

Hoppers brings some mid-season heat

Red-hot Hoppers has promotion on the mind in the Bowls Victoria division 2.

The Pannam Drive-based team is a game clear in second with a 6-1 record after seven rounds.

Only undefeated Altona Sports is standing in the way of Hoppers and the summit nearing the mid-point of the season.

In their most recent game a fortnight ago, Hoppers produced a remarkable comeback to beat Williamstown 75-70 on its home green.

It was Hoppers' third successive win and most memorable to this point in the season.

Hoppers was staring down the barrel after 40 ends, trailing by a whopping 22 shots.

Slowly but surely they chipped away at the deficit and by the 73rd end they would have an unlikely lead.

The pick of the Hoppers rinks was skipped by Collin Ravenscroft, which won 25-13 with Deanna Tobin, Paul Shelton and Greg Berry on board.

"After a disappointing start again, the focus

was for all rinks to improve their position and watch the main board score," Ravenscroft said.

"We knew that if we do run the game right out then we could get back in the game.

"To take the 16 points and improve our position on the ladder was extremely pleasing."

Hoppers will travel to fourth-placed Flemington-Kensington for an all-top four match-up on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Werribee will be looking for a return to form when it travels to lowly Essendon on Saturday.

The Bees have been in a bit of a slump, losing their past two games to be 4-3 for the season.

Last time out, Werribee went down 83-66 to undefeated Moonee Valley, salvaging just the one rink. Rob Smith claimed that victory for the Bees with a nail-biting one-shot win.

Lance Jenkinson

Deanna Tobin unleashes for Hoppers in the comeback win over Williamstown. (Shawn Smits)



IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ They have every reason to be proud at the Spotswood Football Club. Yet another junior product has advanced to the elite level, with Lachlan Fogarty drafted by Geelong with pick 22 at the national draft. Fogarty's older brother (of four), Michael, was on the Footscray VFL list in recent years. Their uncle is current Spotswood assistant coach Grant Smith, himself a more than handy player with Williamstown, playing in the 1986 and 1990 premierships teams. Spotswood has four current players in the AFL, with Fogarty joining Callan Ward (GWS captain), Bachar Houli (Richmond premierships player) and Connor Menadue (2017 Grand Final Sprint winner).

■ Laura Giles is a remarkable athlete. Her stellar netball career was acknowledged last week when she was inducted into the Hoppers Crossing Sports Club Hall of Fame. Her achievements include district and Victorian representation at many age levels and even being selected for Australia and being part of the World Champion team at the 2013 titles in South Africa. She has won numerous individual awards, including multiple best-and-fairest trophies, team of the year selection and many others. Team success has been equally forthcoming, with premierships at junior and senior level. Laura, 25, is the first female to receive the hall of fame honour in the club's 25-year history.

■ Brody Miihocek completed yet another rags to riches sports story when he was drafted to Collingwood as a mature-aged rookie. The gritty defender has been at Port Melbourne for the past two years and before that at Werribee. At 25, the Tasmanian had not given up hope that an AFL side would recognise his talent, determination and hard work, and he has deservedly landed at the elite level. His father, Jack, played 13 games for Essendon in the late '70s, but will be a magpie man from now on.

■ The Point Cook Bulldogs will certainly make their mark in their debut season in the WRFL if their recruiting is anything to go by. The latest signing is Barry Priest medallist Wayne Skipper. It has been a big week for the former Bulldog and Hawk, as he and wife Sally welcomed their second daughter, Frankie Carol. Skip will turn 35 before the first bounce of the 2018 season but is sure to be a big hit with the red, white and blue boys in division 2.

Kevin Hillier

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Bulldogs' giant recruit

By Lance Jenkinson

Point Cook has shaken up the Western Region Football League division 2 competition with an eye catching recruiting spree.

The Bulldogs have landed one of the biggest fish in the league, securing the signature of former Hoppers Crossing ruckman Wayne Skipper.

Skipper, who played 60 games at the top level, 45 with the Western Bulldogs and 15 with Hawthorn, and was part of the 2011 Port Melbourne VFL premierships team, has been one of the best big men in the WRFL for a long time, peaking with a Barry Priest Medal for division 1 best-and-fairest in 2015.

Skipper is just one of a host of new faces to arrive at Saltwater Reserve next season, making the new team to the senior competition a force from day one.

"We're going OK with recruiting, we've done well so far," Point Cook coach Ian Denny said.

"Wayne was a pretty good get for us.

"He came down and met with us and we talked to him about our short term and long term ambitions and he was all over it, pretty excited about it, so he's looking forward to it."

Skipper was wooed to Point Cook by new assistant coach Brett Jacobs.

Jacobs was a coach of Skipper for the WRFL interleague games and the pair struck up a friendship.

Skipper's impact on the Bulldogs will be more than just on field.

The 34-year-old will be entrusted to provide leadership to the team, in particular the young tall players such as ruckman Andrew Robinson and key forward Alex Grigg.

"It will be a good opportunity for guys to spend some time with him on and off the ground and see the way he goes about it," Denny said.

"He was a Barry Priest Medal winner only a couple of years ago, so you're talking about a premier player in the competition.

"We think he's going to bring a whole lot of stuff and he's a good fella too, a knockabout sort of a bloke, so he'll assimilate well with the club and the young fellas."

Point Cook is excited with its new-found midfield depth. Recruits Jessi Lampi, Sean Curtis and Matthew Poland will be vying for spots in a strong engine room.

"We hope to be strong through the midfield which will give us strong peripheral players through the flanks and wings," Denny said.

Just as important for Point Cook was its player retention.

All required players have stuck with the



Star ruck-forward Wayne Skipper will call Point Cook home in 2018. (Marco De Luca)

Bulldogs since their move from the Victorian Amateur Football Association to the WRFL.

"Virtually all the players from last season have committed for next year," Denny said.

"Both Robbie [Milne], who won the best and fairest, and Mason [Kip], who won the three best and fairests before that, are back on board.

"It's a good mixture of new and old.

"It's a club that people want to come and play for."

Point Cook is also working hard to get a women's team off the ground.

The Bulldogs will also bridge the gap been junior and senior men's teams with an under-19 team.

Denny is thrilled to see the Bulldogs implementing both teams for next season.

"It gives the club a better pathway having the U19s, so we're pretty excited with that team," he said.



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