

## Storm one win away from fairytale season

Manor Lakes has a psychological edge over not only the rest of the Western Region Football League senior women's competition, but also the weather.

The Storm demolished Caroline Springs, keeping them goalless in a 60-point semi-final thrashing at Burbank Oval on Saturday to be the first team through to the grand final.

The victory was set up in the first quarter when the Storm kicked three goals to nil kicking into a stiff breeze.

"Our captain won the toss and doesn't say we're kicking into the wind, it's only, we're going that way," Storm coach Nathan Smithwick said.

"We kicked three goals to nothing in that quarter.

"It's a mind over matter type of thing and we just keep going."

Manor Lakes is one win away from a fairytale unbeaten season. The Storm went 13-0 in the regular season with an astronomically high percentage of 2708.93.



Jaimi Paten could not find a way through this pack, but her Manor Lakes team found its way through to the grand final. (Marco De Luca)

They cruised through the first final, keeping Caroline Springs to just seven behinds.

While the Storm would be unbackable favourites on grand final day, Smithwick said the team cannot afford to get ahead of itself.

"It's a sigh of relief to get to the grand final to start with," he said.

"Getting there first doesn't make us a 70 per cent chance to win the game, we're still a 50-50 chance of winning."

Gemma Anderson was outstanding for Manor Lakes in the midfield. She capped a best-on-ground performance with three goals.

Smithwick implored coaches at higher levels to consider his star player.

"Gemma's a freak player," he said.

"She should be playing at a higher level."

Madisson Ahumada also jagged three goals for Manor Lakes. The midfield of Anderson, Ahumada, Jaimi Paten, Cara Dunshea, Jessica Court, Belinda Nancarrow and Diandra Sellers was totally dominant.

Manor Lakes will await the winner of the preliminary final between Caroline Springs and Spotswood.

Lance Jenkinson



## IN THE DOGHOUSE

At the elite level of sport no one wants to hang on for that last season where it becomes bleedin' obvious the carnival is over. I am sure those thoughts would have been racing through Dale Morris' mind in recent months as he evaluated his future. In signing a one-year contract for 2019, the elder statesman of the Bulldogs has made many people happy. Unquestionably one of the nicest blokes to ever don the red, white and blue jumper, he is also one of the fiercest competitors and most durable players in the club's history. His passion for the game and the club shines like a beacon and it will be great to see him running around again in the famous number 38.

John Lamont has moved on from Avalon Airport Oval after five years as senior coach and three before that in a development capacity via the North Melbourne alignment. Lamont finished on a high, with his side winning four of the last six games of the year and his final duty will be naming the 2018 Bruce Montgomery Trophy winner later this month. John has wonderful people skills and in the cut-throat environment of elite football, it's a trait that goes a long way. That, along with his football know-how, will make him a wanted commodity.

The search for players is a constant for any football club and there will be many players contemplating their next move in the coming weeks and months. Spotswood Football Club Life Member Bill Bond is on a sub-committee of the Torquay FC which is entering a senior women's team next year and it is looking for coaches, players and volunteers. If you are making a sea change and want to be involved, contact [admin@torquaytigers.com.au](mailto:admin@torquaytigers.com.au)

I don't think local and second tier footy cash in enough on the opportunity they have with the AFL bye weekend. Suburban leagues and VFL should fill some of the space normally given to AFL, but they have to do some work to get that space and airtime. In our backyard the Deer Park story is a beauty. If it wins and makes it six straight, what a dynasty. If it gets beaten it is the underdog story of the decade. Either way it is far more interesting than a large slab of what was written last week. If the bye week stays, local clubs should do some work to get some much-needed and deserved publicity.

Kevin Hillier

Any news, let me know on email [kevin@howdypartnersmedia.com.au](mailto:kevin@howdypartnersmedia.com.au). Follow me on Twitter @KevinHillier, plus check out the Howdy Partners Media website as well.



Werribee Bears players and fans celebrate with the premiership cup. (Mark Wilson)

## Rare hat-trick for Bears

By Lance Jenkinson

Let the debate begin, are the Werribee Bears the team of the decade in the NRL Victoria first grade?

The Bears have achieved what no other club has done in this era by taking out a rare premiership three-peat.

It is only the third time in top-flight history that a side has strung three premierships together.

Sunbury has managed three premierships this decade, but not in the form of a three-peat.

The 1990s had a three-peat side in the Waverley-Oakleigh Panthers from 1992-94, while the 2000s had the all-conquering Altona Roosters who won an unsurpassed four titles in a row from 2003-06, as part of a dynasty of seven premierships in 10 seasons.

The Bears completed the hat-trick with a gutsy 12-8 grand final win over Sunbury Tigers at Haines Reserve on Saturday.

Bears coach Josh Makiri was on cloud nine after the game.

"I'm kind of speechless," he said. "The feeling is unreal.

"I'm happy for the boys because they're the ones who really deserve it."

We might have to wait until after the 2019 season to settle the debate over which team takes out team of the decade status. What is undisputed is that Werribee is the club of 2018.

The Bears won the first grade men's and first grade women's premierships – on home soil.

It was the first time Haines Reserve has hosted an NRL Victoria grand final day and it was a good one for the hosts.

The day began well with the Bears trouncing local rivals Truganina Rabbitohs 14-12 in the women's first grade decider.

The icing on the cake was the men's side showing guts and determination to beat Sunbury.

There was little to separate Werribee and Sunbury with the exception of one important ingredient.

"Our boys had more determination," Makiri said. "It came down to who wanted it more."

Werribee started fast, scoring the opening try through Radeem Saleupolu after three minutes.

The Bears charged out to a 10-0 lead when Kuros Metuariki converted the goal from his own try. All that was good for Werribee came on the back of strong play from Sepu Ryder, the game's MVP.

"He's just went forward all day and he tackled all day," Makiri said. "He produced 80 minutes of strong football."

Ten down was not a knockout blow for Sunbury. The Tigers got a late try through Jeremia Jeremia to trim the deficit back to six at half-time.

Metuariki extended Werribee's lead to 12-4 with a penalty goal midway through the second half before Samisoni Fusi crossed over for Sunbury to cut the lead to four.

It was in the final 10 minutes that proved Werribee to be worthy champions. The Bears defensive line was being pushed and prodded in repeat sets, but they kept the Tigers at bay.

"It was by far the best defence we've produced all year," Makiri said.

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