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The incredible story of a star Magpie who rose from the 'absolute bottom'



Adam Treloar celebrates after the Magpies beat Geelong in the First Qualifying Final at the MCG. Picture: STEPHEN HARMAN

LIVING WITH A MONSTER



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THE MONSTER

ADAM TRELOAR

'I've been to the absolute bottom - but right now I feel it's completely the opposite. The challenge is to stay up there.'

LOST AND FOUND

CHIEF FOOTBALL REPORTER



MARK ROBINSON

ADAM Treloar is not ashamed, nor does he want anyone to feel sorry for him.

His battle with anxiety — a feeling of being worthless — has recently been made public. By “coming out”, Treloar has found freedom from those chains of despair.

Despair might not be the right word. The umbrella term for it is mental health.

The intricacies are low self-esteem, catastrophising small things and believing people are judging you. The brain goes into overdrive. You feel vulnerable, you question yourself, about what you do and what you say. You feel and see failure when others see optimism. Rational thinking and contentment are puzzles that can't be solved. But overall, it's that sense of worthlessness.

Danny Frawley died from it. Wayne Schwass is a voice of change because of it.

Treloar is living it. He's dealing with a monster that keeps trying to get him, scare him and maybe even hurt him.

“I've been to the absolute bottom,” the Collingwood midfielder, 26, says.

“But right now in my life, I feel it's the complete opposite. The challenge is to stay up there. I'm not a superhero. I still have my days.”

Are you troubled? “No.”

Complex? “Yeah, a little bit.”

Complicated? “Complicated within myself, yes.”

Confident? “I reckon externally I can show I have confidence, but ...”

Caring? “100 per cent. Caring is the one that matters to me.”

What will people reading this think of you?

“I want them to see me as the individual that I want to be seen as. That I'm a caring, thoughtful person. I don't have a bad word to say about anyone. I'm a massive lover. And I'm someone who has a lot of passion and lot of motivation to make his family proud. Just see someone who is caring and works his a--- off.

“But he overthinks ... he definitely overthinks.”

EVERYONE is a product of their upbringing.

Treloar tells stories of his childhood as if it's therapy. They are not woe-is-me. They are real and affecting.

At 12, he'd have a bad train-



Adam Treloar is rising above the despair he has battled all his life. Picture: MICHAEL KLEIN

ing session and get annoyed. “Little things used to tick me off,” he says.

“A lot of this has to do with my insecurities and anxieties, about not feeling worthy or good enough in the world I live in because I feel in my head that I don't deserve it. My mind is trying to convince me I don't deserve it and that's where it all stemmed from.

“When I talk about growing up rough ... we grew up rough.”

Treloar didn't know his old man. “He left my mum ... I don't know. I might not have been born when he left. I've met him on the back of me being intrigued when I was 16.

“I met him once. I didn't want to have anything to do with him and I'll never want anything to do with him.”

Treloar's mother was 21 when he was born. His brother was born three years earlier. They have different fathers.

“My mum was 21 with two kids growing up in a flat in Doveton, which isn't the safest area, and my stepdad came into my life when I was about one,” he says. “They are married. They had a further two kids, a brother and sister. It was hard for mum to work because she was busy with four of us.

“My stepdad worked his a--- off. He brought in all the money. I call him by his name, Ken, but he's my dad. I say my parents to anyone who asks.

“It was all loving, but I don't think they made the best decisions when they were young.

“I reckon my work ethic I've got from Ken. He's a good man. He would do anything for us to have food on the table. Sometimes it was tough.

“I can remember times we didn't have food, sometimes we didn't have electricity. My parents never owned a house. We lived in this ministry house in Dandenong up until when I moved out when I was 17.

“There was no room for me. I was on a single mattress in the hallway for about a year and a half. The hallway was right where the bathroom and toilet was, so whenever somebody needed to go the toilet, I'd get stepped on.

“The day before I moved up to the Giants, my last sleep was on the mattress. That said, it was all loving.”

Treloar was always shy. He was embarrassed because the family didn't have anything to show off. Friends never came around after school.

“My mum did everything she could for us,” he says. “I love her. Whenever we had food we'd have lunches to take to school. When we didn't have it, we wouldn't have lunches.”

There was an office at school that had lunches for those who did not. “That was the norm. That's where all my worries came from.”

At his first training session at Dandenong Stingrays, he wore basketball shoes — hand-

me-downs from his uncle and brother — because he didn't have runners.

He wore those basketball shoes at athletics carnivals, where he was a state-class cross-country runner and hurdler.

“We ran at the aths track at Olympic Park in grade six and all these kids were wearing spikes and everything else. I've got basketball shorts on and basketball shoes that are barely holding on.

“I felt so out of place. Then it got to footy and I made all these reps teams, and I had boots that were so old they were coming apart. We'd tape them up to make sure the leather wasn't flapping around.

“I felt like parents were looking over at me and thinking: ‘Who's this kid? He looks like he's just off the street’.

“On the flip side, that what's motivated me. I wanted to do this for my family, but also to prove people wrong.”

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Lost and found

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ADAM Treloar is a jumble of idiosyncrasies.

At 17, he had obsessive compulsive disorder and had a long talk to former Kangaroo and Bali bombing survivor Jason McCartney, who was his coach at the Australian Institute of Sport.

"If I was to see myself at 16, 17 and 18, I'd be like, you're a weirdo, what are you doing?"

Treloar would "touch wood" on everything. If he said he hoped his team would win, he'd secretly touch the wood of the seat he was sitting on or get up and find wood to touch.

To reset after a period of panic, say walking home from school, he would bend down and touch the ground.

"Another thing I used to do ... I used to have to go left around things.

"This what OCD is. See my car over there, I'd have to get up and walk left around the tree and the rubbish bin even though I could walk to the car in a straight line.

"You're looking at me like I'm a weirdo, aren't you? Deep down I'm still that 13-year-old Dandenong boy who is biting and scratching and clawing and doing his absolute best to make a name for himself and his family — that's what motivates me."

MANAGING his world was a constant psychological wrestle and it collapsed last year.

After 26 touches and kicking a goal in the Round 3 win against Carlton, Treloar started crying in the spa.

To cover his tears from teammates, he submerged his face in the water.

That week, he revealed his

problems to his mum, his girlfriend Kim, leadership and culture manager Nick Maxwell, and psychologist Jacqui Louder. Coach Nathan Buckley was also a constant.

His travails were filmed for the documentary *Collingwood: From the Inside Out*, which was released this year.

It was August 3 when he went public with his struggles on Fox Footy's *AFL 360*, where he joined Richmond's Jack Riewoldt on Tuesdays.

On September 3, he didn't front for the program.

"It was one of those days where I had an anxiety day," he says. "It got to about 2pm and I said to Kim I can't go on. I just feel undeserving.

"You can ask me what does that even mean, but I can't tell you what it means. It's just in my head.

"I felt under-deserving. And the biggest thing that goes off that is anxiety. If I were to go in, I probably would've gone to the toilet and tried to hide."

He returned to the show a day after Frawley's death. His four-minute piece on Frawley and depression was gripping.

"That's what I battle with. That's what I struggle with."

His worthiness, which he has spurned from childhood, was apparent.

"I know that, but I will never be satisfied with footy, never ever. Of course I want to achieve great things. I want to be a premiership player. I want to be All-Australian. I want to leave a legacy as a football player. That's always burning inside of me.

"That's when I say I haven't achieved anything yet.

"But mum and Kim and Jacqui say, 'What do you mean, Adam? Think about where you are now and how many lives you've touched by just being you'. I know that, but in my mind, I think, 'Nuh, you still haven't done anything. You're still not good enough'."

He's taken days off from



Collingwood this year, too. The most recent was between the break of Round 23 and the first final against Geelong.

One of the first panic attacks this season arrived at the first JLT game.

"Pre-season I'm always happy because there's no anxiety about anything. But it just comes back. We had a pracky match against Melbourne and it came back and I had to have a couple of days off.

"I was in the carpark bawling my eyes out and I couldn't get out of my car.

"Bucks came over, and Maxy and Jacqui, and they consoled me and I went home and had a couple of days off."

The sense of being a burden exacerbates his problems.

"I feel like a burden. I feel embarrassed. That's the main thing. I feel embarrassed."

The constant challenge begs two questions.

How has he put together the best season of his career?

"With the anxiety and the worry, one of the biggest things — hate thinking about it and it almost brings me to tears — is letting my team-



Talking about his issues has inspired Treloar to assist others — a far cry from being a Dandenong Stingrays draft hope in 2011 (far right).

'Week-long' battle

GREATER Western Sydney chief executive David Matthews says the Giants have been fighting Collingwood all week after Toby Greene's ban.

Greene will miss today's preliminary final against the Magpies after his appeal to overturn his one-match ban for contact to the "eye region" of Brisbane Lion Lachie Neale failed.

Matthews took a swipe at the role of former Magpie and match review officer Michael Christian, who brought the initial charge against Greene.

"Michael Christian played in a premiership for Collingwood, and it feels like we've been playing Collingwood all week," Matthews said.

REBECCA WILLIAMS

He said the outcome had left him with little confidence in the tribunal system.

"There was probably actually not a shred of evidence that supported the charge, and in the end, the vision was inconclusive," Matthews said.

"The evidence of Lachie Neale seemed to get set aside, and Toby's version of evidence wasn't something they wanted to give credit to either."

AFL boss Gillon McLachlan defended the tribunal system and commended Christian.

"An independent process has validated this," he said.

The AFL said Matthews would not be fined.

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'Angry' Giants ready

GREATER Western Sydney has backed its group to stand up without Toby Greene and Lachie Whitfield, vowing to come out "angry" in today's preliminary final against Collingwood.

The suspended Greene joined his teammates for their captain's run at Punt Rd Oval yesterday after an appeal on Thursday night failed to overturn his one-match ban.

Assistant coach Matthew Nicks dismissed suggestions the Greene tribunal saga, along with the loss of Whitfield (appendicitis), had been a distraction for the players.

"I guess we just have to move on and get the job done this week," Nicks said.

REBECCA WILLIAMS

"The boys love Toby, the boys love Lachie.

"They are really important to the way that we play our footy, but guys will step up.

"I think most of us are angry, but you've got to be angry — if you want to call it angry or on the edge — to play finals footy.

"If you don't, you get criticised for not being ready, but if you do obviously there is people who are questioning the way that you go about it.

"But we didn't beat the Bulldogs and Brisbane by going out there and playing soft footy. I thought our guys went hard for the ball and the contest."



mates down. It scares me. That's the other thing that motivates me."

How has he lived the most positive year of his life?

"It's a challenge, but it's well and truly getting easier because I've spoken about it."

"Could you imagine if I was still holding on to all of the stuff I've spoken about and no one knew about it?"

"I'd be ready to explode. It could turn into something so unfortunate, do you know what I mean? There's so many people who could go down a completely different path when they have their own mental demons. And I mean a path of destruction."

"I don't want to say it, but it leads to people thinking suicide. I've had a friend, five years ago, who took his own life. That broke my heart. He had so many demons."

TRELOAR'S outlook on life has changed dramatically.

He doesn't read or listen to media. He no longer worries about what commentators say about his kicking efficiency, or when they praise him and

there's a "but".

"There's always a but," he said. "That was really good by Treloar but ... how good was that play by Treloar but ..."

"That has been part of my anxiety, because I feel there's always a but. And that's part of the reason why I always thought I wasn't good enough."

"It got to me early, but I know I'm valued internally, and that's taken me a long time to accept that's all that matters."

Just last week he was a guest speaker at a mate's manufacturing business. It was about mental health.

"Since AFL 360, a lot of people have asked me about it."

"It gets me out of my own world and makes me think about others. Always, my whole life, and ask anyone who knows me, I'm a carer. If anyone puts their problems on me, I want to help them."

"But since coming out, it's been incredible."

"I still have my anxieties, but if I've had a bad training session, it doesn't matter to me as much any more. I used to walk off the track thinking, 'F--



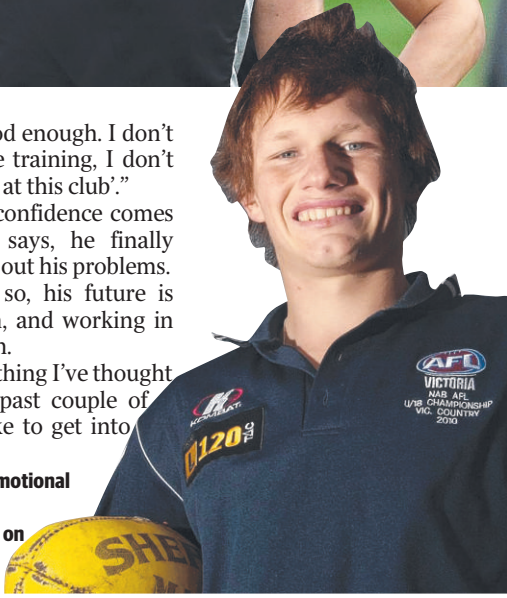
-, I'm not good enough. I don't deserve to be training, I don't deserve to be at this club."

Treloar's confidence comes because, he says, he finally opened up about his problems.

So much so, his future is football, Kim, and working in mental health.

"It's something I've thought about these past couple of weeks. I'd like to get into it."

For help with emotional difficulties, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au



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CHASING THE MONEY

- Giants won 19.8 (122) to 11.9 (75) over Collingwood in their most recent clash in Round 18 at Giants Stadium.
- Collingwood has won five straight after consecutive losses. They lost four of five before that.
- These teams met in last year's finals, the Magpies scoring a 10-point win in a semi-final at the MCG.
- The Giants have won three straight matches after consecutive losses.
- The Giants have won three of their past four matches against Collingwood dating back to Round 8, 2017.
- Collingwood is 10-5 at the MCG this season (won four straight).
- The Giants are 1-2 at the MCG this season (2-4 since Round 2, 2018).
- The Giants are 6-5 away from New South Wales and ACT this season. They've won two and lost three in Victoria.

NICK SAYS

CAN the Giants cover the sizeable losses of Toby Greene and Lachie Whitfield?

It is certainly a huge ask and it is a big reason why Collingwood finds itself so short heading into the Grand Final qualifier.

I like the Magpies, but I can't see it being a blowout as the Maggies just don't have the firepower with Jordan De Goey out.

I'd be looking at the Magpies to win between 1 and 39 points.



SATURDAY SPECIAL

THERE are two TAB Saturday specials for the first preliminary final. Young Magpie Jaidyn Stephenson (left) and Coleman Medallist Jeremy Cameron (right) are at \$3.50 to combine for five or more goals. Magpie ball magnets Taylor Adams and Adam Treloar are at \$3.50 to combine for 65 or more disposals.

*All TAB odds correct at 4pm yesterday



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