

## Bees' new crew debuts with thrilling win

Werribee has put a tumultuous off season behind it to open the new Bowls Victoria division 1 season with a stirring win.

The new-look Bees overcame Darebin City 74-70 in a thriller at Chirnside Park on Saturday.

Bees committee chairperson Steve Weston was delighted with the come-from-behind win.

"The boys showed great spirit and a good work effort to take the points," he said.

"After a slow start and being well behind at the afternoon tea break, the boys re-focused, rallied strongly and applied real pressure to our opposition and came back into the winning arena."

Werribee entered the season having lost the core of its on-green leadership in the off season.

All four of the regular Bees' skips from last season crossed to Altona, leaving the team light on for experience.

Two other players departed, one trying his hand in premier division and another retiring.

But the Bees found some willing new leaders in Peter Williams, Graeme McNaughton, Peter Yasar and Rob Smith, who took on the role of skips in the season opener.

The Smith (up 10) and Yasar (up 2) rinks won on the day, while Williams finished down seven and McNaughton was pipped by one.

Werribee took out two of the four rinks, picking up 14 of a possible 18 points for a strong start to the season.

"This first-round win shows Werribee has the capabilities to mix with the best in division 1 this season," Weston said.

Werribee will travel to play Fitzroy Victoria, a first-up loser, in the second round on Saturday.

Lance Jenkinson



New Werribee skip Peter Yasar liked what he saw from his team on Saturday. (Shawn Smits)

## Top Tiger signs on

By Lance Jenkinson

Werribee Tigers have put the first piece of the jigsaw puzzle in place as they revert to being a stand-alone club in the Victorian Football League.

The Tigers will build their team around three-time Bruce Montgomery Trophy winner Matt Hanson, who has re-committed for next season.

Hanson had no intentions of leaving the Tiger cage, particularly with the club going it alone and returning to a redeveloped Avalon Airport Oval.

"It was a no-brainer, to be honest," Hanson said.

"After the support Werribee has given me and the opportunity to play at the VFL level three years ago, I can't speak highly enough of the club.

"I'm just trying to repay the favour."

The Hanson-Werribee partnership has certainly been good for club and player.

Since he arrived from South Launceston in 2015, Hanson has played 53 hard-nosed games in the midfield and kicked 34 goals.

He made the VFL team of the year in his first season with the Tigers and was elevated to the leadership group a season later.

Hanson has played in two VFL state games, twice been a team-of-the-year member and is recognised as one of the premier onballers in the VFL, having finished a career-best third in this year's JJ Liston Trophy count.

He is one of the best two-way midfielders, leading the competition in contested possessions and tackles.

Werribee coach John Lamont is thrilled to secure Hanson's signature for next season, but would be even more stoked if he was given a shot at the AFL.

"It's really pleasing," Lamont said. "He's had a massive impact since he arrived from Tasmania.

"The key thing for me has been that his game has continued to improve and that says a lot.

"He's taken feedback, absorbed it and improved his game ... he was particularly good this year when we were under pressure.

"Part of me doesn't want him to play with us, because it means an AFL club has given him an opportunity, which I think he thoroughly deserves."

Werribee is working on a big summer of signings in order to field a competitive stand-alone side in a tough competition.

The additional senior spots available should be enticing for players to re-commit and fresh faces to join.



Matt Hanson has committed to return to the Werribee Tigers in 2018 if he's not drafted to the AFL. (Jessica Ward Photography)

"The returning players and the guys who have been here for two-plus years are really excited about the prospect of being our own club," Lamont said.

"So the signing of a popular member and

triple best-and-fairest winner can only add to the enthusiasm. We'll start having meaningful dialogue with the players about contracts for next year and start filling up the spots, but it's a great start."



### IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ I thought I might not be writing footy for a few weeks but with cricket unable to get games away due to the state of wickets, the Sherrin kickers continue to dominate. Brad Murphy has made a bold statement as new coach of St Albans unveiling his recruits last week including former AFL star Daniel Kerr. The former Eagles premiership player oozes class, and will no doubt make a mark for his new club along with another five or six new faces, and an old face in Jack Sims returning. The Saints have had a couple of very lean years, but with this talent can certainly bounce back quickly. Murphy is a proven winner as a coach, especially during his tenure as under-18s coach at Hoppers Crossing.

■ Robbie Greto and Matt Scalzo have stepped down as coaches at Sunshine Heights, after a successful stint at Glengala Road. Damien Farnfield has stepped up from reserves coach to lead the Dragons for the 2018 season with Matt Camilleri looking after the reserves. Jason Hamilton is the new top man at Braybrook, after a football journey that has taken him to the Northern League, Southern League and into Tasmania as well as a stint as an umpire. He has taken on the toughest job in footy in the west, trying to get the Brookers back to past glory. There is still a few prime positions to be filled, most notably division two grand finalists Yarraville Seddon and premiers North Footscray.

■ Even though Port Melbourne Colts now play in the Southern Football League they still have ties to the west and it was great to see Stacy Massis and Blake Twomey receive life memberships to the club last week. Mandy Drew and Adam Walters were recognised by Williamstown with life memberships as was Werribee trio Peter Williams, Jimmy Masterson and Doug Joiner.

■ Back to my opening sentence about local cricket and the lack of matches. It just can't go on if the game hopes to be the national sport. Cricket is losing ground and needs to do some serious thinking about the future of turf wickets. Ground sharing with football might be a thing of the past as both sports overlap more and more and demands on grounds become unworkable. The sports have been great allies in the past but that may not be the case in the future.

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