

JAMES⁵HIRD

A C A D E M Y

EST 2010



Mason Fletcher with JHA Coach Heath Hocking

Hello and welcome to another edition of the JHA Newsletter.

Our first edition of 2018 will cover everything from our annual Guard Of Honour Game against Port Adelaide, to the commencement of our Acceleration Group's training program, the completion of the first After-School session for the Flight Squad and the welcoming of new members to our father-son, Next Generation Academy and international zoning applicant tiers.

Under the supervision of JHA coach and VFL captain Heath Hocking, the JHA has expanded to over 70 members across the Acceleration Group, the Flight Squad and the Baby Bombers programs.

The commitment of the James Hird Academy to developing the skills and off-field preparation awareness of talented junior footballers up to 19 years of age has reaped rewards as, once again, the JHA is well represented amongst the ranks of TAC Cup side, the Calder Cannons.

The Academy continues to respect and embolden the traditions of the Essendon Football Club with names such as Lloyd, Peverill, Johnson, Ramanauskas and Caracella keeping the flame of their fathers' legacy alive at 'The Hangar'. The maiden season of the Bombers' inaugural VFL Women's side has given new hope for the daughters of previous stars of one day pulling on the red and black, and the Academy has given a starting point for those potential future Bombers to live out their dreams.

So read on for pocket profiles of our members, a summary from the coach himself and a full report of our annual Guard of Honour Game!

Happy reading to the entire Bomber Family!

Written and edited by Callum O'Connor & Georgia Harvey

James Hird Academy Development Groups

JHA BABY BOMBERS

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

JHA ACCELERATION GROUP

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Daniel Hanna	18	NGA
Jaxon Neagle	18	Merv Neagle
Ismail Moussa	18	NGA
Mason Fletcher	18	Dustin Fletcher
Kyle Gillard	18	NGA
Jake Firebrace	17	NGA
Ricky O'Donnell	17	Gary O'Donnell
Darcy Denham	17	Sean Denham
Kurtis Barnard	17	Paul Barnard
Tom Hird	17	James Hird
Kyle Baker	17	NGA
Lachlan Johnson	16	NGA
Xavier Saly	16	NGA
Cody Brand	15	NGA
Max Fletcher	15	Dustin Fletcher

JHA FLIGHT SQUAD

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Joshua Misiti	15	Joe Misiti
Nyawi Moore	14	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Alex Hird	14	James Hird
Tex Wanganeen	14	Gavin Wanganeen
Jordan Bourke	14	NGA
Alwyn Davey Jnr	14	Alywn Davey
Jayden Davey	14	Alywn Davey
Luca Alessio	13	Steve Alessio
Will Hamilton	13	Paul Hamilton
Luke Barnard	13	Kurtis Barnard
Noah Caracella	11	Blake Caracella
Alex Alessio	11	Steve Alessio
Alijah Davey	11	Alywn Davey

From the Coach Heath Hocking

To all the Essendon fans and Academy members,

It is an honour to be writing to you as the new James Hird Academy Coach.

It's been a busy start to the year transitioning from full-time football into part-time coaching, but one that has been very enjoyable. I'm looking forward to the challenge that the role will bring this year and am very excited at the amount of talented young kids we have in the program.

Building on the foundations of Greg 'Diesel' Williams last year and the coaches before him, I will be looking to help these young kids develop the confidence to play, share with them my knowledge of the game, and give them an understanding of what it takes to make it to the AFL level.

I will use my experience to show them what they are likely to face if they were to get drafted to an AFL club (i.e. number of meetings, solid training sessions, weights sessions, functions, recovery and many other things), with an overall focus on the basic skills of the game (i.e. kicking, handballing, marking and decision making).

It was an amazing experience to be involved in the Guard of Honour Game in Round 4 against Port Adelaide, reuniting with past players who I played football with and getting to meet their kids who will be a massive part of the program in years to come.

As a proud football club that is seen as a family club, it is extremely important to continually engage with our past players and their families. Events run by the JHA that can bring past players back to the footy club along with their kids, we try to do as much as possible.

I've had the privilege of working with the Flight Squad a couple of times now, made up of predominantly father-son kids. Seeing the enjoyment they get from participating in skill sessions and strength and conditioning sessions, gives me a great buzz!



Heath Hocking 2017 Round 23 - Essendon v Fremantle

The Acceleration Group has been working hard every Monday on their skills, made up mostly of Next Generation Academy kids in this area. In three months, they have all made great improvements and are continuing to work on their game.

I'm looking forward to our next Development Day and Baby Bombers Clinic but until then, go Bombers!

Heath Hocking

James Hird Academy Coach



Koby Bewick

JHA Member in Profile: Koby Bewick

Age: 9 years old

Nickname: Bewy or Kobes

Football Club:

Airport West Under 11s Division 2

Position: Centre Half-Forward and Midfield

Hobbies & Interests:

Doing maths, sport,
playing with my mates

Favourite AFL Player:

Patrick Cripps and Andy McGrath

Favourite Musician: Ed Sheeran

Best Football Advice Your Dad Has Ever Given You:

He always says to have fun

Return to Essendon for Champions Son

It was an exciting afternoon for the James Hird Academy when 14-year-old Tex Wanganeen joined the Flight Squad's After-School training session.

The son of Brownlow Medallist and 1993 premiership player Gavin returned to the club where his father carved out a distinguished career. Living in South Australia has kept the talented young midfielder/forward from walking the same hallowed halls his father once did, but when he was stateside there was no keeping him out of The Hangar.

"I've come over to Melbourne for the training session and to get a sense of what it's like to be at Essendon," says Tex.

"My dad's grown up here since he was 17 or 18 and it's good to get a sense of what it was like for him as a teenager. Feels like home."

Tex has been playing football since he was five and now pulls on the boots at local clubs Sturt and Mitcham as well as in his school competition. Just like his father, who played 127 games for Essendon between 1991 and 1996 and was voted the 19th greatest Bomber in the 2002 "Champions of Essendon" list, Tex plays as a midfielder with an eye for the goals.

"I'm an inside mid, like to kick goals," says Tex. "I'm probably not similar [to Gavin], but we have the same technique and style. Dad's probably faster, I'm not as fast but I like to set up goals."

Joining in with the Flight Squad's strength and conditioning sessions under the supervision of coach and VFL captain Heath Hocking at The Hangar gym, Tex was able to fully access the elite facilities available to all James Hird Academy members.

As Gavin played more than 100 games with Essendon and Port Adelaide, Tex is eligible for father-son recruitment at two clubs.



Tex Wanganeen having a kick at The Hangar



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 pictures and more.

Hash-tag **#JamesHirdAcademy** to feature on our page!



facebook.com/jameshirdacademy



[@jameshirdacademy](https://instagram.com/jameshirdacademy)

Sponsorship Opportunities:

The James Hird Academy wishes to announce the availability of major and individual player sponsorship opportunities for 2018.

This is a fantastic opportunity to promote your product, service or corporation in conjunction with the Academy.

If you are interested in entering into a sponsorship agreement, please contact Brenton Humphreys on (03) 8340 2182 or bhumphreys@essendonfc.com.au for more information.

Around The Grounds

Guard Of Honour Edition

ISMAIL MOUSSA

18-year-old Ismail Moussa entered the James Hird Academy as a Next Generation Academy (NGA) player. Born in Australia to Lebanese parents, he grew up on a diet of soccer and Australian Rules, to which he was introduced by his cousins.

"I love the extra professionalism" says Moussa of the Academy, to which he is part of the Acceleration Group. "Being able to use the facilities and talk to Heath, I love that too."

Commitment and dedication comes as second nature to the youngster - Moussa is looking to complete a four-year Business and Sport Management Degree in just three years, having already enrolled in summer school.

Like many Academy members in the Acceleration Group, Moussa plays for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup, whilst also juggling school and local football commitments.



DANIEL HANNA AND KYLE BAKER

18-year-old Daniel Hanna is one of several Acceleration Group members to play for the Calder Cannons. Hanna is a NGA player whose father is Lebanese. However, unlike fellow NGA player Ismail Moussa, Hanna was raised on Australian Rules from his waking days and first pulled on the boots at AusKick.

Hanna first made the Cannons' squad as a half-forward but occasionally plays in the ruck. With the heavy workload of the Cannons' program as well as his local football commitments, Hanna says the Academy's approach is to fine-tune skills.

"The training's much more technique based which is what we need," says Hanna. "We do a fair bit of gym and running, just getting the (fitness) base up."



17-year-old Kyle Baker is a schoolmate of Hanna's as well as also being in the Calder program. However, unlike Hanna and Moussa, Baker is a new recruit to the Cannons in 2018. After toiling through local football club Maribynong Park, Baker cracked not only the Calder Cannons squad but the James Hird Academy as well; he became a part of the Academy in the Acceleration Group Program at the beginning of March this year.

"I enjoy making my skills better, using the facilities at Essendon," says Baker.

JAEDA LLOYD

Modern day Essendon legends don't come much bigger than Matthew Lloyd. The champion full-forward kicked 926 goals in 270 games between 1995 and 2009. He kicked 100 goals in a season on two occasions, was a 12-time Club leading goalkicker, five time All Australian, three-time Coleman Medallist and a member of the 2000 Premiership side. More importantly, his performances on the big stage made him a hero in the hearts and minds of the Bomber's clan young and old.

Lloyd's oldest daughter Jaeda is carrying on the torch of the Lloyd name for the Bomber faithful. Having been in the Academy for three years, Jaeda says there is nothing like the special opportunities that all JHA members receive.

"I like that we get the opportunity to meet some of the players and run onto the ground," says Jaeda.

Jaeda is the oldest of three Lloyds, with her eight-year-old sister Kiera and five-year-old brother Jacob joining her as Baby Bombers in the James Hird Academy.

LOGAN DANIHER

For over 30 years the Daniher name and the Essendon Football Club have been almost intrinsically linked, which means that for nine-year-old Logan Daniher, the James Hird Academy is a way of perpetuating the legacy into which he was born.

Logan is the son of Chris Daniher, who played 124 games and kicked 40 goals for the Bombers between 1987 and 1997 and was a member of the 1993 premiership team. Logan attended the Guard of Honour game with his brother Harvey and sister Ivy. Chris' three older brothers Terry, Anthony and Neale all played for Essendon in one of the strongest family dynasties ever seen at a football club.

NOAH AND SCARLETT PEVERILL

Damien Peverill played 144 games and kicked 32 goals for Essendon between 2001 and 2008. Now he has passed the red and black legacy on to his two children, Noah (six years old) and Scarlett (four), who are both James Hird Academy Baby Bombers.

Six-year-old Noah plays Auskick and has been a part of the James Hird Academy's annual Guard of Honour Game two years in a row, including when he ran on to the field with key position star Cale Hooker in 2017.

"I like seeing the Bombers play," says Noah. "Getting to go out onto the ground has been the best."

With Essendon's VFLW side embarking upon its maiden season, Scarlett says she looks forward to hopefully playing for Essendon one day.

Around The Grounds *Acceleration Group In Focus*



MAX FLETCHER

With the intensive training program now underway, the Acceleration Group members of the James Hird Academy are ready to take their football development to the next level.

Under the supervision of coach Heath Hocking, the training sessions at the Hangar look to develop the on-field skills and off-field preparations of Acceleration program members who are in the 16-18 age bracket and are ready to start approaching their football with the mindset required at AFL level.

Max Fletcher, son of Essendon games record-holder Dustin, says this element of the James Hird Academy offers members an exclusive opportunity to improve themselves as footballers.

"I am hoping to develop my game in this program by improving my football skills and also to get stronger with the work in the gym," says Max.

"The extra things I can get out of the James Hird Academy that I can't with local or school footy are learning off ex-AFL players, using elite facilities and having access to nutritionists and physiotherapists."

With his two-time premierships father held in high regard as one of Essendon's finest full backs, Max has taken the time outside of the James Hird Academy to discuss the art and science of football from the man who played a club record 400 games for the Bombers.

"With Dad I talk about the areas I can improve on" says Max. "We also talk about how Essendon are playing and the different positions on the ground that I might play."



Max Fletcher

XAVIER SALY & CODY BRAND

Fellow members in the Acceleration Group, Xavier Saly and Cody Brand have been selected in the Calder Cannons' Under 16 squad.

The pair have been playing together for the Cannons and were rewarded for their good form at the official selection announcement in the first week of May.

"On the Wednesday night after training, they read the final team out for the first game on the holidays," says Brand, "and when I heard my name get called out across the half-back, I was pretty happy that I could focus on where I was playing the following week".

"I was so happy," declares Saly, who was at home when the news came through. "I trained and pushed myself to go further than what I thought I was capable of. I was excited and I'm really looking forward to it."

Brand and Saly both tipped their caps to the James Hird Academy when discussing an extra developmental edge. "I hope I can widen my range of skills that will hopefully give me the edge at a higher level of football. I'd love to get a view of what it really does take to become an elite AFL footballer."

Saly says the Academy has imparted that "there is always room for improvement".



Cody Brand



Xavier Saly

Guard of Honour Game 2018

Bomber stars of the present and future shine

There's just something about the James Hird Academy's annual Guard of Honour Game that stirs something for Essendon's performance.

In 2017, the Bombers defeated Port Adelaide by 70 points in Round 12 at Etihad Stadium. This year, the meet and greet for members, their families, former players and Essendon officials in Etihad Stadium's Limelight Room and the subsequent Academy members' Guard of Honour was followed by Essendon upsetting the unbeaten Power by 22 points.

With over 300 people packed into a room lavishly set with finger food, drinks and a charcuterie bar – as well as a play area complete with arcade games, chess, a handball target, colouring-in books and face painting to the delight of the youngest of the Baby Bombers – the James Hird Academy was given a fittingly celebratory afternoon for its most auspicious event of the year.

In attendance were stars of yesteryear Matthew Lloyd, Damien Peverill, Mark Johnson, Adam Ramanauskus, Sean Wellman and Chris Daniher, many with their families including children who are now members of the JHA.

As the homecoming Bomber Legend of the day's game, 144 game midfielder Peverill was interviewed on the hallowed surface of Etihad Stadium before the players ran out through the special James Hird Academy themed banner.

Fox Sports correspondent Julian de Stoop acted as MC for the afternoon with Club CEO Xavier Campbell the guest speaker at the event that combined the Guard of Honour ceremonies with the Chairman's Function.

Newly appointed James Hird Academy coach Heath Hocking then took to the microphone to sum up just what the Academy means and does for its members and the Essendon Football Club.

The former Essendon player, current VFL captain and lifelong Bomber fan spoke from the heart when he got his turn to take centre stage.

"My job is to help develop the confidence of these young kids to play football, whether that be local footy or TAC Cup and then hopefully further on to VFL and AFL" said Hocking. "I just want to share my knowledge of what I've learnt over my 12 seasons in the AFL and give them a real understanding of what it takes to play football. If I can improve their football and them as a person, then I'm doing my job."

With the formalities complete, it was then down into the bowels of Etihad Stadium as the members and their families waited in raptures in the race to take the field and form a Guard of Honour. The excited members formed a long line between the race and the banner as their Bomber heroes strode onto the ground.

Essendon got off to a hot start and was never really headed, claiming a crucial win over Port Adelaide. Unsurprisingly, the biggest cheers were reserved for a pair of goals from the James Hird Academy's favourite son: inaugural graduate to the Bombers Joe Daniher.

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!



Lucas, Aidan and baby Joshua with father Adam Ramanauskus



Skeeta & Noah Peverill in the race



Matthew & Lisa Lloyd with kids Jaeda, Kira and Jacob

Guard of Honour Game 2018

Bomber stars of the present and future shine



Darren Bewick with kids Koby, Gemma, Teya and Jett



Heath Hocking with Mark, Rylan and Charli Johnson



Hayley and Gemma Bewick enjoying the kids zone



Matthew Lloyd assisted by son Jacob doing the honours of tossing the coin