

# JAMES 5 HIRD

## A C A D E M Y



**Hello and welcome to the third and final edition of the James Hird Academy Newsletter for 2014.**

The Academy has enjoyed another banner year, with a number of JHA members producing impressive performances at junior level throughout the past season.

2014 was JHA Coach, Marty Allison's, first full year at the helm of the Academy program. Marty's tireless perseverance and dedication to guide and train these aspiring footballers undoubtedly contributed to many youngsters enjoying personal-best seasons.

The Academy has also enjoyed a higher public profile this year, after three JHA members played starring roles in the Essendon Football Club's video submission for the Virgin Australia Short Film Festival. Jake Long, Josh Misiti and Tex Wanganeen all donned the red and black jumper while recreating iconic football moments made famous by their fathers.

JHA Next Generation members and their families relished in two footy camps held at the True Value Solar Centre during the course of the season. Both camps were a roaring success and greatly enjoyed by not only the youngsters participating in the specialised skills clinics, but also their proud dads who savoured the opportunity to return to the club and catch up with old

teammates. Keep reading this newsletter for a full recap of the second Next Generation Camp.

But perhaps the highlight of the JHA year came just a few short weeks ago when Jake Long (son of Michael) was recruited to the Essendon Rookie List with pick 47 in the NAB AFL Rookie Draft as a Father-Son Pre-Listed Selection. The Academy extends hearty congratulations to Jake and the rest of the Long family. Be sure to keep reading this newsletter for an in-depth look at Jake's journey from the JHA ranks to the AFL.

In closing, the James Hird Academy would like to congratulate all Academy members on their football achievements this season. Thanks also to all the parents for their continued support and involvement with the JHA.

Thank you for your readership this season and we look forward to bringing you all the latest news from the James Hird Academy throughout next year and beyond.

We wish all members of the greater Essendon Family the very best for the Christmas holiday period and as always, go Bombers!

Stay up to date with the JHA by visiting the following address:

[www.essendonfc.com.au/team/james-hird-academy](http://www.essendonfc.com.au/team/james-hird-academy)

### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - ACCELERATION GROUP

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Tom Wallis	17	Dean Wallis
Jett Bewick	17	Darren Bewick
Harvey Daniher	17	Chris Daniher
Matthew Neagle	16	Merv Neagle

### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - NEXT GENERATION

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Jaxon Neagle	14	Merv Neagle
Mason Fletcher	14	Dustin Fletcher
Ricky O'Donnell	14	Gary O'Donnell
Darcy Denham	14	Sean Denham
Kurtis Barnard	13	Paul Barnard
Tom Hird	13	James Hird
Max Fletcher	12	Dustin Fletcher
Joshua Misiti	11	Joe Misiti
Nyawi Lovett-Murray	11	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Alex Hird	11	James Hird
Tex Wanganeen	11	Gavin Wanganeen

### JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - BABY BOMBERS

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Luca Alessio	10	Steve Alessio
Alwyn Jr Davey	9	Alwyn Davey
Jayden Davey	9	Alwyn Davey
Will Hamilton	9	Paul Hamilton
Luke Barnard	9	Paul Barnard
Noah Caracella	8	Blake Caracella
Alex Alessio	8	Steve Alessio
Aljah Davey	6	Alwyn Davey
Taj McPhee	6	Adam McPhee
Logan Daniher	6	Chris Daniher
Mara Lovett-Murray	6	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Aidan Ramanaukas	6	Adam Ramanaukas
William Hird	5	James Hird
Koby Bewick	5	Darren Bewick
Max Alessio	5	Steve Alessio
Thomas Caracella	5	Blake Caracella
Lucas Ramanaukas	4	Adam Ramanaukas
Taitum Dempsey	4	Courtenay Dempsey
Cove McPhee	4	Adam McPhee
Rylan Johnson	3	Mark Johnson
Cruz Davey	2	Alwyn Davey
Noah Peverill	2	Damien Peverill
Lenny Solomon	2	Dean Solomon
Jacob Lloyd	2	Matthew LLOYD
Connor Stanton	1	Brent Stanton
Harlan Ryder	1	Paddy Ryder



# MARTY'S MESSAGE

*"Hello to all members of the James Hird Academy."*

Congratulations to each of you, I know you all put in a lot of effort and hard work throughout the past season and you should be proud of your achievements.

We've had a terrific year in the Academy and have been able to accomplish some great things. From attending my first Guard of Honour Game, to the establishment of the Next Generation Group and the continued success of the Acceleration Group, I have thoroughly enjoyed my first full season at the helm of the JHA.

Being involved in the Guard of Honour Game was a fantastic experience for me. To see the joy on the youngsters' faces as they ran out onto Etihad Stadium gave me a sense of what the James Hird Academy is all about. Similarly, to meet our 'Next Generation' and their parents for the first time at our school holiday camps provided me with further understanding as to why this club has had such a strong history of father-sons players. It truly is about the Essendon family!

Finally, the Acceleration Group continues to go from strength to strength and has delivered the club a rookie-listed player, along with three boys progressing to their top-age year in the TAC Cup and another lad embarking on his TAC Cup journey for the first time.

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Looking forward to seeing you all for a big 2015.

Go Dons!



# NEWS & NOTES

## Staff Update:

The James Hird Academy is excited to announce the addition of former Gold Coast Sun, Josh Toy, to its coaching panel for 2015. Josh played 13 games for the Suns after being pre-listed by the club as a 17-year-old. Following the 2012 season, Josh returned to Victoria and has spent the last two years playing for Essendon's VFL team. Josh now harbours strong ambitions to pursue a



coaching career in the AFL. He will assist JHA Coach Marty Allison (his former coach at the Calder Cannons), in helping teach and mentor members of the Academy, with a particular focus on the Next Generation group. Welcome aboard Josh!

## Congratulations: Tom Fields

The Academy also sends warm wishes and congratulations to Tom Fields, after the former JHA alumni was selected by the Carlton Football Club with selection 41 in the NAB AFL 2014 Rookie Draft. Tom was an inaugural member of the James Hird Academy (active member in 2010 and 2011), and is the son of former Essendon Best & Fairest Winner, Neville Fields, who still works for the club as a talent spotter. Tom produced a solid season playing across half-back

for SANFL preliminary finalists South Adelaide, playing 20 games and averaging 15 disposals. Congratulations Tom!

## Congratulations: Joe Daniher

The James Hird Academy would like to extend hearty congratulations to inaugural Academy graduate, Joe Daniher, after the young forward won the Essendon Football Club's Leading Goal-Kicker Award for 2014. Joe also took home the Lindsay Griffiths Rising Star Award at the club's end-of-season Crichton Medal night. Much like all Bomber fans, we look forward to seeing Joey boot many more goals for the Dons over the years to come.

## VFL Update:

In more exciting news for the Academy, two former JHA alumni will be undertaking a VFL pre-season with the hopes of making the Essendon squad for 2015. Jydon Neagle (active member from 2010-2013) has made the move to Melbourne from Albury to continue to chase his football dream; while Todd Vander Haar (active member from 2010-2013) is looking to build upon an impressive comeback season with Old Xavs in 2014, following some horrific injuries that prevented him from playing football in 2012 and 2013. Good luck boys!





# ACADEMY REVIEW

## Next Generation Camp #2 - October 2014

The second Next Generation Camp for 2014 got underway beneath the cloudless blue skies of a sun-drenched spring morning.

An excited fleet of Hird Academy members arrived at the True Value Solar Centre ready for an action-packed day of fun footy education.

Young lads bearing famous Essendon names such as the likes of Hird, Misiti, Barnard, Neagle and Denham; gathered in the player's auditorium for a welcome presentation delivered by JHA Coordinator Adriano Leti. The plan for the day's events was briefly outlined to the group, before JHA Coach, Marty Allison, reinforced the importance of the JHA Values (1.Family 2.Education 3.Football).

The members of the Next Generation group were presented with their official JHA training t-shirts, emblazoned with their father's name and number on the back. After a quick change, the boys streamed out onto the turf of the True Value Solar Centre's undercover Hangar.

Under the watchful gaze of Coach Marty and with a helping hand from senior Acceleration Group members Harvey Daniher, Tom Wallis, Jett Bewick and Matt Neagle; the youngsters were guided through a series of warm-up drills and racked up some quality touches of the Sherrin with a kick-to-kick session.

The importance of quick feet was emphasised next as the speed ladders were rolled out. The Hird brothers were singled out and applauded for their fleet-footed efforts, while Josh Misiti's running commentary had the boys in stitches.

The camp then moved outside to the sunshine-bathed Etihad-sized oval, where the young Academy members focussed on kicking technique and the art of handballing to a moving target while drawing an oncoming opponent.

Next up, the boys were shown how to gather the ball off the ground with 'clean hands' under pressure; before learning how to out-body an opponent in a marking contest to protect the fall of the ball.

Finally, the troupe retreated from the relentless afternoon sun and experienced a true AFL post-training recovery session with hot and cold baths – the less glamorous side to training like a footy star!

After drying off, the boys relaxed amid the air-conditioned surrounds of the players' lounge and joined with their parents and staff for a catered lunch – bringing their exciting day at Bomberland to a close.

The Academy would like to thank all participants, parents and club officials for helping to make the camp one to remember and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2015.



*Darcy Denham, Josh Misiti and Kurtis Barnard*



*Alex and Tom Hird*

*JHA Camp Attendees: Harvey Daniher, Tom Wallis, Jett Bewick, Matthew Neagle, Jaxon Neagle, Tom Hird, Alex Hird, Josh Misiti, Kurtis Barnard, Darcy Denham*

## AROUND THE GROUNDS



### JAKE LONG

Unfortunately for Jake, he endured another injury-interrupted season and missed 12 games with a high ankle sprain. However, he did manage to pull on the boots five times this year; including two games for the Northern Territory in the TAC Cup, two games for Scotch College in the APS competition, and finally making his debut in the red and black for Essendon's VFL team in the last round of the season. The year finished on a high for Jake, with the youngster earning a place on the Bombers' Rookie List - Well done Jake!



### JETT BEWICK

Jett unfortunately endured a horror year with injury in 2014, missing most of the season due to a back stress fracture. After missing out on the Calder squad because of his back injury, Jett finished the year off by playing the final four games of the EDFL season for Airport West Under 18s. Jett will look to rebound strongly in 2015, again pushing hard to make the Cannons squad.



### MATTHEW NEAGLE

Matthew also had an injury-plagued season, missing eight weeks with a back stress fracture and four weeks with a broken wrist. However, in between that time, he managed to successfully gain selection for the GWS Giants Under 16 Academy and played two games against the Sydney Swans Academy. Matthew has also been invited to train with the Murray Bushrangers' TAC Cup squad in the hopes of making their team as a bottom-ager in 2015.



### TOM WALLIS

Tom had a successful first year of TAC Cup football, playing eight games for a very strong Calder Cannons team while averaging 12 disposals and kicking two goals. Additionally, Tom played six seniors games for Doutta Stars in the EDFL and represented VIC Metro in a Futures trial game. Tom will play as a top-age player for Calder in the TAC Cup in 2015.



### HARVEY DANIHER

Following his move to Melbourne from Wagga in January, Harvey had an up and down year due to injury. He started the season slowly after recovering from a foot stress fracture but managed to play two games for the Calder Cannons and eight games for Aberfeldie Under 18s in the EDFL. A minor hamstring strain caused him to miss four weeks late in the season, however he returned just in time to play in Aberfeldie's premiership. Harvey will look to build on 2014, playing as a top-ager for the Calder Cannons next year.



Jett Bewick with Alex Hird



Harvey Daniher, Jett Bewick, and Matthew Neagle



Tom Wallis

### 2015 Sponsorship Opportunities:

The James Hird Academy wishes to announce the availability of major and individual player sponsorship opportunities for season 2015. 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 Chris Goodwin on 0434 182 351 or [cgoodwin@essendonfc.com.au](mailto:cgoodwin@essendonfc.com.au) for more information.

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## Jake's Long Journey From JHA Prodigy to the EFC Rookie List

The Long name is spoken with reverence within  
in the halls of the Essendon Football Club.

*Compiled by Adriano Leti & Zoe Cotsis*



Anyone with red and black blood flowing through their veins can vividly recall that famous bouncing run and goal at the MCG on Grand Final day when, 'Longy' broke Carlton hearts (and possibly one of Stephen Silvagni's fingernails) on the way to a best-on-ground performance that helped deliver the 1993 Premiership Cup to Bomberland.

Michael Long's football achievements speak for themselves – 190 games, two Premierships, a Norm Smith Medal, dual All-Australian selection, inductee to the Australian Football Hall of Fame, and also ranking among the top 25 players to have ever donned the sash throughout more than 140 years of history as a 'Champion of Essendon'.

While Michael's on-field accolades comfortably place him amid football's elite performers, it is perhaps his off-field triumphs that have left an even bigger mark on the game and the wider AFL community. Michael's fierce passion for his fellow Indigenous people and his relentless fight against racism through stirring initiatives like the historic Long Walk program, have inspired countless numbers of Australians both young and old.

As a living legend of the club and icon of the game, the Long legacy is assured to endure throughout the coming years and generations of footy fans... but Michael's young son, Jake, is looking to leave his own mark upon the game that made his father a household name.

Sitting beside his boy at a press conference to announce that Jake would be joining the Essendon Football Club as a pre-listed rookie via the Father-Son Rule, the senior Long couldn't contain his delight. "This is a proud moment for our family. The Long surname has obviously opened the door and provided Jake with an opportunity, but I know he has the drive and commitment to make the most of this chance," the Bomber great acknowledged.

However, the road to that joyful moment was by no means an easy ride. Jake Long's pathway to the Essendon Rookie List is a story peppered with injury setbacks, personal sacrifices, and an unwavering determination to succeed.

In 2010, Jake made the extremely tough decision to leave his home and close-knit family back in Darwin and move to Melbourne in order to focus on his football and commence studying at Scotch College.

Rather than choose the more conventional football pathways, Jake resisted invitations from the Oakleigh Chargers TAC Cup team and elected to emulate his superstar cousin, Cyril Rioli, by hoping to get drafted into the AFL system via the APS competition and also playing with the Northern Territory Thunder at the National Championships.

# FEATURE ARTICLE JAKE'S LONG STORY

The James Hird Academy team first laid eyes on Jake at the inaugural JHA Welcome Day held at Windy Hill in mid-2010, and of the 20 boys who attended, he was one who immediately caught the attention of Academy staff out on the track.

Bombers List Manager, Adriano Dodoro, could see undoubted potential in the skinny 14-year-old. "There were two kids that stood out, a guy called Joey Daniher and a guy who was a lot smaller who was called Jakey Long," he reflected.

The initial glimpse of burgeoning talent witnessed on that crisp July afternoon at the first JHA session was reinforced by Jake's impressive performances for the Northern Territory Under 16's team at the 2012 National Championships held in Sydney. Essendon Recruiting Manager, Merv Keane, kept a close eye on the lightly-built youngster and was thrilled with his fleet-footed runs off half-back and clean disposal.

Jake followed up his strong form at the Champs by making his senior debut for St Mary's in the Northern Territory Football League in December 2012, despite still only being 16 years of age. The game was broadcast on ABC television in Darwin and everyone watching was immediately captivated by the young Long, who showed an innate sense of footy nous and willingness to chase that was uncannily reminiscent of his famous father.

Dodoro still gleefully recalls the footage, "When he debuted for St Mary's at 16 years of age in the NTFL, he showed he had a lot of attributes like his father – his run, his speed, the agility, the game awareness," the recruiting guru said.

After such a strong finish to the year, Jake entered the 2013 season full of eager optimism and was promoted to the James Hird Academy Acceleration Group as part of the next stage in his footy development. However, the next 12 months would bring frustration and disappointment as Jake's body succumbed to a string of unfortunate injuries – including a broken collarbone sustained in the first match of the APS season that saw him miss both JHA school holiday training camps and the 2013 Under 18 National Championships.

After returning to play a couple of games for St Mary's Under 18's at the end of the 2013 season, Jake was looking forward to lining up in the highly-anticipated match between Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar that traditionally opens the APS season. Unfortunately, the injury curse would strike again for the luckless Long, as he seriously hurt his ankle – an injury that would sideline the young midfielder for 12 weeks and once again cost him the opportunity to represent his home state at the 2014 Under 18 National Champs.

Jake Long and Joe Daniher  
14, July, 2010



Jake eventually returned to the field late in the season and managed a solitary TAC Cup match, and also finally enjoyed playing with his schoolmates in the last two games of the APS home and away season.

The AFL aspirant had also ramped up his involvement with the Academy. Jake began attending fortnightly training sessions with JHA Coach, Marty Allison, and other members of the Acceleration Group in an effort to hone his skills, work on his footy craft, enhance his understanding of the nuances of the game, and continue his physical development by way of intense gym sessions both at Scotch and at the club.

However, with two consecutive years of injury-ravaged seasons – and no real gauge of the kind of football Jake was capable of producing at his peak – the Bombers were set to head into the 2014 AFL draft period with no definitive answer in regards to committing to picking up Jake Long.

But that all changed at the end of August when Jake was given the opportunity to pull on the red and black jumper for the first time by playing in the final game of the VFL season against Geelong on a Friday night at Skilled Stadium.

# FEATURE ARTICLE JAKE'S LONG STORY

Despite his minimal preparation and lack of match conditioning, Jake surprised everyone with his performance. The wiry teen looked like he belonged out on the field as he collected 12 disposals, laid 7 tackles and even kicked a goal that sparked jubilant celebrations from his teammates.

It was this encouraging performance that convinced the Essendon recruiting staff that Jake could play at the next level. "He just stepped straight up to the mark; it was enough for us to say I think we've got a player here," Dodoro admitted with his trademark grin.

Since that night, life has been a whirlwind for Jake Long. After taking part in the final JHA Acceleration Group session for the year in mid-September, Jake returned home to Darwin for the school holiday period and ended up staying longer than expected after a virus resulted in the 18-year-old missing the last two weeks of Year 12. Fortunately, Jake was well enough to head back down to Melbourne and recovered in time to attend the final assembly for the school year and also sit for his exams.

Shortly after submitting the last of his essays and exam papers, Jake was summoned to the True Value Solar Centre for a meeting with Adrian Dodoro, where it was revealed that the Bombers would commit to selecting the youngster as a pre-listed rookie pick under the Father-Son Rule – granted that no other club swooped on the raw talent during the course of the NAB AFL National Draft.

As we now know, Jake Long was officially drafted to the Essendon Football Club via pick 47 of the AFL Rookie Draft – fulfilling the brand new Bomber's lifelong wish. "Ever since I was kid, I've loved the footy club and didn't want to go anywhere else," the ecstatic rookie revealed. "Essendon is a huge part of our family, and it's a great feeling to officially join the club that means so much to me and obviously my Dad."

The dual Premiership star and Norm Smith Medal winner praised the JHA as a viable pathway for future Father-Son prospects and stated, "I think what the football club is doing through the James Hird Academy is important and it makes sure the club retains that great family feel which was prevalent during my playing days."

Throughout the past two years, the Academy has maintained regular contact with Jake and initiated fortnightly phone calls to Rob Smith – Football and Indigenous Programs Coordinator at Scotch College – in order to receive updates on how Jake was progressing and to ensure the aspiring athlete wasn't neglecting his studies.

Jake has not only turned his footy dream into reality by getting drafted by the Bombers, but he has also successfully completed VCE – an achievement that meets the criteria of the JHA Values (1. Family 2. Education 3. Football).

Michael, was especially thrilled that his boy managed to strike the perfect balance between his efforts on the footy field and in the classroom. "We're pretty proud of what he has achieved. He's just finished Year 12 ... to top that off and be rookie listed by the club that's been a big part of my life, it's a proud moment for the family," he acknowledged.

Essendon Senior Coach, James Hird, was also elated to witness another product of the Academy named in his honour, pull on the famous red sash. "To see Joe Daniher, and now Jake, make it onto the Essendon list is a credit to Adrian Dodoro and the recruiting team, as well as the Academy coaching staff," Hird said.



# FEATURE ARTICLE

## JAKE'S LONG STORY

When quizzed on the weight of expectation that comes with the Long name, Hird was pragmatic and revealed, "There will be expectations from outside the football club for Jake to emulate the career of his father, but internally there's no pressure. We want Jake to enjoy his footy, enjoy his development and learn from the challenges along the way, and I think the most pleasing aspect is Jake's a driven young man who wants to forge his own career."

That drive and determination has already reaped benefits within the past two weeks Jake has spent training with his new Bomber teammates. The rookie clocked up a surprisingly good 2-kilometre time trial effort, finishing with a promising time of 6 minutes and 56 seconds.

But Jake knows he's still got a long road ahead of him and is well aware of the fact that he needs to put on at least 5 kilograms before even contemplating playing at AFL level. "I know I've got plenty of work to do on my development but I'm ready to put in the hard yards and hopefully I can take that next step and play senior footy for the Bombers," he expressed with a steely glint in his eyes.

Who knows where Jake Long's football journey will take him, but if the will and desire to fight through the countless hurdles already placed before him in his endeavours to make it onto an AFL list offer any indication, then Bomber fans may be seeing another spritely Long bounce his way across the MCG sooner than expected.

The James Hird Academy would like to officially congratulate Jake and the rest of the Long family on his rookie selection – Well done, Jake and best of luck for the season ahead!

