

## The Two Elephants in the Room: St.Kilda Football Clubs Best and Fairest

There's a lot of preparation that goes into a Best and Fairest. I am, of course, talking about the shaving of legs, preparation of clothes, planning of transport; make up, hair and nails. Feeding the dog, making sure the kids took care of themselves, and booking a cab to pick me, and then Rina, up for our big night out.

The St.Kilda Football Club put in a lot of effort too. They booked the Palladium at Docklands, had lots of handsome young men and women with ipads checking off attendances and giving us table numbers, they had decked out the Palladium beautifully. One thousand people fill out the barn of a place. Apparently it was a sold out event. We were on table 92, with a mother and daughter from Essendon, two sons and their two fathers, it was a gift to the fathers from the sons (and they'd driven from Ballarat), and a couple who we find out actually sit near us during the season. Now we'll know more people from the footy. We were close to the bar and close to the toilets. Always good in double in my book. And close when the players all gathered momentarily before proceedings begun. Perhaps they were being shown where there private loos were.

Sandy Roberts MC'd the night, I learned a lot this night. Sandy Roberts is another Saints tragic. Like Molly and Eric Bana, both present. Like all the rest of the important people, the staff, families, and the plebs. We all love St.Kilda, enough for some of the guest to be getting this night as a gift from someone else, or giving it to themselves. To be amongst the faithful celebrating the year that was. That was the title, the Season that was. You could have also called it the LENNYFEST. That would have been an even more accurate take on the night.

Lenny's absence came to our notice when his mother accepted his first of 4 awards. She is very funny. She also said that he got all his skill from her. She's probably right, she had a fantastic presence on stage and good humour to boot. His father, who accepted his other awards, was much shyer, like I think Lenny is. So Lenny, the wonderful Lenny was not at this event because he has had a heart operation on his valve last week. An operation he knew was coming from the beginning of the season. If Lenny played like a legend that he is, all year, gets the Best and Fairest, and his heart valve was faulty, what the f...will he play like now it's mended? He is extraordinary. All year I have waxed lyrically about his presence in every game. I did notice in the last he didn't seem quite as wonderfully as all the others, but that meant that he shone just a little less. Perhaps he was thinking about what was ahead of him in just a few days. Who knows.

Lenny was awarded: the Desire Indicator Award (AFL), Halo Coterie Robert Harvey Best Player Award, Ozito Fans Player of the Year and the Best and Fairest Trevor Barker Award. He has previously won this award in 2003 and 2010. Rooy joked on Game Day on Channel 7 on Sunday morning that Lenny had 8 surgeons on his heart because it's so big. Amen to that.

Lenny's absence at the Best and Fairest was the first Elephant in the Room, the man who gave so much all year wasn't there to be adored by his mates, his club and his fans. So we did it by sending our love to him through the universe and he responded with a pre-recorded spot, in which he was often breathless. Heal well Lenny. You are a champion, a legend...the words seem just so not enough to describe the place he has in all our hearts, whatever team you barrack for. Lenny is Lenny.

Perhaps we can have a phrase in footy when someone is giving an effort way beyond the human, we can say "he's doing a Lenny". This week, Lenny is vulnerable and human and he still keeps on giving. Get well and see you next year.

There were other awards on the night, like the Robert Harvey Most Professional Player which went

to Sean Dempster who had a stellar year too. He was also third runner up for the Trevor Barker, behind Leigh Montagna who was three points behind Lenny. Jackson Ferguson got the Desire Indicator Award (VFL) and gave the quickest speech in the history of speeches. A quick thankyou and he was off.

Several retiring Directors received Life Memberships, Ross Levin and John Gdanski. Then Brendon Goddard got his Saints Life Membership for his service of 10 years. The elephant crashed through the fancy table settings and beautiful backdrops, through the champagne and wine and beer, and wonderful chicken or even better steaks, through the great service and the entertaining evening. Brendon made his thankyou speech and we all silently held our breath and prayed that within the speech would be the announcement that he looked forward to the next five at the Saints. The elephant stamped her foot as he refused to buy in to the collective dream and desire of one thousand people seated around the room. He remained cool and within himself throughout his speech. He is, and always will be, his own man and do what he does, in his own time and of his own making. I think he would like to remain a Saint, but he is also open to what other possibilities of the future hold. As much as we want him to stay, no one will begrudge him his future. It will be a bitter pill to swallow if he follows his mate Ross Lyon. I'm sorry, I'm just not THAT happy hearted, at that prospect, but I will find some positives if he goes. It will give us a good pick and perhaps someone with the passion of BJ who really wants to come or stay and take St.Kilda to our second Premiership. It was a night of dreaming.

Then, when we thought the night was past surprises, DD SMS'd that he was at table 54, so we got to meet up with Mrs DD and father-in-law DD, and sat with them until they left later in the evening. The music started not long after we joined them, the band with Russell Robertson from Melbourne footy club. He's cute and he can sing very well. But it killed all chance of conversation. I did take myself to the dance floor and invited myself into groups of dancers who kindly let me join them. I gotta say I love this about (mostly women) at functions. We don't mind dancing in the group sans partners, and it enabled me to dance off some of the food consumed.

Come 11.30, we left the young ones to the night, and headed home to our comfy warm beds, happy to have been part of the party but also happy to go home and finish the night. The elephants found their own way home.

P.S. On this morning, I'd run over my favourite reading glasses, a cheap chemist job at \$20, but they'd been with me for years now. They fell from around my neck and I ran them over as I left the driveway and I heard the crunch as I returned. So I went off searching for another, and found a cool jungle striped pair in black and white. With a little texta, they became my Saints glasses for the night, and today, I painted them good and proper. Is there a wonder that my kids just shake their heads at me?

Yvette Wroby  
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