

## About the Author

If you love reading about sport, there's likely to be at least one 'Ken Piesse' title, cricket or football in your collection. *Favourite Footy Yarns* is the 72nd book Ken has written or edited.

In a lifetime of sportswriting, Ken has collaborated in the autobiographies of some of the biggest names in the game, from Dermott Brereton and Jason Dunstall through to Tony Lockett and Paul Salmon. He edited *Football Fan* magazine, *Football Australia* and wrote for *Inside Football* for years. His biggest 'scoop' story made the front pages of every News Limited Sunday paper Australia-wide when Sydney's Darren Jolly told him he was intending to be with wife Deanne at the birth of their first child rather than play in the 2006 Grand Final. Baby Scarlett was induced on the Friday night before the game!

Ken says there's never been a more exciting kick or a bigger roar than the day Jezza (Alex Jesaulenko) bounced through the sealer in time-on of the 1970 VFL Grand Final, or a more supercharged solo than produced by Hawk Stuart Dew in the third quarter of the 2008 play-off.

Ken and his artist wife Susan live on the Mornington Peninsula. They have five children, the youngest of whom, Rebecca, plays AFL for the ANU Griffins in Canberra.



• FAVOURITE •  
**FOOTY  
YARNS**

FROM LAUGHS & LARRIKINS TO  
BUSH LEGENDS & BAD BOYS

**KEN PIESSÉ**



echo

Front endpaper captions – (clockwise): Darrel Baldock, Bob Skilton, Hawthorn (2014), Trevor Barker, The 1963 Grand Final Record, Bert Hartkopf, Carl Ditterich, Ron Barassi, Doug Hawkins and Ted Whitten

Back endpaper captions – (clockwise): The old Victoria Park, Brendan Edwards, Alistair Lord, Dick Reynolds, Peter Bedford, Kevin Murray, Channel 7's Dennis Cometti, Bruce McAvaney, Nathan Buckley, Leigh Matthews (in 2009) and Fred Wooller 1963



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TEENAGER: Eighteen-year-old Robert Harvey with Demon Alan Johnson,  
MCG, mid-season, 1990  
*Ian Kenins/Inside Football*

# Foreword

By Robert Harvey

I was blessed to be born a footballer. When Darrel ‘the Doc’ Baldock first picked me (to play for St Kilda), I was 16 and still in fourth form at John Paul College in Frankston. I was skinny, underweight and overawed. But the Doc came to me and said no matter what happened, I was going to play the final four games of the season and he was true to his word. This was 1988. I’d gone from playing my first game in a back pocket in the Under 19s to a forward flank in the firsts – all in six months. To have emulated the longevity of Ted Whitten and Michael Tuck and play 20 League seasons was way beyond my rainbow. I just wish I could have played in premierships like them. But strange as it may seem, I don’t regret anything about my career. To play on the biggest stages of all for two decades with and against some of the game’s legends was an ongoing challenge and privilege. Sure, the final half of the 1997 Grand Final when Adelaide came from behind to beat us was a low point, but we had our chances that day and simply weren’t good enough to take them. The premiership was there for us, but we fell away when it counted. I don’t know if we could have done anything differently. But that’s football. The highs can be incredible but so are the lows.

As a teenager, walking into Moorabbin and seeing the big stand enveloping almost half the ground is something that will always stay with me. Tingles would run up and down my spine. Our champions then like Tony Lockett, Stewie Loewe, Trevor

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Barker and Danny Frawley were all heroes in my eyes. Yet they all had time to chat and make a young kid more comfortable. Fast forward a decade and blokes like Burkey (Nathan Burke), Fraser Gehrig, Lenny Hayes and Nick Riewoldt – still going strong – were every bit as important in helping us win respect and play off in finals.

My attitude to footy never changed over those 21 seasons. I wanted to succeed and do everything possible to help me be the best player I could be. My way was to train hard and then harder again. I don't know how many pairs of cross trainers I've worn out over the years, but it would have to be hundreds. Training was always an obsession with me. It was one of the reasons why I stopped playing cricket, a game very much in the Harvey blood and one I'd loved since I was a little tyke in the backyard at Seaford. I'd taken five wickets for my team Frankston Peninsula in the Premier first XI grade the day before, but was too sore to do weights the following day. I was young at the time and maybe some celebrating with mates that night had a little to do with it as well, but our coach Stan Alves was adamant: 'That's it, Harvs. No more cricket.'

It proved to be a blessing as football was fast becoming totally professional and juggling training and practice for two sports even in November and December was simply too complicated. By concentrating solely on footy, I was able to bring a new consistency to my game – and incidentally, provide a few extra dollars for my Dad, Jeff, family and mates who backed me at 70-1 preseason to win the Brownlow Medal in 1997. They did it again nice and early in 1998, got 33s and won big again. In those years, I may not have been as dynamic a player as earlier, but I had good balance to my game, had plenty of rest and physio and stretching sessions and didn't miss a beat. Looking back now, I was at my absolute top during those two years. To be able to play another 10 years after that was an ongoing bonus.

I'm certainly glad that I remained a one-club player. I would never have been able to forgive myself if I had ever left St Kilda and the club had made the finals without me. You can have all



## FOREWORD



UP FROM SEAFORD: Sixteen-year-old Robert Harvey, pictured squatting at the very front on the far left, first played in a back pocket for the St Kilda Under 19s in 1987. Also in the squad, sitting in the front row, far right, is Shane Warne

the comforts in the world, but if you're not at home, what's the point?

I'd like to thank Ken Piesse for the opportunity to contribute to his latest book. People say I had stamina but so does Ken. Maybe that's why he's known as 'the Master'. He loves footy and cricket. He tells me this is the 72nd book he has written or edited. More than 20 are on football. That's an amazing record. My Mum kept newspaper cuttings in scrapbooks over the years and Ken's stories figure prominently throughout, from my introduction to the club via recruiting officer John Beveridge right through to my 300th League game on preliminary final day, 2004. Ken is passionate, expert, loyal and caring. He's at the top of the tree – among the best and most knowledgeable sportswriters. We were cricket teammates at Frankston and for years have been near-neighbours at Mt Eliza. Years ago he got me out first ball at Port Melbourne, but my old man got runs against him that day, so I always say we're square.

I like the mix of his favourite stories and punchlines and love Paul Harvey's cartoons – particularly the one of 'Plugger' (Tony Lockett) picking up Mark Graham and squeezing him like a



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sponge. I was always glad Plugger was on our side. When he went off to Sydney it was like dancing with your sister.

It's my pleasure to endorse *Favourite Footy Yarns* and wish Ken every success with it. He deserves it.

ROBERT HARVEY

Mt Eliza



x



## Author's Introduction

It's a red-letter day when a new book you've written arrives. I immediately rang Allan 'Yabbie' Jeans and said, 'Our book is here, Yab.' It wasn't his life story – years earlier he'd told me the truth and nothing but the truth would affect too many. Instead, he had written a foreword to my book *Football Legends of the Bush*. Hailing from Tocumwal, high up on the Murray, where he first ran the local pub as a teenager, Jeans was an old bushie at heart who loved to yarn and reminisce.

His autobiography would have been fascinating and full-frontal. Contributing a foreword to someone else's book was less demanding and hurtful. He'd been thrown into League coaching at 27, still the youngest-ever. Some of those he suddenly had a responsibility to had been his idols. Some resented a kid telling them what to do. His peers like Len Smith were all-embracing and encouraging. Jeans was at the coalface when St Kilda vacated the Junction Oval. He always reckoned the cricketers had too much power. Coaching champions like Baldock, Stewart, Howell and Ditterich had been incredibly rewarding – but stressful. He trusted me enough to elaborate – but not for the record.

'Coaching,' he'd say, 'is the art of surviving.' Every now and again I'd playfully suggest that he had a good story to tell – and how it would be something for the grandchildren ... 'You know why I can't do it, mate,' he'd say.

Every visit without fail, Mary Jeans would prepare morning tea, with percolated coffee and homemade cakes. It was country

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hospitality in the city. ‘You didn’t need to do all this, Mary,’ I said once.

‘Oh yes I do, Ken.’

While Jeans was uncomfortable with penning a warts-and-all autobiography – one he’d just read had somehow neglected to mention the hero’s long-time illicit lover, making it a less-than-true account – he had no problem in dictating 3000 words or so on his bush upbringings – especially as it also involved Mary, his wife for more than 50 years. She was a nurse completing her training in Melbourne and Jeans wanted to be closer to her. Initially he’d knocked back the advances of Les Foote and St Kilda, saying he was a country boy and had responsibilities to his mother. His father had disappeared to goodness-knows-where during the war and Mrs Jeans had to raise the family herself. She worked three different jobs to feed and clothe them all. Jeans had been promised 500 pounds, a small fortune back then, to come to the Big Smoke and play six games. On the night of the sixth, back he was at home again, with an envelope.

‘Here you are, Mum, this [money] is yours,’ he said.

‘What are you doing here, Allan?’ she said. ‘You’re supposed to be in Melbourne [playing football].’

‘Mum, I’ve played my six games. They gave me all this money ... 500 pounds ... this is for you.’

‘Allan,’ she said, ‘you can always come home, but you can’t always move forward.’

I faithfully transcribed his foreword, including the anecdote on how he got his nickname: ‘I used to follow my big brother around,’ said Jeans. ‘He was pretty red in the face and was known as “Lobby” – short for lobster. They asked him one day who the little tyke tagging around with him was? “Oh that’s just a little yabbie,” he said.’

I dropped the deluxe version around for his approval and as I was leaving, he called, ‘Mate [he always called you “mate”], you don’t want me to come to the launch [of the book] do you?’

‘You’ll be right, Al, you’re fine.’ But even then his lungs were shutting down.

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COUNTRY BOYS: Tocumwal's Allan Jeans and Latrobe's Darrel Baldock piloted St Kilda's one-and-only premiership in 1966

Six or so months later, when the first copies of the book arrived, I rang him again. This time he was in the Allan Jeans Wing at a nursing home in Cranbourne. He was seriously ill. 'Come around ... now,' he said.

He'd lost an alarming amount of weight and was hooked up to an extra air supply. He couldn't even get out of his chair without assistance. As he'd confided a year earlier, he was stuffed.

'Hello, Al ... thought you'd like some copies for the family,' I said.

We had the best hour together, chatting about his coaching, his mates and Mary.

'What I'll never forget,' I said to him, 'were the feasts Mary would prepare when you knew I was coming over. It was so very kind.'

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Jeans looked across the room to Mary and grinned. It was a true love match, that one.

‘How’s the cricket going?’ he asked with a mischievous smile.

He’d never let me forget the time he provided a character reference following my one-and-only umpire’s report in a District game at North Melbourne. I’d been given out lbw and told the umpire he was guessing, repeated it afterwards and he put me on report. I was a captain and should have been more diplomatic. Jeans loved that one. ‘Fancy me giving a reference for you ... a member of the mee-dya,’ as he liked to pronounce it.

He signed some books and photographs in his impeccable hand, including one of him with Cameron Schwab at Richmond in 1992. I’d never asked him why he’d coached the Tigers. They were debt-ridden, had a poor list and in a decade hadn’t finished higher than eighth. ‘Alan Schwab [Cameron’s dad] refused to take no for an answer,’ he said. ‘He kept on saying I had to help.’ From the corner of the room, Mary spoke up: ‘Ken ... do you know why he did it? Poverty ... we needed the money.’

They’d lost whatever savings they had in the Pyramid collapse. Jeans had also been one of the many creditors at St Kilda who were paid peanuts via a scheme of arrangement, despite his status as the club’s only premiership coach. With four children to raise and care for, times were tough.

We shook hands and I wished him well. A day later the nursing home cut off all access to visitors other than the family and within a week he was gone. More than 5000 attended his funeral at the MCG. For so many of us it was like losing a father all over again. Dermott Brereton was particularly cut. He’d been to see Yab earlier that week and also knew he’d never see him again.

For Jeans, his players were his extended family. Ever since Dermott was 16 and first training at Glenferrie, Jeans had always provided wise counsel. Dermott was often accused of being self-centred and lairy but he was also a matchwinner – and had raw courage and a team ethic matched by few. At the time he was driving a red Ferrari and had a bad back. ‘Dermie,’

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Jeans asked him once, 'have you ever thought about getting a more comfortable car – one where you don't have to be a contortionist to get into?'

'No, Yab ... never.'

Teddy Whitten had fashioned a lime green set of adidas boots for Dermott and with his long blond hair and earring, he was quite a sight. 'Dermie,' said Jeans, 'all this flashiness ... what happens if you need to go to a bank manager and ask him for a home loan? Do you think you need to be just a little more conservative?'

'Yab,' said Dermott, 'what happens if I don't have to go to a bank manager?!'

Brereton's on-field swagger and Irish temper could be a lethal cocktail. Once Jeans sent out his runner George Stone to deliver Brereton a message: 'Tell that blond poofta if he doesn't do what he's told, he's coming straight off.'

Brereton saw Stone racing towards him and told him to back off – for his own good. Wanting to stay healthy, Stone kept running to another blond – Russell Morris – and dashed back to the bench. 'Wadda he say?' demanded Jeans on his return.

'Nothin' Yab, nothin' at all.'

In one run into a late '80s finals campaign, the Hawks were playing St Kilda at Waverley and so certain was Jeans that a hyped-up Brereton was on the verge of losing his temper and going on report, he had Stone hovering 30 or so metres away from him for much of the last quarter, constantly calling to him to 'stay cool' and 'the finals start in a fortnight'.

Away from the game, Dermott was amiable, laidback and loud. At his 21st, he and his Dad, Dermott snr, both wore brand new matching singlets. One was lime green and the other bright pink. They both loved dogs. 'KD', the family's St Bernard, grew so tall, Mr Brereton removed the front seat of his old car so the pup could fit and still go on his favourite walks at Frankston beach. One day Dermott saw a bloke mistreating his dog at the beach, saw red and ended up in court. Once we visited on the way down to our holiday home and Mrs Brereton

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LAIRY: Summer training at Glenferrie Oval and Dermott Brereton was a standout with his pink spotted legionnaire's cap and lime green singlet, 1990  
*Tony Greenberg/Inside Football*

was making vegetable soup, complete with croutons. The aroma was magnificent.

'Gee, what are you making, Jean?' I asked, hoping we'd be asked to take a seat.

'Ken, it's for the dog!'

Dermott and Trevor Barker were good mates and Dermott would often stay at Trevor's place when he was out on the tear at a weekend. Trevor was forever receiving chocolate boxes from his many lady admirers and was always too polite to say he didn't eat chocolate. He'd pack them one on top of another into his tallest kitchen cupboard. Dermott discovered them one day and had no problem devouring the lot – even the out-of-date ones.

When Dermott was cleaned up by Geelong's Mark Yeates at the first bounce in the 1989 Grand Final, he writhed in agony as Gary Ablett snr took the first shot at goal 60 metres away. A rib was broken and he had kidney damage. He tried to stand up but couldn't. Stone came out to get him off. Dermott refused. Stone was insistent: 'Yab says you've got to come off.'

'No.'

Grimacing in pain, he was helped by the club's fitness advisor



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John Kilpatrick into a forward pocket. Watching on, four rows back, Tony Jewell, a Richmond premierships player and coach, said Dermie looked positively green. Yet minutes later, when Hawthorn attacked, Brereton drove himself to get in front of the pack, somehow reached for the sky, took a crucial mark and kicked truly. It was one of eight for the term as Hawthorn opened a 40-point break.

In an instant Stone was again side-by-side. 'Yab says well done. Stay on.'

It was the most physical Grand Final since the 1971 donnybrook between Hawthorn and St Kilda. At the first break on his way to the Hawthorn huddle, Brereton walked past Yeates, winked and said, 'I'm still here.'

By half-time Hawthorn's lead had been cut to six goals. The rooms looked like a battle front. John Platten with his head bandaged was in Ga-Ga Land having been knocked out in the opening minutes, Robert Di Pierdomenico had a broken rib and a pierced lung, Brereton was passing blood and Gary Ayres had a bad corky. Despite its enviable run of Grand Final appearances, Hawthorn had never won back-to-back premierships. Already it was down to 16 fit men.

Jeans was known for his inspiring oratory. The only one who could possibly rival him was the club's first premierships coach, the iconic John Kennedy snr.

Jeans' ability to raise his voice and add emphasis to a word or a phrase just at the right time was uncanny. He would have made a remarkable general. He could see the hurt in his players' eyes and gradually, ever so gradually, worked himself into the most celebrated and inspiring Grand Final speech of all.

Jeans' messages were always simple and relevant. He started with a story. A teenage boy was at the shops buying a new pair of shoes. He had a choice: a really good pair which were more expensive, or a cheaper pair that didn't fit quite as well.

Sweeping his eyes around the group, he asked, 'What will we all be saying tomorrow? Will we be saying: I wish I HAD paid the price?'

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'Are you prepared to pay the price?' Today ... right here ... now.

'ARE YOU?' his voice rising.

'To win today, to create history for the club, to go back to back, to achieve our goal, all of us ... we must pay the price.

'We must. We must. Today. NOW.'

The 'now' was delivered quickly and with venom. This was a 'no-tomorrow' situation. The eyes of every player were on Jeans, who slowly and deliberately walked from player to player, looking directly at them and demanding, 'Are you prepared to pay the price?'

'ARE YOU?'

Minutes later as the players ran down the race again with Jeans still booming, 'PAY THE PRICE, PAY THE PRICE,' Peter Curran was one of several with tears running down their faces, so charged was the atmosphere. Jeans had had a brain aneurism less than two years earlier. Mary Jeans scolded him later, saying the tremendous effort in trying to motivate his players that day could have triggered more issues.

Geelong kept on coming, reducing the gap further at the final change. Had the game gone even 30 seconds longer, Malcolm Blight was sure his Cats would have won. There was just a kick in it at the end. Somehow, despite nine goals from Ablett, Hawthorn survived. It remains the most remembered Grand Final since my first in 1963, right up there with the 1970 Carlton comeback against Collingwood and the titanic finish to the 2005 decider when Sydney's leaping Leo Barry took one of the great marks of all deep in defence with just seconds to play.

That night at the Hilton hotel, in between the speeches, the players spent much of their time together on couches out of the ballroom. Ayres, the toughest Hawk of all, told me how his mate Brereton had stood up like never before. He was like a proud big brother. 'He didn't want the Geelong boys to see that he was hurt, but he was ... to take that early mark and provide the inspiration he did ... it's something none of us will ever, ever forget,' he said.

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION



FIERY: Tony Lockett's strong-arm sleeper hold on Essendon's Brad Fox was a talking point for weeks as the 1992 season opened furiously  
Inside Football

In my 30-odd years of covering games each Saturday, the only others to corner as many headlines as 'the Kid' were Tony Lockett, Wayne Carey and Gary Ablett snr.

I penned Lockett's St Kilda autobiography, which Trevor Barker launched at Moorabbin. He didn't change even one sentence of the 50 000-word manuscript. At the launch the big fellow was humble and softly spoken. He would much rather have been around his barbecue at Devon Meadows with his mates sharing a beer and a few snags. Late last year, I was in Bowral for a Don Bradman function and Plugger rang, apologising that he wouldn't be able to make it. 'Wednesday's my busiest day,' he said. 'Not only am I looking after my cows, but the fella next door's as well.'

The sports editor at the *Sunday Press* Scotty Palmer would always have me at St Kilda games as he knew Plugger trusted me and would always talk. But you had to wait for the right moment, until he was ready. The only full-forward to win a Brownlow, Plugger's idea of a perfect day was to kick six, flatten a few, have half a dozen pots in the social club and be back home in Ballarat by nine. He craved anonymity and distrusted the media. His shift to Sydney was a godsend, both for club and player.

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Wayne Carey won more matches single-handedly than any other player I've seen. He was unstoppable, especially on Friday nights and the big games that really counted. He *was* North Melbourne and to see his life spinning out of control after his sudden exit from the club was extraordinarily sad. We'd met at Arden Street on his very first day in Melbourne in the late '80s. Under 19s coach Denis Pagan said he'd seen him down at training and Wayne had said, 'No, I'm here to play seniors.' Carey was incredibly athletic and took a remarkable number of screamers running straight at oncoming traffic à la Jonathan Brown. It was one reason why Pagan created 'Pagan's Paddock', so Carey could run into open space without the complication of opposition defenders jumping into him. 'He was our biggest asset. We needed to keep him fit,' Pagan said. With his tan and imposing Chesty Bond physique, Carey was the apple of everyone's eye. Once he did a fashion shoot as part of a players' fundraiser, wearing a pair of leather pants on the catwalk and nothing else. The girls squealed and whistled and the pictures were excellent. When I suggested to him that one would make a good front cover for the next *North News*, he said, 'Do you mind if you don't? Sally [his long-time girlfriend] won't like it.'

Ablett was also an amazing footballer who could kick staggering distances with either foot and mark the ball seemingly five storeys high. He'd take the ball in front of us on the wing at the old Waverley pressbox and my mate Daryl Timms and I would say, 'Have a shot.' His nine goals in that epic '89 Grand Final won him the Norm Smith, and *The Age* cartoonist depicted him walking on water back to Geelong that night. The great man almost became involved in a biography I was writing. He rang one Friday night and asked to meet. The book was virtually finished and at the printers. More than 60 had contributed from coaches and teammates from Hawthorn and Geelong to Drouin and Myrtleford. In the end, the publisher reckoned he wanted too much so the book went ahead as an 'unauthorised biography' and was a bestseller.

Many of my football books have been written on behalf

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**MATCHWINNER:** Wayne Carey was the ultimate matchwinner, the finest of my time

*Ken Rainsbury/North News*

of a celebrity player, from Brereton and Lockett through to Tony Liberatore and Paul Salmon. In one taping session with 'Libba', young Tom Liberatore, now also a champion Bulldog, was playing balloon football up and down the corridor with the full Rex Hunt-type commentary: 'And Wynd knocks it down to Romero ... Romero to little Libba ... Libba sees a leading Chris Grant ... he marks it and ... it's another goal ... the Doggies lead!' Tony suggested to Tom to keep the noise down a little, only for Tom to say, 'It's okay Dad, it's almost orange [quarter] time.'

So significant a contribution did Salmon make in his five years at Hawthorn that he was named in the club's Team of the Century. Accorded the regular rucking role he'd craved at Essendon, he mixed his height and sheer skill with brainpower. This particular year North Melbourne's Corey McKernan was the outstanding follower in the game, his centre-bounce leaping his signature. There was a photo in the *Herald Sun* from the previous weekend's game with McKernan jumping into an opponent and using the opponent's body for extra elevation. We were in the early stages of taping and interviewing for

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Salmon's autobiography *The Big Fish*, the first of a two-book deal I'd arranged for Paul with Bob Sessions, one of the great Australian publishers. In the lead-up to the North match and his meeting with McKernan, I suggested to Paul that he faced a huge challenge trying to combat McKernan who was almost 10 years younger and more athletic. Had he thought about doing something a little different at the bounces? Maybe coming in sideways at an angle ... anything to stop him jumping into him à la Simon Madden ...

There were no restriction on a ruckman's run-up back then and come game day, at the very first bounce Salmon faced McKernan and ran at him, as per normal, only to baulk at the very last moment and watch McKernan disappear over his shoulder, without having touched him or the ball. Salmon grabbed the ball and started a Hawthorn attack. Minutes later, the pair were opposed on a wing and McKernan was bolting towards free space at half-forward. Instead of following him, intent on manning-up, Salmon ran the other way, making his own space. Seeing Salmon bolting in the opposition direction, McKernan stopped and sprinted back to where Salmon was. Suddenly Salmon was doing all the dictating and Hawthorn had a big win. Paul was gracious enough later in the year to inscribe a copy of *The Big Fish* for me with a special message: 'Thanks, Master ... for everything.'

It was my privilege to work with him and so many others in 30-plus years of being paid to go to the footy. From being threatened by one ruckman who promised to 'come and get' me if my story wasn't to his taste to marvelling at the leapers like McKernan and Nick Naitanui and the bravery of Jonno Brown, Luke Hodge, Carey and Nick Riewoldt, it has been an amazing adventure. I trust you will enjoy the stories that follow.

KEN PIESSE  
Mt Eliza