

HOME GROUND ADVANTAGE

A Snapshot of Melbourne's historic suburban football ovals

Today, AFL games in Melbourne are played exclusively in the city's two major stadiums, but 25 years ago there were more than 10 functioning ovals, where footy fans would gather weekly to cheer on their footy team at their 'home ground'.

From today, Monday August 30, the National Sports Museum at the Melbourne Cricket Ground will launch an exhibition that salutes these former home grounds which were once the cornerstones of football club culture.

A 'home game' at your club's oval means all the advantages of a favourable crowd and known terrain while the opposition has to travel long distances, deal with an inhospitable crowd and – on occasion – suffer cold showers!

For some teams, their connection to their home ground remains strong. For others, the days of the 'home ground advantage' are long gone.

Relive the unforgettable footy moments, captured in photographs, at these once cherished grounds - from Windy Hill, the home ground of Essendon from 1922 – 1991, to Lakeside Oval which South Melbourne called home from 1897 – 1981.

Many of the grounds date back to the late 1880s and remained fully functional to 1985, when the Independent VFL Commission was established to increase the game's profitability by scheduling games at grounds with greater venue capacity.

Called 'ground rationalisation,' it was the beginning of the end for the smaller suburban football ovals, which were phased out of the fixture over the following two decades in favour of bigger grandstands.

Sourced from the AFL archives which are managed by Slattery Media Group, 'Home Ground Advantage' will run from August 30 – October 17, 2010.

Entry is included in general museum admission.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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The National Sports Museum is a Commonwealth Government initiative.