

# JAME<sup>5</sup>HIRD

A C A D E M Y

MAY 2015

EST. 2010



**Hello and welcome to the first edition of the James Hird Academy Newsletter for 2015.**

The JHA enjoyed another bumper year last season, with a number of exciting events taking place. The Academy benefitted from a higher public profile on the back of Essendon's video submission to the Virgin Australia Short Film Festival, which featured several Academy Members re-enacting classic footy moments made famous by their fathers.

Jake Long, one of the youngsters who stole the spotlight in that short film, turned his football dream into reality by being recruited by the Bombers as a Father-Son Pre-Selected Rookie at the end of last season.

Jake joins Joe Daniher as the second JHA Member to have successfully progressed through the Academy program and earn a place on Essendon's list. Joey also produced a strong season at AFL level for the Dons, with the young forward winning both the Leading Goal-Kicker Award for 2014 and the Lindsay Griffiths Rising Star Award.

2015 is shaping up as another watershed year for the Academy and has already gotten off to a strong start with our first Next Generation Camp for the season having taken place over the Easter Holidays. For a full recap of the training camp, keep reading this newsletter.

This season is set to be one of the most exciting of the JHA's five-year existence with

a number of boys in the Acceleration Group also reaching draft age.

The annual Guard of Honour Game is also approaching fast and the event is scheduled to take place at Essendon's Round 10 clash against Geelong at Etihad Stadium on the evening of Saturday June 6th. All JHA households can expect an invitation to arrive in the mail very soon and we greatly anticipate another strong turnout for the Academy's flagship event.

The James Hird Academy staff roster continues to grow with former Gold Coast Sun, Josh Toy, joining the ranks as JHA Assistant Coach. Having played his final match for Essendon's VFL team just six months ago, Josh is fresh out of the game and is looking forward to applying his footy knowledge and experience to the benefit of the JHA Next Generation Group. To find out even more about Josh, keep reading this newsletter for an in-depth interview with the JHA's brand new Assistant Coach.

With another big year for the James Hird Academy already underway, we look forward to bringing you all the latest news throughout 2015 and beyond – happy reading!

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	18	Dean Wallis
Jett Bewick	18	Darren Bewick
Harvey Daniher	17	Chris Daniher
Matthew Neagle	17	Merv Neagle

## JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - NEXT GENERATION

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Jaxon Neagle	15	Merv Neagle
Mason Fletcher	15	Dustin Fletcher
Ricky O'Donnell	14	Gary O'Donnell
Darcy Denham	14	Sean Denham
Kurtis Barnard	14	Paul Barnard
Tom Hird	14	James Hird
Max Fletcher	12	Dustin Fletcher
Joshua Misiti	12	Joe Misiti
Nyawi Lovett-Murray	11	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Alex Hird	11	James Hird
Tex Wanganeen	11	Gavin Wanganeen
Luca Alessio	11	Steve Alessio

## JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - BABY BOMBERS

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Alwyn Jr Davey	10	Alwyn Davey
Jayden Davey	10	Alwyn Davey
Will Hamilton	10	Paul Hamilton
Luke Barnard	10	Paul Barnard
Noah Caracella	8	Blake Caracella
Alex Alessio	8	Steve Alessio
Alijah Davey	7	Alwyn Davey
Mara Lovett-Murray	7	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Logan Daniher	6	Chris Daniher
Taj McPhee	6	Adam McPhee
Aidan Ramanauskas	6	Adam Ramanauskas
William Hird	6	James Hird
Koby Bewick	6	Darren Bewick
Max Alessio	5	Steve Alessio
Thomas Caracella	5	Blake Caracella
Taitum Dempsey	5	Courtenay Dempsey
Lucas Ramanauskas	4	Adam Ramanauskas
Cove McPhee	4	Adam McPhee
Rylan Johnson	3	Mark Johnson
Noah Peverill	3	Damien Peverill
Lenny Solomon	3	Dean Solomon
Jacob Lloyd	2	Matthew Lloyd
Cruz Davey	1	Alwyn Davey
Connor Stanton	1	Brent Stanton
Harlan Ryder	1	Paddy Ryder



# MARTY'S MESSAGE

**“Greetings to all Academy Members and your families; welcome to another big season for the JHA!”**

2015 holds plenty of promise for the wider Academy family and the year is already off to a busy start with former Gold Coast player (and my fellow Calder Cannons alumni), Josh Toy, joining the JHA as Assistant Coach – welcome to the team Josh!

We also have exciting plans in motion for the members of the Acceleration Group, with a few boys entering their potential draft year.

It was great to catch up with the lads who attended our first Next Generation Camp for the season during the Easter holidays. I look forward to seeing more of you at our next training camp in July.

Finally, our annual Guard of Honour Game is just around the corner as well. The Guard of Honour pre-game function is a fantastic evening for all involved and I strongly encourage everyone to take part in the Academy's 'night of nights'.

Good luck to all of you with your on-going football commitments and as always, go Bombers!



# NEWS & NOTES

## Congratulations:

Congratulations to inaugural JHA Member, Jydon Neagle, who has made Essendon's VFL list for the 2015 season.

Jydon moved to Melbourne from Albury at the end of 2014 and completed the entire pre-season with the Bombers while also playing in two practice matches.

Jydon was in-line to play early in the season as Essendon's 23rd man but unfortunately dislocated his shoulder playing for the Wodonga Raiders in the OMFL. Although he will require surgery, he is hopeful of returning to the field late in the season.



### JHA Events Calendar

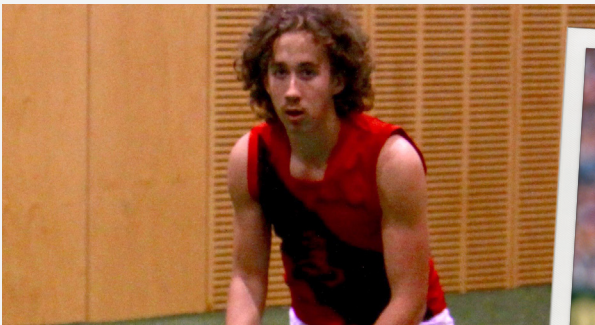
Guard of Honour Game

Saturday June 6th 2015

Next Generation Camp #2

Wednesday 8th &  
Thursday 9th July

## MEMBER IN PROFILE



Jett Bewick



Darren Bewick - 1996



Jett & Darren Bewick  
1993 AFL Grand Final

FAVOURITE PLAYER	Nat Fyfe
HOBBIES & INTERESTS	Football & School
FAVOURITE MUSICIAN	Tom Wallis' Sound Cloud
FAVOURITE TV SHOW	How I Met Your Mother
FAVOURITE MOVIE	The Blind Side



# ACADEMY REVIEW

Next Generation Camp #1 - April 2015

**With the Easter holidays in full swing and the scent of chocolate eggs still permeating the air, a handful of young Academy Members gathered at the True Value Solar Centre for the first Next Generation Camp of the season.**

Two of the Hird brothers, Tom and Will, plus a rambunctious Josh Misiti were among the participants who enjoyed an action-packed day of full-on footy at the Essendon Football Club.

The morning began in the players' auditorium where JHA Coach, Marty Allison, conducted a thorough video analysis of each boy's kicking style. The dual TAC Cup Premiership-winning coach gave the lads vital tips on how to improve their kicking technique – from how to properly hold a footy, to the ball-drop and the all-important follow through of the kicking leg.

With each JHA Member knowing what to focus on, the boys headed out to the undercover hangar for a fast-paced skills session. Under the expert guidance of newly-appointed JHA Assistant Coach, Josh Toy, the lads enthusiastically tackled the training program.

Highlights included handball drills, goal-kicking practice, gathering ground-balls with 'clean hands', and how to protect the drop of the ball in marking contests.

Essendon's Performance Analyst, Des O'Sullivan then showed the boys

how to run efficiently when in possession of the ball and without, while also emphasising the importance of high knees in the running motion.

In a bonus for the Academy Members in attendance, Essendon's Senior Coach, James Hird also took some time out of his busy schedule to make a special appearance at the

training camp. Onlookers could be forgiven for feeling a sense of deja-vu as 14-year-old Tom Hird licked his fingers in the signature fashion made famous by his father before gathering the footy under the watchful gaze of his proud dad.

The day was capped off with a mandatory recovery session (including the dreaded hot/cold baths), and a satisfying lunch in the Bomber Café.

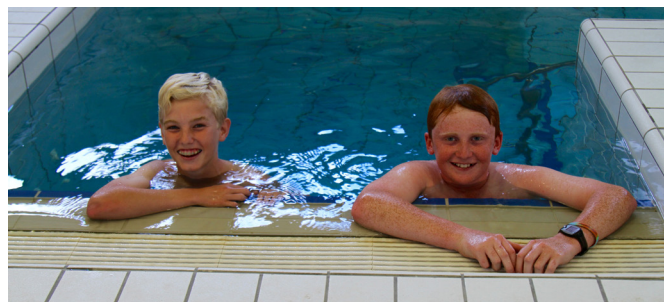
*The James Hird Academy would like to thank all Academy Members and their parents for helping to make our first training camp of 2015 a success – we look forward to seeing you again very soon at the Essendon Football Club!*



William Hird



Coach Marty with Josh Misiti



# AROUND THE GROUNDS



## JETT BEWICK

Following a full pre-season and three practice matches with Calder in the TAC Cup, Jett unluckily missed selection in the Cannons final squad for 2015. In further bad luck, Jett injured his ankle in his first practice game for the Airport West U18s in the EDFL and missed a month of football. Since then however, Jett has rebounded strongly by being named in the best players in Airport West's last 3 games and is strongly pushing for selection in the senior team.



## MATTHEW NEAGLE

Matthew has had a terrific start to his bottom age year by making the Murray Bushrangers squad in the TAC Cup after a couple of impressive performances in practice games. While he is yet to crack the strong Bushrangers line-up for a TAC Cup game this year, he has played some terrific football across half-back for the Wodonga Raiders senior team in the Ovens & Murray Football League. Matt has averaged approximately 12 disposals a game and is holding his own in the very competitive country football league.



## TOM WALLIS

Looking to build on a promising bottom-age year, Tommy spent the month of January training full-time with the Bombers in the lead-up to the TAC Cup season and displayed some impressive attributes in match simulation. Since then, Tom has had a solid start to the 2015 season with the Calder Cannons, averaging 15 disposals across 6 games while rotating between the midfield and defence and defence.



## HARVEY DANIHER

Harvey is once again playing for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup. It has been somewhat of a slow start to the season for Harvey while learning a new position – playing in the midfield for the first time. However, he has managed one TAC Cup game and has played some decent football for the Aberfeldie U18s in the EDFL. Harvey will look to push for a recall to the Cannons side in the upcoming weeks and is also in line to play for NSW-ACT in the NAB AFL U18 National Championships.



Tom Wallis with Des O'Sullivan



Matt Neagle, Jett Bewick, Harvey Daniher and Tom Wallis with Des O'Sullivan



Tom Wallis - Calder 2015

## 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

## Unwrapping the Academy's New Toy

Written by Zoe Cotsis

Josh Toy has always had a strong love for footy  
and a deep affinity for the Essendon Football Club.



At the tender age of just four, the youngster with a head of curly blonde hair would tag along with his father, Malcolm, to help run the local Auskick clinics before heading home to sit down in front of the TV and watch replays of Essendon games.

While most other kids his age would happily watch cartoons or children's films, Josh was enamoured with the game of AFL. He recalls, "Dad used to have heaps of old Essendon matches from the 80s and 90s on video and for some reason I would watch them over and over when I was really young. That probably started a fixation with the game and my passion grew from there".

From those fledgling beginnings, Josh would go on to carve out a glittering junior career (including winning the Ben Mitchell Medal as voted by his peers in the AIS/ AFL Academy squad) which culminated in the Gold Coast Suns selecting the talented rebounding defender as a pre-listed 17-year-old in the 2010 NAB AFL Draft.

Toy looks back on his time at the Suns fondly and recounts the sheer thrill of being drafted to an AFL club after so many years of hard work and dedication. He relates, "It was amazing. It was literally my dream to play at the highest level I possibly could. The most amazing part was being signed at the same time with guys I had played with at VIC Metro and others who I had just been on a trip to South Africa with as a part of the AIS tour, and to share that time with them and know I was heading up there with them also was relatively surreal".

Josh went on to play 13 games for the Suns at AFL level and was part of the club's inaugural team. He considers himself lucky to have spent two years playing alongside and under some of the game's greats, including Gold Coast captain, Gary Ablett Jnr and former Senior Coach, Guy 'Bluey' McKenna.

"I definitely learned plenty from Gary and 'Bluey' and all the other coaches, support staff and players too. I spent time going over edits with Gary and it gave me a really good insight into one of – if not the most – elite current-day players about positioning and his thinking process in different scenarios; whether it be when the ball was in dispute and how to win it, or where to cover off to and other situations like that." Josh continues, "I also spent time learning aspects of the game from Andy 'Chopper' Lovell and Shaun Hart, as they were the development and reserves coaches and they played a huge role in my understanding of structures and expectations."

Unfortunately, Josh was unable to further his on-field AFL career, due in part to an on-going battle with a congenital heart condition. He reveals, "My career wasn't cut short necessarily by that. It restricted me but in the last year I was up on the Gold Coast, I was so short of confidence that I wasn't playing at the standard required to stay on a list. It's as simple as that to be brutally honest."

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## UNWRAPPING THE ACADEMY'S NEW TOY

With his AFL career seemingly over, Josh returned to his home state of Victoria and earned a place on Essendon's VFL list. Toy recounts with joy how much being able to play for his beloved Bombers meant to him, "It was a really special opportunity. I was an avid Bombers supporter growing up and many other family members went for Essendon too. For them to be able to head along to games and support me was great to see, and for me to pull on the jumper was a little surreal too. All round it was a decision I am very happy I made".

However, despite the premature end to Toy's AFL playing days, his insatiable passion for the game still remained and Josh realised that coaching was perhaps his best path to stay involved in football. He states, "I believe I have more of a drive to coach than I do to have played. It sounds weird as I dreamt of playing AFL, however, I get immense satisfaction out of seeing others develop and improve... as corny as that sounds!"

He continues, "I love making a teammate a better player. As a coach, there would be nothing more satisfying than helping someone improve and gain success as a result of something you may have worked on with them – whether that be physically or mentally. I have no doubt that I will stay involved in the game down the track, whether it be in development at the highest level or working in academies with the younger men coming through."

After having played his final game for the Essendon VFL team approximately six months ago, Josh was hired as the James Hird Academy's Assistant Coach – a role he tackles with utmost sincerity and intent.

"I spoke with EFC List Manager, Adrian Dodoro, while I was playing VFL the year I came back from the Gold Coast. He asked me what my plans were long term, to which I answered that I hoped to see myself working in player welfare, player development or something along that path," Toy remembers.

"When I decided to not play on this season with the VFL, I approached Adrian about possibly helping out with the James Hird Academy as I thought it would be great if I could have an impact on those young men striving to make it at AFL level. I really felt I could relate to them, being not to distantly removed from the game."

Mirroring his unwavering dedication to his craft as a player, Josh has turned his full focus on becoming the best coach he can possibly be. The ambitious 23-year-old is currently studying a Bachelor of Applied Science course at RMIT University in Bundoora, majoring in teaching Health and Phys-Ed.

To supplement his studies, Josh is also working at Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, and has returned to his local Aberfeldie Football Club as a player



and Development Coach. If all that wasn't enough, the aspiring coach is also assisting with the VIC Metro Futures Program, providing valuable support and guidance for so many young men embarking on their own footballing journeys.

Funnily enough, Josh finds it somewhat ironic that he is now serving as Assistant Coach for the James Hird Academy, considering that as countless other Essendon fans growing up in the 90s, Josh keenly followed the fortunes of his favourite player – a blonde haired fella who wore the number 5 guernsey.

"It's a little surreal. Being a Bombers supporter growing up, who couldn't love watching James Hird? His leadership, his ability to impose himself on a game whenever the side truly needed it by moving from half-forward to get a crucial clearance or set up a goal were a couple of many attributes I really admired and modelled my game on. It has been awesome speaking with James (through the new role) and working with Tom Hird when he came down to the club during the school holidays for a training camp with us too. It was bizarre, as I did teaching rounds where he goes to school and he was a little shocked when he saw me the very first day," Josh recalls with a laugh.

# FEATURE ARTICLE

## UNWRAPPING THE ACADEMY'S NEW TOY

Toy believes the JHA plays an important part in the football landscape and provides a unique avenue for youngsters looking to achieve greatness at AFL level. He says, "I think it's a fantastic idea. AFL teams are looking at different ways to get an edge on each other nowadays, with academies such as those in QLD and NSW. It's a great opportunity for the guys to get into the environment of a top-tier club and push some weights around, use the training facilities, jump in the hot/colds and experience what the AFL boys do. Having some of the listed guys walking around while they are there no doubt gives them a bit of a thrill too".

As a lifelong Essendon fan, Josh also acknowledges the value of the Academy for the Bomber faithful. "What I think is great, is more so for supporters. Growing up, I was always on the lookout or incredibly interested in Father-Son players coming through and continuing a tradition at the club. Watching Jobe Watson develop as a player and also following the link of Dustin Fletcher at the club (having had Ken as a coach) is really special as a supporter. I believe it is a great opportunity for the club to keep families involved and around the club," he states with a smile.

As the JHA's new Assistant Coach, Toy will focus predominantly on the Next Generation Group – the Academy's intermediate stage comprised of lads aged 11 to 15. Josh is already throwing himself into the role, as evidenced by his keen interest in his new charges, "I try to get along to a game a week of one of the boys in this age bracket, and so I have seen Josh Misiti and Mason Fletcher already and I'll endeavour to see a couple of the other boys over the coming weeks."

Toy is particularly thrilled to be working with JHA Coach, Marty Allison, who was the former junior star's backline coach at the Calder Cannons. Josh admits, "I'm really

looking forward to working alongside and learning from Marty again. I have the utmost respect for him – as a person first and foremost – and secondly, as a coach. There are definitely attributes of his that I try to use when I get the chance to coach and interact, not only in coaching but teaching also. He has a great balance of being caring, able to joke around, but also knowing when to be serious."

In addition to Marty Allison, Toy considers himself fortunate to have learned about the game from some of the finest coaches in the caper. "There were many. Ken Hinkley was a standout for me, in terms of his balance. He simply hated losing and was an awesome competitor. To me, he was destined to be a successful AFL coach because you couldn't do anything but respect him."

Josh continues, "Andy Lovell and Shaun Hart were two others who stood out for me – approachable, easy going, fiercely competitive and genuinely quality people. Ken Fletcher was as well, if not for anything but his longevity in staying involved in the game. He was a huge influence on my career as a player and for me as a person".

Toy underscores the fact that despite each of these coaches were driven to succeed, they always invested time and effort on a personal level, as he states, "The thing that stands out is that they genuinely cared about each individual. The empathetic nature, coupled with the willingness to help push players to get the best out of them is no doubt a huge reason why not only I, but many others would respect these guys. This approach resulted in me not wanting to let them down and pushed me to look at what I could do for them and the team. This was huge for me".



# FEATURE ARTICLE

## UNWRAPPING THE ACADEMY'S NEW TOY

Josh still remembers the best piece of advice he was ever given – and fittingly, it was bestowed upon him by one of the greatest AFL coaches of all-time. “I remember Kevin Sheedy saying to me at a jumper presentation for the Under 12s Schoolboys when I was a full back. He said, ‘If you see the ball and think you can influence the situation, just go, don’t hesitate and just go for it.’ At that stage of my development and even through to now, it was a great piece of advice and a moment that is still really vivid and engrained in my mind,” he reminisces fondly.

When quizzed about his own coaching philosophy, Toy is unequivocally resolute and responds with a single word, “Care. It isn’t necessarily a rule or a philosophy, but everything I do stems from there. I try to build a PLE (positive learning environment) by having that balance between being serious, having a joke with players and then genuinely taking an interest into what they do and things about them”.

Josh continues, “This balance to me is vital. Being able to influence young people and create an environment where they can learn but also enjoy doing what they love doing is a huge deal for me. I believe the more positive experiences you have, the more you will enjoy doing something; and for any competitive, driven young men or women, I believe creating this positive environment is essential”.

Josh will endeavour to do everything within his power to ensure he succeeds as JHA Assistant Coach and maintains that there are many ways to gauge success through such a program. He says, “I hope I can have a positive influence on the guys. It’s not about loading the guys up and bombarding them with heaps of information, I hope that I can be someone who they can bounce ideas off in regards to not only footy but everyday life. I want to help the guys become and continue to be well-rounded, quality young men.

“Success can’t simply be rated as how many of these kids get drafted. It’s about providing a platform and opportunity for them to develop key areas of their football and strive for continual improvement. If this occurs, then that is successful to me,” he states with an air of anticipation at the challenges set before him.

Offered the chance to send out a message directly to his James Hird Academy understudies, Josh eagerly accepts the opportunity – “I’d like to wish all of you the best of luck with your schooling and footy commitments for the rest of the year, and I look forward to working with many of you throughout 2015”.

Despite the sun having set on his AFL playing career, it appears that the new dawn is breaking for Josh Toy as a football coach.

The James Hird Academy officially extends warm congratulations to Josh on becoming JHA Assistant Coach and greatly anticipates working with him throughout his journey during the next stage of his footballing life.



**DANIHER** *Dynasty*  
Fundraiser for Motor Neurone Disease Research

Thursday 13th August | 7:00pm for a 7:30pm start | Members Dining Room, MCG