

JAME5HIRD

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The Davey Twins – Alwyn Jr. and Jayden

Hello and welcome to another edition of the JHA Newsletter.

Under the watchful eye of first-year coach Heath Hocking, who balanced his JHA duties with captaining Essendon's VFL side, our members developed their skills and understanding of the great game of Australian Rules.

From our Baby Bombers taking their first steps, to the Flight Squad, to the Acceleration Group looking to break into the higher levels of football, the JHA was made up of over 60 members honing their craft at the Hangar.

Three of our Tiwi Island Next Generation Academy members – Brayden Rioli, Stanley Tipiloura and Tyson Tipuamantameri – along with father-son twins Jayden and Alwyn Davey Jr., travelled from the Northern Territory to The Hangar during the AFL's Sir Doug Nicholls Round.

Many of our members are playing football at their local clubs with several catching the eyes of scouts for representative sides (no fewer than nine JHA players were selected in initial squads for TAC Cup side Calder Cannons in 2018).

Acceleration Group key-position player Daniel Hanna took the next step in his football journey when he made his VFL debut in the red and black against Geelong at GMHBA Stadium in round 19.

With Essendon fielding a women's team for the first time in its fabled history via the 2018 VFL Women's competition, the pathway for the JHA's female members to play at the same level as their male counterparts has never been more within reach.

The NGA is already providing dividends with several promising prospects bobbing up among Essendon's recruiting zones.

Keep reading this newsletter for a full recap on the NGA, plus updates on our up-and-coming JHA members.

Happy reading to the entire Bomber family!

Written and edited by Callum O'Connor and Georgia Harvey

Coach's Reflection

Reflecting on my first year of coaching the James Hird Academy at Essendon, I can see how much I have learned, not just about coaching but about myself as well.

Above all, I've learned what makes me tick as a coach, and where I want to take the JHA next year. I know that my role doesn't just revolve around getting players drafted, but also a focus on guiding these young kids towards being better footballers and, more importantly, better people. Along the journey I model the values of the club, and pass on my experiences of playing AFL football and being in an elite environment.

One of the most important things I have learned is the importance of relationships. I believe that continuing to build relationships with past players and their kids is a key to building a bigger and stronger Essendon community. I've been able to reconnect with players who I've competed alongside during my career, while also coaching their kids.

Throughout the year in the program I focused on the basic fundamentals of football such as kicking, handballing and marking, while also adding in the elements of decision-making, game-like pressure, fitness and fun.

Every Monday I would coach the Acceleration Group. This was a challenging but enjoyable program, with the boys keen to learn and soak up as much information as possible. It was great to see some growth and improvement from all the players involved.

Four Mondays during the year, I'd take the Flight Squad through a training session at the club. Two days during the school holidays, the squad would get the opportunity to participate in our development days. These were more intensive sessions that contained football skills, weights and education, and the boys were lucky enough to get a talk from Essendon stars Michael Hurley and Joe Daniher. They probably enjoyed this more than the skills session!

Early in the year we saw the Baby Bombers come to Marvel Stadium to form a guard of honour in the clash with Port Adelaide. It was a great opportunity to connect with many of the past players and their kids in a relaxed and fun environment, with the win over the Power to top it off.

Later in the year we held a Baby Bombers clinic at The Hangar, where the parents and kids could come and enjoy themselves again.

The experience of going to the Tiwi Islands and working with the community up there was very special. Football means so much to these talented kids, and to get a chance to learn from them and teach them some things about AFL are invaluable.

One of the highlights this year was getting to see Daniel Hanna make his VFL debut. Seeing his development throughout the season with the JHA and Calder Cannons and then watching him step up to the plate in the VFL was a pleasure. He showed he has what it takes to play well at that level. It was also enjoyable to be on the ground with him and captain him on the night. Being there to help him through the game as a coach and a teammate was a unique experience.

The growth of the JHA and its importance to identifying and adding talented NGA prospects were really positive this year. There was an increase in the number of dedicated kids introduced to the program. Not only are they being given the opportunity to further develop their football skills, but more importantly they are valuing the opportunity to develop as great Essendon people.

Thanks to everyone for the support and I look forward to a bigger and better 2019.

Heath Hocking

James Hird Academy Coach



The Acceleration Group received some one-on-one coaching with Bomber stars Michael Hurley and Joe Daniher

Around The Grounds

Acceleration Group

Daniel Hanna

The rangy key-position player had a 2018 season to remember. His form at Calder Cannons saw him named in the best four times in 12 matches and bring himself to new heights on his football journey when he made his VFL debut for Essendon in round 18 against Geelong. Daniel racked up 21 touches playing as a key defender to prove that his talents as a footballer have yet to reach their ceiling. He also featured in two Young Guns games where he averaged 88.5 per cent disposal efficiency.



Jaxon Neagle

The 18-year old son of former Bomber Merv Neagle (147 games) played for the Wodonga Raiders alongside his brothers Matt and Jaydon in the Ovens and Murray League in 2018. He had four appearances in the best players, with the team going down to Wangaratta in the preliminary final.

Kyle Gillard

An NGA talent, Kyle continued to develop his game at the higher levels of basketball, while also training with the JHA.

Jake Firebrace

The NGA member of the Acceleration Group won his second consecutive Calder Cannons selection and went on to play seven matches at TAC Cup level, kicking a goal in each of his first four games and netting two appearances in the best players. The 18-year-old represented the Craigieburn Eagles at local level.

Mohammed Abou-Eid

A late arrival to the JHA, Mohammed is an NGA recruit who played for the Calder Cannons in the 2018 TAC Cup for the first time as a bottom-ager, booting four goals from six games and claiming the Phil Dunk Award for the best on-track player. He also proved handy in front of the big sticks playing local football at West Coburg in the under-17 first division of the Essendon District Football League (EDFL), averaging just under a goal in a game.

Ismail Moussa

Moussa backed up his 2017 Calder Cannons selection with another nod for the orange and blue in 2018. The solidly built youngster played 17 games and had no fewer than seven appearances in the best players including four in a row in a hot streak spanning from round seven against the Northern Knights to round 10 against the Eastern Ranges.



Mason Fletcher

Stress fractures in his lower back hampered Mason's 2018 season. The son of legendary 400-gamer Dustin played for Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School in the Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria league, while managing three games for Calder Cannons and a Vic Metro trial match before his season was cut short.



Around The Grounds

Acceleration Group

Kurtis Barnard

The son of 2000 premiership Bomber Paul Barnard was a revelation up forward for Aberfeldie's under-17 first and second-division sides. He kicked 20 goals across throughout the season and finished with a premiership medallion in a win over Strathmore in the EDFL.



Kurtis Barnard celebrating the premiership

Xavier Saly

This year marked Xavier's first in the JHA. Playing for Greenvale's under-17 side in the EDFL, he was in the best on four occasions, whilst also playing in the Vic Metro carnival for the Calder Cannons in the Barry Davis under-16 squad.



Xavier Saly playing in the Vic Metro carnival with the Calder Cannons Barry Davis under-16 squad

Kyle Baker

The NGA recruit broke through for his first berth into the Calder Cannons squad in 2018, playing seven games and kicking two goals in his inaugural TAC Cup season. Kyle also represented Maribyrnong Park in the premier division of the EDFL, kicking three goals on two occasions and being named the Lions' best player four times. However, his season was unfortunately derailed by a broken collarbone.

Lachlan Johnson

Another NGA recruit to win his maiden place on the Calder Cannons' list, the son of triple premiership Brisbane player Chris Johnson played eight games with Calder and added five games with Strathmore's under-17 side in 2018.

Jeffrey Simon

The 17-year old boy from Northern Territory played for the Tiwi Bombers this season, racking up seven appearances including a best afield effort against the Wanderers in round 11 of the TIO Northern Territory Football League's Men's Premier League. As an NGA recruit, Jeffrey racked up a rising star nomination in round six of the 2019 season.

Brayden Rioli

Football brought the brother of Richmond premiership player Daniel Rioli across a wide and long path in 2018. The 16-year old made his senior debut for St Mary's in the NTFL and kicked three goals against Waratah in his second match. He also journeyed down to Melbourne to spend time with the Bombers during Sir Doug Nicholls Round. With all the hype that his famous family name will bring him, the Tiwi Island NGA recruit will be watched closely in the future.

Cody Brand

With height on his side, the NGA prospect was selected for the Calder Cannons in the Barry Davis under-16 squad for the Vic Metro carnival.

Max Fletcher

Dustin Fletcher's youngest son played for Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School in the Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria competition throughout 2018, while also fine-tuning his craft in the JHA.

Around The Grounds

Flight Squad

Josh Misiti

The son of 253-game Bomber Joe Misiti played 17 games for the Aberfeldie under-15s in the EDFL and was a part of Aberfeldie's premiership-winning side. The 15-year old applied plenty of scoreboard pressure when given the chance up forward, kicking 13 goals with a trio of three-goal hauls. He was named in the best players on seven occasions.



A family affair for Josh Misiti

Nyawi Moore

This year proved a rollercoaster for the son of former Bomber Nathan Lovett-Murray. Nyawi's performances with local club Woorinen continued to capture the imagination, with the youngster kicking 31 goals in 11 matches. However, a skull fracture caused by an on-field accident in late July cost him a chunk of his season before he made a full recovery. He returned and was best afield for Cummeragunja in its grand-final victory in the Koorie Junior Football Carnival under-17s and a week later found himself playing against his father in the Koorie Senior Football Carnival for the Swan Hill Murray Cods (Nathan played and coached the West Vic Eels).

Tex Wanganeen

The son of 1993 premiership Bomber and Brownlow Medallist Gavin Wanganeen crossed from his native South Australia to visit The Hangar in May. As Gavin played more than 100 games with both Essendon and Port Adelaide, the 15-year old is in the unusual position of being eligible for father-son recruitment for two different clubs. Back home, he played 14 games for Mitcham in the SANFL under-15s and racked up 26 goals with two hauls of four against Modbury and Walkerville.

Jordan Bourke

The Tiwi Island student played for Brighton Grammar this year before returning to the Tiwi Islands towards the end of the year.

Carlos Egan

The newly added NGA member pulled on the boots for Strathmore under-15s in the EDFL this year. Across 15 games, the talented Carlos kicked 19 goals, including a bag of four against Hillside in Round 13 - his best performance for the year.

Alwyn Davey Jr. and Jayden Davey

The twin sons of former Essendon player Alwyn Davey, Jayden and Alwyn Jr. represented the Northern Territory in both the Kickstart National Diversity Championship in Sydney and the under-15 School Sports Championship in South Australia in 2018. The 14-year-olds played together at the Palmerston Magpies in the TIO NTFL; Alwyn played 14 games, kicked nine goals and featured in the best players seven times, while Jayden played 14 games and kicked 13 goals for five appearances in the best players. The brothers were runners up in the best and fairest and visited The Hangar for personal JHA training sessions during Sir Doug Nicholls Round.



Can you tell them apart? The Davey Twins

Luca Alessio

The son of 184-game Bomber Steve Alessio, Luca's played 15 games and kicked four goals for Strathmore's under-15 side who went down to Jacana in the preliminary final. He not only claimed his club's best-and-fairest award, but was also awarded the club's best finals player!



Luca Alessio with all of his awards

Around The Grounds

Flight Squad

Will Hamilton

Will enjoyed a busy season, playing finals for Golden Square in the Bendigo Junior Football League, whilst also representing Bendigo in the under-13 interleague game against Ballarat. Will also made the AFL Central Victorian Academy.



Will Hamilton getting dirty for his club Golden Square

Luke Barnard

The son of 140-game Bomber Paul played as a top-ager for Aberfeldie's under-13 in the EDFL, kicking three goals across 13 games and named twice in the best players.



Luke Barnard

Alex Alessio

The 12-year-old son of Steve Alessio represented Strathmore in the EDFL, playing nine games including a feature in the best players.

Alijah Davey

It was a proud season for the Davey family, with 11-year-old Alijah adding a premiership medal and representative guernsey to his list of achievements. Alijah was part of the victorious Palmerston Magpies under-12 grand-final team and played for Darwin in the School Sports Championships.



Alijah with proud parents Alwyn and Janelle

Around The Grounds

Baby Bombers



Logan Daniher

Logan had a stellar year playing in the Ungarie under-11s side of the Northern Riverina Football Netball League, kicking 14 goals across 10 matches with no fewer than four bags of three goals as he featured in the best six times. Ungarie finished the home-and-away season in third place on the ladder and won its way through to the grand final with victories over Tullibigeal and West Wyalong-Girral, only to fall in the premiership decider to Lake Cargelligo by 23 points.

Logan also played out of his age group in nine games with Ungarie's under-14s, where he held his own to kick a further three goals.

Taj McPhee

The son of 142-game defender Adam, Taj played nine games for the Barwon Heads under-10 and under-11 sides in the Geelong Advertiser League.

Chenae Dempsey

The daughter of Courtenay, Chenae played thirteen matches for the Greenvale under-11s in her second season, kicking four goals and featuring in the best players on no fewer than six occasions. She placed fourth in Greenvale's under-11 best and fairest and was awarded the encouragement award. She also placed sixth in the EDFL under-11 division one best and fairest.



Chenae Dempsey with father Courtenay

Max Alessio

The son of Steve, Max had an enjoyable season playing eight matches for Strathmore's under-nines in the EDFL.

Koby Bewick

Adding another best-and-fairest award with Airport West to his trophy cabinet, Koby Bewick's already glowing profile went to another level in 2018. He played in Airport West's under-11 division two premiership-winning side as a nine-year-old and also reached the 50-game milestone. Amazing achievement!



Best & Fairest winner Koby Bewick with dad Darren

Taitum Dempsey

The son of former 133-gamer Courtenay Dempsey, Taitum played 12 games for Greenvale under-nines in the EDFL.



Cheesy grin from Taitum Dempsey

Jake Long and Joe Daniher 2018 Summaries

Joe Daniher

If Joe Daniher's 2017 season had pundits predicting that all the achievements in the world were within the grasp of the son of former Bomber Anthony Daniher, then 2018 was the year in which the football gods conspired to throw everything at the prodigiously talented young key forward. After claiming his inaugural Crichton Medal, along with All-Australian selection, the ANZAC Day Medal, the Tom Wills Medal, the Mark of the Year Award and leading the Bombers' goalkicking for a fourth successive season, Daniher couldn't reach the heights of 2017 this season. Essendon's poor start to the year was compounded by the onset of osteitis pubis in its marquee forward. The injury was first diagnosed in the Bombers' round two match against Fremantle. Daniher could only manage seven games and eight goals and did not play after round seven, with his 100th career game against Hawthorn a silver lining on his most challenging season yet.



Joe Daniher kicks a goal during the 2018 AFL round seven match against the Hawthorn

Jake Long

The son of Essendon legend Michael forged his way back into AFL selection in 2018. After making his debut in 2016 and going on to play two more games for the season, Long was a victim of Essendon's newfound midfield depth in 2017 that prevented him from donning the sash at the highest level. After strong showings at VFL level across wing and half-back, Long completed his return to the Bombers' AFL side in round 16 against Collingwood, where he impressed with a career-high 17 disposals. Long retained his place for round 17 against Gold Coast and won 10 touches and achieved the personal highlight of kicking his first AFL goal.



Jake Long and Brodie Grundy in action during the 2018 AFL round 16 match against the Collingwood

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James Hird Academy?**

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



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Famous Bomber daughters make history

The father-son rule has been kind to Essendon with iconic names such as Watson and Daniher re-emerging in recent times to dominate the AFL.

After such success it was only a matter of time before the father-daughter structure made its own mark, and on Tuesday afternoon a Long and a Hird once again hit the track in the red and black.

When the inaugural Essendon Football Club VFLW squad walked into the club, Michaela Long and Stephanie Hird were the talk of the town.

Michaela's father Michael and Stephanie's father James were both dual premierships players for the Bombers, rightfully considered legends of the club.

Essendon VFLW coach Brendan Major grew up as a Bombers supporter, and said it was a "huge" moment for the club.

"The father-son structure in the men's football is really exciting and it's a way of keeping those big names that have added a lot to clubs within the club," Major said.

"To be able to have those two in the women's program is huge for the Essendon Football Club."

The team is so much a part of the Long family's fabric that Michaela rejected AFLW offers in favour of waiting for Essendon to enter the league where she could join her brother Jake.

Bombers CEO Xavier Campbell couldn't help but mention the two famous daughters when welcoming all players to the club.

"Our history is significant and the contribution that Michael and James made to our football club is something that is really significant and I'm really proud that they're down here today," Campbell said.

"Today presents an opportunity for both of you to carve your own name and, like everyone, you all have equal opportunity in front of you."

VFL Operations Manager Ashley Brown said it was terrific for women to have new and equal pathways into football.

"It's great for the club and also great for women's football as well that some of the champions of our football club have daughters who now have the same opportunities that their sons do," Brown said.

"To have Steph Hird and Michaela Long be involved in our inaugural women's team, it's just great to have those names back inside the four doors of the football club."



Michaela Long & Steph Hird

Essendon VFLW A Pathway for JHA Girls

Essendon's VFL Women's team took its first steps into the hallowed halls of the Hangar in 2018. The introduction of the first Bombers' team in women's football was historic not only for the players who donned the sash but for the young girls in the James Hird Academy who can now dream of embarking upon the football pathway in the red and black, and one day into an AFL Women's team.

The names of the VFL Women's Bombers are now etched in the pages of the history books. Former Western Bulldogs AFLW player Lisa Williams was anointed by her team as the Bombers' captain while utility Jess Trend and key forward Danielle Ponter will be the first Essendon products to play AFLW after being selected to North Melbourne and Adelaide respectively. Hayley Bullas was the inaugural Best & Fairest winner and VFL Women's Team of the Year nominee with Alex Quigley and Val Moreau tying for the leading goal-kicker award.

Under coach Brendan Major, the Bombers began the year as the youngest and least experienced team in the VFL Women's competition. Although they would claim just the one win in a thriller against Richmond at Windy Hill, the developments made by the Bombers will hold them in good stead across an exciting future.

For the female members of the JHA – be they father-daughter selections or Baby Bomber cadets just embarking upon their first steps into football – the future has never been so within their grasp.



JHA member Chenae Dempsey with VFLW player Courtney Ugle

Brayden Rioli

Players of the Rioli line have enthralled the football public for three generations now.

Maurice, Dean, Cyril and Daniel Rioli have left their mark on Australian Rules to form one of the most prolific and talented families in our game's history – not to mention one beloved by fans.

That reputation was a lot for 16-year-old Brayden Rioli to bear on his shoulders as he embarked upon his first steps in senior football for St Mary's in the NTFL. However, the youngster let his performances do the talking.



Tyson Tipuamantameri, Stanley Tipiloura and Brayden Rioli training with the Greater Western Victoria Rebels

Hailing from the footy-mad Tiwi Islands, Brayden is a Next Generation Academy recruit to the James Hird Academy. He played five matches at senior level for St Mary's this season and broke through to etch a name for himself with his three-goal haul in his second match against Waratah.

Next year will present the next chapter in Brayden's football journey as he relocates to Ballarat to follow his brother Daniel in boarding at St Patrick's College.



The boys at The Hangar earlier this year

Nyawwi Moore

Not many footballers get the opportunity to play against their fathers. Fewer still could look back on a season in which such a match has happened and say that it wasn't the biggest challenge they encountered.

However, both cases were true for Nyawwi Moore in 2018. The 16-year-old son of former Essendon player Nathan Lovett-Murray was sidelined by a skull fracture while playing for Woorimen against Kerang in late July that saw him hospitalised.

Nyawwi had been flying up until that fateful accident, kicking 28 goals in seven matches including hauls of eight against Balranald and six against the Mallee Eagles, so it comes as no surprise that he was determined to return to the field in 2018, making his comeback nearly two months later.



Nyawwi Moore

He led Cummeragunja to victory in the Koorie Junior Football Carnival under-17 grand final, claiming the best afield award. A week later he found himself playing against his father in the Koorie Senior Football Carnival for the Swan Hill Murray Cods (Nathan played and coached the West Vic Eels).

Having pushed through a challenging season and coming out on the other side, Nyawwi was rewarded for his skill and perseverance with an invite to the Bendigo Pioneers' under-16 pre-season program. With all fingers crossed, he might just be plying his trade in the TAC Cup next season.



Nyawwi with father Nathan Lovett-Murray

Q&A with NGA member Lachlan Johnso

One-on-one sessions with JHA coach Heath Hocking have given the talented utility, who broadened his game to play across the midfield as well as the forward line in 2018, the chance to gain a deeper understanding of his craft as he underwent an intensive workload for football this season with Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup, Scotch College and Strathmore.

How have you found your experience at Calder?

I really liked it. It was great to learn more about footy and different positions and I really enjoyed my time around the people there.

Do you talk about footy much with your father [Brisbane premiership player Chris Johnson]?

Dad's one of my big teachers. He's taught me a lot this year and over the last two months he's been teaching me a lot. He's been educating me on my diet and on training a bit harder, training really hard for next year. He's been teaching me what I need to do on running patterns, so it's been pretty good.

Did you find that you were able to bring back what you were learning at Calder and apply it to school football at Scotch College?

It was pretty different to my role. At Calder, I was a deep small forward and then became an inside mid. At Scotch I was a half-forward flanker trying to kick goals and make goals for the team. It was a bit different, but Calder taught me how to be an inside player, make my own ball and then I could get that and make my own possessions at Scotch.

In the 16s at Calder they played me there [midfield] a little bit and then in my local club at Strathmore, where I played in the under-14s before I played for Calder, I played mainly midfield but it was more like an outside midfielder. I'll normally run onto the ball.

Only the last two years I've been playing small forward, since under-16s at Calder, normally as a midfield or a backman and then Calder said they'd chuck me down as a small forward and I really enjoyed playing there. I felt more comfortable playing there and Heath's (Hocking) been helping me because he's a small forward for the VFL, so he's been teaching me tips and tricks.

So do you think you're better suited to being a midfielder or a small forward?

I think a small forward because of my height. I'm 177cm, so probably not tall enough to be an inside mid but maybe I could go in there for five minutes to get a clearance or something. Small forward is what I'll probably be because I like to fly for a mark or get a snap on goal and lift the team.

How have you found the one-on-one sessions with Heath?

I've found them very helpful. He taught me a lot of things. Normally I haven't had a goalkicking routine, so he's been teaching me a routine and getting the ball on the foot for a quick snap on goal.

How have you handled moving around as much as you have?

It's pretty normal, pretty easy adapting. The first training session I make it pretty clear to get to know everyone and then again at the second one and then before the game it's pretty normal.

Have you thought about what you would like to achieve next season?

Probably being more of a lethal small forward kicking four to five goals, and getting more possessions – around 15.



Lachlan Johnson