

# JAMES HIRD

## ACADEMY

EST. 2010

JUNE 2017

### WELCOME MESSAGE



JHA Coach Greg Williams with Flight Squad members Josh Misiti, Noah Caracella, Alex and Luca Alessio

### Hello and welcome to another edition of the James Hird Academy Newsletter

The James Hird Academy is celebrating its 7th anniversary since the program's inception in 2010, and the season is already showing promise with several youngsters amongst the JHA ranks performing well in junior leagues.

Meanwhile at AFL level, the Academy's inaugural graduate Joe Daniher is enjoying a strong 2017 campaign with match-winning performances against the Magpies, Cats, Eagles and Power to date.

The JHA is also thrilled to announce that AFL champion Greg Williams will serve as the new Coach of the Academy. After filling the senior role last year, Jacob Thompson will act as Williams' Assistant Coach this season.

The new Coach was on-hand for the annual JHA Guard of Honour Game to witness the Dons' 70 point demolition of Port Adelaide in Round 12 of the AFL Season. For a full recap and photos of the event, keep reading this newsletter!

But for now, the JHA Newsletter is here to keep you up to date with the latest Academy news.

Happy reading to the entire Bomber Family!

### 2017 - 2018 Sponsorship Opportunities:

The James Hird Academy wishes to announce the availability of major and individual player sponsorship opportunities for season 2017 and 2018. This is a fantastic opportunity to promote your product, service or corporation in conjunction with the Academy. If you are interested in entering a sponsorship agreement, please contact Brenton Humphreys on (03) 8340 2182 or [bhumphreys@essendonfc.com.au](mailto:bhumphreys@essendonfc.com.au) for more information.

#### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - ACCELERATION GROUP

| PLAYER          | AGE | FATHER                  |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------|
| Daniel Hanna    | 17  | Next Generation Academy |
| Jaxon Neagle    | 17  | Merv Neagle             |
| Mason Fletcher  | 17  | Dustin Fletcher         |
| Ricky O'Donnell | 16  | Gary O'Donnell          |
| Darcy Denham    | 16  | Sean Denham             |
| Tom Hird        | 16  | James Hird              |

#### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - NEXT GENERATION

| PLAYER          | AGE | FATHER               |
|-----------------|-----|----------------------|
| Max Fletcher    | 14  | Dustin Fletcher      |
| Joshua Misiti   | 14  | Joe Misiti           |
| Nyawi Moore     | 14  | Nathan Lovett-Murray |
| Tex Wanganeen   | 13  | Gavin Wanganeen      |
| Alex Hird       | 13  | James Hird           |
| Alwyn Davey Jnr | 13  | Alywn Davey          |
| Jayden Davey    | 13  | Alywn Davey          |
| Luca Alessio    | 12  | Steve Alessio        |
| Will Hamilton   | 12  | Paul Hamilton        |
| Luke Barnard    | 12  | Kurtis Barnard       |
| Alex Alessio    | 10  | Alex Alessio         |
| Noah Caracella  | 11  | Blake Caracella      |

#### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - BABY BOMBERS

| PLAYER             | AGE | FATHER               |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|
| Alijah Davey       | 10  | Alywn Davey          |
| Mara Lovett-Murray | 8   | Nathan Lovett-Murray |
| Logan Daniher      | 9   | Chris Daniher        |
| Aidan Ramanauskas  | 8   | Adam Ramanauskas     |
| Taj McPhee         | 8   | Adam McPhee          |
| William Hird       | 8   | James Hird           |
| Koby Bewick        | 8   | Darren Bewick        |
| Max Alessio        | 7   | Steve Alessio        |
| Thomas Caracella   | 7   | Blake Caracella      |
| Taitum Dempsey     | 7   | Courtenay Dempsey    |
| Cove McPhee        | 6   | Adam McPhee          |
| Lucas Ramanauskas  | 6   | Adam Ramanauskas     |
| Rylan Johnson      | 6   | Mark Johnson         |
| Noah Peverill      | 5   | Damien Peverill      |
| Lenny Solomon      | 5   | Dean Solomon         |
| Jacob Lloyd        | 4   | Matthew Lloyd        |
| Connor Stanton     | 3   | Brent Stanton        |
| Harlan Ryder       | 3   | Paddy Ryder          |
| Cruz Davey         | 3   | Alywn Davey          |
| Edward Mercuri     | 3   | Mark Mercuri         |
| Bohdi McPhee       | 2   | Adam McPhee          |
| Aidan Stanton      | 2   | Brent Stanton        |
| Henry Mercuri      | 2   | Mark Mercuri         |
| Mekhi Dempsey      | 1   | Courtenay Dempsey    |

# FROM THE COACH GREG 'DIESEL' WILLIAMS

Greetings to all Academy Members and your families!

It's my pleasure to officially address all Academy Members for the first time after assuming the position as Coach of the JHA.

It's great to be working with a passionate Essendon stalwart in Jacob Thompson, who will be on-hand as the Academy's Assistant Coach this year.

Programs like the James Hird Academy play a very important role in the football landscape. As the AFL competition continues to grow at a rapid rate; it's vital that we don't lose that sense of soul, heritage and tradition that a foundation Club like Essendon has been built upon.

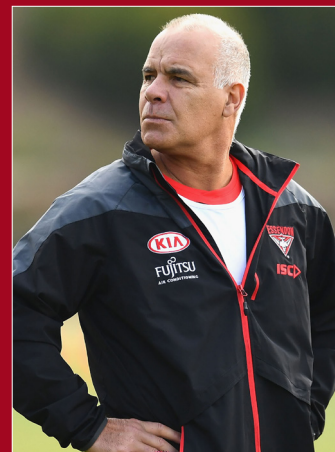
The father-son legacy at the Bombers is one of the finest in the League. Names like Fletcher,

Watson and Daniher spring immediately to mind... and bring back memories of tough times on the field in opposition territory!

It was great to be part of the JHA Guard of Honour Game and it was wonderful to meet so many Baby Bombers and reunite with former rivals under much friendly terms.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming JHA Development Days in July at the Essendon Football Club High Performance Centre.

Until then, good luck with your football commitments and go Bombers!



## NEWS & NOTES

### Joe Does it Again

The JHA would like to congratulate Joe Daniher on his best-afield performances in Essendon's thrilling victories against Collingwood and Geelong earlier this season.

With his high-marking flamboyance and wheeling long-range goals, Daniher is fast becoming one of the most exciting players in the AFL competition.

The young spearhead collected the ANZAC Day Medal after bagging three goals from 16 possessions, and also took home the Tom Wills Award for best on ground in the Country Clash with another 16 disposals and five goals.

Well done Joey, and good luck for the rest of the season!



## AROUND THE GROUNDS

### JAXON NEAGLE:

2017 is proving to be a pivotal development year for Jaxon Neagle. After playing for Rand-Walbundrie-Walla in the Hume Football League, Jaxon has joined his older brothers (Jydon and Matt) at the Wodonga Raiders in the highly competitive Ovens & Murray Football League. The 17 year-old has played 9 reserves games, kicking 17 goals and has been named in the bests on 4 occasions (awarded best on ground in Round 2). In a fantastic footy story, Jaxon earned his place in the Senior Raiders team and has played 2 games alongside his brothers resulting in 2 victories, with Wodonga defeating Corowa-Rutherglen by 161 points and North Albury by 26 points.

### MASON FLETCHER

The eldest son of the Essendon champion and games record-holder Dustin Fletcher, Mason has played 5 TAC Cup matches for the Calder Cannons this season, while also playing school footy for PEGS.

### KURTIS BARNARD:

The eldest son of Bombers Premiership hero Paul Barnard, Kurtis is currently playing for the Aberfeldie U17's Division 2 team in the EDFL. Aberfeldie is sitting 4th on the ladder with finals a distinct possibility.

### DANIEL HANNA:

Essendon's Next Generation Academy member is currently playing for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup, while also splitting his time between JHA commitments and school footy with St. Bernards.



# Diesel Power: Meet The Coach

**To generations of Essendon fans, the name Greg Williams once struck fear into our hearts.**

The former Geelong, Sydney and Carlton star was ruthless at his trade, winning contest after contest in the centre of the ground, amassing damaging possessions, and firing off rocket-like handpasses at will.

Not gifted with great height, speed or agility; it was Williams' bulletproof determination, deadly disposal and innate football nous that lead to one of the all-time great AFL careers.

And it is that still razor-sharp football mind that will perhaps best serve the young members of the James Hird Academy, as they look to glean as much intel as possible from this AFL champion and new Coach of the JHA.

The Premiership player, dual Brownlow Medallist and AFL Team of The Century member is excited by the opportunities this new role presents.

"I'm really enjoying my time at the Bombers and working alongside the players and coaches," Williams says.

"The father-son rule has been one of the great initiatives of the AFL and the opportunity to help foster and develop Essendon's prospects is something I'm really looking forward to."

In addition to his role with the JHA, Williams is also conducting specialized training sessions with the current Essendon stars. Williams is happy to play his part in the Bombers' 'Comeback Story' after the incredible adversity of recent years.

He says, "I work with the Senior List three days a week and I think everyone's looking forward. The feeling is that the team is on the right track. There's still a lot of work to do but I think there's enough talent here to get back in the finals".

Despite being a tough-man of the game, Williams isn't immune to the romance, tradition and nostalgia invoked by the Father-Son Rule. "It's a great thing and I know the supporters love it. I think Academy programs like the JHA are a massive advantage for footy clubs," the new coach relates.

Williams can't help but chuckle at the thought of helping the next generation of Baby Bombers succeed in their footy endeavours after spending a career in opposition colours.

"I've always had a lot of respect for the Bombers. I played against a lot of the dads involved in the JHA program so it will be great to catch up with them and also offer as much help as I can to the children coming through."

He continues, "I want to make sure the kids come in, have fun, and become the best player that they can possibly be. And maybe, some will go on to play like Joey Daniher and (Jake) Longy - two Father-Sons that are already playing, and hopefully we can get some more".

When asked to pass on one footballing tip for aspiring athletes, the AFL great has a simple philosophy. "The key is practice and fitness. Enjoy your footy and if you're good enough, you'll get spotted and selected to state sides and things like that, but the main thing is to get out there and train."

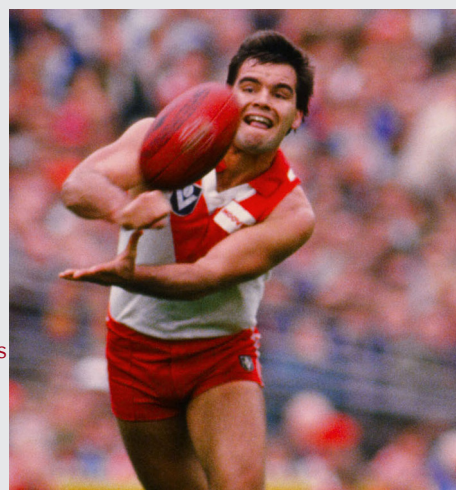
Williams also has a clear message for the contingent of JHA parents and says, "I'd like to let the JHA parents know that if their kids are keen to come down to the Club, then feel free to drop them off when they're available to train - we'll work on their fitness, skills and development and I think they'll have a great time ... who knows where they'll end up!"

Former Geelong Captain, Michael 'Micky' Turner bestowed Williams with one of the great football nicknames after his first VFL match in 1984. Much like a diesel engine, you could always rely on Williams to get the job done.

Now, the Bombers can rely on Greg Williams to help mould the next generation of youngsters to Don The Sash.

As one of the most decorated footballers in the history of the game, the James Hird Academy is in good hands under the expert guidance of the man known as 'Diesel'.

The Academy is thrilled to have Greg Williams on-board as JHA Coach and we wish Diesel the best of luck in the new role!







# The Graduate

## Joe Daniher

### **2017 is shaping up to be a defining season in the history of the Essendon Football Club.**

After enduring the last 4 years mired amid the adversity of the ASADA Saga, this is the first season where the focus is purely on footy, as it should be.

As the Bombers head into the second half of the season sitting 11th on the ladder in an extremely tight competition, the next 4 months may bear witness to the rebirth of a football club – just like the fabled phoenix rising from the ashes.

2017 may also be remembered for the emergence of one of the most exciting young players in the game.

Joe Daniher's meteoric rise from a scrawny Father-Son junior prodigy, to a gun forward of the AFL is one of football's feel-good stories.

The Daniher name is as entrenched with footy as the blades of grass on the field.

The heroics of Daniher's through the history of the game and in particular, the annals of the Essendon Football Club, are legendary.

And what is perhaps most exciting for Bombers fans, is that the latest Daniher may just turn out to be the best of the bunch.

Joe is no stranger to the feats of his father, Anthony, as well as those of his uncles Terry, Neale and Chris.

The young spearhead is proud that the family connection lives on.

"I feel it's important to keep great family names at clubs with great history, and Essendon is definitely one of them. I'm thrilled to be able to continue the legacy created by my dad and uncles at Essendon," he says.

Joe is enjoying a terrific year so far and is on-track to achieve a career-best season, with the 23-year-old already claiming the ANZAC Day Medal and Tom Wills Medal as best afield in Essendon's marquee clashes against Collingwood and Geelong.

It seems like just yesterday that Joey was a lightly-framed teenager among the first intake of James Hird Academy members 7 years ago. Back in 2011, few would have been so bold to predict that Joe would go on to become the all-important barometer of the Essendon attack, but mid-way through the 2017 season that is exactly what the enigmatic goal-kicker is.

As the JHA's inaugural graduate, Joe acknowledges the role that the James Hird Academy played in his junior development and states, "The JHA is a fantastic introduction into the lifestyle of a professional AFL footballer and an opportunity I am very grateful to have received".

"The JHA gave me a unique perspective on the demands of being a professional athlete and also grouped me together with others in a similar position, so we could share our experiences together."

Joe continues, "As far as introductions to an AFL football club go, it was a terrific way to feel part of the Essendon fabric and the Club as a whole. The program made me feel very welcome and included".

Having progressed through the ranks as a Father-Son draftee, Daniher is similarly supportive of the incoming Father-Daughter Rule and states, "I don't have any sisters so I can't give that perspective, but I'm sure some of the many dozens of cousins that I have would love to be involved, and I'd love for the Daniher name to continue to be a strong presence in the future of the Essendon Football Club – both in men's and women's footy".

Who knows how many Daniher's could be playing in red and black by the time our Women's team is established!

But for now, the Bombers will be looking to cement their spot in the Top 8 and hopefully launch an assault on the finals.

And we know that Joe Daniher, just like the other Daniher men before him, will be leading the charge.



# JHA MEMBER IN PROFILE

## JOSH MISITI

Father: Joe Misiti

Age: 14

Position: Centre Half Forward

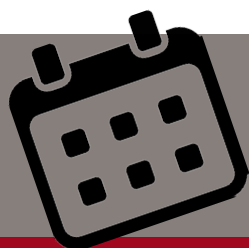
Football Club: Aberfeldie FC

Hobbies & Interests: : Playing basketball, kicking the footy with mates and riding my bike

Favourite AFL Player: Joe Daniher

Favourite Musician: Bruno Mars

Favourite TV Show: American Dad



## JHA 2017 Events Calendar

### JHA AFTER-SCHOOL SESSIONS:

Monday August 7th 2017

Monday September 4th 2017

### JHA DEVELOPMENT DAYS (SCHOOL HOLIDAYS):

Wednesday 12th July 2017 - Term 2 School Holidays

Saturday 15th July 2017 – Term 2 School Holidays

### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY BABY BOMBERS CLINIC:

Friday 14th July 2017 - Term 2 School Holidays



JHA Coach Greg Williams with Luca Alessio



Flight Squad members Alex Alessio and Noah Caracella



# JHA IN REVIEW

## GUARD OF HONOUR 2017

**JUNE 10TH ROUND 12 V PORT ADELAIDE - ETIHAD STADIUM**

The 2017 instalment of the James Hird Academy Guard of Honour Game was one for the record books.

The Academy's night of nights set the scene for Essendon's biggest win of the AFL Season to date, with the Bombers running out 70 point winners against the Power.

Before the first bounce, almost 60 former Essendon stars, their young families and Essendon officials gathered in Etihad Stadium's Arena View Room.

Past players reconnected over dinner and drinks, while their young children ran amok with face-painting and balloon animals proving a big hit.

Essendon CEO Xavier Campbell, List Manager Adrian Dodoro, and new JHA Coach Greg 'Diesel' Williams were among the special guest speakers to present at the event.

There was more than just a little cheeky ribbing in the room with the former Cats, Swans and Blues superstar coming face-to-face with many Bombers opponents from his playing days but the evening was of course enjoyed in good jest.

Essendon Football Club players Darcy Parish and JHA graduate Jake Long were also in attendance, mingling with former Dons legends and posing for photographs with the Baby Bombers.

As the event came to a close, the JHA contingent made their way down to the bowels of Etihad Stadium in preparation for the signature Guard of Honour.

As part of the Guard of Honour festivities, Essendon champion and all-time leading goal-kicker, Matthew Lloyd, was interviewed on the big screen pre-game with his young family also in attendance.

While older members of the JHA formed the Guard of Honour, the Academy's Baby Bombers walked out onto the field hand-in-hand with the modern-day Essendon stars.

After crashing through the JHA-themed banner, the current custodians of The Sash put on a dominant display befitting of the Academy's flagship event.

In a fitting touch, the Academy's inaugural graduate, Joe Daniher also enjoyed a great night in front of the big sticks with the young forward booting 4 goals.

The JHA would like to thank all Academy members, their families, Essendon officials and volunteers for taking part in the Guard of Honour Game – see you next year!



Paul Barnard with sons Kurtis and Luke



Mark Johnson with EFC General Manager of Football Rob Kerr



Courtenay Dempsey with son Mekhi



JHA Graduate Jake Long with Aidan & Lucas Ramanauskas





Darcy Parish with Baby Bomber Koby Bewick



Logan Daniher – Don The Sash



EFC Captain Dyson Heppell walking up the race with Jacob Lloyd



Zach Merrett walking onto the field with Aidan Ramanauskas



Mark Johnson forming the Guard of Honour with son Rylan



Bomber legend Matthew Lloyd sharing a moment with his kids Jacob, Jaeda and Kira

# **The Neagles:** *Brothers In Arms*

**For those in attendance at John Foord Oval on Saturday June 10th, they could have been forgiven for mistaking a footy match for a family reunion.**

Round 9 of the Ovens & Murray Football League pitted the Wodonga Raiders against Corowa-Rutherglen, and all the pre-match hype centred on the Raiders locker room where three brothers prepared to run out as part of the same team for the first time.

With proud mum, Donna looking on; Jydon, Matt and Jaxon Neagle played their part in creating history for the Wodonga Seniors – destroying the Roos by a record-setting margin of 161 points.

22-year-old Jydon Neagle, reflected before the match that the presence of one particular spectator was sorely missed.

“It’s special. I’m just spewing the old man isn’t here to see it,” the Raider’s star conceded.

When asked what his late father and former Essendon champion, Merv Neagle, would say about the occasion, Jydon was pragmatic and stated, “He would be over the moon. He would just be saying, ‘look after the boys but make sure you get a kick yourself’”.

It was also a momentous match for the James Hird Academy, with the three Neagle boys all being members of the JHA program.

In another milestone, the game marked the Senior debut of current JHA Acceleration Group player, 17-year-old Jaxon Neagle.

Raiders Coach, Daryn Cresswell, left no doubt that the youngster had earned the call-up.

“He’s shot up and lost weight and deserved his opportunity. He’s got Matty’s leg-speed and Jydon’s class,” Cresswell stated.

With Wodonga sitting 5th on the Ovens & Murray League ladder, there’s every chance the Neagle brothers will run out side by side again – and who knows how far the family connection can propel the Raiders in the second half of the season.

The JHA would like to thank Donna Neagle and The Border Mail for their assistance with this feature.



From Left: Matt, Jydon and Jaxon Neagle  
Photo Credit: The Border Mail

## GET SOCIAL!

Want to stay up to the date with the James Hird Academy? Make sure to follow the JHA on Facebook and Instagram for all the latest news, behind the scenes pics and more. Hash-tag #JamesHirdAcademy to feature on our page!



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