

Cat signing a big win for Werribee Tigers

Werribee Football Club has bolstered its big man stocks with the signing of former Geelong VFL player Jack Berry.

Berry, 22, is the second ruckman with VFL experience to sign with the Tigers in the new year, following former North Ballarat Rooster Nick Nott.

Berry, who stands at 198 centimetres, spent most of his Cats career playing in the development league, but played three games in the top side last season.

The Leopold-aligned tall showed his potential with 46 hit-outs in a game against Coburg in round 11 last season.

Berry is hoping to further his football career with Werribee.

"It's a good opportunity down here and I'm looking forward to it," Berry said.

"The [Avalon Airport Oval] facility is definitely enticing and the stand-alone aspect is very exciting. It's a new beginning and you can kind of put your own stamp on things."



Werribee Tigers youngster Charlie Bance with the club mascot at the SkyBus sponsorship launch. (Supplied)

In other player news, Werribee has re-signed defender Jack Williams for a third season.

Williams missed out on his chance of a promotion to the senior side last season after a mid-season adductor injury, but impressed in the backline during 10 development league games en route to taking out the team's best and

fairest award. The 22-year-old will be hoping to add to his three senior games played in 2016.

"It feels good to be back on board," he said. "It was a bit of a limited opportunity last year. I got injured after five rounds, missed the middle part of the year ... I missed out on senior selection, but had an all-right year in the twos."

"I really want to step it up this year and try to break into this senior side and keep my spot."

Williams' first opportunity to claim a senior berth will come on the practice match circuit.

Werribee's pre-season schedule includes games against Williamstown at Deakin University in Waurin Ponds on March 10, Geelong Cats at GMHBA Stadium on March 16 and Essendon at Avalon Airport Oval on March 24.

Meanwhile, in an off-field boost, airport transfer service SkyBus has signed on as the Tigers' new principal sponsor.

Lance Jenkinson



IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ Footy at the Western (Whitten) Oval is back for 2018 and that is good news, even if it is still February. I am not a big fan of the way footy has eaten into the calendar at the expense of other sports. Footy to me is a winter game and that means a late March start at best. I have no problem with footy being the No.1 sport – but I'd prefer that not be at the expense of every other sport. The AFLW will continue to grow and will eventually be played at the same time as the AFL. That will be a very interesting time for the game's hierarchy.

■ The Burton boys have been making news in the past few weeks, both on and off the field. Matthew Burton has moved into the role of football operations manager with the Calder Cannons after a few years with the Werribee Football Club. Matt's older brother, Jono, has been making his mark on field for the Werribee Cricket Club with both bat and ball. After an injury interrupted start to the season, he weighed in with the bat last week against Kew in VSDCA north-west, scoring 55 after coming in as a nightwatchman, and then claiming a hat-trick in the last over of the day to finish with 3-1 from two overs.

■ I will not roll out the line about money ruining local football again, but Albion Football Club hosted a debt demolition day last Saturday. The club posted on social media that it was up against the wall and called on supporters to get behind it for the coming season. I hope the day went well and money was raised through the raffles, auction items and appearance by former Collingwood star Nick Maxwell. But why is the club against the wall again? Will this be the last time this kind of event is needed? Both questions deserve to be answered – not to me, but to the club faithful. And not just by Albion, but by every suburban club in financial trouble. There are a few.

■ Former players like to sit around and talk about their glory days. Who can blame them when the other major topic of conversation is their latest operation? There will be plenty of talk at the Footscray past player gathering when Stephen Smith aka "Boppo" and Zeno Tzatzaris can discuss their knee replacements. The two warriors of the west will be back to their dangerous best in no time.

Kevin Hillier



Werribee captain-coach Tim O'Brien gets on the front foot en route to a half century. (Damjan Janevski)

Hat-trick game changer

By Lance Jenkinson

Werribee opening bowler Jonathan Burton demonstrated why you should avoid leaving a sporting event early.

In the last over of day one against Yarraville in the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association at Chirnside Park on Saturday, Burton had the fans in raptures as he produced a hat-trick with the first three balls of the over, giving his side a huge boost going into the second day.

Tigers captain-coach Tim O'Brien could not believe what he was seeing with the time clock moving towards 6pm as Burton turned an OK day into a special one for the Tigers.

"I've never played in a game where a hat-trick was taken – that's the first one," O'Brien said.

It was an incredible way for the day's play to finish considering much of the afternoon was dominated by the batsmen.

Werribee posted 9-233 declared, but faded late on.

At one stage the Tigers were cruising at 113 without loss, courtesy of a superb opening

stand between Adam Alifracco (75) and Matt Dean (36). Alifracco and Dean both fell with the score on 113, but O'Brien (66) and Shaun Dean (20) combined for a 72-run partnership to take the score to 3-185.

That's when things got tricky for Werribee, and they lost their last six wickets for 48 before the declaration.

All this happened while Yarraville was producing a slow over rate.

The Eagles would barely have got through 70 overs had the Tigers decided not to declare.

But O'Brien made a bold decision to have a dip at snaring some early Eagles wickets with the final three overs of play. He never expected to have Yarraville in trouble on 3-2 at stumps.

"If we had've batted an extra three minutes, the game would've been called off at 68 overs," O'Brien said. "I thought with nine down, we might as well have a couple of overs at them and it panned out alright for us. I don't think Yarraville expected it."

"It sort of threw them out a bit, so it was to our advantage."

It leaves Yarraville with just seven wickets in hand to score a further 232 runs.

Earlier in the day, Alifracco produced his best knock of the summer with 75.

Alifracco's knock could have massive implications for the finals' chance of both sides with the Eagles sitting seventh and the Tigers a game back in ninth.

"He's got the ability, so hopefully we can see that more often from him," O'Brien said.

While Werribee has the momentum following Burton's hat-trick, O'Brien knows there is still plenty to play out in this contest.

"[Matthew] Harrison and [Matthew] Love are their two best batsmen and are still yet to bat, so it's still game on," O'Brien said.

Meanwhile, Hoppers Crossing will need to bowl to its maximum capabilities if it is defend a small total of 185 against Preston at Preston City Oval.

Trent Said was the standout for the Cats with 64, while Will Partington-Gardner chimed in with 29. Brett Smith took a late wicket for the Cats to have Preston on 1-3 at stumps.

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