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BOMBER



ESSENDON FOOTBALL CLUB MAGAZINE

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THE BOMBERS' HARD MEN

SMASH GRAB!



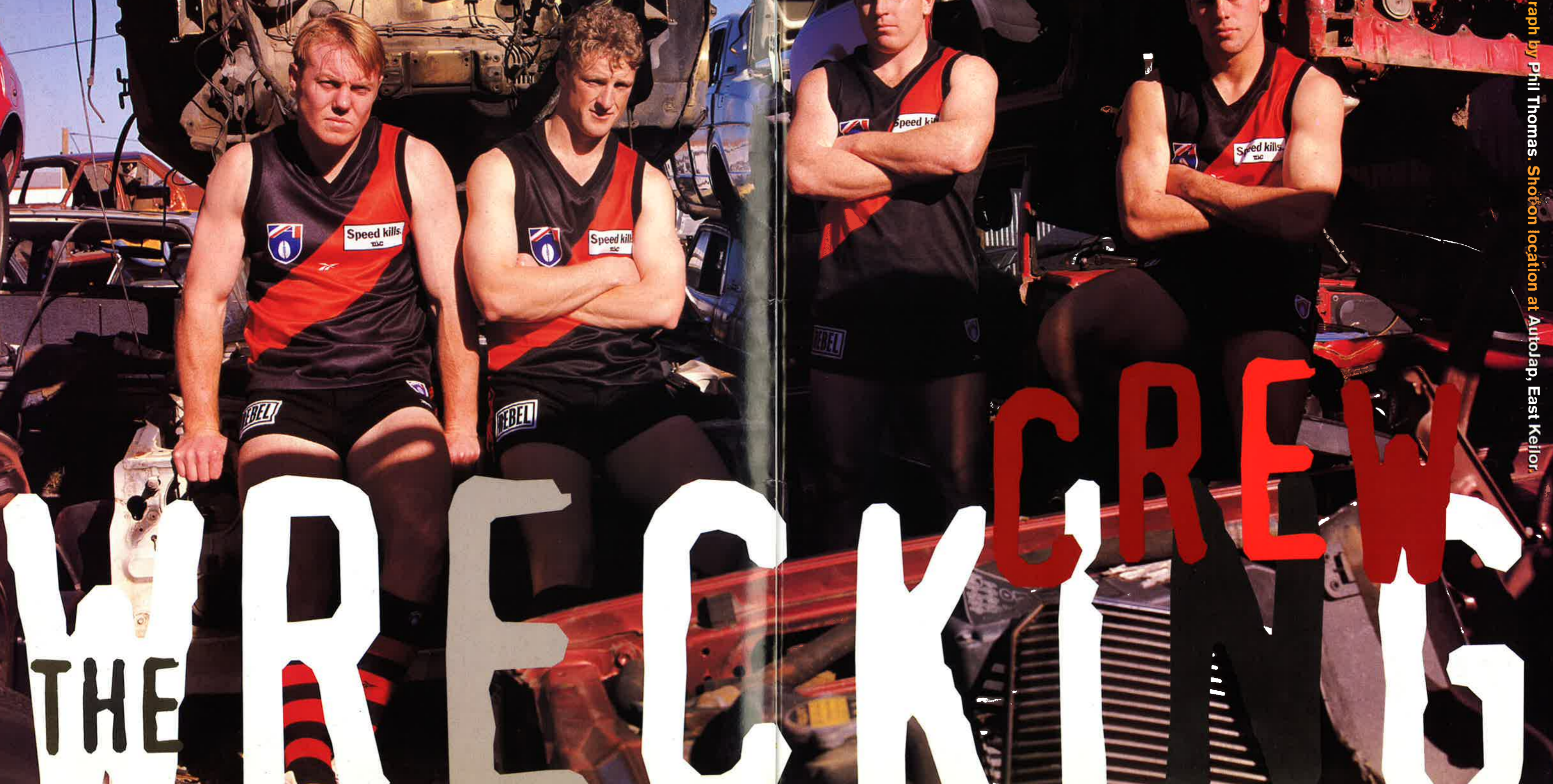
RECORD BREAKER!
SHEEDY TRIBUTE

ON TO THE FUTURE:
DOCKLANDS REPORT

FOOTY

isn't all about spectacular marks, long runs or freak goals. There's a lot of grit and grind about it, too. **Just ask these blokes.**

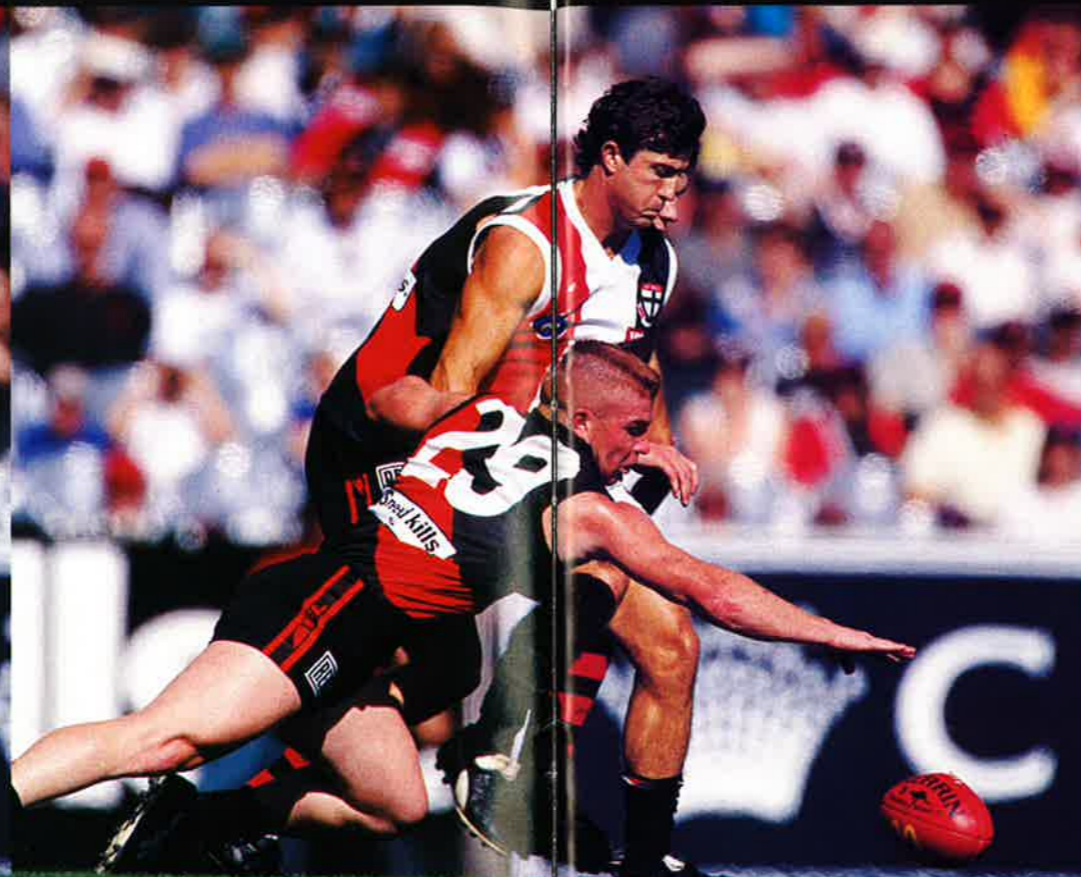
FEATURE STORY



THE RECKLESS CREW

Story by Gary Walsh. Photograph by Phil Thomas. Shot on location at Autolap, East Keilor.

"The more of those players you have got, the more chance you have of being successful as a team."



THE WORKING CLASS HEROES OF FOOTBALL

hey are the working class heroes of any football club.

Most years, instead of finding them at the head of the Brownlow Medal table, you'll find them at the bottom of packs, where they will fight ferociously to be the one to hand the footy to the umpire for a ball-up; they will be the ones laying fierce tackles; the ones running full tilt to shepherd a teammate; the ones knocking the ball forward under immense pressure;

the ones smothering kicks; the ones doing the unseen (but essential, team-lifting and crowd-lifting) things that complement the brilliance of the leading lights.

They are the famed 'one-percenters', whose dedication, determination, guts and sheer work ethic are crucial to a team's success

or failure. At Essendon, you tick off names such as Sean Denham, Damien Hardwick, David Calthorpe, Gary Moorcroft, Dean Solomon, Paul Barnard, Dean Wallis.

It's no coincidence that these types of players often are the ones who become cult figures. Look at Gary Moorcroft, whose buzz-saw haircut and squat build would make him stand out in any football team, but whose single-minded attack on the football (combined with a liberal dose of skill and a remarkable aerial ability) has endeared him to the red-and-black faithful. The fact that he has come back from being de-listed and placed on the rookie list has also contributed to the fans' admiration - everyone loves an underdog.

And look at Dean Solomon, who launched himself into senior football with a steely resolve and unquestioning courage befitting a kid from the wilds of Broken Hill. In the space of a couple of games, he had the Bomber crowd shaking their heads in admiration, and TV commentators in raptures, at the youthful abandon he displayed.

The one percenters might not be blessed with the consummate skills of a James Hird or a Mark Mercuri, but the football world has long recognised their importance in the overall package. For every Malcolm Blight who has translated a playing career of rare brilliance

into success as an AFL coach, there is a Kevin Sheedy, Michael Malthouse or Denis Pagan - tough, committed players of limited skill who have gone on to win the ultimate prize as coaches. If you look at the recent history of the AFL/VFL, more Premierships have been won by coaches who were dour, gritty players than by those who were high-flyers. There's Tom Hafey, Allan Jeans, Alan Joyce, John Kennedy and David Parkin. And many of today's coaches who have yet to enjoy a Premiership also come from the same school - Gary Ayres, Jeff Gieschen, Terry Wallace, Rodney Eade, and the latest recruit, Roger Merrett.

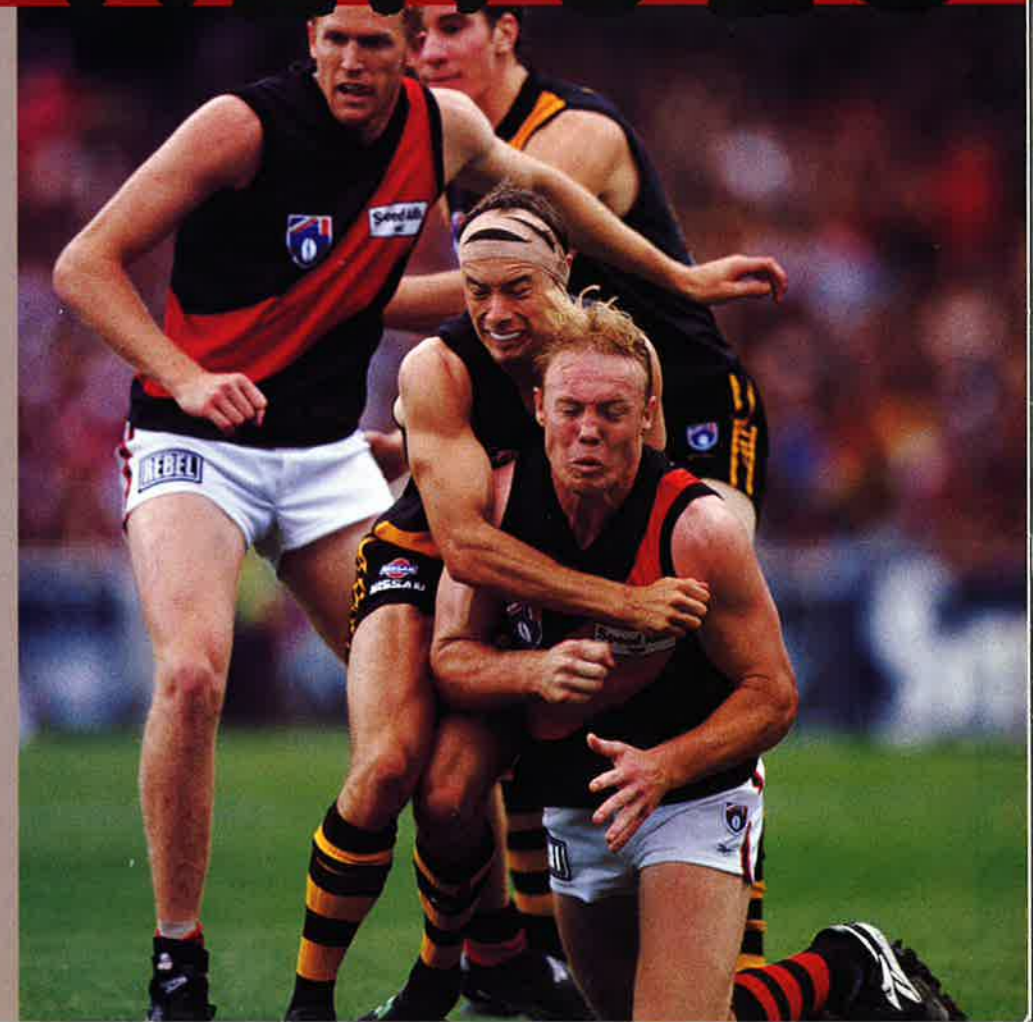
Gary Moorcroft's role models when he was a kid were players like Tony Shaw ('Slash' was a Collingwood supporter) and Tony Liberatore. It's not hard to see why - both were players who made the most of their ability, worked exceptionally hard on their games, and were always to be found deep in the packs doing the bullocking work. Now Moorcroft looks to teammate Sean Denham for inspiration. "You must have those sort of players," says Moorcroft. "Sean Denham just bores in and gets the ball. My main asset is going in hard, so I have to be at the bottom of the packs with guys like Sean. Players like him are the most important next to the guys like

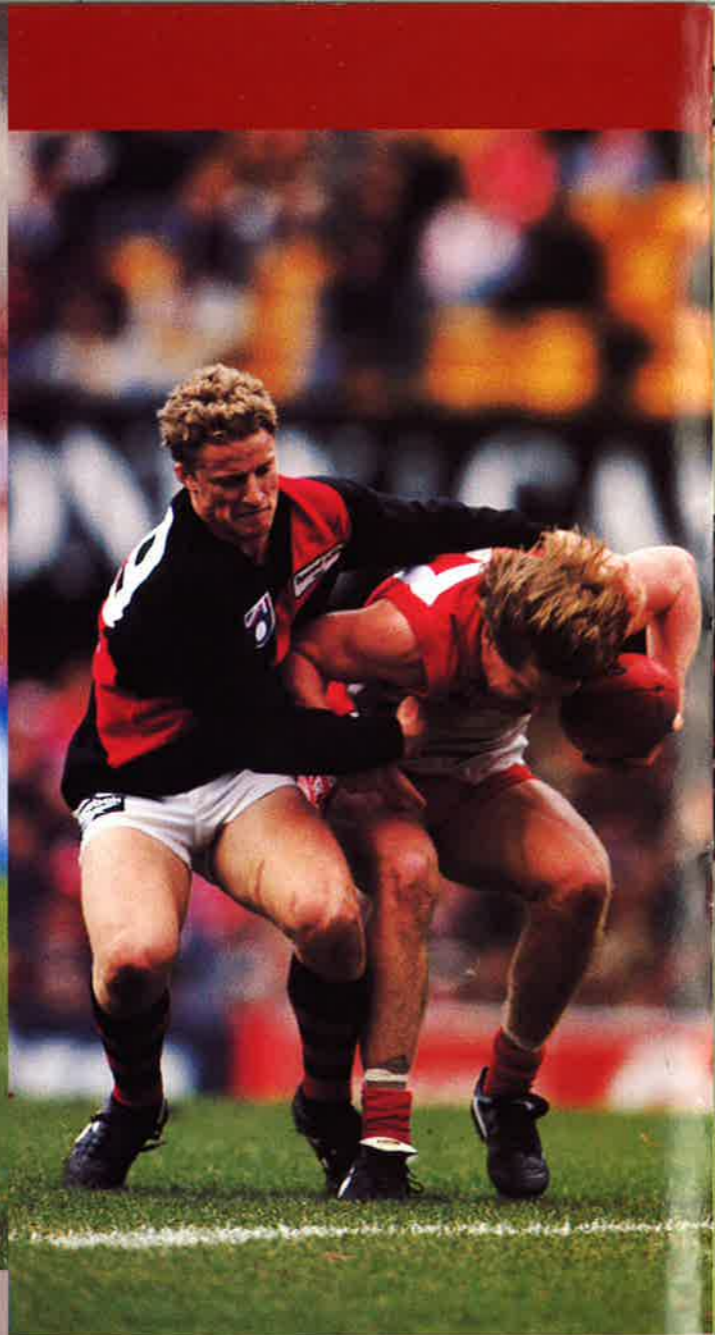
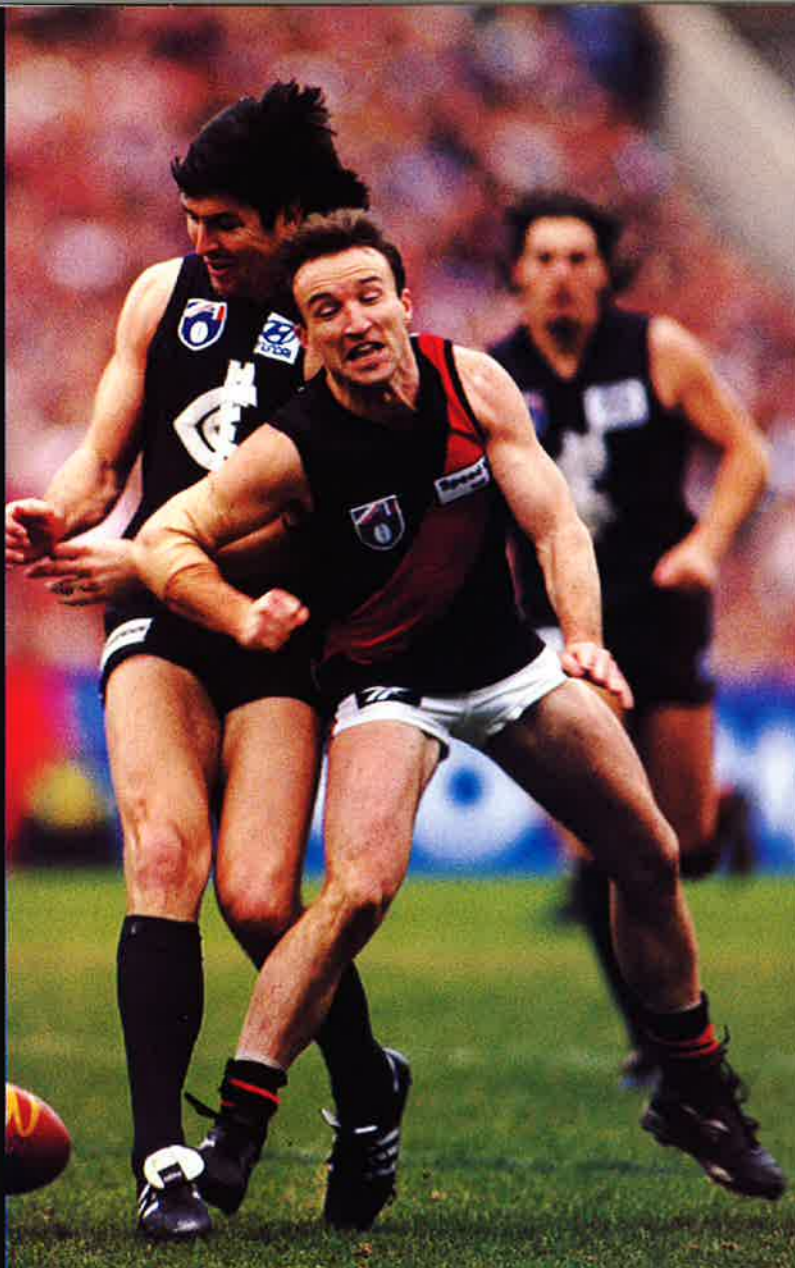
Carey. They start all the play and do all the tackling. They're right up there with the best."

His renaissance as a league footballer may have turned him into a cult player, but he's happy just to be playing senior footy. "Being in the senior side gives me more pleasure even in going to training. There's a greater sense in being part of the side," Moorcroft says. "Before, nobody knew me. I let everybody down - myself, my teammates, the coaching staff, my family, the supporters - so it's good to redeem myself. When I got the call to say that I was coming off the rookie list I was that relieved and that rapt. I pulled my finger out and just played better footy."

Gary O'Donnell - not a bad one for the hard grind himself - reckons the one-percenters are crucial to a team's success on the field. "The more of those players you have got, the more chance you have of being successful as a team. But it's not necessarily the unsung blokes who do it; it's pretty important for some of your better players to be good on the one-percenter stuff as well. It's a key indicator of success if your better players are proficient in that area.

"A lot of blokes in the side can be getting a game purely because of that reason - because they are good at harassing, tackling, shepherding ... all those team things that can inspire





teammates. The one-percenters are really team players."

O'Donnell looks at a player such as Jason Dunstall as a perfect example of a highly skilled player who also gives his all. "He's a great full-forward who is also good when the ball is going the other way. He's more competitive than a lot of other players of his type."

Former Essendon champion Shane Heard is the ultimate example of the one-percenter, according to O'Donnell. "Heard was a skilled player who also happened to be the consummate one-percenter. He was fit and had great

one with all the footballing skills, the other with limited ability but great reserves of determination.

O'Donnell considers Dean Solomon as an emerging player with great one-percenter potential. "When he tackles, blokes stay tackled. It can be such a team-lifting thing, and demoralising for the opposition."

But he cautions that people should not let concentration on a player's burrowing/tackling/scragging abilities get in the way of recognition of the purer footballing skills. "Sometimes a guy's talents in that area are so

tackling and smothering were quite superb. Mark Harvey was another. Paul Van Der Haar was a great tackler. Billy Duckworth. David Grenvold. Dean Wallis."

According to Thompson, the one-percenters are crucial to Essendon's game plan in trying to force opposition errors. "Players good in that area are rated very highly by the Club," he says. "They have to be fearless and courageous and desperate. And we can always get better in that area, so we actively look to

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concentration. I've never seen anyone better able to narrow his vision and concentrate on the task. He was an incredible player."

Essendon assistant coach 'Bomber' Thompson and former utility Paul Hamilton were other good examples of one-percenters -

superior that people overlook areas in which he might be just as skilled."

'Bomber' Thompson has a long list of one-percenters with whom he played and for whom he had unbounded admiration. "Daisy Williams was a fantastic one-percenter. His

recruit players who have those qualities."

Thompson also sounds a quiet warning to those players of abundant skill "who try to do it on natural ability alone". "They should look at these young kids who come in laying tackles and smothering," he says. **B**

CHEER SQUAD



Three cheers for the Cheer Squad!

There are few things more exciting in football than when our team runs onto the field. There's the noise, the expectation and the great moment when the boys break through the banner.

But those banners (or run-throughs as they are more correctly known) don't just appear as if by magic. They are made each week by the guys and girls of our official Cheer Squad. It's probably easy to take the run-throughs for granted; after all, they're there every week.

But we shouldn't, because there's a lot of work that goes into them - not just with their sheer size but also the creativity of the art work and design. Some of this year's have been absolute beauties!

Then, of course, there's the cheer-leading, the support, and the social functions the Cheer Squad runs. We think they do a great job, and it's a great way to be involved in the Club. So if you'd like to be a part of the Cheer Squad - and we heartily recommend you do - contact Shayne Honey on 0412 225 421.