

SPORT



The proud Olinda-Ferry Creek women remain unbeaten in a grand-final since 2016.

Picture: ROB CAREW

A win for the ages

Underdog Olinda-Ferry Creek has taken the Outer East Football Netball League netball crown with a Grand Final victory in extraordinary circumstances at Gembrook.

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Olinda Auskicker nominated

By Tyler Wright

Olinda Auskicker Grace Fernando was nominated as one of 23 contenders for this year's NAB AFL Auskicker of the Year award, receiving a three day grand final experience.

Grace received grand final tickets for herself and a parent, and will present a premiership medallion during the presentation ceremony.

Grace's dad, Ross Fernando, said Grace loves playing mini games with her friends at Auskick and going to the footy to watch her team the Melbourne Demons.

"She wanted to learn how to play footy better, and she liked playing footy in the backyard with her family so thought Auskick would be lots of fun," Ross said.

Grace's favourite moment on the football field has been playing for the Olinda youngbloods with her friends in the Auskick Under 9 footy carnival at Woori Yallock.

Memorable moments for Grace this year have including kicking a goal in the last youngbloods mini game, and playing in the half time Auskick game during the Melbourne vs Essendon match at the MCG.

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They then went goal for goal in Extra Time as torrential rain fell and when the buzzer sounded it was the women in red and white who prevailed 44-43.

During the season OFC and Narre Warren clashed three times with Narre, led by former Australian player Erin Bell, winning comfortably on each occasion.

However Olinda-Ferny Creek has an amazing history in the top grade of the competition winning every grand final since 2016 and taking home the Minor Premiership when there were no finals in 2021. The women in red and white had a crown, and a reputation to defend.

In the first quarter OFC made it clear they had come play and at times held a three goal lead.

OFC captain Krista Carpenter, a local schoolteacher, read the game like a Year One book and set up numerous scoring opportunities for Goal Shooter Hayley Howard and Goal Attack Taylah Werner.

Two other mid court veterans, Madeleine Guz and Alice Paget were almost faultless with their ball movement and loaded up the pressure on the Narre "mids".

Narre Warren went to work in the second quarter and at times had their noses in front.

The top team looked to set-up a premiership victory in the third term with relentless attacks which OFC defenders Brodie Smith and Bronwyn Simpson worked overtime to stop being converted into goals.

It was more of the same in the last quarter but the OFC veterans, some of whom had played in the Club's first flag way back in 2015, refused to buckle.

Incredibly, with the scores locked together on 36 all and three seconds left on the clock, Erin Bell missed a goal in wet and blustery conditions sending the game into overtime.

It was then that the heavens opened up and the rain bucketed down drenching players and hundreds of supporters.

OFC and Narre once more went toe to toe with Howard and Werner repeatedly scoring clutch goals to keep the red and white in the



League Premier Division C Grade Best Player Mel Thomas.

OFC President Michael Hill said post-match "we are so incredibly proud of this group of women, they have been the benchmark for Outer Eastern netball for the best part of a decade".

Hill said the final series had again underlined the incredible depth of talent at Olinda-Ferny Creek "eight of our nine teams played finals and our Women's Football side made the Preliminary Final in the top division in just its second season. But the netball win is absolutely the icing on the cake."

OFC Players Win Awards

Meantime Olinda-Ferny Creek players were prominent at the recent Outer East League end of season awards.

James Royle-Young won the Best and Fair-



League Premier Division Reserves Best and Fairest James Royle-Young.

Hayley, along with Krista Carpenter, made the Team of the Year.

In a fitting recognition for a team which finished fourth in the top division OFC's Matt Scharenberg, Lachlan Taylor and skipper Kelsie Currey were selected in the football team of the year.

Olinda-Ferny Creek's exciting young Women's Football side also did well. Simon Gilson was named coach of the Team of the Year and four of his players won gongs in the side-captain Maddy Collins, Grace Belloni, Casey Seymour and Chelsea Wilson.

OFC's Women's Team was also the "Best Conducted Club".

Season Finale

To cap off a marvellous season for OFC a num-

ber of youngbroods mini game, and playing in the half time Auskick game during the Melbourne vs Essendon match at the MCG.

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For Grace's entry, she recorded a short video stating she has learned how to mark and kick this year, and said she should win Auskicker of the Year because she "loves footy" and wanted to see the Demons take out the grand final.

The NAB AFL Auskicker of the Year, Archie Stockdale, was announced at the Brownlow Medal ceremony on Sunday 18 September.

