

The Wrap Up:

*Celebrating the Magic
Moments of the 2023
AFLW Season*



Women's
AGENDA



The 2023 AFLW season may be over, but that doesn't mean we have to stop reliving some of the most epic moments.

In this eMagazine, we've collated the stories we've covered throughout the season, further showcasing the extraordinary talent and commitment displayed by the athletes who have graced the field, breaking barriers and shattering stereotypes along the way.

The AFLW has not only evolved into a powerhouse of women's sports but has also become a platform for inspiring stories of resilience, determination, and progress. From electrifying goals to strategic brilliance, this season gave us plenty to celebrate.

As co-founders of Agenda Media, we are passionate about elevating women's voices and achievements in sport, and our partnership with the AFL helps us to do exactly that. We extend our gratitude to the players, coaches, and supporters who contribute to making the AFLW a beacon of inspiration for all women and girls.

Enjoy!

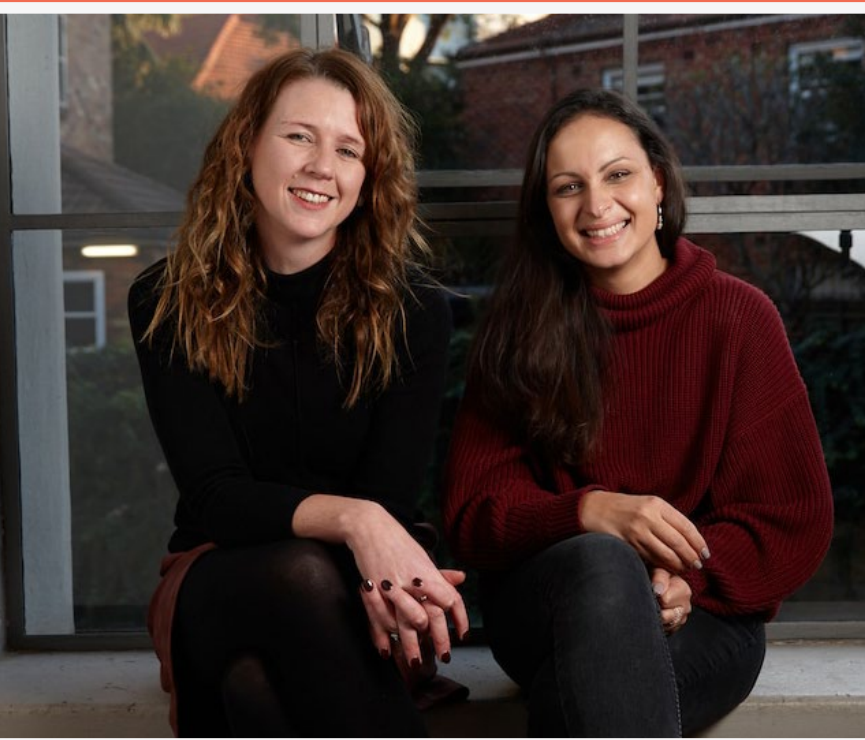
Tarla Lambert & Angela Priestley,
Co-founders, Agenda Media

We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

About Women's Agenda

Women's Agenda is an independent daily news publication 100 per cent owned and run by women. Our team of journalists and researchers provide a vital perspective across daily news events and current affairs, including across politics, media, business, tech, climate, health and leadership. Published by Agenda Media Pty Ltd, founded by Angela Priestley and Tarla Lambert, this team also publishes Women's Health News and runs a growing podcast network, events, roundtables and regular research reports.

Get in contact with our team at
contact@womensagenda.com.au





Jas Fleming's AFLW career is already a 'dream come true' and she's just getting started

by MADELINE HISLOP

From the moment Jas Fleming was drafted into the AFLW by Hawthorn with Pick 2 in 2022, everything started to blur.

"It just went so fast," Fleming told Women's Agenda recently. "Suddenly, I was lining up against some of the best midfielders in the country every single round, it did take a while to get used to it."

"Honestly, I was a little bit star struck in the first two rounds and I needed to settle in."

Now, in 2023, Fleming is in the midst of playing her second season of AFLW for Hawthorn (the club she grew up supporting), and already has a second 'Rising Star' nomination under her belt.

Fleming has sport in her blood. The 18-year-old is the daughter of Australian cricket legend and commentator Damien Fleming, and former elite

netballer Wendy O'Donnell. With a family like that, Fleming says being an elite sports person was always on the horizon.

"My dad said it best before I got drafted - that I've kind of been preparing for elite sport since I was born," Fleming says.

"I always knew as a kid I wanted to pursue sport - I was into basketball for a little bit, I tried out netball, footy, and then for a while, I thought I was going to try and pursue cricket."

In fact, right up until about six months before the draft for the 2022 NAB AFLW season, Fleming was still set on cricket.

"But then the interest from the AFLW and where the league was at, it presented an opportunity that pushed me more into footy," Fleming explains.

Fleming says it was always easy to see her future in sport, largely because growing up, she knew her mum, as an elite female athlete, had done it before her.

“My mum was a female athlete herself, so I didn’t really see any difference between me and my brother,” Fleming says.

“So if my brother wanted to be an elite athlete, I could too because I guess I had mum and dad who were both elite athletes. I could kind of see the pathway and future.”

Just two years into her AFLW career, Fleming is already making a name for herself. She was considered one of the league’s most eye-catching prospects in her first season (despite working double-time to juggle her final year of school) and has continued to impress in the 2023 season.

“Looking back and reflecting on it, I kind of forget that I did do Year 12 while playing last year,” Fleming shares. “It was very challenging at certain points, especially when traveling, still needing to keep up with my school work...I didn’t really switch off for the whole year.”

Her goals for the rest of this season? Play to her strengths.

“It took me the nine games I played last year to start feeling comfortable at the elite level, so now it’s about using that experience to build and be confident in myself to be able to use my strengths,” Fleming says.

“The best thing for the team is if I can use my weapons. So that’s my goal, as well as working on my kicking and delivery to the forwards. That’s been a pretty big focus for myself.”

Fleming doesn’t take her place in the AFLW for granted, and says she is continually grateful for the women who have come before her, bringing the women’s game to where it is today.




JAS FLEMING

“I’m very grateful for the time that I came into AFLW, how established it is, and for the people that got the game to where it is,” she says. “Now that I get to play in it, I want to help to continue to grow it. I do reflect on that a lot actually.”

“I’m really lucky to have a lot of people at Hawthorn who’ve been around who’ve been around women’s footy before the AFLW even existed. So I get to speak to them about their experiences. I’m very lucky that I got to have the opportunity to play footy since I was three years old.”

Looking forward, Fleming is set on being able to contribute to AFLW and Hawthorn for years to come.

“To be drafted to Hawthorn was a dream come true and not just to me, my whole family. For mum, dad and my two siblings, they’re pretty ecstatic that they didn’t have to change teams,” she says.

“To be able to say that I’m a Hawthorn player and co-vice captain of the club, it’s pretty cool. And it’s something that I don’t take lightly.” 



AFLW star Gemma Houghton unveils Indigenous Round guernsey tribute

by OLIVIA CLEAL

Before Gemma Houghton was born, her grandmother, Clara Coffin, used to collect hundreds of shells from the beaches of Marapikurrinya land in Port Hedland, WA.

Now, this weekend, her team at Port Adelaide FC will don the guernsey for the AFLW's Indigenous Round, co-designed by Houghton and Anangu Pitjantjatjara artist Tjunkaya Ken, featuring those shells her grandmother collected.

"What that represents for my family is so significant and special," Houghton told Women's Agenda.

"It's perfect for my grandmother, Tjunkaya's grandmother and the sistership around the club – and how it all brings us together."

Houghton is a Yindjibarndi woman and Port Adelaide's star forward, moving to the club from Fremantle last

year. Footy was never on the cards for her sporting career, but she was surrounded by the game growing up as a kid.

"I loved anything outdoors," she said.

"My brother grew up playing footy and we played in the neighbourhood park together, versus the neighbourhood kids. We were always around football and watched it on the TV."

From the age of 10, Houghton began playing basketball and was building a promising career in the sport. But a DM her brother Joel received one day from Fremantle's key forward Ebony Antonio turned everything around.

"My brother went to a high school in Perth where Ebony Antonio went to... and she just inboxed him one day and said: 'Would Gemma ever be interested in playing footy?'"

“And that’s kind of where the conversation sparked for AFLW.”

Although she “didn’t have the best footy skills” at the time, Fremantle’s coach Michelle Cowan recognised her athleticism.

“They took a chance on me. And here I am, eight seasons later,” Houghton said.

Houghton debuted in the AFLW’s inaugural season in 2017, but a stress fracture in 2018 limited her to playing just two games.

“I gained a bit of weight and sort of just lost a lot of ability with that injury,” Houghton said.

It was this season that was the most challenging part of Houghton’s career, especially when Fremantle did not offer her a contract for a third year at the club.

“I remember driving out of headquarters thinking: ‘What am I gonna do?’” Houghton said.

“So I went away and worked my absolute butt off for two months.”

Her epic comeback earned her a spot back in the Fremantle side. By 2020, Fremantle were at their best, winning seven games in a row before COVID-19 cut the season short.

Houghton achieved so much as Fremantle’s key forward. She was picked in the All-Australian side in 2019 and 2021 and was the club’s leading goalkicker in 2019 and 2020.

But Houghton said one of the highlights of her career, despite its challenges, was moving to Port Adelaide.

“(It was) a complete lifestyle change of moving away from my family and friends… learning to be in a professional environment, away from what you’re so familiar with,” she said.



Houghton was also joining the club where one of her sporting role models Erin Phillips played.

“(I am) playing alongside Erin Phillips, who is someone I’ve always looked up to, even during my basketball career,” she said.

“It’s so amazing and special to be able to learn from her and just watch the things behind closed doors that you don’t often see in a football match on TV.”

Last year, Houghton was approached by Port Adelaide, asking if she would design the club’s Indigenous guernsey for the AFLW’s Indigenous Round, which continues this weekend.

As a Yindjibarndi woman and artist herself, Houghton agreed and was looking for another female artist in Adelaide to collaborate with.

That’s when she came across Tjunkaya Ken, an Anangu



Pitjantjatjara artist who was born and raised in Adelaide. The pair got talking and got to know each others' stories, and realised the connections they had together that would bring the artwork on the guernsey to life.

One element of the guernsey is an Indigenous story, which was passed on to Tjunkaya Ken by her grandmother.

"The story line is two sisters – the older sister and the younger sister – and it's about the older sister teaching the younger sister about life and the journey of coming together," Houghton explained.

The other element incorporates the memory of Houghton's grandmother, Clara Coffin.

"My grandmother collected hundreds of shells... and we were able to get photos of a couple of those shells that were really special to her, and they're on the guernsey," she said.

Being able to represent both artists' grandmothers on the guernsey was really special for Houghton and Ken, as it also represented the importance of "sistership" in their cultures, the club and beyond.

"I think it's perfect for my grandmother, Kayla's


grandmother and the sistership around the club – and how it all brings us together," she said.

"We have five Indigenous players at the club in the women's squad. I think it's really important for myself and for the other players to be connected."

Despite the "difficult time" Australia faces with the failure of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum last weekend, Houghton said the AFLW's Indigenous Round is extremely important.

"I think it helps in terms of growing and unifying the community together," she said.

"Football is a game that is inclusive for all, and is a sport that's definitely familiar with Indigenous people. We played it thousands of years ago when it was Marr Grook.

"I remember even before I was playing in the AFLW, all the Indigenous role models in the men's competition that were just always on TV... the inspiration that it has and the impact it can have on young lives, in particular when they see a role model that is from the community... it gives them hope and belief that they can too be in a position like that if they want to." 

'Building something special'

Sydney Swans co-captain

Chloe Molloy on creating a club legacy

by MADELINE HISLOP

Sydney Swans co-captain Chloe Molloy oozes quiet confidence.

It's a quality that's evident in both the sporting prowess that she's displayed this AFLW season, as well as in her off-field leadership that has cemented her place as one of the competition's most influential young players.

Speaking to Women's Agenda recently, the 24-year-old explained why she made the decision to transition from her established career at Collingwood, and move to the Sydney Swans, a club in its second season this year, saying it was a growth opportunity that felt like "something special".

"I was blessed because the call to leave Collingwood and move to Sydney for the club's second season was on my individual terms," Molloy shares.

"As a player, I was looking at where I needed to go and how I wanted to be remembered. I felt like

I could keep growing at Collingwood, but I just thought that my growth was going to be amplified if I moved and changed my environment."

"And then there was Scottie Gowans. He had coached the Swans in their first season and as much as they didn't record a win - I just really liked the way they went about building their list. You could see from the outside they were starting to create something special."

Molloy believes it's a privilege to be able to contribute to the growth of a club from its early stages and was also attracted to the idea of having a lasting impact and building a legacy from the ground up.

"I'm so excited, and we're only just scratching the surface. I just think about what this team can do six seasons from now," she says. "It makes my hair stand up on my skin when I think about it."

With more than 54 games under her belt as an AFLW player across a period of more than

six years, Molloy is one of the league's more experienced players. She has been awarded an AFLW Rising Star, Collingwood's Best and Fairest, and earned two All Australian jumpers.

And now, having taken on the role of co-captain at the Sydney Swans alongside Lucy McEvoy, Molloy said her approach to leadership is to make sure each one of her teammates feels valued and heard.

"I never want to be viewed as any better than anyone else. There's no hierarchy, there's no vertical relationships," Molly explains. "I want anyone in the club to be able to come and speak to me no matter who they are."

"It's about getting to know the person, their family, and what makes them who they are, so that when it comes to the tough moments I have an understanding of who the person is and how they respond to adversity and to feedback."

With young leaders like Molloy at the forefront of the AFLW, there's no doubt the league will continue to build from strength to strength. And as Molloy notes, that's exactly what's happening.

In the time she's been in the AFLW, the quality of the competition has improved exponentially. Molloy has witnessed the game move from involving a lot of "contested footy" with a focus on just keeping the ball moving forward. To now, where teams are able to establish fully-fledged game plans and have a new-found balance between handling and kicking, and defensive mechanisms.


"It's all about professionalism," Molloy says. "The girls are stronger, we don't go down in contests as easy anymore. The goal accuracy has gone up. We train more hours and have more time to work on our craft."

The professionalism of the women's league is continuing to grow, with the first collective bargaining agreement to cover both AFL and AFLW players finalised this year, including a deal that saw an immediate 29 per cent pay rise for the game's female players.

It's a significant milestone that means AFLW players have a new sense of security in their game.

As for the remainder of Season 8 of the AFLW, Molloy says the Swans are focused on ensuring they commit to the full four quarters each match.

"We can't be worrying about what's happening next week or what other results are happening across the league," she says.

"Once that first siren goes, you need to play that first quarter of football and then at the second quarter football you need to be able to reset if things haven't gone our way, and carry that through the game." 



CHLOE MOLLOY + THE SYDNEY SWANS



‘We want to make sure people
feel seen and heard’:

Bonnie Toogood on the power of AFLW’s Pride Round

by MADELINE HISLOP

For Essendon co-captain Bonnie Toogood, this weekend’s AFLW Pride Round is all about making sure everyone in the community feels seen and heard for who they are.

The culture of acceptance and inclusion within the AFLW competition is something she’s witnessed through her time across two AFLW clubs, the Western Bulldogs and more recently, Essendon.

“I noticed it particularly when I transferred from another code, and then coming into AFLW, it was just such an accepting environment and a place where you could be who you are and be really vulnerable with that,” Toogood tells Women’s Agenda.

The 25-year-old says she feels a responsibility as a leader within Essendon and the AFLW more broadly to ensure that this culture of acceptance is continued for years to come.

“The AFLW has been such a safe and accepting environment for so long,” Toogood said.

“We just want to continue that and bring that to the wider community because it’s so important to make sure that people feel seen and heard and accepted for who they are.”

This weekend, between November 3–5, the AFLW will be holding its Pride Round, marking the league’s fourth



BONNIE TOOGOOD

ever round dedicated to celebrating and supporting LGBTQI+ communities.

All 18 clubs will wear specially designed Pride guernseys, while field and boundary umpires will wear rainbow-coloured sweatbands and goal umpires will carry Pride flags. On field, the 50-metre arcs will be painted rainbow, while a rainbow will also feature on the iconic Sherrin for the first time.

The AFLW works with not-for-profit organisation, Pride in Sport, to ensure it continues to learn and provide genuine support to the community.

Toogood says it's this commitment and culture that continues to bring more fans and community members into the game, and helps them to feel connected to the women's league.

"That's something about women's footy that I've heard time and time again, particularly about being in the stands during Pride Round, is that there's such an accepting environment and everybody's celebrated," she said.

"We've got the progressive flag through our sash and it's really important to make sure all identities and sexualities are being celebrated."



Toogood also suggests that the AFLW has cemented its place as an industry leader for LGBTQI+ inclusion.

"Pride Round means we are able to continue being the industry leaders in that, because visibility is a key part of the education process. You can't change language, or evolve, if there's no visibility," she explains. "It's really important that we champion that."

For Toogood, a key part of her leadership style as a co-captain at Essendon is to make sure she works hard to be as vulnerable as she can.


"I'm particularly passionate about this [LGBTQI+ inclusion], and so many of the girls are too. It's about talking about it in a way that people can engage with," she said.

"Being vulnerable and honest with how important it is to give visibility and educate the wider community on what it means. Previously, people may not have felt safe in a football environment, but now they do because of this round."

"Whether it's the rainbow flag or the progressive flag, it's so important to realise how much it means to people."

Toogood's dedication to ensuring Pride Round is successful, and that there are positive flow on effects for the LGBTQI+ community is clear. As she says, it's a really exciting opportunity.

And it also highlights the fact that what AFLW players do is so much more than just playing footy.

"It's about connecting the community, and it's imperative for me as a leader to champion that." 



Sister Act:

Hannah Button and Rachelle Martin

prepare for AFLW semi-finals

with the Adelaide Crows

by OLIVIA CLEAL

From a young age, AFLW sisters Hannah Button and Rachelle Martin were always competitors. Playing soccer, netball, tennis, basketball and more, the pair were rarely on the same team.

It was footy that brought them together. Now, playing together for the Adelaide Crows in the AFLW, their relationship is stronger than ever.

“We got a lot closer, and we are always genuinely happy for each other with whatever we achieve,” Hannah, 26, told Women’s Agenda.

Hannah and her younger sister Rachelle, 24, signed up for the South Australia National Football League (SANFL) in 2017 when they moved to Adelaide from the Yorke Peninsula. With no footy experience at all, the sisters quickly found their feet and were drafted for the Adelaide Crows in the AFLW.

Five years later, Hannah and Rachelle became the first siblings to win an AFLW premiership together – but they’re not planning on stopping there, with the Crows preparing for the 2023 NAB AFLW Finals Series.

From the backyard to SANFL

Hannah and Rachelle spent most of their childhood either playing a team sport, or kicking the footy with their older brother, even though their Filipino mother and Australian father weren’t all that sporty. But the family shared a love for AFL and were Adelaide Crows members for years.

“We grew up on the Yorke Peninsula and played many different sports – soccer, netball, basketball, tennis,” Hannah said.

“But there were no footy opportunities for us back home. We had an older brother and we’d kick the footy with him in the backyard.”

Rachelle had her first run playing the national game in Year 8, playing in an AFL 9’s competition. It was here she fell in love with it, but with no options for girls’ footy on the Yorke Peninsula, she didn’t return to her dream until her and her sister moved to Adelaide in 2017.

“I convinced Hannah and Chelsea Biddell, because I went to school with Chelsea,” Rachelle said.

“I just kinda asked them: ‘You wanna play footy together?’”

Hannah and Chelsea weren't as keen as Rachele, but the 24-year-old contacted West Adelaide anyway. Suddenly, the girls were playing in Division 1 for the club in the amateur league, and it wasn't long before they transitioned to play in the SANFL.

The premierships

After winning the Best and Fairest players award in her first season of footy, Hannah was drafted to the Adelaide Crows in the AFLW in 2018. The following year, she won an AFLW premiership.



RACHELLE MARTIN

"I obviously got to experience it in 2019... it's just such a great feeling and I really wanted Rachele to be able to experience that.

"I guess it just made it that more special being able to experience it together. It was a really good memory."

Rachele agreed. "It was crazy," she said.

"In 2021, we played a losing grand final together, which was quite hard for us... this was just so special."

Her footy career was looking promising, but an ACL injury during the off-season threw a spanner in the works.

"That was my first major injury... I did a lot of damage to that knee," Hannah said.

"It was a bit of a lengthy process, but thankfully I had plenty of time to get back for the following season."

Meanwhile, Rachele was thriving in the SANFL and, in 2020, she followed in her older sister's footsteps, winning the Best and Fairest award and getting drafted to the Adelaide Crows in the AFLW.

It made it all the more special when Hannah returned to the league after recovering from her injury in 2021, playing their first season in the league together.



HANNAH BUTTON

Another premiership?

Now that Hannah and Rachele are teammates, their competitive days are behind them.

"We were always quite competitive with sport, but when it came to footy... I don't know, it sort of changed our relationship in a way," Hannah said.

"We got a lot closer, and we are always genuinely happy for each other with whatever we achieve."

Unfortunately, Hannah sustained another ACL injury and has not been able to play this season.


"But I'm happily cheering from the sidelines," Hannah said.

She plans to cheer Rachele and the Adelaide Crows all the way to the big dance.

But it was the Season 6 AFLW Premiership in 2022 that remains to be the highlight for the girls. They are the first siblings to win a premiership together in the league's history.

"I think we're tracking well, and I still think there's more that we can give," Rachele said.

"That was pretty special," Hannah said.

"I don't think we've played our best yet." 

Monique Conti wins Best and Fairest at the W Awards for Season 8 of AFLW

by OLIVIA CLEAL

The eighth season of the AFLW will come to a close this weekend when the Brisbane Lions battle it out with the North Melbourne Tasmanian Kangaroos for the premiership.

To celebrate another successful year of women's football, the league held the W Awards on Monday night, acknowledging the incredible efforts of the competition's top players.

Monique Conti from the Richmond Tigers took out the top prize of the night, receiving the Best and Fairest Award.

Fellow Tiger Caitlin Greiser kicked the Goal of the Year and Courtney Hodder from Brisbane took the Mark of the Year, while GWS GIANTS' Zarlie Golsworthy was named the Rising Star.

Women's Agenda spoke with the winners to hear how they felt receiving the accolade – and their advice for aspiring future footy legends.

Monique Conti, Richmond Tigers – Best and Fairest

The star midfielder received 23 votes, making her the clear winner and first Richmond AFLW player to take home the prestigious award.

“It feels a bit unreal,” she said.

“It's been a bit of a wild ride – I didn't expect it at all, and I'm very happy and humble.

“I know that this is an individual accolade, but I think no one can ever win such an award without good people around.”

Although Richmond didn't progress to finals this season, the side finished strong with a 52-point win over Collingwood – the highlight of the season for Conti.

“As a team, being able to dig deep and finish on a high to set us up for next year – it was probably a highlight for me and the girls,” Conti said.

Conti entered the league in 2018 when she was 18 years old. By then, she was already an established basketball player in the WNBL.

“I guess I would say I was a basketballer... I would put basketball first, and then come and do footy after that,” Conti said.

“It was definitely a massive juggle – but that’s how I liked it too.”

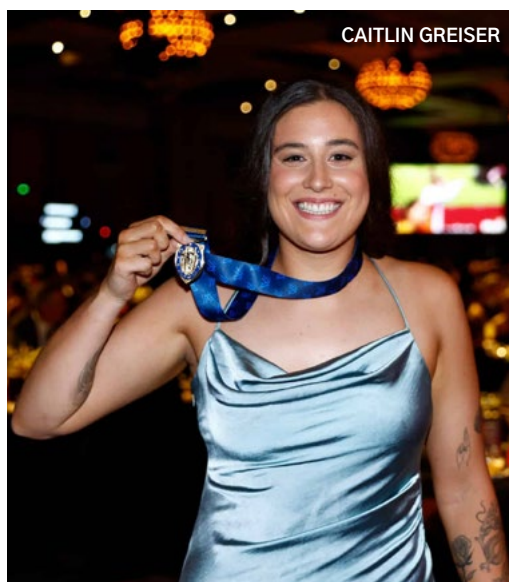
Although her season with the AFLW has wrapped up, her season in the WNBL started three weeks ago. Yes – she still plays professional basketball, for the Melbourne Boomers.

“For me, it’s just about balance and communication, and making sure I’m open and honest with how I go about it and making sure that I’m listening to my body,” she said.

Conti has two bits of advice for young girls wanting to be where she is today.

“You gotta enjoy what you do,” she said. “You have to love it, because at the end of the day, it should feel like something that you love doing, something you want to wake up and get better at every day.

“You also have to go the extra mile. You have to do that little bit extra to be better, to become the athlete that you want to be, the person you want to be.”



Caitlin Greiser, Richmond Tigers – Goal of the Year

The Round 10 match against Collingwood was a special moment not just for Conti, but for fellow tiger Caitlin Greiser.

“We played so well and we were able to finish on a high,” Greiser said.

“We obviously didn’t have the season we wanted… I was pretty happy with how it went.”

But it wasn’t just the massive win that made the match her highlight – it was also because she scored the killer goal that would win her Goal of the Year at the W Awards.

“I left it right to the end, didn’t I?” Greiser laughed, remembering she scored the goal in the final minute of the game – the final minute of her season.

“I was shocked that I won, to be honest… but so stoked. It’s so special.”

This was Greiser’s first season with the Tigers, starting her AFLW career with St Kilda in 2020. Before footy, however, she was heading towards a professional career in soccer.

“I loved footy growing up. I always wanted to play,” she said.

“But mum and dad didn’t really want me playing footy with the boys, and obviously there was no opportunity to go further at the time (with the girls).

“So I took up soccer – but I just loved footy. You’d see me watching the footy more than you’d see me watching the soccer.”

Greiser’s advice for the next generation of AFLW stars is to have fun and enjoy it.

“Growing up, you have to have fun playing sport. I think I really enjoyed my sport when I was younger and that made me fall in love with it,” she said.

“I think it’s really important that you just get yourself out there and have fun, but more importantly, put the hard yards in. Work hard, make sure you’re working for what you want to achieve.”

Zarlie Goldsworthy, GWS GIANTS – Rising Star

It’s Zarlie Goldsworthy’s second AFLW season. But at just 19 years old, she has already made her mark, named the Rising Star at the W Awards.



HARRY SHEEZEL + ZARLIE GOLDSWORTHY

"I don't think it's properly sunk in yet," she said, "it's a huge honour to be recognised with this award."

Like Greiser, Goldsworthy was a soccer player growing up, but would play footy with the boys at lunchtime at school.

It wasn't until she was 16 – just three years ago – that she started properly playing the game.

"The difference (between AFL and soccer) is I just have such a passion for footy," she said.

"I absolutely love it. I'm definitely happy I made the switch."

On top of the Rising Star award, as well as some pretty impressive averages for disposals, hitouts and clearances, Goldsworthy also made her maiden appearance on the All-Australian side for the AFLW.

Looking back on her first two seasons in the AFLW, Goldsworthy has some good advice for other Rising Stars in the making.

"Just be yourself," she said. "I think last year I was probably still in my shell a bit around the club and with my teammates."

"Whereas this year I just felt a lot more comfortable around the group. I think that reflects on the football field."

Courtney Hodder, Brisbane Lions – Mark of the Year

Season 8 isn't over just yet. There's still one more match to play – the NAB AFLW Grand Final, between the Brisbane Lions and North Melbourne this Sunday.

But for now, Courtney Hodder can celebrate her individual win, taking out the Mark of the Year.

"I'm still a little bit lost for words," she said, "I don't think it's sunk in."

"I'm extremely grateful and happy that I've been recognised for Mark of the Year."


Hodder's highlight of the season is still to come, she said, as she prepares for the big dance this weekend.

"I'm excited, nervous, got mixed emotions – but just ready to ride the wave and just follow through with the journey and see where that takes us," she said.

"We're very excited for the grand final. We've got a good group of girls here at the Brisbane Lions, and I'm looking forward to running out on the field with each and every one of them."

Hodder's advice for young people wanting to play in the AFLW is simple: work hard.

"I always say hard work beats talent," she said, "so if you put 110% into everything you do, you'll definitely reap the rewards at the end."

"Work hard, and then you'll reach your goals." 



COURTNEY HODDER



Brisbane Lions take home the premiership of the AFLW Grand Final

by OLIVIA CLEAL

The Brisbane Lions have secured their second AFLW premiership, defeating the North Melbourne Tasmania Kangaroos in the Season 8 Grand Final.

The Roos led in the first three terms of the match until Brisbane's Dakota Davidson snapped two goals in the final quarter to take the Lions ahead, finishing with a 17-point lead – Brisbane 7.2 (44) to North Melbourne Tasmania 4.3 (27).

There were 12,616 fans at Ikon Park in Melbourne

on Sunday afternoon to watch the Lions, who finished fourth on the ladder, take home the premiership.

Bre Koenen, captain of the Brisbane side, was named best on ground for the match. Leading her team to victory, the 28-year-old also finished with 19 disposals and 11 tackles.

The Lions also broke the AFLW record for the most tackles in one game, laying 110 tackles on the Roos throughout the match.

While it was a tight contest, the Roos led the match in points in the first three quarters. Jasmine Garner, who just missed out on the Best and Fairest prize at the AFLW W Awards last week, kicked the opening goal 16 minutes into the game with a 48m set shot.

Brisbane replied with a goal from the 50m boundary coming from Charlie Mullins early in the second quarter. By half time, there was one point in it, the score 14–13 to the Roos.

It was another hotly contested quarter, but three quarter time saw the Roos leading by one goal and one behind, 27–20.

It came down to the fourth and final quarter, and a spectacular performance from Brisbane's Dakota Davidson.

Last week, the 24-year-old was in doubt of making the team for the grand final, after copping a knee injury that was eerily similar to the dreaded ACL rupture.

Once the scans came back giving her the all-clear, she was determined to play in the grand final – and for Brisbane's sake, it was lucky she did.

Davidson kicked two goals in the final quarter to lift Brisbane's spirits and secure the lead for the Lions. A goal from Ellie Hampson quickly followed, before captain Bre Koenen kicked a major in the closing minutes of the match, bringing the final score to 44–27 to the Lions.

The petrol can

As the team celebrated the premiership – Brisbane's second in the AFLW – one of the girls ran onto the field holding an unusual object above her head.

It was a petrol can – and there is a special story behind it from pre-season, as Dakota Davidson

explained in a post-match interview with 7 Sport.

“We had to carry (the petrol cans) for 20km through a trek,” Davidson said.

“So every time times get tough, we always throw up the jerry can.

“(Then) everyone knows it's time to work hard – like we did in the pre-season.”

‘No ACL, no worries’

Later, Davidson spoke with AFLW as she celebrated the win.

“Honestly, the best feeling in the world,” she said.


“This is why we play footy – to win games like this – and I'm just gonna soak up every minute of it.”

Davidson was asked about her knee injury scare last week, and how she responded when the scans came back with the good news.

“I looked at my physio dead in the eyes and I said: ‘No ACL, no worries – let's get this done’,” she said.

“I tried everything I could in my capability to play this week because you know this is what dreams are made of and this is why we train.

“Wrap it up, stick a need in it – who cares, I wouldn't miss this for the world.”

Davidson said the team would celebrate with “a few ‘quiet’ bevraginos in Melbourne. 



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