



Central Murray
Football Coaches Association

NEWSLETTER

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**CENTRAL MURRAY COACHES
ASSOCIATION**

**WELCOME TO THE SEPTEMBER 2015 EDITION OF THE
AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL
COACHES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**

JAMIE MACRI

Welcome to the final newsletter for 2015

The code and the country are wrong but this quote by Legendary American football coach Vince Lombardi is worth remembering. "It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up."

At this time of the year the finals are over. The winners are grinners but for some players and clubs that didn't make the grade it will be difficult to start again. Populations are declining. Junior players leave for university or the money other clubs are prepared to pay. For some, it's the better option to disband rather than fight on with no hope of winning a game or gaining glory. Sometimes it's too hard to get back up after a knock down.

For others, the season may be over but it won't be long before the preparation for next year will begin. Coaches and club officials will reflect, regroup, discard old strategies and work on new ones. Recruiting the right players to "fit" your team and club, planning which young players to encourage or bring up to the senior ranks takes an amazing amount of time and effort. Without the army of volunteers that support country clubs there wouldn't be country football. I would like to congratulate all those who made sure their team took to the field each week.

For some towns the football club is what keeps a community together. Your team might not have won the big one or perhaps it's way down in the ranks but it's important to remember to get back up.

Thanks to all individuals and clubs who made my job easier. It's been great working alongside you.

All the best for next season.

Jamie Macri.

Developing young players into senior footballers

Jamie Macri

AFLV FDM Central Murray

Player development can, at times, be underestimated, even forgotten in the already heavy schedule of any senior or junior coach. It is vital to find time to develop young players so they can reach their potential which in turn will improve your team's performance. Very often, young players are "all or nothing" and attempting to get them to play consistent football comes back to analysis of their game. Even seasoned veterans can need some fine-tuning and improvement in their games

The three key areas in developing players are identifying their strengths and weaknesses and then providing a focus area to work on. For example, a player may be struggling with positioning themselves in defensive situations. The player will need to practise this skill before and after training and at every other opportunity in order to improve.

This could be a key focus area over a two or even three-week period. Once the player has remedied this he automatically becomes more confident when this situation arises and thus further improvement and skill acquisition should place during matches and at training. It is then time to work on the next “weakness” or focus area. Players should be encouraged to identify these focus areas themselves or in conjunction with the coach or his assistants.

Time is always an issue for any coach, so it may benefit the playing group by grouping or pairing them in focus areas that need attention. I am sure your players and team will show some real progress if this strategy is adopted. Mentoring is also another way of finding extra time to develop players.

The Bendigo Pioneers allocate at least 25 minutes for all players to work on their individual “craft” at each training session. This is broken into 15 minutes of work in their “lines” with the line coaches then the midfielders, backs and forwards work with the coaches on set ups, structure and implementation of tactics for the following game. The Pioneers are now streamlining development pathways to enhance each player’s ability to improve.

The Bendigo Pioneers will field a Division 1 and Division 2 team at this year’s V/Line Cup state Championships in Gippsland. From this squad of 60, a squad of 30 will be chosen to represent the Bendigo Pioneers U/16’s in 2016. The top 20 or so players from this group will then “feed” into our U/18 program. For the first time there will be a “Rookie” Squad of 20 to 25 players that can be brought into the main squad of 35 to 38 players. Players who exhibit good form outside these squads can also be selected at a later date to represent the Pioneers.

This new pathway will still provide opportunities for all aspiring players but also allow more time to develop listed players.

Josh Jenkins on Fire

David Alderuccio

Central Murray AFCA President

Who would have thought that ex-local footballer Josh Jenkins would become one of the AFL’s premier forwards?

Josh Jenkins hails from the town of Swan Hill where he played his junior football with the Tyntynder Football Netball Club. A tall, thin kid, he loved getting out amongst his mates playing the game he loved. I remember Josh as a great young kid. At 14, he represented Central Murray Schoolboys and was a very talented young footballer. But football wasn’t his only passion. Basketball was his main interest. A very talented squad basketball player, Josh travelled the state representing Swan Hill. Driven to play basketball at the highest level, he travelled north to Townsville to try his luck in the NBL. After many years of trying he pulled the pin and returned to the place he called home.



Josh was your average good kid. He loved playing cricket with his mates, going to the local pub and showed his expertise as an apprentice plumber. He was a very quiet person who lived with and loved his grandma. During his quiet life on a small rural property, Josh learnt the basics of living a happy, healthy life. After his return from basketball, Josh signed with the Lake Boga Football and Netball Club. After running around, mainly playing in the ruck for the Magpies, Josh wanted more. So, with the help of his mates and close friend Toby Thoolen, he played a few games in the VFL hoping to catch the eye of recruiters.

Later that year, after the CMFNL season was over when most local players were reflecting on the season and counting the votes, Josh was training hard ready to launch himself at the National Draft Combine Camp. This was his first taste of being a professional sportsman and he wasn't going to squander the opportunity.

Josh caught the eye of the Bombers' scouts and Essendon recruited him to be a Rookie. Swan Hill and the surrounding community were excited. It hadn't been since the days of Brent Guerra, Cal Beasy and Luke Livingston that the CMFNL had someone from our region playing AFL football. However, Josh didn't get the chance to play AFL whilst with the Bombers. After the experience of playing in the NAB cup and VFL, came the trade period where Josh Jenkins' name really surfaced.

When the Adelaide Crows wanted to recruit Josh, Essendon had to agree to the deal, which they did. So, Josh Jenkins found himself being traded to the Adelaide Crows – a chance for a fresh start in his AFL career. There are not too many Rookies who have a second chance to prove themselves, so the importance of this move was at the forefront of Josh's mind.

It has been quite a journey for those interested in Josh's career seeing just how far he could go with this opportunity. Josh is now regarded as one of the best forwards in the AFL. His ability to take strong marks and kick long goals is what every youngster aspires to be. I know our little boy loves to watch Josh on TV and he is somewhat of an idol in our house on Fridays and Saturdays during the AFL season.

Josh Jenkins took a chance and has made the most of it. To his credit he has over 50 AFL games under his belt and has kicked over 40 goals in consecutive seasons.

Locals are proud of the way Josh still calls Swan Hill his home and takes the time to give back to the community in fund-raising events and his weekly foray into local radio. When the Crows had the mid-season bye Josh came home to Swan Hill and visited the local Primary and Secondary schools. He was humble, spoke really well and caught up with some old teachers from St Mary's Primary and Swan Hill College. The comments and feedback I received would make any grandma and the Adelaide Crows very proud.



We wish him continued success and a long and healthy career.

“Taking the Tackle” – It’s About Respect & Responsibility



With a central theme revolving around *“Taking Care Of Yourself”* and *“Looking out for your Mates”*, a joint session of AFL Vic’s Taking the Tackle Program was held on July 7th for thirty five Under 16 and Under 18 footballers from the Tyntynder and Mallee Eagles Football Netball Clubs.

Family & Carer Mental Health Support Worker Pina Mancinelli welcomed those present and introduced Officer Leading Senior Constable Andrew Downes of Victoria Police. Andrew presented the AFL’s Respect and Responsibility (R&R) *“Taking the Tackle Program”* a resource for football clubs which amongst other things, promotes messages around respect for women, a tolerance for all members of the community and focuses on creating safe and inclusive football / netball clubs. Supported by coaching staff and parents from both clubs the session was interactive, informative and full of good humour. LSC Downes congratulated both clubs on providing leadership opportunities for their young footballers, commenting *“while we all know on field rivalry is always fierce, raising awareness within clubs has definite flow on benefits to the wider community”*



Club Secretaries Jan Hickmott (Tyntynder FNC) and Alison Bradley (Mallee Eagles FNC) combined to thank both Andrew and Pina before inviting everyone to enjoy the healthy food options (including bottled water) on offer. In line with Vic Health’s Healthy Sporting Environments (HSE) philosophies positive messages around healthy eating were re enforced and interclub relationships enhanced.

Further information on how best to care for yourself and your mates can be obtained from Pina Mancinelli at Mallee Family Care on Ph: 5032447

Avoiding Colds and Flu - How does a healthy diet improve resistance to colds and flu?

Eating healthily shouldn’t just be confined to AFL footballers. Players at any level will benefit from a good diet. Consuming adequate vitamins and minerals is essential for a healthy immune system.

This can be achieved by following some easy steps:

- Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Enjoy hearty vegetable soups
- Keep up your fluids
- Ensure adequate protein intake
- Consume a minimum of high fat and sugar processed foods.

Eat healthy fats

Many footballers, although particularly at AFL level, have extremely low body fat levels and this can increase the risk of getting sick. Eating enough total kilojoules through regular meals and snacks and including some healthy fats in the diet helps ensure body fat levels do not get too low.

Healthy fats are found in foods such as:

- Fish and seafood
- Almonds
- Avocado
- Olive and canola oils
- Peanut butter

These foods need to be consumed in volumes that are appropriate for the individual to ensure the right balance of good fats.

Eating well is an essential part of preparation and a balanced intake can help boost the immune system and ensure illness is avoided.

Coaching: Some points to think about for next season!

Jim Hirst

State Finalist in the AFCA Youth Coach of the Year Award

The job of the senior coach is not an easy one, especially in rural and remote areas. It is a time consuming role that encompasses so many roles. Not only are you the face of the community but you are also involved in recruiting, mentoring, fitness, training, team selection, player evaluation, opposition analysis, motivating, etc. Quite often you are also a playing coach. This list goes on and on!

These are all important components of the coach's role but I have omitted one of the most important roles that the coach must fulfil – that of player skill development. This component of coaching can sometimes be neglected due to the emphasis placed on developing the team's game plan. The majority of training drills are now centred on the team's game plan and we presume that skill development will occur within these drills. But to what degree is this actually occurring? The answer is probably not as much as we think. Take the example of the developing young player training with the seniors. He doesn't want to make a mistake in



the drill so he plays it safe and uses his preferred side. It is great that he is training with a higher degree of intensity because he is with the seniors, but is he working on his deficiencies?

Player skill development and refinement, especially after juniors, is still a vital component of senior coaching. But with the coach having to perform so many roles, he definitely needs assistance in this area. There never seems to be

enough time to take aside a player or group of players to develop and refine their skills. This is where it is important for the coach to have support staff to assist in this area. Development can come in many forms. There are the obvious areas of kicking on both sides of the body, handballing on both sides of the body, overhead marking, etc. However, there are other areas that are often neglected. e.g. smothering, evasion skills, tackling, shepherding/blocking, spoiling, crumbing, marking in the wet, etc. And what about kicking

the ball off the ground? Have you ever considered playing a game of soccer with our odd shaped football? Just think about the percentage of goals that are kicked off the ground during a game! How much time do you spend on goal kicking practice, both on the run and set shots? If your club has not got goal nets, I would make them an absolute priority as they have so many training benefits.

The imparting of knowledge is another important component of coaching. Some players have the ability to read the game while others need to be taught where to run. e.g. if you can't get to influence a contest, why run there? Players need to be taught to sum up what is happening and then predict where the next contests or possessions will be. The importance of scanning around is also important. How often do players, and even coaching staff, get caught watching contest after contest! If you get too engrossed in each contest you often miss the player ducking out the side for the easy release kick or things happening off the ball. You can't have all of your coaching staff following the contests as you may miss the opposition's structures and a particular move that your team should be 'pulling the trigger' on.

In today's game we often hear the coach spruiking the message of the need to *take the game on* or the need to *take risks*. To do this a player often has to do something out of the ordinary. e.g. run around the man on the mark, sell the dummy, kick a goal from an acute angle, etc. However, when a player unsuccessfully tries one of the before mentioned things he is hung out to dry for not doing the team thing! Are we giving the players a mixed message? Strangely enough, we don't often complain about the poor strike rate of the high flying forward who keeps on trying to take the 'mark of the year' every time the ball comes down! Let's hope that the modern coach encourages his players to still show some flair within their team oriented structures.

As you are all aware of, the senior coach in a rural or remote community has to be able to breathe and live footy. It is a very demanding role that can also be rewarding. We often say that a coach is only as good as his players, which is true to a large extent. But have you considered that a coach has a much better chance of success if he has a number of educated support staff around him to assist him on training nights and on match day? I know that this is not always achievable in our rural communities, but as I alluded to earlier, it is something that you must consider moving forward. I know that we are not AFL clubs, but one of the biggest changes that have occurred at AFL level in the last ten years has been the increased number of support staff at each club. Maybe you should be looking at 'recruiting' some of your retired 'stars' to assist in this area next season!

Frankie Cheng welcomed at Wandella

When a young Chinese fellow named Frankie Cheng walked into the Wandella Football Club, no one imagined he would put that little club in the Golden Rivers League on the map and also make an impact on AFL football.

Frankie moved to Australia from China nearly four years ago looking to buy a barber shop. Whilst searching the internet he found a barber shop for sale in the Northern Victorian town of Kerang. He bought the business and began his sea change from the city to the country.

Frankie originally went out to Wandella with a friend, thinking the training would keep him fit for soccer. However, after showing some enthusiasm for the game and a bit of form, he played his first game against Quambatook. As he came onto the ground in the second quarter he was welcomed with a huge roar from the crowd. With his first kick he kicked a goal. The Wandella crowd and his team mates went crazy and

Frankie celebrated accordingly. What a great start to his career! He was a legend and became a cult figure at the club where everybody loves Frankie Cheng.

Frankie is a sponsor of the football club and supports the club at every training session. Each week he donates his much anticipated haircut award for best on ground.

The Central Murray Region Multicultural Ambassador of the AFL contacted Frankie to be a Multi-cultural ambassador for the AFL Multicultural round. Frankie was totally blown away by the film crew and photographers that travelled to Kerang to film the advertisement for the AFL. He was filmed at his barber shop with his coach Chum supported by club team mates who volunteered as models while Frankie cut their hair. He walks around town now like a movie star although the dark glasses to hide his identity might be a bit much.

Frankie and his coach, Mathew (Chum) Chamberlain were invited to the launch of the AFL Multicultural round in Melbourne and enjoyed the experience immensely. The Wandella football club arranged a bus of supporters to march with Frankie in the Chinese parade from China town to the MCG. For the kids marching to the MCG with the Chinese Dragon and Frankie leading it onto the ground was an amazing season's highlight. Frankie was the Melbourne Football Club's guest for the day and was interviewed on the big screen at the MCG. He was invited down to the rooms and had a kick of the footy on the MCG with some senior Melbourne Football Club players. Frankie was also interviewed on DEE TV which was a great laugh. When he took a mark on the "specky" bag on the MCG a massive roar was heard from his bus load of Wandella supporters from that little club in the bush who were privileged and very proud to be a part of Frankie's amazing day and fame.

Frankie has been really busy at work now since his recent fame and hopes to reap some of the fortunes he hoped for as that boy from China. He has had people call in from parts of Australia just to meet him and get a photo.

Frankie loved the opportunity to meet the CEO of the AFL. He said that Gillon McLachlan may be more famous in Australia than he is, but Frankie is definitely more famous than the AFL CEO in Kerang!!

Eagles soar under combined Coaches

The Mallee Eagles, based at Lalbert in the Central Murray Football Netball League have seen a remarkable improvement in on ground performances this season.

Led by joint coaches Bo Alexander and Tyson Mihocek the team has finished second on the ladder at the end of the home and away season. It has been a massive turnaround for the Club who hasn't had major success since the 1996 Premiership.

Alexander said, "Having two personalities in charge makes the Coaches more approachable to the individual players and gives two minds to approach the game which the players have been reaping the benefit of".

Alexander, a fourth year Sports & Health student, is a local boy, playing his early years with the St Mary's Junior Club then moving into the Seniors as a youngster becoming CMFNL Rookie of the Year and Runner up in the Club Best and Fairest the same year. In that year he played interleague for CMFNL U18's and was voted best on the ground. Moving to Melbourne for school he captained U 19 Uni Blacks and played with Pascoe Vale before Mallee Eagles President at the time Shaun Warbuton coaxed him home to take up a Senior Assistant's job with Daniel Ward at the helm. He has coached with Jamie Macri and now Tyson.

He said he has learnt that looking after the welfare and wellbeing of his players mentally, physically and emotionally seems to bring the best out of people.

On the other side of the coin Tyson Mihocek, a physiotherapist, is a Tasmanian boy who started as a young fellow playing senior footy at Burnie Dockers in the Tasmanian League, while also playing 2 years of State Under 18 footy for Tasmania. Tyson said, "While playing for Tassie and Burnie, I learnt a lot about professionalism and preparation. I was coached by some great people at the time who helped with my development as a player and leader". During his gap year he did some junior coaching and held a full time junior development role with AFL Tasmania.

From there he moved to Bendigo to study physiotherapy and played senior footy with Kangaroo Flat FC in the Bendigo league for 4 years, captaining the team for the last two which helped to enhance his leadership skills.

He moved to Swan Hill for employment and took up the position as assistant coach with the Mallee Eagles. He said, "In 2014, although under achieving on field, I fell in love with the club and the people and was very excited when approached to undertake a joint coaching role with Bo Alexander for the year 2015".

The two coaches, along with recruiting manager Roger Bett, worked tirelessly on recruiting the right players to the club that would complement the young and talented local group both on and off the field. Mihocek said, "We strive to respect all players at the club and in turn we hope they respect us as coaches, sometimes drawing the line between friend and coach can be difficult but we believe we have done it well".

One of their main aims as coaches has been to provide clear communication and feedback to players so they are well aware of what their role is and where they stand within the group. While doing this they have also focused heavily on being involved with the junior aspect of the club and promoting the development of players from junior through to senior levels.

Another important aspect of their role in the Lalbert community has been being approachable, so others are comfortable with their role whether it be family members, supporters or people from the general community.

Alexander said, "The team has bonded perfectly during the year and after the tragic loss at a pre season training camp of a much loved player the team has developed much more as people and not just as players, which has brought them closer together as a group".

Mihocek said, "Overall, our success so far this year has not been by accident and it has come from the hard work of many including the board, committee, volunteers, players and us as coaches".

The two having totally different personalities have gelled well together and have gained the respect and trust of their players while implementing a very professional and fun approach to the year.

In closing Mihocek said, "We still have goals we want to achieve this season but we are proud of the position the club and the senior group is currently in".