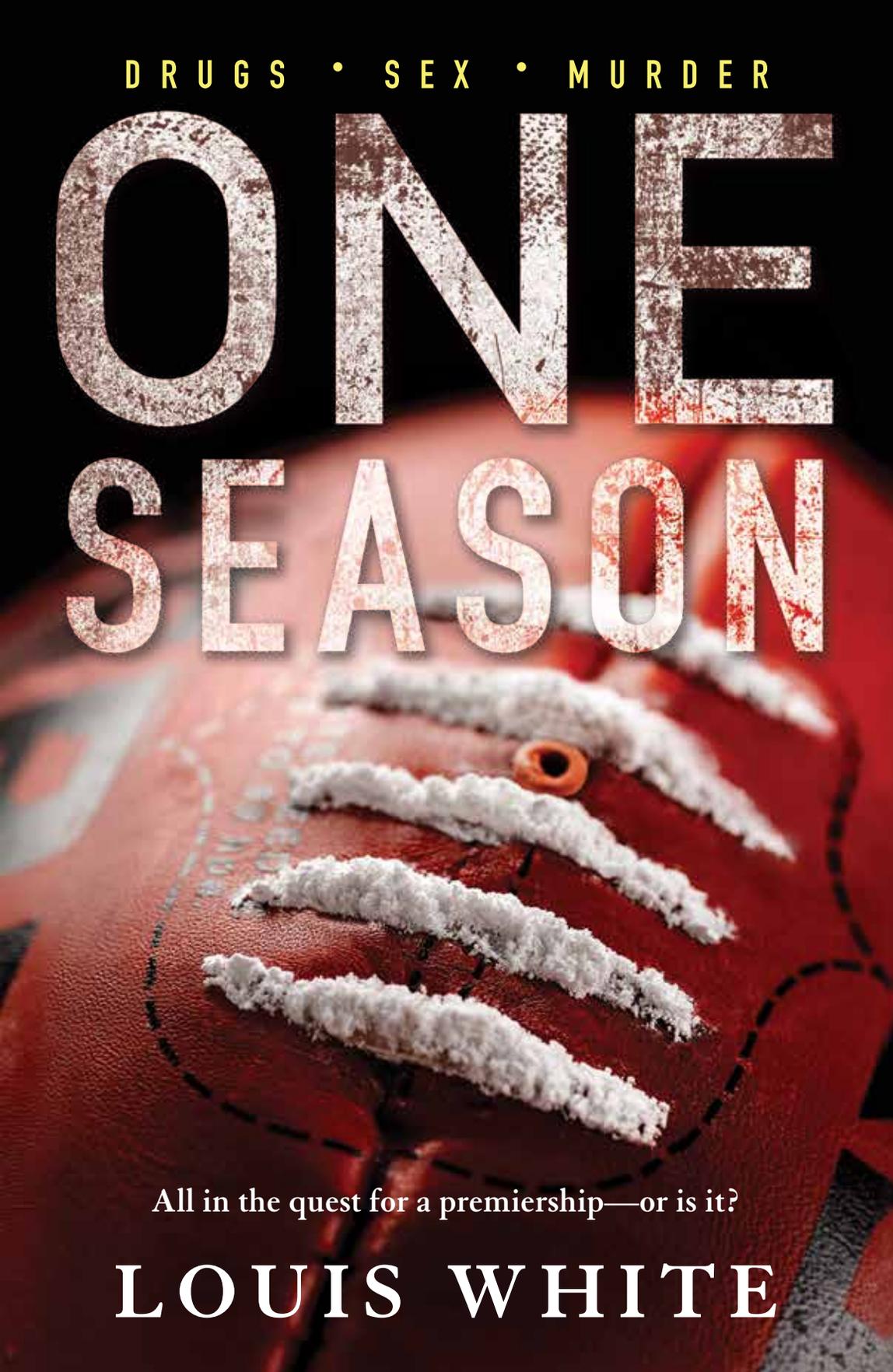


DRUGS • SEX • MURDER

# ONE SEASON



All in the quest for a premiership—or is it?

LOUIS WHITE

**ONE  
SEASON**



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# PROLOGUE

## The National Australian Rules Competition (NARC)

The 20 teams comprising the National Australian Rules Competition



### Queensland

- 1 Cairns Crocodiles
- 2 Brisbane Brumbies
- 3 Gold Coast Box Jellyfish

### New South Wales

- 4 Newcastle Nukes
- 5 Western Sydney Razorbacks
- 6 Sydney Snakes

### ACT

- 7 Canberra Bears

### Victoria

- 8 Bendigo Bees
- 9 Ballarat Bandits
- 10 Geelong Octopuses
- 11 East Melbourne Pelicans
- 12 Central Melbourne Spiffires
- 13 West Melbourne Bull Ants

### Tasmania

- 14 Tassie Devils

### South Australia

- 15 Adelaide Spiders
- 16 Glenelg Hammerheads
- 17 Mount Gambier Volcanoes

### Western Australia

- 18 Perth Bull Sharks
- 19 Northern Quokkas
- 20 Indian Ocean Pirates



# TASSIE DEVILS 2018 FIXTURE LIST

<b>Round</b>	<b>Opponent</b>	<b>Venue</b>
R1:	West Melbourne Bull Ants	Home
R2:	Brisbane Brumbies	Away
R3:	Adelaide Spiders	Home
R4:	Bendigo Bees	Away
R5:	Cairns Crocodiles	Home
R6:	Newcastle Nukes	Away
R7:	Glenelg Hammerheads	Home
R8:	Gold Coast Jellyfish	Away
R9:	Mount Gambier Volcanoes	Home
R10:	Northern Quokkas	Away
R11:	Indian Ocean Pirates	Home
R12:	Sydney Snakes	Home (Overseas)

## **Bye for all clubs**

R13:	Canberra Bears	Away
R14:	East Melbourne Pelicans	Away
R15:	Geelong Octopuses	Home
R16:	Western Sydney Razorbacks	Away
R17:	Central Melbourne Spitfires	Home
R18:	Ballarat Bandits	Away
R19:	Perth Bull Sharks	Home
R20:	Unknown at this stage	

# FIXTURES AND FINALS

The season is 20 rounds long. Each team plays each other once thereby constituting 19 rounds. The final round of fixtures for the home and away season sees the top ten teams play each other and the bottom ten sides play each other, as follows:

## **Top ten teams**

(The team with the superior ladder position receives the home ground advantage)

1<sup>st</sup> vs 10<sup>th</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> vs 9<sup>th</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> vs 8<sup>th</sup>

4<sup>th</sup> vs 7<sup>th</sup>

5<sup>th</sup> vs 6<sup>th</sup>

## **Bottom ten teams**

(The team with the superior ladder position receives the home ground advantage)

11<sup>th</sup> vs 20<sup>th</sup>

12<sup>th</sup> vs 19<sup>th</sup>

13<sup>th</sup> vs 18<sup>th</sup>

14<sup>th</sup> vs 17<sup>th</sup>

15<sup>th</sup> vs 16<sup>th</sup>

There is no break at the end of the home and away season with the first week of finals played the following weekend.

## **Finals**

(Four weeks of finals to be played continuously. The top ten teams qualify)

### **Elimination finals**

(EF1) 7<sup>th</sup> vs 10<sup>th</sup>

(EF2) 8<sup>th</sup> vs 9<sup>th</sup>

The two losers eliminated.

### **Semi-finals**

(SF1) 1<sup>st</sup> vs the winner of 7<sup>th</sup> vs 10<sup>th</sup> (EF1)

(SF2) 2<sup>nd</sup> vs the winner of 8<sup>th</sup> vs 9<sup>th</sup> (EF2)

(SF3) 3<sup>rd</sup> vs 6<sup>th</sup>

(SF4) 4<sup>th</sup> vs 5<sup>th</sup>

Winner of (SF1) plays winner of (SF4)

Winner of (SF2) plays winner of (SF3)

The four losers are eliminated.

### **Preliminary finals**

(PF1) SF1 vs SF4

(PF2) SF2 vs SF3

Winners progress to the grand final. The two losers are eliminated.

### **Grand final**

Winner of (PF1) vs winner of (PF2)



# THE MAIN CHARACTERS

## **Tassie Devils main players**

Angelo Astone  
James Brown  
Robert Danielson  
Ian Fisher  
Anthony Khoury  
Leon Schlapp  
Aaron Taylor  
Todd Thomson (captain)  
Frank Walker  
Phillip Young

Chris Robinson (coach)

## **Tassie Devils board members**

Jeffrey Bush (chairman)  
Simon Cunnington (CEO)  
Mia Crowe  
Noah Harris  
Wang Li  
Rahul Patel  
Oliver Walker  
Paul Williams



It wasn't even 8pm, yet Angelo Astone could barely keep his eyes open as he stood up to go to the bathroom.

"I thought you were supposed to be fit?" said Frank Walker, slightly clipping Astone as he walked past his table.

"Yeah, aren't you the kid who was quoted as saying, 'I'm ready to play in the big league now', when you were like 12 years old?" James Brown said mockingly, placing his hand on Astone's shoulder.

Astone had always regretted giving an interview to a local reporter back when he was not yet a teenager. His dad thought it was a good idea since he had just won his third competition best and fairest in a row, but his classmates and teammates had mocked him ever since.

"It only gets harder from here on in, mate," Brown said, emphasising the "mate" as he pushed hard on Astone's shoulder before walking off laughing.

Walker and Brown continued to snigger, turning back at Astone with mocking intention.

Astone knew that both players wanted to stamp their authority on him early and saw him as a threat to them making their league debuts next season. He'd been very excited to be drafted by the Tassie Devils in the National Australian Rules Competition (NARC), but was blatantly underprepared for the step up from school competition into a professional Aussie Rules football club.

Although he had played a few country games with men, and had received a few whacks around the head, amongst other bumps and bruises, being drafted to play in the NARC was in a league of its own.

Astone had no idea that he would be training six days a week, that there would be dietary restrictions, and that he would have to

learn new terminology while being briefed by up to half a dozen different coaches on tactics, positions and running patterns as he went from one meeting to another.

Sitting next to players he had watched on TV was surreal. Here he was next to fully grown men revered by the sporting public, and soon he would be running out on the football field, playing alongside them. It was hard not to be daunted by the prospect.

The six weeks of pre-season training he had endured so far were the equivalent of hell, and today, the final day before the 10-day Christmas break, was like meeting the devil himself.

Three hours of running, cycling, weights, swimming, and more weights. It was the last training session before the break and it was as though the coaches had decided that any excess eating or drinking from Christmas and New Year's Eve would be burned off before it was consumed.

To make matters worse, tonight was the club's Christmas party and the entire playing squad was expected to interact not only with other teammates and their parents, but also a never-ending list of officials, sponsors and a few select fans.

All Astone wanted to do was collapse into bed and have someone feed him and carry him wherever he needed to go for the next 24 hours. Every muscle ached. His eyelids wanted to do nothing else but close.

The players were told that they had to stay for a minimum of two hours. Astone had spent the great majority of that time sitting at one table drinking water. When he was forced to stand up, he found a wall he could lean on.

The questions from sponsors and fans were repetitive and mundane.

"How are you enjoying Tasmania?"; "Have you settled in yet?"; "Is this your dream come true?"; "What's it like to be a professional Aussie Rules player?"

Astone kept his answers simple and short. He was always polite and always smiled. He continually checked his iPhone to see how much longer he had to stay. He hadn't really bonded with any of his

teammates yet and he constantly dipped in and out of conversations, never really feeling part of the club.

He sought out his billeted parents in order to catch their eye. He wanted them to know he hoped to leave right on time. Every 18 year old drafted to the club from interstate was allocated a family to live with while they settled. Even though there was no dedicated timeframe, a player was expected to live with their allocated family for a year.

Astone had no problem with that, as Mr and Mrs Bianchi reminded him of his parents, with whom he had a great relationship. They waited on him hand and foot and Astone was often too tired to protest. Once he actually got NARC fit, things would change and he would pull his weight, but for now he just wanted the comfort of his bed.

For some parents it was the opportunity of a lifetime to guide a young boy who would become a foster son for the remainder of their lives—even though they may have only spent a few months living together. For some of the fathers it was a chance to re-live their glory days, even if they had only played amateur football, to pass on their experience and know-how, despite the game having moved on from their football mantra.

For the Bianchis, who had six grown-up children of their own, it was neither. They missed having children in the house and were keen to help out a fellow Italian. They regularly called his parents to talk about him, even when he was in the room. This he found embarrassing and awkward, so he would retreat to his bedroom to put his headphones on.

Astone looked at his phone. Seven minutes to go. The party was in full swing. Music was playing, and thankfully all the speeches from the CEO, coach, and major sponsor were over. Astone had not paid attention to any of them. The three-course meal, consisting of soup, barramundi and pudding, was more for the guests than the players. Anyway, it helped fight off the tiredness. He was so hungry he was sure he could have eaten two main meals.

Astone's table was right at the back and it was a journey to get to the bathroom. He weaved in and out of people, trying to avoid eye

contact so that he didn't have to say "Hi" or present a fake grin. He was getting that down pat.

He was surprised when he finally entered the toilets to see a core group of senior players emerge in high spirits and full of life.

"Angelo, how are you buddy?" Captain Todd Thomson said with an enormous grin on his face. He put an arm around Astone, which soon turned into a playful headlock.

Astone tried to resist but it was fruitless. Thomson and his crew were driving him back into the main reception area. Astone dreaded the thought of more trivial conversation.

Thomson, while slightly shorter than Astone at five foot ten, was exceptionally strong for his size. He was built of lean, pure muscle and could match anybody pound for pound.

"Good, Todd," Astone said in a muffled voice. "Can you let me go now?"

"What do you think fellas? Should I let young Angelo go? Or should we drag him up to the microphone to give a short speech?" Thomson said mockingly to his teammates, while ruffling Astone's hair.

"Make him give a speech! Let's drag him to the stage!" came the cheerful voices from behind.

Thomson stopped and let Astone go.

"So, how is life treating you?" Thomson asked. They both stood in the corridor on the edge of the main reception room.

"All good," Astone replied meekly. This was the first time in two months Thomson had acknowledged him since he had first arrived in Tasmania for pre-season training and was given the customary handshake and welcome by the captain.

"You're looking a bit tired, Angelo," said Thomson. "Come and find me in 30 minutes. I'll sort you out."

With that Thomson and his crew left to join the main party.

Astone had no idea what Thomson meant but he was sure he didn't want to partake in any drinking games. All he could think of was going to bed and sleeping forever. He could barely walk and even raising his hand to his mouth to drink caused him pain. Had they really needed to do so many weights today?

Astone decided there would be no further conversations with anyone at this point. He looked around for the Bianchis, but they were nowhere to be seen. He tapped the Uber app on his iPhone and arranged for a pick-up. He had four minutes to kill.

Astone looked for an unattended exit, as officials and supporters were standing near the main entrance door. He spotted the waiting staff walking in and out of the kitchen and thought there must be an exit there.

As he walked past chefs and waiters barking instructions, like he had seen on one of those reality TV cooking shows, Astone dodged quickly to avoid being hit by a full tray of drinks. He was suddenly standing in a short corridor with a door to his right. This must be another exit for the kitchen staff, he thought. He opened the door to see something that would change his life forever—and not in a way he had ever intended or wanted.