

Looking at football
from a different
point of view

MAFL 2008

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Pre-Season 2008, No.1

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This is Chi, the Official
MAFL Mascot™



Last season he tipped a very creditable 118½ from 185 (64%).

This is Quila, MAFL's
Official Apprentice
Tipster™



Last season she tipped ... well like a Chihuahua x Terrier with very little interest in the game.

Welcome to Season 2008

Another footy season beckons, full of promise and brimming with intrigue.

Will the Cats go back-to-back? Will they be the first team to break 250 in a game?

How long into the season before a coach, downplaying a string of victories or defeats – it works for both – declares that his side is 'just taking it one game at a time'?

Will the Roos play any games at all at the Gold Coast? If they do, will any of the locals turn up to watch?

Did Fraser make the right decision?

Will the scourge of rushed behinds continue (we averaged about 6 per game in 2007, with 2 of them deliberate)?

At the end of which round and about which team will we hear the first whispers of tanking?

How soon after these first whispers will the AFL come out, solemnly declare its atheistic beliefs re tanking, and then struthiously affirm its commitment to the current draft arrangements?

Will the Eagles make the finals for the 7th consecutive season?

Will pre-season form count for anything? (Why should it this year? Remember Carlton last year?)

Will the Heritage Fund recognise that not all \$4 home team underdogs are worth a punt?

Which MAFL Funds will make money this year? Will any?

Is the author of this newsletter so lacking in material that this first newsletter will just be a series of rhetorical questions?

Enough already - welcome to new MAFLers and old MAFLers alike. This is the third season I've run the MAFL Funds and written this newsletter and all indications are that it'll be our biggest year yet (for suitably defined 'big').

For those of you who've not read my newsletters before, perhaps the best way to give you a flavour of what to expect is to list a few of the topics we covered last year:

- How big a lead is a 'good' lead? How far in front does a team need to be at quarter-time, half-time or three-quarter-time before it can feel, say, 90% certain that it will go on to win?
- Do behinds matter? How many games are decided on behinds?
- What's more important: attack or defence? Is winning more associated with scoring heavily or defending stoutly?
- Which quarter of the game do winning teams win? Typically, at what point in games do the goats and the sheep lift a cloven hoof and reveal which is which?
- Which decade has produced the highest number of unique Flag-winners? Which has produced the highest number of unique Spoon-winners?
- Who's won the most 1st quarters, 2nd quarters, 3rd quarters or 4th quarters this season? Who's led most often at half-time or three-quarter time?

What you won't get from me is any in-depth analysis of a particular game or a discussion about whether the Hawks need more talls, more shorts, a more direct kicking game or a more fluent passing game. Startling quantities of column-inches and TV- and radio-minutes are already devoted to this sort of thing and they're provided by pundits with an immeasurably superior footballing pedigree than mine.

New readers please also note that you're not in any way obliged to invest in any of the MAFL Funds. For most of you I figure reading this newsletter will soon be suffering enough. But, if you do want to invest you're most welcome. There's a little bit about changes to the Funds at the end of this newsletter, and the next newsletter will include a lot more about the Funds that will be operating this season and how you can become an investor should you choose to. If you've never wagered on the outcome of a sporting event before, please be aware though that it fundamentally changes how you watch a game of footy and your attitude towards the progress and the outcome. There'll be no more casually following a game, appreciating its ebbs and flows, and acknowledging the skills of the players on both teams. Now one team's representing your money and the other (and probably the umps too) are trying to steal it. Truly there's nothing like it.

How Much Can We Learn From History?

The pre-season, I contend, has limited if any predictive value for the season proper. Is last season's form any more useful? (It better be since all our Funds implicitly assume it is.)

One way of partly answering this question is to look at the consistency in team performances from year-to-year. The more scrambled the ladder positions of one year are relative to those of the previous year, the less predictive value there is in the previous season's ladder positions.

Season	Number of Teams in This Year's Top 8 From Previous Year's:	
	Top 8	Top 10
1998	6	6
1999	5	6
2000	5	6
2001	4	5
2002	4	5
2003	6	6
2004	5	5
2005	6	7
2006	5	6
2007	4	5
Average	5.0	5.7

The table at left shows, for each of the seasons 1998 to 2007, how many of the previous season's Top 8 or Top 10 made the Top 8 in the subsequent year. (I chose 1998 as the starting season because it's the first season in which the participating teams were identical to those we had in 2007 – presuming you'll allow me to treat North Melbourne and the Kangaroos as simply the same team renamed).

So, for example, from the first row of the table we find that 6 of the teams in the Top 8 for the 1998 season came from the Top 8 of the 1997 season (and none came from positions 9 or 10).

If each team's ladder position in a given season were unrelated to its ladder position from the previous season then we'd expect 4 teams from the previous season's finalists to be finalists this year, and 5 teams from last season's Top 10 to make this season's finals. Instead, for the seasons 1998 to 2007, we find that the respective averages are far higher at 5.0 and 5.7. Indeed, in no single season have the results fallen

below the expected values of 4 and 5 respectively. That's pretty clear evidence that each season's finalists come disproportionately from the previous season's higher achievers.

So, if season 2008 is like most of those from recent times, you can expect 5 of the finalists to come from last year's top 8, and there's a reasonable chance that one more of them will come from positions 9 and 10 from last year, which is great news for Saints' and Lions' fans.

What if we narrow our focus to the cream of the performers: those that finish in the Top 4? The table at right shows, for each of the seasons 1998 to 2007, how many of the previous season's Top 8 or Top 10 make the Top 4 in the subsequent year. This time, if each team's ladder position in a given season were unrelated to its ladder position from the previous season we'd expect 2 teams from last season's Top 8 to make this season's Top 4, and 2½ teams from last season's Top 10 to make this season's Top 4.

Season	Number of Teams in the Current Year's Top 4 From Previous Year's:	
	Top 8	Top 10
1998	3	3
1999	3	3
2000	3	3
2001	2	3
2002	3	4
2003	3	3
2004	2	2
2005	3	3
2006	3	4
2007	1	2
Average	2.6	3.0

Once again the averages – 2.6 and 3.0 respectively – are higher than we'd expect if season to season results were statistically independent of one another. In fact, in seven of the ten most recent seasons, 3 of the Top 4 spots have been filled by finalists from the previous season (with last year being a very notable exception).

So far we've looked at the Top 8 and the Top 4. What if we looked at the entire ladder?

Correlations (with previous year)		
Season	Rank	Comp Pts
1998	0.31	0.18
1999	0.27	0.28
2000	0.45	0.52
2001	0.34	0.54
2002	0.35	0.37
2003	0.63	0.62
2004	0.34	0.34
2005	0.39	0.36
2006	0.56	0.60
2007	0.14	0.20
<i>Average</i>	<i>0.38</i>	<i>0.40</i>

The table at left provides, again for seasons 1998 to 2007, the rank correlation of each season's ladder positions with that of the previous season.

Rank correlations can range between -1 and +1, with -1 meaning that this year's ladder positions are a complete reversal of last year's, +1 meaning that this year's ladder positions are identical to last year's, and 0 meaning that there's no association, positive or negative, between one season's ladder positions and the previous season's.

The table also provides the correlation between the competition points scored in one season with those scored by the same team in the previous season. These correlations can also range between -1 and +1, with negative values meaning that teams scoring above-average competition points in one year tend to score below-average in the subsequent year, and vice versa; positive values meaning that teams scoring above-average

competition points in one year tend to score above-average in the subsequent year too; and zero meaning that a team's competition points in one year is completely unrelated to its competition points from the previous year.

The first thing to note is that all the correlations are positive. This suggests that, no matter how we slice it, teams that do well in one season tend also to do well in the following season.

What if we extend the gap between the seasons? For example, how much can I say about the 2008 season based on what happened in 2006?

Our final set of tables in this section (below) provides the same data as in the tables above, but compares each season with, firstly, the previous season but one and, secondly, the previous season but two. In other words, the row for season 1999 in the upper set of tables compares season 1999 with season 1997, and the row for season 2000 in the lower set of tables compares season 2000 with season 1997.

Number of Teams in the Current Year's Top 8 From Two Season's Ago:			Number of Teams in the Current Year's Top 4 From Two Season's Ago:			Correlations Current year with Two Seasons Ago		
Season	Top 8	Top 10	Season	Top 8	Top 10	Season	Rank	Comp Pts
1999	5	6	1999	3	3	1999	0.14	0.24
2000	4	4	2000	3	3	2000	0.14	0.11
2001	5	6	2001	3	3	2001	0.35	0.40
2002	4	4	2002	1	1	2002	-0.03	0.00
2003	5	6	2003	3	4	2003	0.20	0.06
2004	5	6	2004	2	3	2004	0.34	0.29
2005	4	5	2005	3	3	2005	0.09	0.16
2006	4	5	2006	2	3	2006	-0.06	-0.06
2007	6	6	2007	4	4	2007	0.41	0.33
<i>Average</i>	<i>4.67</i>	<i>5.33</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>2.67</i>	<i>3.00</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.17</i>

Number of Teams in Current Year's Top 8 From Three Season's Ago:			Number of Teams in Current Year's Top 4 From Three Season's Ago:			Correlations Current year with Three Seasons Ago		
Season	Top 8	Top 10	Season	Top 8	Top 10	Season	Rank	Comp Pts
2000	4	4	2000	1	1	2000	-0.36	-0.42
2001	3	5	2001	1	3	2001	-0.24	-0.16
2002	5	5	2002	2	2	2002	0.11	0.14
2003	2	3	2003	1	2	2003	-0.53	-0.37
2004	4	4	2004	2	2	2004	-0.05	-0.10
2005	5	6	2005	2	2	2005	0.13	0.18
2006	5	5	2006	4	4	2006	0.24	0.09
2007	4	5	2007	3	4	2007	0.34	0.32
<i>Average</i>	<i>4.00</i>	<i>4.63</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>2.00</i>	<i>2.50</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>-0.04</i>	<i>-0.04</i>

For seasons that are separated by two years we again find evidence of positive correlation, albeit weaker than for seasons separated by one year. In contrast, seasons separated by three years appear on the whole to be largely uncorrelated, with finalists and Top 4 teams unlinked to those of three years previous, and the rank and competition points correlations both averaging near zero.

So, if your team did poorly last year, chances are you can book September holidays for this year and next.

Who Fared Best in the Draw?

Each year, the AFL see fit to foist upon we fans a draw that pits some teams against each other once and some teams against each other twice. Quite obviously this has a distortionary effect, so much so that the best 8 teams aren't always those that participate in September.

The table below summarises this year's offering. Let me take you through an example row – the first. It tells us that Geelong play home and away ("HA") against Port, West Coast, the Roos, Sydney, Freo and Melbourne; play away only ("A") against Hawthorn, Collingwood, Adelaide, St Kilda, Essendon and Carlton; play at home only ("H") against Brisbane and the Bulldogs; and play Richmond twice, once away and once on a neutral ground ("AN").

		Opponent & Venue (H=Home, A=Away, N=Neutral Ground)																	
		Gee	PA	WC	Kan	Haw	Col	Syd	Ade	StK	BL	Fre	Ess	WB	Mel	Car	Ric		
Geelong			HA	HA	HA	A	A	HA	A	A	H	HA	A	H	HA	A	AN	Geelong	
Port Adelaide		HA		A	HN	A	H	HA	HA	HA	H	HA	A	N	H	HA	H	Port Adelaide	
West Coast		HA	H		A	HA	A	HA	HA	H	HA	HA	HA	A	A	H	H	West Coast	
Kangaroos		HA	AN	H		HA	HA	H	A	H	HA	A	H	HA	HA	A	A	Kangaroos	
Hawthorn		H	H	HA	HA		HA	H	HA	A	HA	A	A	H	HA	A	HA	Hawthorn	
Collingwood		H	A	H	HA	HA		AN	H	HA	A	HA	HA	A	A	HA	A	Collingwood	
Sydney		HA	HA	HA	A	A	HN		H	HA	HA	H	H	HN	N	A	H	Sydney	
Adelaide		H	HA	HA	H	HA	A	A		A	A	H	HA	HA	H	HA	HA	Adelaide	
St Kilda		H	HA	A	A	H	HA	HA	H		A	HA	HA	HA	H	HA	H	St Kilda	
Brisbane Lions		A	A	HA	HA	HA	H	HA	H	H		H	A	HN	HA	HA	N	Brisbane Lions	
Fremantle		HA	HA	HA	H	H	HA	A	A	HA	A		H	H	HA	A	HA	Fremantle	
Essendon		H	H	HA	A	H	HA	A	HA	HA	H	A		HA	H	HA	HA	Essendon	
Western Bulldogs		A	N	H	HA	A	H	AN	HA	HA	AN	A	HA		HA	H	H	Western Bulldogs	
Melbourne		HA	A	H	HA	HA	H	N	A	A	HA	HA	A	HA		H	HN	Melbourne	
Carlton		H	HA	A	H	H	HA	H	HA	HA	HA	H	HA	A	A		HA	Carlton	
Richmond		HN	A	A	H	HA	H	A	HA	A	N	HA	HA	A	AN	HA		Richmond	

The other rows are read in the same way. The ordering of the rows and the columns matches the final regular season ladder positions at the end of season 2007.

If you split the teams based on whether or not they made the finals in 2007, you find that:

- 43 games (just under 25%) involve two finalists
- 43 games (again just under 25%) involve two non-finalists
- 90 games (just over 50%) involve a finalist and a non-finalist

These proportions are roughly what we'd get if you had an all-plays-all home-and-away competition, which would require 30 rounds and 240 games compared with the current 22 rounds and 176 games.

Looking just at teams in last season's top 4, the draw provides for them to meet one another 10 times out of possible 12 during the season, so we've fared pretty well on that front.

Turning next to the fate of individual teams, you might ask: who fared best in the draw?

Some principles might help define what we mean by best:

- Strong teams are best avoided; but if they must be played, best do it away from their home ground
- Weak teams are best played and played often, but preferably not on their home grounds
- Team strength and weakness can be gauged by either:
 - the number of competition points they scored last season
 - the bookmaker's current premiership odds for the team

The table below was put together with these principles in mind, using the number of competition points scored last season as the measure of team strength. Again, let's walk through a row, and again let's take the first: Geelong's. We see that they play 8 games at home against opponents who averaged 45.5 competition points in 2007 (an average which I've called OAP). They also play 13 games away against opponents who averaged 42.6 competition points, and 1 game on a neutral ground against an opponent who scored 14 competition points.

A simple averaging of OAPs for Geelong yields 42.4, the smallest OAP for any team, ranking Geelong 1st on this measure in terms of easiness of the draw. A weighted averaging of OAPs, with home OAP weighted 0.8, neutral OAP weighted 1.0 and away OAP weighted 1.2, gives Geelong an overall weighted OAP of 42.2 points and sees them ranked 2nd.

Team	Home		Away		Neutral		Unweighted Totals			Weighted Totals**		
	Play	OAP*	Play	OAP*	Play	OAP*	OAP*	Easiest = 100	Rank	OAP*	Easiest = 100	Rank
Geelong	8	45.5	13	42.6	1	14.0	42.4	100.0	1	42.2	100.2	2
Port Adelaide	11	41.3	9	47.1	2	47.0	44.2	104.3	9	44.7	106.2	13
West Coast	11	43.5	11	46.2	0	0.0	44.8	105.8	12	45.1	107.1	14
Kangaroos	10	47.0	11	41.1	1	60.0	44.6	105.4	11	44.1	104.7	8
Hawthorn	11	46.4	11	39.3	0	0.0	42.8	101.1	4	42.1	100.0	1
Collingwood	9	47.8	12	39.3	1	50.0	43.3	102.1	5	42.5	100.9	3
Sydney	11	46.4	8	50.3	3	36.7	46.5	109.7	16	46.7	111.0	16
Adelaide	11	42.5	11	42.5	0	0.0	42.5	100.4	2	42.5	101.0	5
St Kilda	12	41.8	10	45.2	0	0.0	43.4	102.4	6	43.7	103.8	6
Brisbane Lions	11	43.5	9	47.3	2	26.0	43.5	102.6	7	43.8	104.0	7
Fremantle	11	46.4	11	43.5	0	0.0	44.9	106.0	13	44.6	106.0	12
Essendon	12	43.2	10	42.0	0	0.0	42.6	100.6	3	42.5	101.0	4
Western Bulldogs	9	39.1	10	46.4	3	50.0	43.9	103.6	8	44.5	105.7	11
Melbourne	10	44.0	10	49.2	2	32.0	45.3	106.9	15	45.7	108.6	15
Carlton	12	47.5	10	41.8	0	0.0	44.9	106.0	13	44.3	105.3	10
Richmond	8	47.0	11	42.7	3	44.0	44.5	104.9	10	44.1	104.7	9

* OAP = Opponents' Average Points
 ** Weightings: Home OAP 0.8; Away OAP 1.2; Neutral OAP 1.0

As you can see, the weightings don't dramatically affect the rankings but, on balance, I think the weighted averages better reflect the relative easiness of teams' draws for 2008, if team strength is measured by competition points scored last season.

The next table shows the results if we repeat the analysis, using TAB Sportsbet odds (as at 12th December), converted to probabilities of winning the flag, as the measure of team strength.

Team	Home		Away		Neutral		Unweighted Totals			Weighted Totals**		
	Play	OAPW*	Play	OAPW*	Play	OAPW*	OAPW*	Easiest = 100	Rank	OAPW*	Easiest = 100	Rank
Geelong	8	4.9%	13	5.2%	1	1.6%	5.0%	100.0	1	5.0%	100.0	1
Port Adelaide	11	6.5%	9	7.9%	2	2.5%	6.7%	135.5	10	6.8%	137.0	11
West Coast	11	7.1%	11	6.7%	0	0.0%	6.9%	138.9	13	6.8%	137.3	12
Kangaroos	10	7.2%	11	6.9%	1	8.3%	7.1%	143.3	15	7.1%	141.8	15
Hawthorn	11	6.5%	11	4.6%	0	0.0%	5.5%	111.6	2	5.3%	107.0	2
Collingwood	9	7.6%	12	4.5%	1	5.2%	5.8%	117.4	6	5.5%	111.1	3
Sydney	11	7.2%	8	8.2%	3	4.2%	7.1%	144.2	16	7.2%	144.7	16
Adelaide	11	6.5%	11	5.2%	0	0.0%	5.8%	117.2	5	5.7%	113.8	4
St Kilda	12	6.6%	10	5.1%	0	0.0%	5.9%	119.6	7	5.8%	115.7	6
Brisbane Lions	11	5.3%	9	7.1%	2	2.0%	5.7%	115.6	4	5.9%	118.2	8
Fremantle	11	6.9%	11	6.9%	0	0.0%	6.9%	138.9	12	6.9%	138.2	14
Essendon	12	6.8%	10	4.9%	0	0.0%	6.0%	120.0	8	5.8%	115.5	5
Western Bulldogs	9	4.2%	10	7.0%	3	5.8%	5.7%	114.9	3	5.9%	118.9	9
Melbourne	10	7.1%	10	7.3%	2	3.4%	6.9%	138.4	11	6.9%	138.0	13
Carlton	12	7.2%	10	4.7%	0	0.0%	6.1%	122.2	9	5.8%	116.5	7
Richmond	8	7.9%	11	5.2%	3	10.6%	6.9%	139.7	14	6.7%	134.2	10

* OAPW = Opponents' Average Probability of Winning Flag (based on Sportsbet odds as at 12 December)
 ** Weightings: Home OAP 0.8; Away OAP 1.2; Neutral OAP 1.0

Once again I prefer the rankings based on the weighted totals.

It's interesting to note the broad consistency in the rankings produced using the two different measures of team strength (the rank-correlation co-efficient is +0.88). Only the Roos show a markedly different ranking under the two approaches.

Teams For Whom the Draw Was Kind			
Team	# times play Geelong	# games played against teams from positions 2 to 9, excluding the Roos	# games played against teams from positions 12 to 16 or the Roos
Geelong	0	10	9
Hawthorn	1 (at home)	9	9
Collingwood	1 (at home)	9	9
Adelaide	1 (at home)	9	10
Essendon	1 (at home)	11	8
St Kilda	1 (at home)	9	9

Teams For Whom the Draw Was Unkind			
Team	# times play Geelong	# games played with teams from positions 2 to 9, excluding the Roos	# games played against teams from positions 12 to 16 or the Roos
Sydney	2	10	7
Melbourne	2	8	8
Fremantle	2	11	8
West Coast	2	10	7
Port Adelaide	2	10	8
Kangaroos	2	10	7

The Rest			
Team	# times play Geelong	# games played with teams from positions 2 to 9, excluding the Roos	# games played against teams from positions 12 to 16 or the Roos
Brisbane Lions	1 (Away)	10	10
Western Bulldogs	1 (Away)	10	8
Carlton	1 (Home)	11	7
Richmond	2	9	8
All Team Ave	1.4	9.8	8.3

Combining our analyses suggests that the teams can be split into three groups based on how well or badly they were treated in the draw as shown in the table at left.

Teams for whom the draw has been kind are those teams that avoid playing Geelong away; that, relatively speaking, tend to avoid the teams that finished 2nd through 9th last year, excluding the Roos (the Second Tier teams); or that, again relatively speaking, tend to play the teams that finished 12th through 16th last year, or the Roos (the Maybe Next Year teams).

Teams for whom the draw has been unkind (and I include the Roos here) tend to have the opposite characteristics – they play Geelong twice, and they play a relatively high number of games against Second Tier teams or a relatively low number against the Maybe Next Year teams.

The Rest don't quite fall into either of these categories for a variety of reasons.

This analysis is, of course, somewhat dependent on which grounds I've

decided are 'home' grounds for each team. This is a straightforward decision for teams such as Adelaide, who play all of their home games at the one venue, a little more problematic for teams such as Carlton, who play 5 home games at the MCG and 6 at Docklands, and extremely difficult for teams such as the Roos, who play 6 home games at Docklands, 4 at Gold Coast Stadium (at least, for now), and 1 at the MCG.

My approach this year has been to deem as 'home' those grounds at which a team plays at least 4 of its designated home games. The table below shows what this means for each team where, by recognised, I mean those grounds that I recognise as 'home' grounds for the purposes of analysis.

Homes Grounds (Number of Designated Home Games in Brackets)		
Team	Recognised Home Grounds	Other Grounds on Which Home Games Played
Geelong	Kardinia (8)	Docklands (3)
Port Adelaide	Football Park (11)	-
West Coast	Subiaco (11)	-
Kangaroos	Docklands (6), Gold Coast Stadium (4)	MCG (1)
Hawthorn	MCG (7), Aurora Stadium (4)	-
Collingwood	MCG (9)	Docklands (2)
Sydney	SCG (7), Stadium Australia (4)	-
Adelaide	Football Park (11)	-
St Kilda	Docklands (11)	-
Brisbane Lions	Gabba (11)	-
Fremantle	Subiaco (11)	-
Essendon	Docklands (7), MCG (4)	-
Western Bulldogs	Docklands (8)	Manuka Oval (1), MCG (1), Mararra Oval (1)
Melbourne	MCG (10)	Manuka Oval (1)
Carlton	Docklands (6), MCG (5)	-
Richmond	MCG (8)	Docklands (3)

Pre-Season Bookmakers' Prices

This season I thought we might track the prices for a few different bookmakers rather than just those for TAB Sportsbet. The table below has information for three AFL markets – the flag, the 8 and the Spoon – from TAB Sportsbet, Centrebet and Domebet.

As you can see, at this point in the season there appears to be broad consensus about the chances of most teams, with the Cats extraordinarily short-priced favourites given that a Steeden has yet to be bounced, kicked or hand-passed in anger. The only significant contention seems to be around just how unlikely it is that Essendon or Richmond will be adding a flag to their list of achievements for the year.

Team	Bookmakers' Prices (12th Dec)					
	Premiership Winner			Final 8	Wooden Spoon	
	TAB	Centrebet	Domebet	TAB	TAB	Centrebet
Geelong	3.20	3.25	3.30	1.06	301.00	251.00
Fremantle	10.00	11.00	11.00	1.33	101.00	81.00
Collingwood	10.00	9.00	10.00	1.35	71.00	67.00
Port Adelaide	10.00	11.00	11.00	1.38	71.00	67.00
Hawthorn	10.00	10.00	11.00	1.40	71.00	67.00
St Kilda	12.00	13.00	13.00	1.40	51.00	51.00
West Coast	12.00	12.00	12.00	1.42	35.00	26.00
Sydney	16.00	17.00	14.00	1.68	31.00	34.00
Adelaide	18.00	15.00	17.00	1.90	26.00	26.00
Brisbane Lions	21.00	21.00	23.00	2.00	17.00	17.00
Carlton	31.00	21.00	26.00	2.20	13.00	11.00
Kangaroos	31.00	26.00	34.00	2.60	7.50	8.00
Western Bulldogs	35.00	34.00	41.00	2.40	6.50	7.50
Essendon	35.00	51.00	51.00	2.90	5.00	5.50
Melbourne	41.00	41.00	41.00	4.00	4.00	5.00
Richmond	51.00	67.00	81.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Over-round	21.0%	20.8%	15.8%	12.7%	29.7%	22.7%

Converting these prices to probabilities helps to demonstrate just how dominant the Cats are expected to be this year as the following table shows.

Team	Probability Equivalents (assuming same over-round per team)					
	Premiership Winner			Final 8	Wooden Spoon	
	TAB	Centrebet	Domebet	TAB	TAB	Centrebet
Geelong	25.8%	25.5%	26.2%	83.7%	0.3%	0.3%
Fremantle	8.3%	7.5%	7.8%	66.7%	0.8%	1.0%
Collingwood	8.3%	9.2%	8.6%	65.7%	1.1%	1.2%
Port Adelaide	8.3%	7.5%	7.8%	64.3%	1.1%	1.2%
Hawthorn	8.3%	8.3%	7.8%	63.4%	1.1%	1.2%
St Kilda	6.9%	6.4%	6.6%	63.4%	1.5%	1.6%
West Coast	6.9%	6.9%	7.2%	62.5%	2.2%	3.1%
Sydney	5.2%	4.9%	6.2%	52.8%	2.5%	2.4%
Adelaide	4.6%	5.5%	5.1%	46.7%	3.0%	3.1%
Brisbane Lions	3.9%	3.9%	3.8%	44.4%	4.5%	4.8%
Carlton	2.7%	3.9%	3.3%	40.3%	5.9%	7.4%
Kangaroos	2.7%	3.2%	2.5%	34.1%	10.3%	10.2%
Western Bulldogs	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%	37.0%	11.9%	10.9%
Essendon	2.4%	1.6%	1.7%	30.6%	15.4%	14.8%
Melbourne	2.0%	2.0%	2.1%	22.2%	19.3%	16.3%
Richmond	1.6%	1.2%	1.1%	22.2%	19.3%	20.4%

That makes Geelong – according to the bookmakers – as likely to win the 2008 Flag as any other three teams combined.

MAFL Funds For 2008

Though I've yet to settle on final details, here's what's investors are likely to face in 2008:

- A very slightly altered Heritage Fund (it'll not bet on teams priced at less than \$2)
- Unchanged Alpha and Beta Funds
- A Line Fund much the same as last season's but one that won't bet if the start offered is less than 8½ points (perhaps even 10½)
- A Chi Fund based on Chi's tips.

I'm not sure if there'll be "Recommended" weightings this season, but there'll probably be default weightings for those investors who want the MAFL equivalent of a Mystery Bet.

More details in the New Year.

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True or False?

1. To protect its copyright the VFL once changed the jumper numbers for the teams playing in the upcoming Grand Final
2. In support of a charity, pink Steedens were once used in every game of the round
3. The telecast of a funeral once led to the rescheduling of a Final
4. Goal posts must be at least 6m high and circular in cross-section
5. During WWII football bladders were so scarce that teams were forced to recondition used balls
6. Mick Malthouse insists that his players be able to handpass with either hand
7. The captain of the away team selects the ball to be used for the entire match
8. The rules once permitted plack-kicking for goal
9. Ron Barassi once publicly endorsed a brand of peanut butter
10. Full-forwards consider it bad luck to touch the behind post before the first centre-bounce

Wishing you and your families a safe and Merry Xmas and a prosperous New Year.

'til next time,

Tony

17 December 2007