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# Essendon save Dick Reynolds' Brownlows from failed auction house



Dick Reynolds' three Brownlow Medals, on their way back to Essendon

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Three Brownlow Medals won by Aussie rules legend Dick Reynolds are on their way back to Essendon Football Club headquarters at Windy Hill after being rescued from the wreckage of auction house Mossgreen in a deal brokered by high-flying lawyer — and Carlton tragic — Leon Zwier.

Mr Zwier, a partner at boutique law firm Arnold Bloch Leibler, is more usually seen working on deals involving hundreds of millions of dollars, or among the legal team assembled by Opposition Leader Bill Shorten to deal with the trade union royal commission.

He volunteered his services on behalf of Bombers coterie the Essendonians, who had agreed to buy the medals from the Reynolds family before Mossgreen collapsed at Christmas.

Reynolds played an astonishing 320 games for Essendon between 1933 and 1951 — a record at the time — earning him the nickname King Richard. He won the Brownlow in 1934, 1937 and 1938, one of only four players to claim it three times, alongside 1930s Fitzroy rover Haydn Bunton and '60s legends Ian Stewart and Bob Skilton.

The Reynolds family consigned the medals, which were previously on display at Essendon, to auction at Mossgreen last year. Four days before the medals were due to go to auction in August, the family struck a deal with the Essendonians, who agreed to buy them for about \$200,000 and pay an auction cancellation fee of about \$30,000.

However, when Mossgreen went into administration on Christmas Day, owing \$12 million, the medals were still at the auction house.



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Essendon's Dick Reynolds.

Administrators Andrew Sallway, Nicholas Martin and James White of BDO said they should be entitled to the purchase price.

“The entire transaction was done by the Essendonians,” Mr Zwiernicki told *The Australian*. “Unbeknown to us, Mossgreen invoiced as if they had done the transaction, which they had not.”

Negotiations brought together a high-powered clutch of lawyers. Ian Pascarl, of Davies Collison Cave, represented the Reynolds family while BDO enjoyed the services of top tier firm King & Wood Malletts.

Also in the Essendonians corner was another powerful clique from the Bombers inner circle, the Lawdons — a group of lawyers, believed to include banking royal commissioner Kenneth Hayne, which helps the club out with legal issues.

Mr Zwiernicki said that under the deal Mossgreen kept its cancellation fee, but all the proceeds of the sale went to the Reynolds family. “In the end I think common sense prevailed,” he said.

An Essendonians committee member, Michael Schoenfeld, said Mossgreen “got every last cent they were entitled to”.

“The family get the money and the medals have been returned to their rightful owners,” he said.

The deal follows, but is separate to, a blow to the administrators on Monday, when Federal Court judge Nye Perram found they were not entitled to charge about \$1m in fees to people who had consigned their goods to the auction house and wanted them back.

Justice Perram found the administrators’ attempt to recoup the cost of doing a stocktake was outside their powers and they were “intermeddling in other people’s goods in circumstances where they had not been invited to do so”.

