

Tigers in Roo makeover



John Lamont will remain coach of the Werribee Tigers until the end of the 2017 season. (Shawn Smits)

By Lance Jenkinson

Werribee Football Club will become the fully aligned VFL partner of AFL club North Melbourne from 2016 for at least two seasons.

The Tigers and fellow VFL club North Ballarat currently have an agreement with the Kangaroos that splits the Roos' players between both VFL clubs.

That contract will end at the conclusion of the 2015 season.

From 2016, Werribee will take over as the fully aligned partner, meaning all players who are not in the Kangaroos' best team will filter down to the VFL Tigers. Werribee will retain its name, nickname, colours and song, preserving 50 years of history.

Tigers president John Nicol said one of the biggest decisions in the club's history came after "exhaustive" talks between the two clubs and extensive research by the Werribee board and staff. "In the end, the financial and football future of the club saw this as our best option for the 2016 and 2017 seasons."

John Lamont will stay on as senior coach until at least the end of the 2017 season, as will football manager Stuart Balloch.

Lamont was a development and line coach at North Melbourne before accepting the head coaching position at Werribee at the start of last season.

"The relationship between the two clubs is very strong, very healthy and has produced good results," he said.

"Werribee has developed players like Ben Brown and Luke McDonald who North has drafted, and we've seen North-listed players like Mason Wood (29 games) and Daniel Currie (30) hone their skills playing for Werribee, all to the benefit of the North Melbourne Football Club.

"We have also seen Ben Ross, Ben Warren and Ben Speight choose to continue their football at Werribee after being delisted by the Kangaroos."

North Melbourne football director Geoff Walsh said the agreement would enhance both clubs' football programs and lead to the Kangaroos having a greater presence in the City of Wyndham.

"Both Werribee and North Melbourne will benefit greatly from the full alignment," Walsh said.

"We are sure that not only will this decision enhance the football programs of both clubs, but the joint approach will further imprint our game in the western region.

"The full alignment will see the North Melbourne Football Club and its players become even more present in the City of Wyndham, adding to the community programs and initiatives already run by the two clubs."



IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ The Werribee Football Club will have full alignment with the North Melbourne Kangaroos from the 2016 season. What does this mean for the club, the players and supporters? The club will retain its home ground, colours, nickname and theme song. There will be 23 blokes in Tiger jumpers running on to the ground each weekend – that won't change. And the fact that 12 or more may be Kangaroo-listed players won't be a game changer. There will still be opportunities for non-North players to play for the club if they're good enough. North Melbourne is not taking over the Tigers – it will supply players and other personnel. Werribee is facing a very challenging 2016 season. The proposed redevelopment of Avalon Airport Oval means finding an alternative training venue and home ground for a year. Arden Street may be the saviour. Werribee has done well with the partial alignment, making four finals appearances. But when you look at Footscray, Box Hill and Geelong, the talent gap is widening. I am keen to hear from Tigers fans about this. Yes, I work for the club as media manager. And personally, I think this will be good for the long-term future of the Tigers.

■ My memories of Luke Beveridge at the early '90s Bulldogs are of a tough, hard-at-it player and a nice bloke off the field. His appointment last week as senior coach of the Bulldogs was done well, and Luke handled the situation with aplomb. Especially when a 'journor' asked one of the stupidest questions of all time. Check out the website as I refuse to repeat it. The smartest move he made all week was to appoint Bobby Murphy as skipper for 2015. These two appointments will allow the Bulldogs to concentrate on what's important – a good preseason and a positive start to 2015.

■ Sport in the west lost two of its elder statesmen last week. Grand United Cricket Club is mourning the passing of Ken 'Lofty' Pearce. Ken was named captain of Grand United's team of the century and had a very good career as a district cricketer for North Melbourne. The Bulldogs lost a beauty with the passing of Ben Bradley. What a man. Ben was an integral part of the change rooms for more years than most of us can remember. Much is made of on-field greats. Ben Bradley was one of the greats off the field.

Kevin Hillier

Any news, let me know on email kevin@howdypartnersmedia.com.au. Follow me on Twitter @KevinHillier, and check out the Howdy Partners Media website as well.

In-form O'Brien sends bowlers a warning

Bowlers beware. Star Werribee batsman Tim O'Brien is hitting his straps in the run-up to Christmas.

O'Brien blasted a magnificent 127 in the Tigers' massive 6-341 against Preston in the Victorian Sub-District match at Preston City Oval on Saturday.

After a relatively slow start to the season with 25, 1 and 20 in his first three digs, O'Brien has made 48 not out and a century in his last two outings to signal that he's back to his best form.

Last summer, the No.4 batsman accumulated 525 runs, including two tons, at 52, while the season before he made 739 at 73 to be one of the cornerstones of a side that went all the way to the grand final.

If the Tigers want to make waves in this competition, they'll need O'Brien at his best, and he's starting to get into his groove.

It took a team effort from the Tigers to compile what should be a match-winning score.

Opener Matt Dean continued his sizzling start with 72.

Contributions came from middle-order batsmen James Freeman (40no), Heath Pritchard (33no) and captain Shaun Dean (26).

The Tigers are preparing for a busy weekend, with the second day of the clash with Preston on Saturday, followed by their first 'Movember' charity Twenty20 game against Hoppers Crossing.

November is when men grow moustaches to raise awareness of men's health issues, including encouraging regular medical checks, early cancer detection and adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Werribee and Hoppers Crossing plan to make it an annual event with the home venues alternating.

The inaugural contest will take place at Werribee's Chirside Park on Sunday, with an under-21 game at 11am followed by the Movember Challenge at 2pm.

There will be a barbecue and raffle, with all proceeds going to the Movember Foundation.

Hoppers Crossing president Greg Mitchell told *Star Weekly* there would be one rule for the players who run out on Sunday.

"In the main game, it's a requirement that



Hoppers Crossing's Luke Goegan and Werribee's Matthew Palmer have their ticket to Sunday's Movember Challenge with finely cultivated mo's. (Wayne Hawkins)

you grow a mo, whether it's good or bad," he said.

"It might be a bit hard to grow a mo for some of the under-21s, though.

"In the past few years the club has had members participate in Movember and do some fundraising, and I think it's a great idea."

Hoppers Crossing (8-236 dec) has barged its way into the VTCA senior division top five with a stunning outright win over Tullamarine (132 and 52) at Hogans Road Reserve.

Skipper Greg Kennedy was chief destroyer for the Cats, with a haul of nine wickets for the match.

In west A1, Wyndhamvale (142 and 4-71)

remains undefeated after surviving a scare against Altona Roosters (132 and 3-162 dec) at Langshaw Reserve.

Adam Moscatello's 47 was crucial in the Falcons' shaky run chase for first-innings points.

Werribee Centrals (115) is still searching for its first win of the season after becoming the latest victim of top-of-the-ladder Williamstown CYMS (223 and 7-93) at Galvin Park.

Point Cook (109) had a round to forget, losing by 194 runs to Sunshine Heights (303) at Ainsworth Reserve.

Lance Jenkinson

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