

What a season!!

No, it wasn't a barnstorming season by an unbeatable unit who stood out against all opposition. On the contrary, Olinda was beaten by every side in the competition save for bottom placed Monbulk. The side started in horrible fashion going down to Pakenham who they had beaten easily 3 times the previous year, and all the pre-season expectations were deflated.

The side was the epitome of 1 step forward, 2 steps back. The side lost 5 of its first 7 games. 2 great wins in rnds 3&5 (rnd 4 was a forfeit), were followed by 3 losses. A seemingly season-defining win against reigning Premiers Upwey away was followed by a shock loss to Berwick Springs.

There were 3 crisis meetings held during the season as the team struggled to find its identity. The true triumph of the season was the fact that throughout the worst times, nobody gave up, and all stayed committed to each other.

The tide finally turned in round 13 against Pakenham who had already beaten us twice, and we accounted for them easily, playing some of our best football for the year.

We would only lose 1 more game for the season, the last round against undefeated Healesville who jumped us with a 5 goal first quarter. The fact that Olinda won the next 3 quarters enforced what we had been working towards- being better than the best.

Meeting undefeated Healesville on their home deck in the preliminary final, a team Olinda had NEVER beaten, seemed a bridge too far....but not for this team.

In an awe-inspiring performance, Olinda beat the un-beatable with 4 quarters of intense, brilliant football, finally hitting the front with 7 minutes left in the game, and fighting like demons to protect that lead for the final 7 minutes.

Olinda beat the thorn in their side Pakenham easily in a dazzling team performance on Grand Final day. It cannot be understated what a meritorious flag this was considering all that led up to it.

All credit must go to each and every player who dragged themselves out of adversity to a fairytale victory. Special gratitude to the leaders, Claire Hyett, Casey Seymour, Lily Carlin and Emmalee Keegan who gave everything of themselves to keep spirits up and continually motivate the squad. Finally, coach Simon who never once lost faith that this was possible, and worked tirelessly to bring it to fruition.

Some thanks:

Mick (Strappa) Hill – You could not have been more supportive, our enduring thanks.

Carey Williams (and crew) – You are the Queen of Olinda, and we all love you and everything you do for your club.

Grant Faull – Your voice of reason at ground zero will never be forgotten, nor will your endless support since.

Helen Wojitsky – Your DNA is all over this team, we appreciate all you did getting us started.

Brue Lowery – A great mentor and an always calming influence

Brendan Donovan – Our Ambassador of Quan.

Olinda members & supporters – The showing particularly at the 2 finals games at Healesville was amazing. Thanks so much to each and every one of you who made the trip and some noise!

Ben Selby-Hele – Not just the care you show for the team on-field, but everything you do off-field too, it doesn't go unnoticed!

Jess, Rach & Mel , Trainers are the unsung heroes of footy clubs. No major injuries this year, which we put down to your preparation, but any injuries were dealt with calmly and expertly.

Ben Watson – It must be hard when 20 girls look disappointed when you turn up to training!! That said, it was clear that our girls were fitter than their opposition in the last 2 games, and credit must surely go to you (and them!!)

Rick Wall – Your newsletters are amazing, and your love for the club past and present is unparalleled.

Trevor Currie – Your photos are beyond elite , we are blessed to have you.

Kiah Burgess – barely a hiccup as Team Manager, just as it's supposed to be!! Thanks for making a difficult job look easy.

#### **HERE ARE THE TEAM AWARDS....**

**MOST INSPIRATIONAL** – CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS CLAIRE HYETT, the team's heart, mind and spirit. Her pre-game addresses will become legendary, and on the field sets the example with her work ethic, aggression and courage.

**BEST FORWARD ENTRY** – COURTNEY STEPHENS FROM PAKENHAM, A beautiful 40m drop punt in front of OLIVIA (The Weapon!) EDWARDS who stormed into the open goal in the Grand Final

## **MOST LIKELY TO NEED THERAPY IN THE OFF-SEASON FOR FOOTBALL WITHDRAWAL**

**SYMPTOMS** – Who else, Miss Football LILY (Laser) CARLIN! Already 3 weeks into an intensive pre-season. Coach Simon might need to book an appointment with that therapist too!

**BEST SINGLE KICK** – (Kyah Barry) THE MISSILE's left foot wormburner away vs Upwey. Special mention to The Weapon for her 30m left foot snap at home vs Pakenham, coincidentally right in front of visiting scouts!

**BEST GENERAL KICK** – (LASER ) LILY CARLIN. If the aliens were pointing a ray gun at the Earth and we needed someone to kick to save the world....

**BEST SINGLE HANDBALL** – THE MISSILE again. 10 metre bullet out of a pack straight to Chelsea Wilson out wide. Special mention to ISSY DENNIS for her clever give to a running MARZIE in the first round

**BEST GENERAL HANDBALL** – (Goanna) ANNA HUGHSON, spins perfectly, flies straight and fast

**BEST SINGLE MARK** – Pick any of Amazing GRACE (THE ACE SAUSAGE) BELLONI'S Grand Final clunks.

**BEST GENERAL MARK** – GRACE again, sorry! Special mention to Chelsea Wilson and Leah Cody

**BEST RUNDOWN TACKLE** – Couldn't split ANNA'S (almost) game -saving tackle against Montrose in the first practice game or THE MISSILE'S blistering chase down in the second practice game against Mornington in which she literally buried her opponent's head into the turf, so the award goes to.....CASEY (THE ROAD-RUNNER "beep beep") SEYMOUR'S 30 metre run-down against Pakenham at home, with a nice little head-butt at the end for good measure!!

**BEST GENERAL RUNDOWN TACKLER** – THE MISSILE.....by the length of the straight!!

**BEST GOAL** – ROUND 14 vs BERWICK SPRINGS at home, RUBY (Barb) GILSON Rubes led 4 Berwick Springs players to the ball as it headed to the boundary, picked it up and cleverly handballed in front of herself as she brushed off the contact. She then scooped the ball up, skirted the boundary, sold the candy to a descending opponent before slipping past her and threading a beautiful drop punt goal from the most difficult of angles. Any more of that from Rubes next year will be worth the price admission to watch. Special mention to The Weapon's 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> goals in the Grand Final that were equally as exciting and almost as spectacular.

**GOAL OF THE YEAR** – While Rubes' goal for skill, execution, and entertainment, was the best goal of the year, the greatest goal in the history of Olinda Women's football came at the 9

minute mark of the last quarter in the preliminary final against Healesville. A chain of kicks starting with Casey (The Vault) Seymour, Kyah (The Missile), Georgia (Peaches) Stubs, Emmalee (Bruce) Keegan, and (Barb) Gilson culminated in the ball travelling the full 160m of the ground untouched by any Healesville player. As the ball off Barb's boot bounced in the goal square, seemingly out of nowhere came (The Ace) Belloni, the ball falling perfectly into her lap and duly thumped over the goal umpire's head. The goal put Olinda in front, and it was the last score for the game, Olinda winning through to the Grand Final and the rest is history.

The fact that Grace had sprinted 150m from the opposition goal square to catch up with the ball made the goal all the more amazing.

**BIGGEST KICK** – Still LEAH (The Lion) CODY. Let's hope she doesn't retire with the mantle!

**MOST IMPROVED** – For the second year running, Claire Hyett's left foot. Unsighted throughout the season, Claire nailed 2 foot left passes to her teammates in the Grand Final. The Weapon's contested marking improved hugely from the start of the year, Paige (The Rage) got better and better, but the greatest improvement as a whole was the team's ball movement by hand. By the end of the season, the panicking handball was all but gone and the inside to outside handball was excellent.

**THE DALAI LAMA AWARD FOR BEST QUOTE** – "Don't be a sponge, be a pole" RUBY (BARB) GILSON – 2023

**THE LOCK YOUR FRONT DOORS OR ELSE THE BOOGIE WOMAN WILL GET YOU AWARD** – LUCY (GOOSE) HILTON....Scary!! Lucy's hip-and shoulder against her Berwick Springs opponent at home was brutal. In fact, we hear the Berwick Spring girl is still breathing through a respirator!!

**THE A.V.O. AWARD** – PAIGE (THE RAGE!) ROBINSON played on the competition's 2 leading goal scorers Chelsea English from Pakenham and Danielle Carrucan from Healesville 4 weeks in a row for a return of only 2 goals. Paige sent Danielle off injured in the last quarter of the Preliminary Final. Both full forwards will be playing in body armour next year.

**BEST FIRST YEAR BLOOD** – OLIVIA (THE WEAPON!) EDWARDS. 5 goals in her first game, 4 in the all-important last game, and a swag of highlights in between, including being leading goalkicker and a spot in the League Team of the Year. A brilliant season! Special mention to "Goose" Hilton, the pepper to Liv's salt.... Both essential ingredients to Olinda's Premiership recipe. Special mention also to CHLOE (The Smiling Assassin) KANNALLY, another tough, skilful mosquito that fitted in perfectly with Olinda's fleet.

**MOST FEARLESS(RECKLESS!)** – A tie between CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS CLAIRE HYETT and CHLOE (THE SMILING ASSASSIN) KANALLY, Both are far too small to attack each contest with

such ferociousness, but don't tell them that!! An example of their white-line fever is Chloe got an elbow in the throat from a 6'3 Healesville opponent in the Preliminary Final and didn't even notice!

**THE JOHNNY CASH "I'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE "** – (DJ) NESS CURNOW (NEE BATEMAN). Poor Ness, played anywhere from full forward, ruck, centre-half back, wing, centre, half forward flank and centre half forward. To Ness' immense credit, never once complained (and plays well wherever she goes). Also gets the award for most convoluted nick-name. It was much easier last year when we just called her "VB"!!

**THE BEAT-KEEPER** – Also DJ Ness, it's an endless parade of hits. DJ Mars has proven herself more than capable too when Ness has been away.

**THE BALL MAGNET** – CHELSEA (Big Kahuna) WILSON has really honed the ruck ethos of staying a kick behind the play. She does, and the opposition keep kicking to her!!

**MOST CONSISTENT IN FRONT OF GOAL** – LAURA (Lorze) CLARKE was moved from her regular backline home to the forward line in the round 3 win vs Berwick Springs . The game was called off at half time but Lorze already had her first goal, and she followed up with another the following week. Went overseas mid-season and came back and went straight into the back line. What could have been?!

**FUTURE SPEEDSTER STARS** – KAESHA (The Florist) CHRISTIE & CELIA (Magic) CLARKE both had interrupted seasons but showed with their speed, ball use, attack on the contest and footy smarts that the sky's the limit if they can have a full season next year.

**FUTURE KEY POSITION STAR** – OLIVE (Evo) KELLY . Only 14, Olive was a victim of the U16s falling over on the eve of the season. Olive could have potentially been permitted to play U14s and would have dominated. A raw talent, Olive is incredibly tough at the contest, has good hands and a booming kick. Olive took a mark in the forward line against Mornington in a practice match at a questionable distance. She went back and booted it through post high and all present were in awe. Watch out for Olive's name in the future.

**BEST RUN AND BOUNCE** – Both Miss Football and The Missile had 2 bounce runs during the Grand Final, but this was eclipsed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter when Lucy (Goose) had the time and space to have 3 bounces. This all bodes well for next year and is something we'd love to see more of.

**THE "WE MISSED YOU"** – CHELSEA (Big Kahuna) WILSON, LEAH (The Lion) CODY, AMALIJA (Mars) KOSTICH-ANGERSON, and EMMALEE (Bruce) KEEGAN all spent large chunks of the season out of the team, and they are vital threads to the fabric of the side. It's no coincidence that once they all came back we thrived!

**THE WE WILL MISS YOU.....** We only had GEORGIA (Peaches) STUBS for a handful of games but her skills, speed and work ethic were a step above. An invitation to this year's draft

combine means Georgia is surely on the radar for an AFLW call-up and we will all have our fingers and toes crossed that she makes it!!

**THE DYNAMIC DUOS** – CASEY (The Vault) SEYMOUR & PAIGE (The Rage) ROBINSON – Olinda's full-back line has always been a strength, and the addition of "The Rage" early in the season added extra aggression next to the already accomplished and revered Full-Back extraordinaire Casey. Paige was so effective that she even took over full-back duties late in the season with amazing success. Opposition full-forwards will be checking the fixture next year hoping to avoid a meeting with these 2.

CLAIRE HYETT & LUCY(Goose) HILTON – The "Terror Twins", these 2 began to morph into identical versions of each other towards the end of the season. Hunting the ball and the opposition as a pair, they were massively influential in stymying and intimidating opposition midfielders while working perfectly together to get the ball into Olinda's forward line.

CHELSEA WILSON & CLAIRE HYETT – Some textbook-perfect centre-bounce clearances. More please!

KYAH (The Missile) BARRY & ANNA (Goanna) HUGHSON- Absolutely controlled their half back flanks. Run and carry, intercepts, tackles, precise movement by hand and foot. To top it off, one a right footer and one a left. Perfect pairing!

HECKLE & JECKLE (NESS BATEMAN & RUBY(Barb) GILSON)- Always on hand for a giggle and a quip, often in a huddle or pre-match address, and regularly directed at the coaches, but they're heart & soul. Swapped places in the forward line late in the season to lethal effect.

LILY (Laser) CARLIN and MARS – Not necessarily on the field, but a formidable duo in any team celebration!

THE WEAPON & GRACE (The Ace) – Didn't play together for long, but developed a radar like rapport in the forward line

**BEST TAKE DOWN** – There was a standing bet during the season of \$20 for anyone who could knock the hefty assistant coach to the ground. All tried, Paige came very close many times, but the only player to collect the \$20 was TOBI (Killer) MONKHORST! While we're at it....

**BEST DON'T ARGUE** – KILLER again. Tried to "don't argue" 2 Pakenham players at once while holding the ball. 2 doesn't go into 3 but the intent was impressive!!

**HARDEST PLAYER TO PLAY AGAINST** – According to Upwey's best midfielder after she'd been shadowed all game.. Cult hero ANJA (Onions) HULSTON. Anja took many valuable scalps during the season, of all shapes and sizes, whether midfielders, rucks or forwards.

**MOST ANNOYING PLAYER** – (To the opposition!!) ONIONS again, closely followed by PAIGE (The Rage).

**FRIENDLIEST PLAYER** – ISSY Dennis, Has a little chat when lining up on her opposition. Asks them how they're going , how they're week's been.....Iss definitely plays good cop!

**BEST PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE ODDS** (other than the whole team's preliminary final vs Healesville !) – JACKIE (The Giant Slayer) RING. In the absence of ruck mainstay Chelsea (The Big Kahuna), Jackie was given the unenviable task of taking on reigning ruck of the year Paula Pavic from Healesville. To make matters worse, 90 minutes before the game Coach Simon showed Jack vision of Pavic driving her knees into the ribs of her opponents. Jack was rightly petrified! Jack fought through her fear and wore everything Pavic threw at her. Pavic finished the game having rarely been sighted, while Jack was a unanimous best on ground.

**FASTEST PLAYER** – Not really sure, but would love to put The Missile, Captain Claire, Bruce Keegan and Mars on a starting line and find out definitively!

**BEST TEAM PERFORMANCE** – By every measurable stat, our Grand Final. The perfect time of the season to peak!

**WORST PERFORMANCE** – Don't want to mention it by name, but the last quarter and a bit vs a certain team was the rock bottom we had to have!

**BEST INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE** – No surprise, Grace (The Ace) in the Grand Final. 34 disposals, 7 marks and 4 goals. Almost the perfect game.

**WORST COACHING PERFORMANCE** – A late positional move gone wrong in the last quarter vs Pakenham in Rnd 1 cost 2 quick goals and it was game over. Ouch!!

**BEST COACHING PERFORMANCE** – Well, in theory Simon's been planning and training for the Grand Final win for 3 years, but the last 2 games of the year vs Healesville, the first an honourable, instructive loss, the second a brilliant win against our undefeated nemesis were his magnum opus!

**MOST DURABLE** - Captain Courageous and Barb Gilson, the only 2 players to have played every game.