

Wyndham's opening round road test

All three of Wyndham's top tier clubs will be on the road in round one of the 2018 Western Region Football League division 1 season.

The league unveiled its fixtures last week and revealed that Hoppers Crossing, Werribee Districts and Wyndhamvale are all scheduled to play away on the opening weekend of April 14.

Hoppers Crossing will face St Albans at Kings Park Reserve in the traditional kick off to the season, while Werribee Districts travels to last season's runners-up Sunshine Kangaroos and Wyndhamvale has a tough trip to Spotswood.

It won't be a long wait for supporters of all three clubs to experience their team's first home games with their home openers taking place in the second round on April 21.

On that day, Hoppers Crossing will face a daunting test against five-time defending champions Deer Park, Werribee Districts will entertain Albion and Wyndhamvale faces Sunshine.

The division 1 grand final re-match between

Deer Park and Sunshine is scheduled for round four at John McLeod Oval.

Deer Park will unfurl its flag in the opening round against Altona.

In division 2, newcomer Point Cook will host Manor Lakes in its first game since moving its senior teams from the Victorian Amateur Football Association to the WRFL.

Manor Lakes will play its first home game of the season against North Footscray in round two under lights at Howqua Reserve.

In division 3, a tasty local derby between Wyndham Suns and Tarneit will be the highlight of the opening week at Goddard Street Reserve.

It will be an opener to remember for Glen Orden, which makes its return to senior football after a year out, against Point Cook Centrals. It will also be the first time Centrals plays under their new name, having been known as Sanctuary Lakes in the past.

Lance Jenkinson

WRFL 2018

ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Division 1

St Albans v Hoppers Crossing
Albion v Caroline Springs
Sunshine v Werribee Districts
Spotswood v Wyndhamvale
Deer Park v Altona

Division 2

Point Cook v Manor Lakes
West Footscray v Newport
Parkside v Albanvale
North Footscray v Yarraville-Seddon

Division 3

Wyndham Suns v Tarneit
Glen Orden v Point Cook Centrals
Braybrook v Sunshine Heights
Laverton v North Sunshine



IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ Merv Hughes admitted his year 8 English teacher probably never imagined in his wildest dreams Merv would one day have the word "author" after his name. Merv may have been no Rhodes Scholar, yet he has just brought out his latest book (his fifth), *BBQ, Beer and B.S.* Merv's life motto is: Find something you like doing then try to make a living out of it. These days he works in the media, has a national television fishing show, hosts cricket tours all over the world, does numerous speaking engagements and writes the odd book. He is still a passionate western suburbs boy and is currently the face of the membership campaign for the Werribee Football Club, where he played 95 senior games. Merv has a three-word description for his latest writing exploit: "Ideal Christmas Gift."

■ Western Bulldogs president Peter Gordon announced at the members' Christmas party last week that the club had not only turned another trading profit (third in a row above \$1 million) for the year, but also that the Bulldogs are net debt free. No one I know can remember the Bulldogs being so financially strong. Well done to all concerned. Last week, Barkers Cafe hosted the past players and officials Christmas lunch, at which Ian Foreman stood down from the committee after a 42-year term. Ian, an unsung hero of the red, white and blue, played two senior games back in 1952.

■ It's all smiles at the Braybrook-based running stables of Terry McGarity after two of his runners quinnella-ed the Terang Gift recently. Megan McMahon just edged out clubmate Jody Richards to take the prestigious 120-metre event. The major athletic events on the horizon locally are the St Albans Gift on January 20 and the Maribyrnong Gift at Pennell Reserve on Australia Day (January 26). McMahon won the St Albans race last year. Another McGarity product, Nathan Burfitt, followed his third in the mile at Terang with a runner-up placing at Northcote last Sunday. McGarity, who turned 71 recently, is one of the fittest men you will ever meet and his coaching record in a variety of sports is remarkable.

■ Club memberships, sporting goods and exercise equipment are all good Christmas stocking stuffers and anything that promotes getting moving and getting active should be on your list for the festive season.

Kevin Hillier

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Saints very much alive

By Lance Jenkinson

Nothing but a premiership will erase the pain of a grand final loss for Seabrook, but a red hot 5-0 start has gone some way to taking minds off last March.

The Saints continued their flawless start to the season with a 77-run win over Melton South Royals in Victorian Turf Cricket Association west A1 at Bruce Comben Reserve on Saturday.

Saints captain Leigh Edwards is rapt.

"It's been a fantastic start – even our second XI have won their first five as well," he said.

"The ones and twos are undefeated on top of the ladder, so we're off to a flyer.

"Everything is heading the right way and it would be great to go into Christmas unbeaten."

Seabrook was bowled out for 129 one ball short of the maximum 40 overs after the game reverted to a one-dayer following the abandonment of day one.

The Saints were a bit deflated by the total, though the slow out-field brought about by the rain in the previous week hampered their progress somewhat.

"We weren't quite sure if we had enough runs on the board," Edwards said.

"It was a pretty good batting wicket – it was just that the outfield was slow. You really had to run your runs because you'd crack one through the covers and it was pulling up and you'd only get two.

"We lost wickets consistently and weren't building partnerships.

"Someone would bat for five overs and then we'd lose a wicket and have to start again."

Walgama Eranga top-scored for Seabrook with 36, featuring in a 51-run opening stand with Jake Collins (nine).

Dhaval Patel (21) and Andrew Hodgart (17) made handy contributions to get the Saints to a defendable total.

Seabrook need not have been worried about whether it had enough runs on the board, as it bowled Melton South out for just 52.

The Royals lost 8-14 in the middle of their innings with Saints paceman Vishva Werrakoon causing carnage with 7-24.

"He was absolutely swinging it both ways and was a class above," Edwards said.

"He played first-class cricket in Sri Lanka, same as Eranga, so they're great recruits for us."

Bellbridge's rough start to the season continued with an 83-run loss to Gellibrand at Digman Reserve. Robert Stimpson was the bright spot for the Bears with 43 in his first game since earning a call-up from the seconds.

In north-west A1, Werribee Centrals was



Seabrook batsman Andrew Hodgart watches as the glanced ball sails close to the wicketkeeper. (Mark Wilson)

bowled out for 97 chasing Altona Roosters' 6-188. Waqar Shah was the standout for the Centurions with 30, while Jacob Russell took 3-43.

In north-west B1, in-form Jack Bolam made 80 not out and Scott Maloney bounced back

with 71 in Point Cook's 54-run win over Maribyrnong Park-St Mary's.

Wyndhamvale squeezed past Williamstown Imperials by four runs in a thriller after superb bowling from Jay Dolliver (4-45) and David Buchanan (3-17).