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INSIDE COVER

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OUT OF HAND

They have been a familiar sight for many, many years.

We are talking about the Messages on Hold hands behind the goals at Subi Oval, oops, sorry, Patersons Stadium, at West Coast Eagles games.

The boss of Messages, **Kym Illman**, told us this week that his company had been an official sponsor of the Eagles since 1992.

As part of the Messages sponsorship package, it had seats behind the goals at both ends and was able to wave the hands when the ball crossed the goal line.

We didn't get to the game on Saturday night, but were told that the hands were there as usual at the start of the game, but not at the end.

Mr Illman said that he was watching the game on TV and had received a call from the Eagles at the end of the second quarter to say the AFL had seen the Messages staff wave the hands over the boundary line.

Mr Illman said he phoned his staff and they told him they had not done anything different from what they had always done, game after game, for years.

The next thing he knew one of his staff had called him and put an official on the line.

The official said the hands were being confiscated, Mr Illman said.

The Eagles told us that the hand wavers were not allowed to encroach over the fence and obscure permanent signs and two warnings had been issued on behalf of the AFL before the hands were confiscated.

The AFL said the action was taken after Messages hand-wavers had obscured signs behind the goals for Toyota, which was the AFL's major partner.

The AFL had not discussed with the Eagles if the hands could be used again, but Toyota signs had priority at any AFL match at the venue.

Mr Illman also said his sponsorship package was up for renewal and he was considering what to do next season.

But here's the best part of the yarn.

We were told that one of the long-serving Messages staffers continued with his usual hand movements, even though he no longer had his big advertising hand. That's dedication!