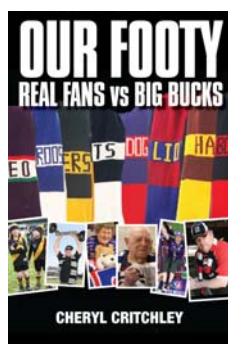


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Our Footy; Real fans vs big bucks (Wilkinson Publishing, \$24.95)

By Cheryl Critchley. With fantastic photos of many featured fans by Peter Ward.

Where else would you find a fan who hasn't missed a game for 47 years, or another who flew around the world for the Grand Final *without* a ticket? Despite Australian Rules football becoming more corporate and sterile, AFL diehards are still among the most dedicated - and crazy - in the world.

Our Footy; Real fans vs big bucks celebrates and gives a voice to some of the many devotees who go above and beyond for their beloved clubs, some despite being taken for granted by paid officials. Cheryl Critchley has spent years gaining the confidence of these gems, who tell their stories in an honest and revealing look at AFL footy from a grass roots perspective.

Our Footy looks at "the good old days", the corporatisation of football and how protective the AFL and some clubs have become of their "brand." Those who dare to question this "order" often find themselves well and truly on the outer. A must-read for anyone interested in AFL footy and sporting culture, among other things the book reveals:

*Amazing stories from days gone by, like six-year-old Theo Rechenberg spending three quarter time in the Geelong player huddle during the Cat's 1925 MCG Grand Final win. Friend Col Hutchinson, who hasn't missed a Geelong game since 1963, also recalls chatting to star players in the change rooms at half time.

*The story behind Richmond legend Kevin Bartlett tripping over his 400 game banner, and the fascinating life of Tigers fan Alice Wills, 90, who still helps run its cheer squad and her own supporters' group.

*How Magpie cheer squad stalwart Neil Benham cut up 167 phone books with a circular slide saw and smuggled them into the 1990 Grand Final wrapped as birthday presents to throw up as "snow" after Collingwood goals.

*How fans follow footy from afar, like US Bulldogs tragic Jim Sheahan, who rises at 2.30am to share his footy tips on ABC radio, and Aussie expat and Saint Tom Batzmarowsky, who flew back from the US for the 2009 Grand Final *without* a ticket.

*How dedicated volunteers are being frozen out of AFL clubs, including a Richmond family and a devoted Geelong servant given their marching orders after more than 30 years of accurately compiling their club's statistics.

*Lions life member and women's auxiliary founder Lorna Duncan could be the only person to attend Fitzroy's 1944 flag and the Brisbane Lions' 2001 Grand Final win.

"While the AFL has kept general admission prices low, regularly going to the footy is now more expensive and logistically difficult with interstate matches and some games on school nights," Cheryl says. "The Grand Final is also dominated by those who are cashed-up or have corporate contacts.

"Despite this, many diehards have kept the faith and fly interstate up to eight times a year to watch their team. Most will follow their club to the grave. Others, however, refuse to attend games at times or venues they dislike. The more corporately attuned tell them to stop being sooks and just watch it on TV. But if these colourful cheer squad characters and boisterous barrackers disappear from the crowd, footy may as well be lawn bowls."

More information: Cheryl Critchley on 0418 312 596 or cherylca@bigpond.net.au.

About Cheryl Critchley.

*A Melbourne journalist of 25 years, Cheryl's other books include pre-teen novels **Still Kicking** and **Burn Out**, parenting book **Unspoil Your Kids; Escape the Parent Trap** and **Mali; My Baby Book**, about Melbourne Zoo's first baby elephant. Cheryl is a lifelong Richmond tragic who watched her team's 1980 Grand Final win in the cheer squad. Married to fellow Tiger Brian Roy, she forced a niece, two cousins and her three children to follow Richmond. *Experienced photographer **Peter Ward** is also a long-suffering Richmond fan whose passion for footy shines through in his colourful photos for this book.*