

## **January 2008**

The start of the year saw the traditional Eltham Tournament to start the representative season.

However, the whole club was stunned with the news of the passing of Clinton Grybas

### ***Farewell Clinton***

#### **WARRANTYTE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION EXTENDS ITS SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO CLINTON'S FAMILY AT HIS PASSING ON JANUARY 5, 2008.**

Clinton Grybas, a name synonymous at Warrandyte. A vibrant young man who's passion and love of not only basketball but ALL sports from grassroots to national and international level.

His love of the Warrandyte *Redbacks* is well known. A junior player, referee, coach, committee member and a driving force in the construction of WSC, Clinton was always getting in and getting involved.

The senior competition which he drove and ran for many years out of Warrandyte High, the original home court of the Redbacks is still running today and although his media commitments often saw him far from home, he always kept in touch with what was happening around the Association.

His delight in becoming the number 1 ticket holder for the Big V Venom women's team was clear and separately is the news-item from last year where he spoke of his pride and passion for Warrandyte. For those who were at any of the Big V games Clinton attended you will know the delight he had in being HOME at Warrandyte. He was amazed at the sea of familiar and new supporters of Warrandyte and how his little club had grown. His pride and passion at how Warrandyte had taken the big steps forward was clear and he often made mention of Warrandyte in his media role.

**R.I.P. Clinton - you have left a footprint in the history of Warrandyte  
Basketball Association that will live on.**

**Words by Mandy Ratcliffe**

## ***Warrandyte Basketball Stunned By Passing of Clinton Grybas***

Warrandyte Basketball Association extends its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Clinton Grybas following his sad passing on January 5, 2008.

Clinton Grybas, a name synonymous at Warrandyte Basketball, was a vibrant young man who had a passion and love for not only basketball, but all sports from grassroots to national and international levels will be sadly missed.

His love of the Warrandyte Redbacks is well known. A junior player, referee, coach, committee member and a driving force in the development of Warrandyte Sports Complex, Clinton was always getting in and getting involved.

The senior competition which he drove and ran for many years out of Warrandyte High School, the original home court of the Redbacks, is still running today and although his media commitments often saw him far from home, he always kept in touch with what was happening around the association.

His delight in becoming the No. 1 ticket holder for the Warrandyte Venom Big V women's team in its inaugural year of 2007 was clear. He had great pride and passion for Warrandyte and followed the Venom's progress closely.

Warrandyte secretary, Mandy Ratcliffe, spoke of Clinton's delight at returning to the club in 2007 and seeing how far it had progressed.

"He was amazed at the sea of familiar and new supporters of Warrandyte and how his little club had grown," said Ratcliffe.

"His pride and passion at how Warrandyte had taken big steps forward was clear and he often made mention of Warrandyte in his media role."

Clinton's article on the first 30 years of history at Warrandyte Basketball can be read on the club's website still today.

"Clinton spoke to me late last year about writing the next pages of our history with the inception of Venom and our entry into the Big V," added Ratcliffe.

"He has left a footprint in the history of Warrandyte Basketball Association that will live on forever."

Locally, Clinton was a Warrandyte boy through and through, always remaining in close contact with the town, his family and friends, along with the local sports clubs and teams.

Venom senior coach Justin Nelson first came across Clinton during the 1990s within media circles and was delighted to have his involvement at Warrandyte Basketball.

"Having been a long time participant at the club, including various roles within playing, refereeing and on the committee, Clinton didn't hesitate to support his local club and get involved once more," said Nelson.

"Despite his hectic workload travelling around Australia calling the football, to his credit, Clinton attended Big V games during the season as our number one member and was thrilled to see the advancement of the club."

"He sat behind our bench and cheered loudly for the team, always proud and passionate about his connection with Warrandyte Basketball at the grassroots level.

"I know the team and the club were always appreciative of his support. He often spent time meeting and talking with the coaching staff and players, along with the many friends he had at the club," added Nelson.

"Obviously the news of his passing is still sinking in across the sports media and the numerous national codes he was involved in as an extremely

professional and talented broadcaster.

"For one so young to leave us, is always such a shock. Clinton was a great believer in grassroots sports and the pathway it provided to youngsters to follow their dreams.

"We will miss him greatly at Warrandyte Basketball and I know the Venom women's team will miss his support at our home games in season 2008, as will I and my coaching staff."

RIP - Clinton Grybas.

### ***Eltham Tournament 2008. Australia Day weekend.***

The weekend was hot (but not too hot); it was near the end of the holidays, with the "back to school" sales on. The last weekend for family time.

For a large and growing number of Warrandyte Venom basketball family this last weekend was spent in various basketball stadia in and around the area, attending one of the largest Junior basketball tournaments in the world – the Eltham Dandenong Junior Basketball Tournament.

In a packed schedule, most teams played 6 games across the weekend with teams and players coming back before the season proper starts.

A record numbers (26 teams) represented Warrandyte with pride and the accompanying support by family and friends was fantastic. At every game there seemed to be more Venom supporters than those from opposing clubs. The spirit and the pride shown is a credit to all.

There were some great 'firsts' for teams, including the 12.2 girls not only winning their first ever game, but they also making it through to the semi-finals losing to Werribee by 9 to 4. The girls united as a team and gelled in their togetherness. Coach Molly Booth was naturally thrilled.



Above – Under 12 Girls – preliminary Finalists. (Left to Right) Sarah Davis, Emma James, Zoe MacDonald, Claudia Kuen, Madeleine Rowarth, Natalie MacDonald, Cassidy O'Donnell & Morgan Cocks

Warrandyte's 16.1 girls beat Kilsyth's VC team by 41-28, the 12.1 boys scored a similar result against Eltham's VC team, while the 16.2 boys celebrated a grand final win with their new coach, Scott Rimes.

All up, 14 Venom teams make it through to the semi-finals (that's 50%), eight made it through to grand finals, while our 14.2 girls and 16.2 boys winning their sections.

One of the best games across the weekend was the 14.2 girls grand final with the Venom's American Big V player Jess Oram coaching her team to a thrilling two-point win defeating Altona by 39-37. It's fair to say Jess has just about let all of New York know.

The Under 16 boys had a thrilling win against Werribee in the grand final by 48-41. Werribee opened strongly and Warrandyte were clawing their way back into the game to be 25 all at the break. The game seesawed in the second half and when Luke Collins outside shot went in with three minutes to go that margin was three points, the largest at that stage of the half.

The final minutes were tense with the Venom being slightly more composed to record a good win by 48-41.

"They are learning how to win and just keep getting better. A good team effort and that's what I like" was coach Scott Rimes comment at the end of the game.



#### Under 16 Boys – Grand Finalists

Back Row: Sam Holston, Billy Lavery, Scott Rimes (coach), Brad McKenzie, Luke Collins  
Front (kneeling): Kyle Robertson, Matt Ratcliffe, Joel Rimes, Lochie Johnson, Josh Edwards.

Another success story was the Under 18 boys coached by Ian Wood. The team improved by at least 10 points a game over the weekend. Their opening game against Whittlesea was a loss by 7 which was reversed to a three point win when they came up against the Pacers team again in the Semi finals.

In a high quality game against Eltham in the grand final they were not disgraced going down by 41-32, again improving by 10 points when these sides met earlier in the tournament.

"They are starting to have some self belief. They are starting to win and that gives them confidence that they know they can win. Coming together well." was a hoarse Ian Wood's comment at the end of the game.



Under 18 Boys: Back Row: Coach Ian Wood, Andrew Whittle, Alistair Stockman, Peter Cormick, Andrew Huntington, Joshua Rock  
Front: Joshua Cookes, Charlie Raines, Jake Rowe, Jason McCracken

The future looks good for the Venom, with the 4 Under 12 boys sides all doing well. Damian Arsenis's boys battled through a heavy schedule and an illness to make it through to the quarter finals. However the toll of the previous 6 games was taking effect, and despite leading by 5 points against Werribee in the semi-final, the boys ran out of legs, and players as they finished the game with just 4 players

left on court, with three of them on 4 fouls each.

One of the other under 12's just missed out on the finals while the other two were runners up in the grand final, David Gibson's boys going down 34-27 against Whittlesea and Andrew Robertson's side going down 29-9 against Blackburn.

## ***Warrandyte Venom at the Eltham Dandenong Tournament 2008***

**...26 teams, and an exhausting weekend.**

The following are the "raw" inputs from various teams – just go with the enthusiasm.

### **Under 16-3 G Brendan Ricci (stand in coach)**

The Under 16(3) girls were playing in a section with two pools of 6 with only

the top two in each going through, so it was always going to be tough to get to finals, especially with only 6 for some games.

We welcomed Jasmine Haikal to the team for this tournament and she did really well, as did all the girls.

We started with a narrow win against Ringwood. We always seem to lift against them and this was no exception, winning 20-17. Some great efforts in the 2nd half when we got right on top.

In our 2nd game, we lost a close won against Eltham (eventual finalists) where we came back from a big deficit to within 2 points with a minute to play. The game was a bit of a farce with Eltham refusing to wear clash tops and both teams frequently mistaking opponents for team mates. We showed a lot of character to nearly pinch this one with 6 players in the heat on Saturday - a great effort. We played Blackburn next at home (eventual finalists also) and managed to restrict them to just 16 points, a great defensive effort, unfortunately we had one of those games in offense where absolutely nothing went in - 5 points won't win you many games! Thanks to Brenna Edsell, for hopping out of the stands and throwing on her sister's uniform to help us out! Sunday night was the real heartbreaker In a game where we were in front for 98% of the match, our poor free throw shooting and a few calls saw us get pipped by a point in just about the last play. The girls were very disappointed about this one as they knew that they were the better team but a succession of missed shots and free throws proved costly. An 8am start on Monday didn't stop the girls from putting on a clinic against Waverley 2. Our 34-18 victory was highlighted by a good all round effort with everyone scoring and contributing at both ends of the court.

Congratulations to the team for working real hard against the odds with 6 players. Most of our opponents had 8

or more. The team is really coming together well as a team and makes a real effort to work on weaknesses, such as turnovers. In the game against Eltham we probably turned it over 20 times - we improved out of sight in this area in the subsequent games. With a bit of shooting practice prescribed for the coming weeks, the team will go from strength to strength on Friday nights.

Well done Maddison (great all round game - threw herself around in all games), Sarah (tremendous defensive efforts in all games, some great drives to the basket and always prepared to run hard), Erin (worked harder in defensive and made some great baskets), Brianna (learning to play the post and is getting better with every game, worked tirelessly as she had to play virtually every minute), Tess (ran and worked hard in defense, passing is improving really well, made some great baskets), Jasmine (fitted in really well, blocked more shots than anyone in the tournament, was a big threat under the ring taking some big rebounds at both ends and making some crucial shots) and Eleanor (ran herself ragged in all games and threw herself against the opposition (literally) made some great lay-ups).

Regards

Brendan Ricci (stand in coach)

## **Justin EMAIL**

I can honestly say that I feel like I have played the tournament. I'm completely worn out, but getting out to 37 games was well worth it across what was a great weekend for the club.

I'm not sure what the final wash-up was, but our next newsletter will update us. I know we enjoyed plenty of



success in both the boys and girls grades, plenty of players showed rapid improvement, but best of all was the unity many teams (and parents) showed during the tournament.

I got to see many of our girls and boys teams and enjoyed the chance to watch many of our coaches in action. We truly are blessed to have so many coaches in the program who don't have a child playing, they are with us because they love the club and they believe in our program. It's a great position for Warrandyte Basketball to be in as we move forward.

I'd like to make mention of a few teams that I had the chance to see, and without doubt there will be many similar stories from teams I didn't get the opportunity to see.

I spent a game with the 12.2 girls on Sunday night at Warrandyte Stadium and honestly enjoyed my best game of basketball since last year's Big V preliminary final win against Diamond Valley. Watching this young team reminded me what this game and the fantastic people at Warrandyte Basketball Association are all about. Winning and losing is par for the course, you simply won't win every game you play in, but what you will hopefully see is our players developing and getting better. These girls were awesome. Yes, they got up and celebrated a victory, but their biggest cheer was reserved for a player scoring her first goal.

I went home with a huge smile on my face and told my wife all about the team. For those who know me well, you'll appreciate that comment as my wife and I don't often talk about basketball.

I can't wait to see these girls in U14s, 16s, 18s and maybe even at senior level in future years. They all looked so proud to be playing for Warrandyte.

I also saw the 12.4 boys on Friday night and echo every comment made above. These boys put on a great show and hung off every word from their coach. I was also very pleased to hear the improvement shown by our 16.2 and 14.4 boys, both of which have had some changes with coaches and seem to have responded positively.

Our 16.1 girls defeated Kilsyth's 16.1 VC team by 13pts in a fantastic team effort, while our 12.1 boys easily accounted for Eltham's number one team. Both of these results highlight how quickly our program is developing.

Again, apologies to the good news stories from other teams, but my most enjoyable adventure across the weekend was undoubtedly the 14.2 girls grand final with our senior Big V New Yorker Jess Oram coaching the team. Up against a team (Altona) they had lost to twice previously, the girls were simply outstanding and must have had at least 50 Venom supporters cheering them on to what was a memorable Grand Final win. The emotion was magnificent, so too was watching Jess jumping for joy on the sideline. This is a good news story that I'm sure has already reached her family and friends back home in New York.

Well done to all teams, including those playing in finals while I write this. I'm sure we'll hear of your efforts over the next 24hrs. Now that the tournament is out of the way, our attention returns to Friday night basketball, starting from this week. It's always tough to come up fresh from a long weekend

tournament, so please be patient with our players. On average, they have just completed two months of Friday night basketball in the space of just a few days.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Regards  
Justin

## **12.2 G Jenni James Team Manager**

Hi Mandy and fellow exhausted basketballers

Well, what a weekend. I always feel before these tournaments that it's not fair our weekends was not ours but I come out the other end feeling a huge sense of achievement has happened seeing your kids out there having a go and trying their hearts out.

Without question the greatest moment for us as a Venom family was seeing the U12 girls finally win their 1<sup>st</sup> ever game. The tournament for them was a revelation and you not only have 8 very exhausted and pooped girls, but 16 Mum/Dads who couldn't be any more prouder of them even if we tried. Major things happened for that bunch of girls. They united as a team and gelled in their togetherness. They learnt so much about their basketball and never gave up for anything. One of our players – Sarah Davis shot her first ever basket after a brilliant lay up didn't land so she grabbed the rebound, and guess what – it went in. The players and parents bench all went up as one and the girls on the court were so overwhelmed they nearly forgot what they were doing. We ended up 2<sup>nd</sup> on the ladder by the tiniest of percentages – 4 points in fact and won 5/6 games in our round robin. What a

brilliant effort for a team that hadn't won a single game leading up to this moment.

Thanks to Mollie our coach, Emma Collins who came and watched and always gave us support and encouragement and to Justin Nelson who seems busier than a brick layer in Baghdad who found time to come coach the girls for a session on Sunday night. To our parent who rode with this journey called the excitement machine, it sure was fun. I have attached a photo of the girls after their first win – slightly knackered but riding this massive way of joy.

So now we resume again this Friday night where we take on Camberwell 2 – let's see what the future holds for these tiny poppets – a sunny outlook I am sure.

Thanks everyone

Jenni James  
Team Manager

Sarah Davis, Emma James, Zoe MacDonald, Claudia Kuen, Madeleine Rowarth, Natalie MacDonald, Cassidy O'Donnell & Morgan Cocks

## **From Di Trenfield**

Jenni, this is brilliant. I feel just as proud of your girls (and their parents and coaches) as you all obviously do. I totally agree with what you say re wanting the weekend to yourself but on Monday night you feel this amazing sense of pride for and achievement by our children. My son, Darcy, and his 12.3 team, won through to the grand final from 3<sup>rd</sup> place after 3/5 wins – they lost the GF by 8 points but boy did they, and we, have a fun time. We didn't have our full team and therefore, with Eltham's blessing, had to pull in 2 boys who don't play regular rep ball



but have played domestic basketball with our boys. Connor Joy unfortunately didn't arrive home from his holiday in Tasmania until Sunday night but came along and sat on the bench with his team mates for the semi and grand finals. He even managed to get himself into the team photo which was great. They were all fantastic and David Gibson stepped up to the plate as coach once again – he was rewarded following our photo session with an absolute water bottle drowning by his players. It is a sensational weekend and one which brings out the best in everybody (even if some of us refs/parents sit on the sidelines 'occasionally' having a vocal dig at the refs who are out there 'having a go'!).

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> tournament in a row that our boys have been runners up in the grand final, but do they appear perturbed by it? Not a chance. I don't even think they'd be worried if they didn't make the finals – they love the game and just want to play. Mind you, tonight was 'voluntarily' a very early bedtime in the Trenfield household for some.

Di

## **Damian Arsenis**

Just wanted to recognise a few teams...

The 12.3 boys as Di noted had a couple of fill-ins and performed extremely well - and made the grand final. This is a great achievement and hopefully the fantastic teamwork and results may end up securing us an additional 1-2 new full-time Venom players.

Whilst the 12.3 boys were great, so were the 12.4 boys. All bottom age players, they welcomed another new player to Venom to help out. This team is not only talented but they are

tough. Their coach Andrew Robertson is just as enthusiastic as his team, and deserves plaudits for the way he is molding this team - as they play so well together. These boys are developing so quickly it is scary and the future looks bright for the boys program when you have such a great group of kids and parents coming through the program. The boys were courageous in making the grand final against an older and taller opponent. However the shots just didn't drop in the big game and they came runners up. The boys and the parents had a fantastic weekend and everyone had a good time.

My 12.1 boys with just 7 players showed how good they can be over the tournament playing in A grade. They easily beat Eltham 1 and cruised through for a win against Hawthorn and Sutherland (NSW), and battled exhaustion as they scrapped a win against Diamond Valley 2 in third game of the day on the Saturday. Illness then hit the team and they were left with just 6 players on Sunday. Despite this the boys battled through the adversity to make it through to the quarter finals. However the toll of the previous 6 games was taking effect, and despite leading by 5 points against Werribee in the quarter-final, the boys ran out of legs, and players as they finished the game with just 4 players left on court, with three of them on 4 fouls each. An awesome weekend for the boys as they got their 2008 campaign to qualify for VC underway. The players had a great time and learnt a lot and they are really gelling together as a team.

I know the 12.2 boys in B1 grade also played very well but missed out on finals. they were playing teams at Metro 1 level and were able to beat a

few of them, and went down narrowly to a few others.

Cheers,

Damian

### **Shawn Summer – 16.3 Boys**

First of All - Big thank you to the 16 -2 boys for switching places with us and Playing as the 16-3's for the Tournament.

Secondly - Maybe it worked well for them too - winning the grand final - great job.

The 16-3 boys (playing as the 16-2's) did a great job. We made our defense a focus and really work hard all weekend. One of the highlights was holding Blackburn 4 (who beat us by 30 points in the grading phase) to 3 points and scoring 23. We too made finals, and really wanted to get through and play the 2's for the grand final - but not to be. We still played off in the first final, really worked hard and made some major improvements as a team and as individual players. Great Tournament and a good start for the year.

Go Venom –

Shawn Sumner - 16-3 Boys.

### **Justin ex web site**

Wow! What a great weekend for Warrandyte Basketball. A superb effort by all. All up I think I watched about 38 games across the weekend, enjoying the development on display in both our boys and girls programs.

There were far too many great moments to mention and more than a few funny moments to keep a straight face, but there are two things I'm most proud of from the tournament. The first is the extraordinary culture we have created at Warrandyte Basketball.

Credit must go to every player, every parent and every coach for what is a culture that so many other clubs are envious of.

I ran into many familiar faces from other clubs over the weekend and without fail every one of them commented on the extraordinary rise of Warrandyte and how the players and parents look so happy! I won't mention clubs here, but two reasonably close clubs to us asked me for some advice on what they can do to lift the spirit at their club?

I'm always happy to help any player or club in basketball, I think it creates a healthy environment and helps the game at large get better across all levels. My answer to the question was to do this; encourage your people to love the club, but understand that you'll only get what you give in return. In other words, look after your people. Be friendly and communicate. Put as much time and effort into the least skilled player in the least skilled team as you do into the most skilled player in the most skilled team. In other words, treat every player equally. Give them a reason to love the game and want to develop. And finally, don't play politics. The club is bigger than you, me, the players, the coaches, the parents and the administrators.

Yesterday is gone and today will soon be over, but the future will always loom large. Always put the future of the club ahead of 'looking after' your own interests.

The second thing that really struck me during the tournament is how well the majority of us here at Warrandyte treat our coaches. Having coached basketball for many years I can openly and honestly say that it is one of the most enjoyable things I do, but it is also a stress I could well do without at times. At the tournament I sat back and observed the reactions of parents in particular and can report that as a club

we are way ahead of others. Some of the conversation amongst parents from other clubs was disgraceful – to put it nicely. The way in which some parents talk about coaches and players leaves a lot to be desired. Mind you, every now and again I do hear some remarks from our own parents that leave me scratching my head.

We must always remember that all of us are here because we share one thing in common – we love the game and we want to support our children. How we react to positive and negative situations is an area that we excel in, but we should never drop our guard, particularly after a game when all of us can have mixed emotions depending on the result. When the team wins, it's back slaps all round, the parents heap praise on their own children, and often give some credit to others in the team. They might also afford the coach a smile and some gratitude. However, when the team loses it's often a far different feeling and I can tell you first hand that parents often communicate with a coach very differently after a loss. Conversation is brief, quite often a player or players are questioned over their ability and every substitution the coach made is put under the microscope.

A coach is often to blame if you listen to some of the comments on the sidelines, not the players who missed shots or failed to follow instructions. Quite often we simply don't give the opposition credit, rather we dig for faults on our side of the fence. Perhaps we lost to a better opponent? I keep telling my players that coaches can't shoot goals during a game or they don't get the chance to play defence or rebound, that is up to them and it doesn't always go to plan. Like I said, thankfully we avoid much of the trouble that occurs elsewhere, but it's also something that all of us must avoid creeping in at Warrandyte.

I can assure you that we don't have one single player or coach at Warrandyte who doesn't make a mistake during a game, it's par for the course, but what we do have is wonderful support and we should be very proud of that. If something isn't going to plan, look for a positive solution. This is also a great trait to teach your children in life. The best thing a parent can do after a loss is tell their child to get back up on that horse again and focus on training hard to ensure they develop. And don't just reserve that message for your own children, make sure you show the same encouragement and faith to the team. Take the time to also pat every player on the back and encourage them, don't just reserve that encouragement for your own child. And make sure you converse with the coach just like you would if the team won. They are often feeling down after a loss as well and need some encouragement. Find positives and work on the negatives together as a team, and never, ever talk negatively about other players or the coach in front of your own child. This is one of the quickest ways to turn your own child off the game. Again, I won't mention the club, but I overheard two parents talking at a boys game on the weekend where their team was winning, yet their conversation centred around how their own children were the best in the team and that if the coach didn't start playing them for all 40 minutes that they would try and get the club to sack him. I just walked away shaking my head so thankful that we don't tolerate such ridiculous conversations at Warrandyte.

We support our coaches. I truly believe that the majority, if not all of us, have the club and all of its members at Venom and Redbacks at heart when we go to games. There was no doubt in my mind that those same parents wouldn't hold back from saying the same

negative things in front of their children. That team may have won the game, but I could tell they were headed for disaster.

If you have something that you think we should address, come and speak with Ian Wood (boys), David Reinecke (girls) or myself. If it's a negative situation, come to us with a desire to create and find a positive outcome, one that will help the club grow stronger. I originally came from a club where the committee turned a blind eye to parents talking in little groups and certain people avoided being anywhere near others. It was cloak and dagger stuff. Some adults frowned upon players simply because they didn't get along with their parents, while backstabbing coaches was a Friday night ritual. The best decision I made in basketball was to walk away and start focussing on helping a club that wanted to do things the right way, that's how I came to be at Warrandyte. Anyway, that's enough from me. Well done everyone on such a great weekend, be proud of your achievements and proud of your team-mates and thankful for the time and effort that the coaches, parents and administrators put in to keep things ticking at Warrandyte Basketball.

## **Justin ex web site 2**

The Eltham Tournament has come and gone for another year and we can report that Warrandyte Basketball set a new benchmark that we should all be proud of.

Record numbers (26 teams) represented Warrandyte with pride and the accompanying support by family and friends was fantastic. At every game there seemed to be more Venom supporters than those from opposing clubs. The spirit and the pride shown is a credit to all.

There were some great 'firsts' for teams, including our 12.2 girls not only

winning their first ever game, but they also made it through to the semi-finals. Our 16.1 girls beat Kilsyth's VC team by 13 points, our 12.1 boys scored a similar result against Eltham's VC team, while our 16.2 boys celebrated a grand final win with their new coach. All up we saw 13 Venom teams make it through to the semi-finals (that's 50%), eight made it through to grand finals, while our 14.2 girls and 16.2 boys won the tournament.

One of the best games across the weekend was the 14.2 girls grand final with our American Big V player Jess Oram coaching her team to a thrilling two-point win. It's fair to say Jess has just about let all of New York know about the win and was literally jumping for joy as the team celebrated. Warrandyte's three coaching directors collectively watched or coached nearly 100 games across the weekend, highlighting their commitment to helping players and coaches develop at Warrandyte.

On top of this, it was great to see many of our coaches and players out supporting other Venom teams. Well done to all on another fantastic effort. Go Venom!

## **The 12/2 boys**

Hi Mandy

The 12/2 Boys had a great tournament! They finished 5th which was a great effort, given they were playing teams that are all pooled higher than them in the 2nd phase grading.

Most important, was that they all got to know each other better, and the families got together for a swim and a BBQ on the Sunday and had a lot of fun.

The 18/1 Boys also finished 5th, and although they had looked strong for finals, they lost the two games. The

18/1 Boys and families also got together for a BBQ and a swim on the Saturday.

A good time had by all teams and Eltham/Dandenong are to be congratulated for a well run tournament and appreciation for the many volunteers who gave up their long weekend to organize and assist around the traps.

Regards

David and Louise

## **Damians Under 12 Newsletter**

### **Back to Basketball!**

By DAMIAN ARSENIS

At the recent Eltham-Dandenong tournament, all 4 of the Venom under 12 boys teams performed exceptionally well to kick start the on-court action for 2008.

Leading the way were the 12.3 boys who experienced an amazing tournament. With a couple of fill in players, they managed to overturn a 3-point loss to Werribee 3 in their first round-robin game to then thrash Diamond Valley 5 and Melbourne 4. Their good run ended at the hands of Whittlesea 2 by just a solitary point in what turned out to be a thriller.

Needing to win their last group game against Wallan 2, the Venom bounced right back up and secured an 8-point win to reach the finals.

Faced with a return bout against game 1 nemesis Werribee 3, the Venom came out and played a blinder as they raced to a well deserved but hard earned 26-17 victory and a grand final berth against Whittlesea 2. Facing near exhaustion, the boys were unable to come up trumps in the grand final, going down to a tough Pacers team 27-34 in a high quality game. Coach Gibbo was ecstatic with the way the

boys began gelling together as a team and was hopeful of the new additions playing permanently.

The 12.4 boys coached by the energetic Andrew Robertson played well above their years throughout the tournament. The team welcomed a new player for the weekend in Lachlan and he fit in perfectly! They played great team basketball all weekend that led to great victories over Keilor 3, Eltham 6, Broadmeadows 3, before drawing against the older and far taller Blackburn 3 8-all. The boys immediately bounced back onto the winners list as they defeated Kilsyth 4 in another close one. Battle weary Venom bodies succumbed to Darebin 2 in their last round robin game on Sunday night, yet they had already secured 1st place and a semi-final clash against Eltham 5.

Playing as if their lives depended on it, the Venom boys displayed their awesome talent and determination as they accounted for the Wildcats in another thriller, eventually winning 19-17. Faced against Blackburn 3 yet again, the boys played another blinder of a game, however this time the shots didn't fall and the Vikings won 28-19. The boys were simply outstanding all weekend and drew praise from everyone that watched them play. The future is looking bright when one witnesses the talent on show in this team. With further hard work and training, this team will be a force to be reckoned with. The only concern from the weekend is a foot injury to Daniel Robertson who will miss this week's game.

Playing A grade, the 12.1 boys gained revenge against VC qualified team Eltham in their first game, shutting down their scoring and recording a convincing 9-point win. Continuing the good start, the boys then accounted for Hawthorn comfortably. Playing against Diamond Valley, the Venom

took it right up to the Eagles and was within 2 at the main break. However playing in the heat of the day with just 7 players took its toll and the boys went down by 12. Exhausted and playing their 3rd game of the day, the Venom then scraped by Diamond Valley 2 in a very scrappy game. Sunday was a tough day, with Nick Parker ill the team was down to just 6 players. Werribee proved too strong, and yet the boys bounced back with a 20-point win over Sutherland.

Werribee was the quarter-final opponent, and the Venom came out firing. Warrandyte etched out a 5-point lead at the man break, however the Venom were in foul trouble and finished the game with just 4 players on court, and 3 of them on 4 fouls. The Devils won in the end despite the boys fighting all the way until the siren. It was an awesome tournament for the boys and they gained great confidence in playing against top class opposition each game. They now have no doubt that they can compete with the best teams and have a great chance of beating them too! A team lunch on Saturday was a clear highlight! David Daniels' 12.2 boys finally started to display the potential that everyone knew they had.

They exhibited great sportsmanship and practised some of the plays they had only learnt recently. Beating Hawthorn 2 easily in the first game was a good start, however we lost Josh Gill in the first half with a broken nose and he was unable to play anymore games. It was great to see that he happily came to the other matches to support his team - great stuff Josh! Next up was Eltham 2 at Eltham and although the Venom played very well and led for most of the game, they missed some crucial points and lost by just 5.

The next games were played on the Sunday and things started well with a

great win against Bulleen 2 by playing a full court press. In the afternoon they played Eltham 3 at Eltham again, and had a similar result. Initially the Venom dominated, and then fell away 2nd half by missing some makeable shots. After a fun swim and team BBQ to cool off before playing our last game at Darebin against Darebin. By this stage, the boys were really tired and they hit the 'brick wall', going down by 12 points. Most importantly everyone had fun and got to know each other a lot better.

The tournament has proved to be a great lead in to grading phase 2 that sees the 12.1's attempt to become the first Venom boy's team to qualify for VC, and the 12.1 boys determined to qualify for Metro 1 or 2. The 12.3 and 12.4 boy's teams will fight it out for one of the high Eastern Qualifying grades.

The 12.2 boys will have an interesting game at home this week as they play 4-quarter basketball for the first time. 4 quarters is what is played at VC level, with a shot clock introduced at under 14's. With just 7 players, this will be a blessing as it will ensure at least another 2 breaks!

Whilst I was unable to attend a lot of under 12 boys games over the weekend, everyone kept me updated with what was happening. I think the coaches did a great job and the kids should have all got plenty of court time. On this point I would like to remind everyone that court time is never assured at this level of basketball as Justin Nelson has outlined in previous WBA newsletters. With VJBL must-win games starting again this week, some kids may get more time than others. However with hard work and dedication, every child has every chance of earning their time on court. If there are any issues, please feel free to contact me directly or Ian Wood.



Good luck this Friday & Go Venom!



Under 14 boys. Runners up against Bulleen.



Under 12-3 boys. Coach David Gibson. Runners up against Whittlesea by 34-27. Could not make up for slow start and matched WTS for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the game.



Full team and support crew for Under 16 boys – premiers.



Under 18 Girls – runners up against Bulleen – “had them worried”.



## ***Friday Night Basketball – January to start it All off***

The second round of grading form Championship Basketball swung into action.

Five of Warrandyte's Venom sides have realistic chance of making Victorian Championship – the highest level in Junior basketball in Victoria - and two were on court at Warrandyte Community Sports Centre.

After their strong effort at the Eltham Tournament Damian Arsenis's boys fronted up against Craigieburn in a fully timed game. Tournaments are a good way to bond and to refocus but they also can be physically and emotionally draining, especially with only 7 players, as the Venom has in this side.

The Venom boys were never seriously challenged however winning easily by 60-20 and outscoring the visitors in each quarter.

All players were on the scoreboard, with 15 points to Zac Stevenson, 11 to Jaye Witnish and 10 to Max Stevenson.

This is a strong percentage booster for the Venom.

Next on court was the Under 20 girls in a come from behind win against Sunbury by 51-46.

The Venom trailed by 7 at the final change but a final quarter 18-6 score line secured the win.

Lauren Sabidussi led the scoring with 20, including 11 in the critical final quarter. Bob Powell with 8 and Tahlia Higgs with 7 were strong supporters.

At the Park Orchard's Stadium, Jess Oram's Under 14 girls could not overcome a slow start and went down by 35-32 against Melbourne.

The Venom outscored the visitors by 5 points in the second half and pushed Melbourne in the final minutes.

However, the Tigers held their nerve to record the victory.

For the Venom, Madison Geddes with 14 and Kahlia Flett with 11 were Warrandyte's main scorers.



Under 14 girls – close losers to Melbourne.

Back Row: Jess Oram (coach), Simone Caruana, Kahlia Flett, Rachael Watson, Emily Stones

Front: Zerah Gordon, Jordan, Moloney, Stephanie Tibb, Madison Geddes.

In the second game at Park Orchards, Bruce Davis's Under 18 Girls had a easy win over a Keilor side by 36 - 6 (Jess Telford 11 points, Parris Webb 10 points).

The final game was between Bulleen and Warrandyte in Under 18 pool BB. Bulleen had just held out the Venom in the grand final at the Eltham Tournament but the Venom were quietly confident.

With the scored locked at 14 all at the break it was anybody's game. The Venom started to edge in front. For a brief period on the second half, the full court pressure from Bulleen resulted in a number of turnovers and easy points to the girls in blue.

The Venom were not able to recover, going down 35-28 at the final whistle.

Melissa Zuccolo scored 8 for the Venom, with 6 to Simone Reid and 5 to Nicolette Prior.

## ***Saturday Basketball.***

The second half of the summer basketball season kicked off at the start of February at Warrandyte Community Sports Centre. With Easter and the end of Term 1 early this year, it is a shortened season and wins are important for finals positioning.

The opening games however were all about the future with two Under 8 games.

Warrandyte's DA boys had an enjoyable come from behind win against an Eltham side. In a skilful game, Eltham had a three point lead at the break but Warrandyte were better in the second half win by 19-13. Given the quality of the game and the positive spirit it was played in, a draw would have been a fair result.

Ben Dickson top scored with 8, with help from Connor Martin (5) and Harry Rock (4).

"The boys are working well as a team, and looking around for their team mates. They have a good attitude" was the coach's comments after the game.



Under 8 Boys: Back Row: Finn Swedosh, Dylan MacDonald, Samuel Martini, Harry Rock

Front Row: Connor Martin, Aaron Castagina, Jasper Robison, Ben Dickson.

When you have a coach of the quality of Jo Metcalfe you know the girls will have a good time. A slow start to the second Under 8 game saw Balwyn with a 9 point lead. There was no fairy tale story in the second half with Balwyn winning easily by 22-7.

"My lovely girls" was Jo's comment later in the day. Kelly Roodhouse (4 points) and Annie Pearson (3) were the scorers for the Redbacks.



Under 8 Girls:

Left to Right: Kelly Roodhouse, Nicky Metcalfe, Whitnie Jeeves, Daisy McMillan, Jo Metcalfe, Annie Pearson, Siobhan Brodrick.

Three high quality girls games were the main attraction.

Andrew Petalas was in charge of the Under 16 A grade game against Bulleen. The scores were locked at 14 all at the break with Warrandyte not dominating as might have been expected.

Bulleen were slightly in front as the end of the game approached but a late

goal by Kirra Solty put the Redbacks in front.

Warrandyte were able to hold this advantage in the final minutes to record a gutsy 24-23 win.

Courtney Petalas led the scoring with 8, with 6 points from Kirra Solty and 5 from Nicolette Prior, including a three point goal in the first half.



Above: Under 16 girls winners in the A grade game against Bulleen by 24-23.

Back row: Nicolette Prior, Cassie Wilson, Kirra Solty

Front: Meg Dargan, Courtney Petalas, Aly Birch

The Under 18 A grade game against Eltham was more one sided with Warrandyte winning against a determined Eltham side by 29-19.

In a strong even side, centres Ashlee O'Brien (11 points) and Melissa Zuccolo (8 points) had impressive games.

A clean sweep for the Redbacks girls followed when the Under 20 girls defeated Eltham by 43-34.

The Redbacks were always in control and were able to withstand a late charge from Eltham who put up a number of successful outside shots.

Janelle Lucas with 16 was the Redbacks key scorer, with 6 points each from Andrea Peters and Alyssa Simpson.

## ***VENOM READY TO STRIKE BIG V GOLD***

by Justin Nelson

Warrandyte Venom's 2008 Big V women's team is focused on going one step better than their runners-up performance in 2007, an admirable effort in the club's first season in the prestigious senior basketball competition.

Following a gruelling three-month pre-season fitness and conditioning regime under the watchful eye of Steve Metcalfe, the Venom's new look senior squad is bigger, stronger and more

determined to go all the way in 2008 according to coach Justin Nelson.

"We've made some excellent changes to our program and make no secret of the fact that we want to win the championship," said the second-year coach.

"We were very proud of our achievements last year, but the experience showed us where we could improve and we've acted to ensure all

of Warrandyte can boast a successful senior women's basketball team."

Amongst those changes include the recruitment of former Australian guard Sally Phillips (nee Crowe), New York centre Jess Oram, former Bendigo SEABL forward Billy Addlem and former Redbacks junior Jazmine Borella, who has recently returned from a college career in America.

"Jo Metcalfe, Liz Benbow, Kate Cohen, Chelsea Ransom and Mandi Gammilonghi are ready to go again, while Jodi Kennedy returns from a knee injury, so it's a very experienced group," added Nelson.

"Our recruits have fitted in really well, especially Jess (Oram) who is touring Australia and has decided to play basketball at Warrandyte, a move we are very grateful for."

Leaving last year's team are Maree Vincent (delisted), Michelle Ackland (Werribee), Eleanor Stevens (retired) and Melissa Cook (retired), while a number of the club's younger players have been positioned in a focussed development group.

"We recognised the need to make some changes and believe we are moving forward in the right direction. No team stays the same from one year to the next and last year's team knew changes would be made when we sat down and looked at our strengths and weaknesses," said Nelson.

"From there, we set about recruiting players who bring more than just an on-court presence to the club. We always look for quality people who want to help our program excel and assist with developing our junior players.

"With the senior group in place and training hard, we then set about bringing together the best juniors at Venom and started a Feeder Group, which is coached by Jo Metcalfe, Kate Cohen and Nicole Howard."

The Feeder Group incorporates 16 juniors and the senior coaching staff hopes to see some of these players make their senior debut during the season.

"It's a huge step for a junior player to make the senior level and we are very wary of throwing our kids to the wolves. We have organised some pre-season games for our juniors against Division Three Big V teams in the hope it provides them with some experience ahead of the season.

"At this stage we will also take most of our juniors to Frankston for the Big V pre-season tournament in early March," added Nelson.

The Venom has also made some alterations to its senior coaching staff, a move Nelson believes will strengthen the team's management and ultimately its performance on the court.

"Kate Cohen and Steve Metcalfe will join Nicole Howard as assistant coaches, David Reinecke will solely concentrate on looking after the club's junior girls program, while Bernie Curtin returns as our team medical trainer.

"The coaching staff work really well together and we are satisfied the team has prepared itself for a successful year.

"Our entire focus is on building a culture that will serve the club for decades, not just a year or two. We want all of our members to be proud of

what Warrandyte can achieve at junior and senior levels."

## ***Venom Announces 2008 Senior Squad***

Following a successful inaugural season last year, which netted a runners-up result in division one of the Big V, an improved Warrandyte Venom women's team is ready to go one step better in 2008.

The Venom has announced its final 10-player senior roster, which includes more than 800 games of WNBL experience, two former Australian Opals, three AIS scholarship holders, a centre from New York and a number of promising former juniors.

In announcing the team, coach Justin Nelson highlighted the need to make changes from last year's team and believes he now has a more committed squad with a work ethic to match the recent performances of rivals Warrnambool.

"As a team and as a club we're really happy with where we are at so soon into our Big V existence," said Nelson, adding, "We have built a senior program loaded with experience and knowledge, which is the perfect environment for our future senior players to develop within.

"The club has been terrific in its support and the Warrandyte community has quickly become one of the most passionate group of basketball supporters throughout the Big V."

Those returning for 2008 include captain Jo Metcalfe, assistant coach Kate Cohen, guard Chelsea Ransom and forwards Liz Benbow and Mandi Gammilonghi, while former England

representative Jodi Kennedy returns from injury.

Venom's four new players include touring American Jess Oram, former Opal guard Sally Phillips (nee Crowe), experienced ABA small forward Billie Addlem and local Jazmine Borella, who has recently returned from four years at college in America.

From the streets of Manhattan in New York, the acquisition of Oram is a story within itself.

"Jess (Oram) has been a great inclusion for us and brings plenty of personality to the club," said Nelson.

"It's kind of a feel good story, but Jess is out here touring Australia and decided to play a bit of basketball after meeting friends in the area. Little did we know she was an all-star centre in her college conference and a leading player throughout her school career.

"The kids in our junior girls program hang off every word she says and will certainly provide vocal support for Jess at Big V games this season."

Those not returning in 2008 include Maree Vincent (delisted), Michelle Ackland (Werribee), Eleanor Stevens (retired), Kelly Pollard (retired) and Melissa Cook (retired).

"Kelly (Pollard) was a tough loss for us because she is such a quality person and had great passion for the game, but she had plenty going on and had to make a decision. The other changes were par for the course and we wish them all well in the future."

The Venom has also implemented a dedicated Big V junior squad of 16 players, some of who will play regularly at senior level this season,

including 2007 senior debutants Nicole Dadswell, Lauren Sabidussi, Carla Sabidussi and Nicolette Prior.

“It’s a great feeder program with Jo (Metcalf), Kate (Cohen) and Nicole Howard at the helm,” beamed Nelson.

“These juniors are learning from some very respected basketball people, it’s the perfect environment for them to progress in the coming years.”

The start of that development will come quickly for the junior players with the Venom’s senior coaching staff deciding to expose them to senior basketball during a hectic practice match schedule for the club.

“We are playing our juniors in practice matches against division three teams Mornington, Melton and Darebin, along with youth league team Bulleen, plus we plan on giving them a good run at Frankston in the pre-season tournament.”

Meanwhile, the Venom’s senior squad also has a full list of practice matches prior to a first round showdown with 2007 division two champions Latrobe City.

Five pre-season games are scheduled with Ringwood (home), Latrobe University (home), Latrobe City (home), Keilor (away) and Diamond Valley (home) all confirmed.

“It’s a full book for us. We see great value in using the next five weeks to get the team adjusted to the structure we will need to be a contender,” said Nelson.

“The practice matches are also a good chance for our supporters to come along and take an early look at their team. I’m sure they will be happy with what they see.”

With the recent loss of the club’s number one ticket holder Clinton Grybas, coach Nelson confirmed the team will pay its respects to the club stalwart at their first home game on April 5 against Warrnambool.

“We’ll speak with the league in the coming weeks and our committee will put in place a fitting way to acknowledge the great work Clinton did at Warrandyte basketball.

“The team was devastated by his passing, as was the entire association. We will miss having his support behind our bench.”



## Venom Senior Squad

Coach: Justin Nelson

Assistant Coach: Kate Cohen (playing)

Assistant Coach: Steve Metcalfe

Assistant Coach: Nicole Howard

Trainer: Bernie Curtin

4. Sally Phillips

5. Chelsea Ransom

6. Jess Oram

7. Liz Benbow

8. Kate Cohen

11. Jodi Kennedy

12. Jo Metcalfe

22. Jazmine Borella

23. Mandi Gammilonghi

34. Billie Addlem