

**In the fast final moments of last year's football season, as the Bombers took their last lunge towards the one spot left in the finals, two moments hinted that they might just have the will, and even the instinct, to fall in.**

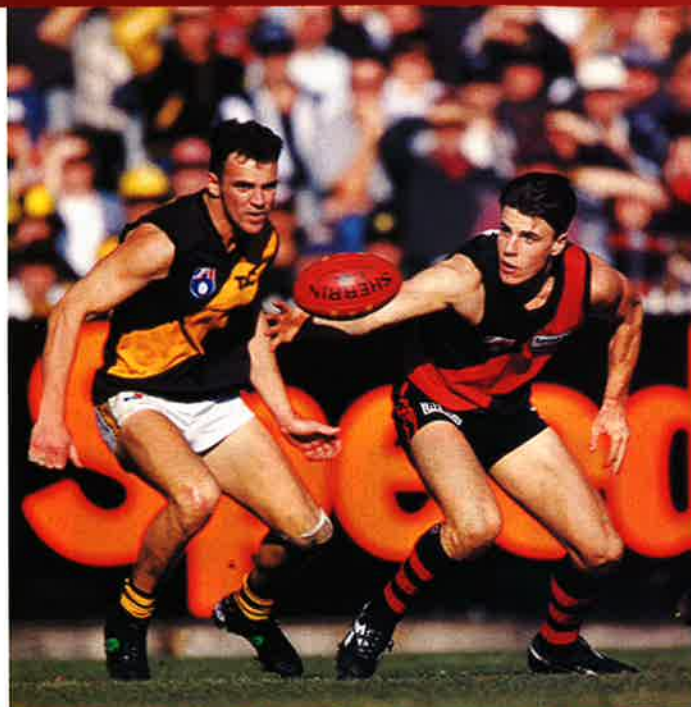
The first was against Carlton, in week 18, with the Blues 25 points up and sure they would win. Mark Mercuri was the first to try and steal the game; with all but one goal out of the way, Mercuri took the ball on the 50 and urged it inside, watching with dread as it fell into the fingertips of the Blues' full-back. Then came Scott Lucas – tripping and stumbling, arms and legs everywhere – who snatched away the last wayward pass, and swung the ball, without even watching, right where it needed to go.

The second moment arrived through more effort than instinct, and was a bit more extended than the last. It belonged to Matthew Lloyd, up forward against Collingwood, two rounds on. The Magpies were fighting; late, like Carlton, they thought they could get there. But it was Lloyd, calm and patient, waiting for the few times the ball headed his way, who scored the last two goals for his team, and ensured they weren't undone by any late challenge.

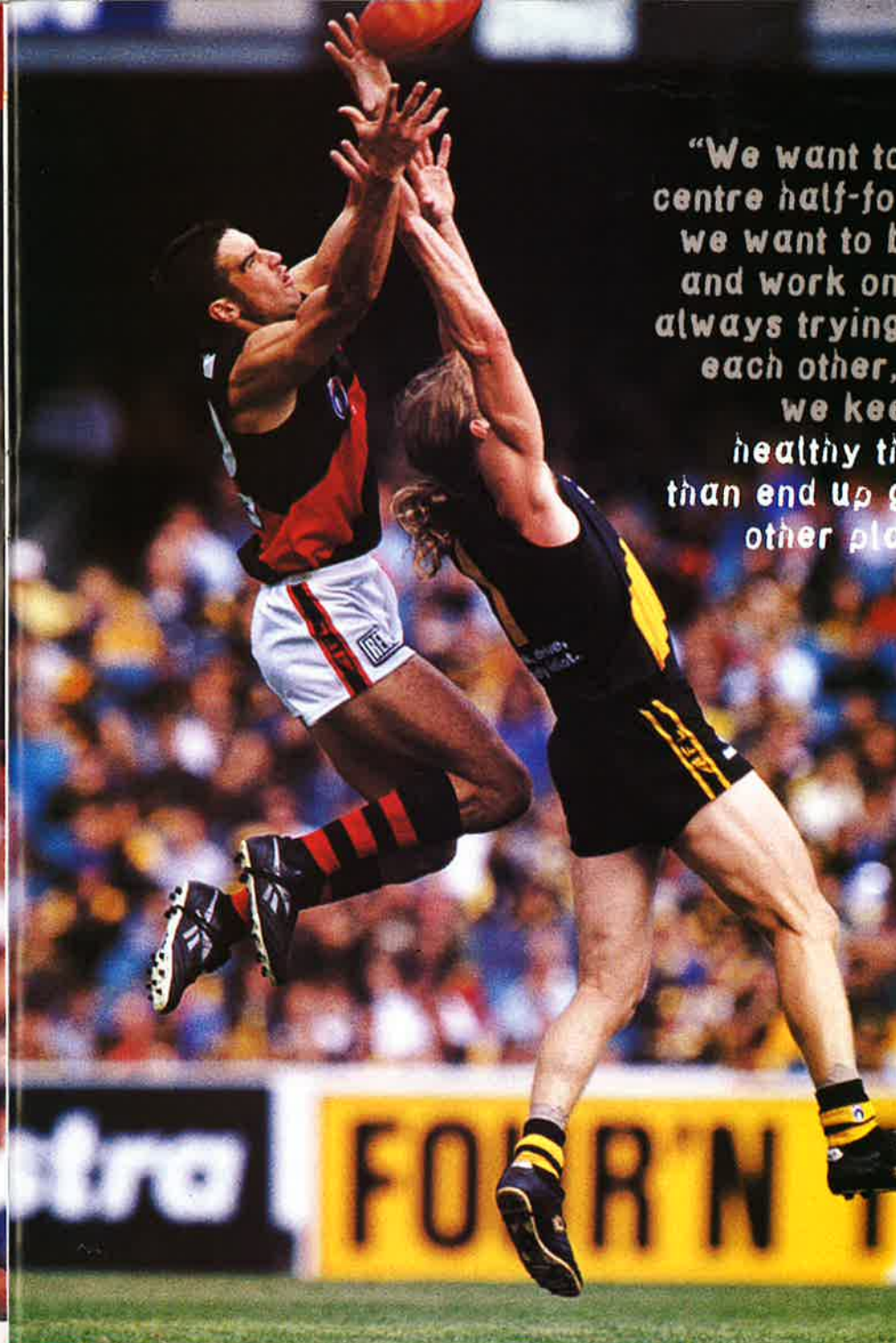
Consistency is one of the more mysterious qualities of AFL football, its players and teams. Flashy, erratic players might invite more wonder, and teams can be full of them, but if you reassure your fans before you surprise them, they will always treasure you more. In the words of Terry Daniher, the Bombers' new reserves coach, "everyone wants players who always give their best, every quarter and every week, even when things might not be going their way. If you know someone can play, then you want to see them do it."

Since joining the Club four years ago, Matthew Lloyd and Scott Lucas have shown that, together, this is the state to which they aspire – that now, match-winning moments must arrive at will. Even if they aren't quite as consistent as they could be, both players know that they are young, have time, and believe they can get there. Waiting for them to make it – watching them grow and sharing their ambition – shapes as an exciting time for both the Club and its fans.

Lloyd entered Essendon at the age of 16, as part compensation for the deal that saw Todd Ridley, Dale Kickett and Tony Delaney join the fledgling Fremantle Dockers side. At about the same time, Lucas was the fourth selection in the 1994 national draft, a position, he says, that deflected some initial attention. "The position wasn't as specific as what Matthew got," Lucas says. "I was one of a heap of players who were drafted that year, and still just one in a group when I came here. It was easy for people to single Lloyd out, and easier for me to hide,



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because he came here on his own." Of the first five players picked up in '94 – Jeff White, Anthony Rocca, Shannon Grant and Joel Smith were the others – only Lucas remains at his original home.

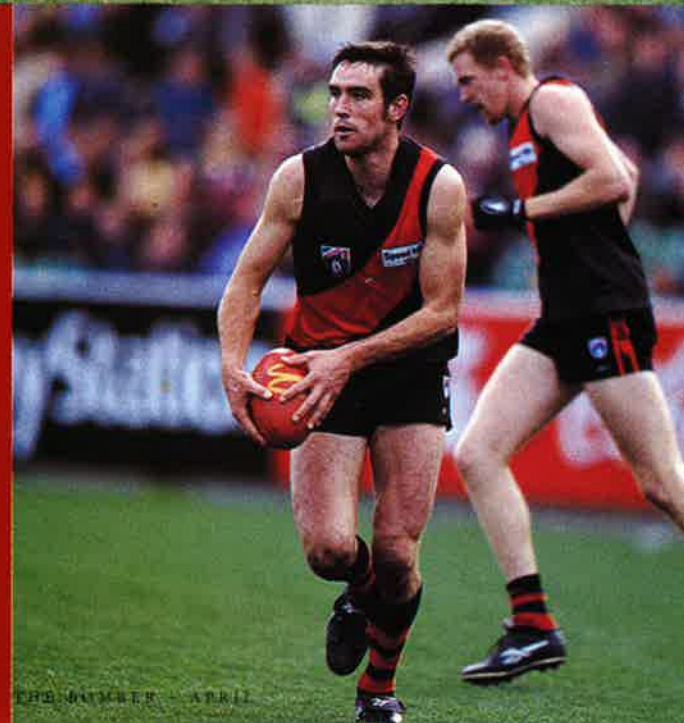
"All of the pressure came because we were young, thought a fair bit of ourselves, and wanted to do everything at once," admits Lloyd, who played his first game against Adelaide, in early '95. "It was hard to understand the focus that young players do get; I had no idea what to do with it. When the Club actually sat me down and told me that they knew I'd need time to settle in, and that they never expected me to play seniors straight away, I was a bit surprised. I came in thinking that was exactly what they did want me to do."

Lucas waited slightly longer than Lloyd to debut; after spending all of '95 in the seconds, 'plodding along for a bit too long,' he won his first senior game five weeks into the following season. Both players now sit on 59 games, and head into the new season with similar aims, ambitions and roles to play. And while both Lucas and Lloyd are beginning to tire of being seen as such a tag team, both players know that much of what has

evolved so far has happened by chance. To improve, they still need to work as a team, to prompt each other, and to compete in a way that is much less intense, yet just as effective, as the challenge they find in opponents.

"We do want to be known as a great combination, even years down the line," says Lloyd. "We want to be the full-forward and centre half-forward for Essendon, and we want to be able to discuss things, and work on ideas together. I think it's good, we both do. We're always trying to stay a step ahead of each other, for sure, but as long as we keep it friendly, then it is a healthy thing. I'd rather have that than end up getting too wrapped up in other players at other sides, and what they're doing."

"Sometimes I feel a bit bad about the whole thing," adds Lucas, "because it feels unfair on the other players, like it's us against them or something. But I feel fortunate for my name to be linked with someone like Matthew Lloyd. I don't see myself as being anywhere near his level yet; I'm nearly there, but he's still done some things that I haven't got close to. I just worry that we might be deflecting attention from a really good group of young guys who are here right now as well. But I suppose that Lloyd/Lucas does roll off the tongue pretty easily. I shouldn't be complaining."



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nderstanding how Lucas and Lloyd have found their way to this particular point – considering their beginnings, and why they wanted to play – is perhaps as interesting as watching them now, and wondering where they'll end up. As Scott Lucas learned to milk cows on his parents' dairy farm outside Geelong, seeing just a few league games each year, Matthew Lloyd lived a few minutes from Windy Hill, wanting to play football because his Dad had. Despite being moved to Scotland from age six until nine, because of his father's job, Lloyd never forgot how much he was meant to play.

"I've always been a very intense sort of person, even as a kid," says Lloyd, who because of his father's 29-game league career, was almost committed to Carlton. "I didn't ever like missing out, or losing anything. You can only take junior footy so seriously, though, because you only really start so you can muck around with your mates, and if you get too serious, too early, then you're probably missing the point. I think that when you get to about 15, and kids start dropping out to work, or realise that

they just don't have it, you get left with the people who really want to be there. That forces you to become a bit more intense about it all, and compete a lot more strongly."

The first football Scott Lucas played was also for fun, with the AFL (geographically, at least) feeling fairly distant. Lucas played for his school when he was young, and joined the Camperdown club as an under 12. As Matthew Lloyd made his way to the Western Jets, sensing he was close, Lucas moved on to the Geelong Falcons, never assuming that it might ever come to anything.

"There was never all that much to do in Camperdown," says Lucas, of his small town sporting life. "You pretty much had footy in the winter and cricket in the summer. That

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was what you did. But at the same time, there was definitely some strong competition out there, and I played against players who, on their day, were much better than me. The thing that I noticed, though, is that AFL players have to be determined, and to want more. My parents were always very hard working people; they live a demanding life and have to be determined if they ever want anything. My grandparents

were like that too, always giving me the serve that 'you only get out of life what you put into it.' I would have let people down if I hadn't tried to be tough."

"Scott's a very laidback person," adds Lloyd, "and I get a lot more tense about things than he ever does. But ever since I've known Scott he's worked hard – on his footy, on his job – and I'm sure that comes from the farm life. If anyone wants to keep up with Scott, they're going to have to be very committed to what they're doing. He has a lot of stamina."

With one expectation accomplished, another arises, demanding a little bit more of that vigor, and even more intensity. Now that Lucas and Lloyd have shown themselves capable of committing to the goal line, and holding it firm, they don't have much choice but to be even more dependable. Essendon has resisted employing full-time forwards for

as long as possible, but while a team wants to be flexible, and fresh, players will learn to predict, trust and rely on each other if they know just where to go.

"There's no doubt about that," says Darren Bewick, who since joining the Club as a rover in 1988 has spent much of his time as a makeshift forward. "That's the way a side gets its confidence, and knows how it works. That's what decides how quickly it can think, and what it does under pressure. But it takes time to find the right balance, and to have every player feeling completely passionate about where they're playing. I think you just have to sit back and wait, sometimes, until the best player for a position comes along, and until you know, looking at them, that that's the spot they need to be."

Neither Lloyd nor Lucas has noticed an increase in inside expectation, or felt pressure from their teammates. But they await it, knowing that when it does come, they will be

better than before. The two may have come to the Club on opposite paths, but they know now that figuring out what to make of it all, and dealing with the pressures, is something they can do together.

The paths may yet split in different directions, because nobody can be certain of the future. But if they continue, and those emerging expectations are met, Lloyd and Lucas might, with their mix of effort and instinct, take the Bombers into a few more Septembers yet. **B**

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# "No, No, What do you really think of me?"

## Matthew Lloyd:

**What is Scott's most embarrassing habit?**

**Lloyd:** He wears these really old boxer shorts all the time, day in day out. As far as I know he wears them to sleep in, during the day, and during games too. And I can't remember even seeing him wash them, not even once. It's pretty disgusting.

**What's the most ugly item of clothing you've ever spotted him in?**

Those boxer shorts are pretty bad. But Scott's actually not a bad dresser these days; he's pretty snappy. When he first got here wearing all his country clothes he struggled a bit, but he's found a bit of class lately.

**Who do you think would best play Scott in a movie?** Kramer (Michael Richards' character in Seinfeld). He's had a few fuzzy hairstyles in his time, and those boxers are the same ones that Kramer gets around in all the time.

**Who would he choose to do it?**

Arnie, or some other action star. Scott thinks he's the big man in the gym.

**Who drives the best car at the moment?**

We're on a par there, actually, because we're both driving Fords at the moment. I'm doing a bit of thinking about upgrading at the moment, though, so I might be outclassing him on the roads pretty soon if I'm lucky.

**It's after the final siren in the 1999 Grand Final, Essendon vs Collingwood. We're down by five points. Who should have the ball, Lloyd or Lucas?**

If it was outside fifty I'd give it to Scotty, definitely. If it was inside, though, then I

might think about having a bit of a go.

**Who, Lucas or Lloyd, would be the best special comments man on the Channel Seven team?**

I reckon Scott would do alright there, actually. He knows every single statistic possible, off by heart. He's an expert. In fact, there's a good chance he might become the next Bruce McAvaney one of these days.

**Who's intending to kick the most goals this season?**

Well, I'll probably be at full forward for most of the year, so it probably should be me, and I'd like to do that. Scotty gave me a bit of competition last season, but I kicked on a bit towards the end of the year, so I'll be looking to hold onto the title after this season's over.

**But whose will be the Goal of the Year?**

I'll give that one to Scott. He tries to be a bit flashy every now and then. I have to be the steady one.

**Apparently you two have an interest in real estate. Who owns the most of Essendon at the moment?**

I set the groundwork, but I think Scott has raced past me. He owns a house in Ascot Vale now, and a unit in Essendon, so he's done a bit of work. I'm pretty keen to catch up, though, so I'll be trying to get past him as soon as I can.

**Where's the first place we should look for Scott on his time off over summer?**

I'd head for Camperdown, and see if I could find him milking a cow or something, down on the farm.

**What will he most likely be doing once footy is over?**

Milking the cows, definitely. Taking over from his dad on the farm.

## Scott Lucas:

**What is Matthew's most embarrassing habit?**

**Lucas:** The only weights Matt ever does are those that are going to make his biceps look a bit better. He's obsessed with his own arms.

**What's the most ugly item of clothing you've ever spotted him in?**

He was spotted in a g-string a while ago, and it wasn't real pretty. I think he actually has a bit of a thing for his g-strings; he probably wears them all the time, knowing him.

**Who do you think would best play Matt in a movie?**

Macaulay Culkin, I'd say, because he never had to shave and neither does Matt yet.

**Who would he choose to do it?**

Tom Cruise or someone. He reckons he's a bit of a pretty boy.

**Who drives the best car at the moment?**

It's all pretty even right now; we both drive Fords. But rumour has it that he's been spotted out investigating the BMWs around town, and I don't think I'd be able to compete with that. He's too rich.

**It's after the final siren in the 1999 Grand Final, Essendon vs Collingwood. Who should have the ball, Lloyd or Lucas?**

Well, I'd definitely take it. I should probably say Lloyd, though, because he's been a bit more accurate than I have in the last couple of years. We're both pretty confident about our shots, so we'd probably fight over it for a while first.

**Who, Lucas or Lloyd, would be the best special comments man on the Channel Seven team?**

It would probably be me, because Matt would probably be off somewhere getting ready to star in his first movie, and putting make-up and everything on.

**Who's intending to kick the most goals this season?**

I'll stick with Lloyd. He's the more accurate kick at the moment, I think, and I know that being at full forward he thinks that it's pretty much his job to do, anyway.

**But whose will be the Goal of the year?**

I might have that. I've been practising my most flukey goals all summer, so I've got a few surprises up my sleeve.

**Apparently you two have an interest in real estate. Who owns the most of Essendon at the moment?**

There is a bit of a battle happening there. Lloyd probably says I have, but he's a bit modest sometimes. We're pretty much on a par at the moment, but you never know who's going to come up with the next big acquisition.

**Where's the first place we should look for Matthew on his time off over summer?**

Go down to Chapel Street. He likes hanging out with the Chapel Street crowd, doing a bit of dining and looking for some nice new clothes to add to the collection.

**What will he most likely be doing once footy is over?**

Working on his suntan. It's a full-time job for Matt these days.

