



## HOW TO PLAY

# MARKING ON THE CHEST

Jonathan Brown is a hard man to shift in a marking contest. **By Howard Kotton.**

A man has got to know his limitations, Clint Eastwood told us in that immortal line from the smash-hit movie *Magnum Force* in 1973. That is certainly true of Brisbane Lions champion Jonathan Brown.

Brown knew from a young age that he did not have the blistering speed of Peter Matera or the leap of Warwick Capper. His greatest assets were his size and strength.

He admired North Melbourne legend Wayne Carey's ability to outmanoeuvre his opponent in a one-on-one contest and take the mark on his chest.

"For a lot of us younger guys coming through watching footy in the '90s, if you're a strong type of player, you certainly took a leaf out of Wayne's book. That was one of his many strengths," Brown said.

"I've always worked pretty hard on the contested marking situation from a young age. Once I got to this level, I worked hard on the weights in the gym to make sure I had the strength to compete with the key defenders in the competition.

"That is hard early in your career when you don't have that physical development, but obviously now I'm in the prime of my physical development.

"With that comes more traffic around you and more guys trying to get back on top of you, so the one thing I have noticed is that it is becoming harder to get into the one-on-one situation."

### PART 8 OF A SERIES - CHEST MARKING

It is important to be able to pull in a safe chest mark on a consistent basis without fumbling the ball.

In his early years with the Lions, Brown tried to emulate the exploits of teammate Alastair Lynch, whose strength in the contested situation was a feature of his game.

He also worked hard at training with former teammates Justin Leppitsch and Mal Michael and these days continues to practise hard with full-back Daniel Merrett.

"Once a week we try to work on our one-on-one contested marks with one of the defenders," the Lions co-captain said. "There will be a lot of contested marking situations, marking in your hands and on your chest."

As a youngster growing up in Warrnambool in country Victoria, Brown often played in wet conditions on muddy grounds, where he found the chest mark was a better option. But he prefers to take a mark out in front of his opponent with his hands.

"It is preferable to mark it in your hands for two reasons – the ball would be further away from the defender's fist if he is trying to spoil because you take it at a higher point. If you mark it in your hands, it also makes it easier to dish it off for the handball," Brown said. ■

## 1 THE APPROACH

Brown sprints on the lead straight towards the kicker and watches the ball intently as his body moves directly in line with the flight of the ball.

## 2 THE PREPARATION

As Brown reaches the last two steps towards the ball, he brings his arms up in preparation to take the mark. Note his hands and forearms are ready to go under the ball.

## 3 DROPPING DOWN

As the ball gets close to his body, Brown continues to move forward while dropping down to ensure the ball will be taken at chest height. His fingers and hands are extended with palms up and his elbows are beginning to tuck in to the side.

## 4 COMPLETING THE MARK

Brown takes the ball in his hands and forearms and guides it into his chest. The mark is completed by hugging the ball tightly to his chest with his elbows tucked in to ensure that the mark cannot be spoiled.

• Technical advice in this series courtesy of the AFL Development Department.

