

# Cats drop finals bundle

By Lance Jenkinson

A fairytale ending to the season has eluded Hoppers Crossing in the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association.

The Cats were reminded of their place in the pecking order by a Williamstown side with prime position in the race for the north-west group premiership in a heavy 94-run loss in a one-day game at the Williamstown Cricket Ground on Saturday.

Cats captain-coach Greg Kennedy believed his side deserved a better end to the season, but acknowledged that Williamstown was a quality candidate for the flag.

Entering the final round, Hoppers Crossing was an extreme long shot to play in the finals.

Even if the Cats had won, they would have missed out on the final because of Yarraville's win over Taylors Lakes.

But the Cats travelled to Williamstown knowing a win would give them a sneaky chance of playing in the finals, giving Kennedy the chance to assess his team in a pressure situation.

"There was some excitement, nervousness, apprehension – I'm not sure what it was – but we were just not quite on," he said.

Williamstown made an imposing 6-233 off its 45 overs.

The Seagulls withstood some quality bowling from Hoppers Crossing, but were helped by the Cats' sloppy fielding.

"We dropped a couple of catches and that was all she wrote against their quality players," Kennedy said.

Brett Smith ended a break-out season for Hoppers Crossing with 3-39 off seven overs.

"I couldn't be happier with his development as a player and he'll be taking over the mantle next year as our premier fast bowler," Kennedy said.

Hoppers Crossing's run chase started promisingly, with opener Cameron Nicol (24) and first drop James Hook (26) ticking the scoreboard over at a high rate.

Once they were removed, the Cats' innings fizzled out, with Brandon Diplock (26) making the only significant contribution thereafter.

While there'll be no finals in the firsts, Kennedy insists the club has future-proofed itself.

The Cats will play second XI finals and most of their top 22 players are under 23.

"There's not many old blokes like me taking up spots," he said.

"We're in a good development phase and we're definitely a club that's comfortable that we're doing the right things for our future."



Bryce Stuart puts everything into a delivery for Hoppers Crossing. (Damjan Janevski)



## IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ The Maribyrnong Sports Academy athletic team has returned from the Simplot games in the US well pleased with the efforts of the six competitors who made the trek to Pocatello, Idaho. Five finalists and a silver and bronze medal shows the effort was very worthwhile. Team captain Jamieson Battistella won bronze in the high jump and Angus Wood picked up silver in the long jump. The Battistella name is well known in local footy circles, with Jamieson's father David a premiership coach at North Footscray. David was team coach for the US trip, filling in for Darren Clarke, who was on national selection duties on the Gold Coast. Angus is the brother of Bulldogs captain Easton. Their dad, Phil, was a Commonwealth Games long jumper for New Zealand. The other members of the team were Alison Williams, Kelera Ratu, Ella Nickolaus and Bianca Puglisi.

■ The college is also celebrating the achievements of Celeste Mucci, who completed VCE last year and will represent Australia at next month's Commonwealth Games in the heptathlon. The school has two former students (Celeste and Gronya Somerville) and four current academy coaches involved in the games on the Gold Coast. The facilities at Maribyrnong are the envy of many schools, but it requires the right people in place to achieve results and the school continues to produce fine athletes in a variety of sports.

■ The stories behind the formation of the AFLW and the people who made it happen are documented in *Roar*, a book written by Samantha Lane. The Newport Community Hub will host a night with Samantha on Monday, March 26. Bookings are available via [libraries.hobsonbay.vic.gov.au](http://libraries.hobsonbay.vic.gov.au) or 1300 462 542. The real test for football is to convert this explosion of interest into a sustainable model for the future.

■ Werribee will miss the sub-district cricket finals after a forgettable last two weeks of the season. Hoppers Crossing failed to pull off a fairytale finish, so it will also be packing the whites away. Spotswood missed out in the VTCA, failing to knock over the premiership favourite, Yarraville Club Cricket Club, in the last round. Good luck to those teams in cricket finals. I hope the weather is kind and the experience is memorable for all teams.

Kevin Hillier

# Porter delivers forward strength for Tigers



Josh Porter will be back in the black and gold of the Werribee Tigers in 2018. (Damian Visentini)

Werribee has lured Josh Porter back to the club for the 2018 Victorian Football League season.

It will be the key forward's second stint with the Tigers, where he played 35 VFL games and kicked 38 goals between 2014-16.

The 23-year-old is thrilled to re-connect with some former teammates and cannot wait to be part of a new-look Tigers as they become a standalone club for the first time in 19 years.

"Obviously, going standalone is quite exciting," Porter said.

"There are a few new faces around the club, so I'm excited to meet the boys, but there are a lot of old faces as well, so it's good to get back into it."

Porter had an interesting 2017.

The Murray Bushrangers product was studying teaching at East Carolina University in the US and also chasing premiership glory with the Wangaratta Magpies in the Ovens and Murray Football and Netball League.

He flew home from the US to be part of the Magpies grand final win over Albury, where he

played alongside former Werribee player Ben Speight.

It was while Porter was travelling that Werribee coach John Lamont made contact with him about returning to the club.

"I came back and saw the feel around the place was really positive," Porter said.

"Having that brand-new facility topped it off, so it was a pretty easy decision."

Lamont was thrilled to get a commitment from Porter.

Not only is Porter going to be a key forward on the field, but with three years in the system, he can be a leader within the team.

"It's a great thing, players returning to your club, and the blokes are excited because they realise the type of player that Josh is and what he's going to bring to the club," Lamont said.

"He's got strong working relationships, he's a popular bloke, and 196cm key forwards who are competitive don't actually grow on trees."

Lance Jenkinson

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