**PIONEERS NEWSLETTER**

COACH COMMENTS:

I feel extremely privileged and honoured to have been appointed the sixth coach of the Bendigo Pioneers. However it is now all about the players and the opportunities that will be presented to them in their time at the Pioneers. I have already been impressed by the work rate and the attitude of the boys and they have certainly embraced and completed a lot of hard work during the pre-Xmas sessions. With the vastness of our area, from north of Mildura down to Kyneton we obviously have some difficulties due to the geography. Nevertheless, the Mildura and Swan Hill satellite groups have been well attended and are being run with great professionalism. All-Australian country football representative and former Geelong Falcon player Xavier Maloney is in charge in Swan Hill whilst local football legend Rod Sims is calling the ‘shots’ in Mildura. They have both received great support from their regional managers; Trevor Ryan (Sunraysia) and Jamie Macri (Central Murray).

Our trial games in Epsom were well attended the standard of the games were very pleasing. As a result our lists now stand at approximately 65 players in the U/18’s and U/16’s. Further trials will take place on the first weekend in February at Epsom and our lists will be finalised on February 16. The following weekend our U/18 squad will undertake a camp in Epsom and Bendigo. Our coaching appointments are almost completed with Peter Gibbs (backs), Mark Snell (Forwards) appointed as assistants. We are still talking to candidates to fill the vacant mid field coaching role. Ex Geelong and Brisbane AFL player Shane Hamilton has been appointed as a development coach and will get to work closely one on one with our players. Dean Sheldrick once again takes on the U/16 coaching role and is assisted by Travis Lethbridge and Bill Higgs.

I would like to thank the many parents that have assisted in transporting our players to trials and training sessions. I hope that you enjoy the 4- week break and feel refreshed to tackle the journey ahead. We also have a number of boys that have or are relocating to Bendigo to enrol in the Senior Secondary College Football program. Obviously we are always looking to improve on previous performances and I am sure that under the guidance of our Strength and conditioning coach, Jake Ford the boys will be ready to take on the Murray Bushrangers in Benalla on Saturday March 28. Our U/16 squad will also tackle the ‘Bushrangers’ as a curtain raiser. Our fixture offers plenty of variety with a Good Friday match in Bendigo and a trip to Hobart at the end of May. Please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns and I look forward to meeting many of our supporters and parents during the season. All players should have their calendars with training recommencing on January 14th and the second round of testing on January 18th. The testing is part of a research project in conjunction with La Trobe University and allows us to monitor prospective injuries and adjust training accordingly.

Brett Henderson