

JAMES HIRD

ACADEMY

WELCOME MESSAGE

Hello and welcome to the first James Hird Academy Newsletter for 2013.

The Academy is now entering its fourth year of operation and the coming season is shaping up to be one of the most exciting yet.

2013 will bring a few changes to the JHA as existing members know it and Essendon fans can expect to hear and see a lot more of the program than in previous years. In addition to this quarterly newsletter and several features in the Bomber Magazine, the JHA will enjoy a bigger online presence at the following address: essendonfc.com.au/team/james-hird-academy

The JHA is also excited to announce the formation of a brand new Acceleration Group, designed to focus on Academy members from the age of 16 onwards

who appear to be on the cusp of igniting a potential AFL career. This specialised squadron will aim to further refine the skills of our advanced members and prepare them for the next stage of the development process.

This year will also see the return of many favourite events to the JHA calendar, including camps, match-day experiences, our traditional end-of-season celebration dinner and the hugely popular Guard of Honour Game – scheduled for Essendon's Round 12 match against Gold Coast at Etihad Stadium.

A warm welcome goes out to the latest batch of Baby Bombers to join the James Hird Academy in 2013 and good luck to all Academy Members with their football commitments this season.

See you on the field and go Dons!

WORD FROM HIRD

Greetings to all Academy Members and welcome to the James Hird Academy for another year.

As everyone is well aware, the 2013 off-season has been a difficult time for the club but the dawn of a new season brings with it a budding sense of optimism, boundless possibilities and hope for the year ahead.

Hope represents what the James Hird Academy is all about and is one of the founding cornerstones of the program.

Each and every one of you aspires to one day pull on the famous red and black jumper and play for the mighty Bombers. I am confident that the guidelines and training structures we've put in place make the Academy an environment where young players like yourselves can not only continue to develop but thrive. One only has to look at the precedent set by Academy Graduate, Joe Daniher, to see how the

Academy can help assist and guide you in your endeavours to become AFL footballers.

The entire Essendon Football Club enters season 2013 with a burgeoning sense of hopeful expectation and restored faith; and I invite all James Hird Academy Members to join us for what will be an exciting journey ahead.

Wishing you all the best for now and go Bombers!

James Hird
Senior Coach



JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS

PLAYER	AGE	SCHOLARSHIP
Jedd Clothier	18	NSW Scholarship

JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - FATHER/SONS

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Daniel Thompson	18	Mark Thompson
Jydon Neagle	18	Merv Neagle
Callum Daniher	17	Chris Daniher
Todd Vander Haar	17	Paul Vander Haar
Jake Long	17	Michael Long
Nathan Neagle	16	Merv Neagle
Tom Wallis	16	Dean Wallis
Jett Bewick	15	Darren Bewick
Harvey Daniher	15	Chris Daniher
Matthew Neagle	15	Merv Neagle

JAMES HIRD ACADEMY - BABY BOMBERS

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Jaxon Neagle	13	Merv Neagle
Mason Fletcher	12	Dustin Fletcher
Ricky O'Donnell	12	Gary O'Donnell
Darcy Denham	12	Sean Denham
Kurtis Barnard	12	Paul Barnard
Tom Hird	12	James Hird
Max Fletcher	10	Dustin Fletcher
Joshua Misiti	9	Joe Misiti
Nyawi Lovett-Murray	9	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Alex Hird	9	James Hird
Tex Wanganeen	9	Gavin Wanganeen
Luca Alessio	8	Steve Alessio
Will Hamilton	8	Paul Hamilton
Luke Barnard	8	Paul Barnard
Noah Caracella	6	Blake Caracella
Alex Alessio	6	Steve Alessio
Mara Lovett-Murray	5	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Logan Daniher	4	Chris Daniher
Aidan Ramanauskas	4	Adam Ramanauskas
William Hird	4	James Hird
Koby Bewick	4	Darren Bewick
Thomas Caracella	3	Blake Caracella
Max Alessio	3	Steve Alessio
Lucas Ramanauskas	2	Adam Ramanauskas
Rylan Johnson	1	Mark Johnson
Noah Peverill	1	Damien Peverill
Lenny Solomon	6m	Dean Solomon
Jacob Lloyd	6m	Matthew Lloyd

AROUND THE GROUNDS:

DANIEL THOMPSON



Son of Mark, 202 games

Daniel is a strong-bodied tall defender who will once again play for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup this season. He will play 3 games for Essendon in the VFL.

JYDON NEAGLE



Son of Merv, 147 games

A medium-sized forward, Jydon will play for the Murray Bushrangers in the TAC Cup competition this year.

JEDD CLOTHIER



NSW Scholarship Holder

In an effort to focus on footy, Jedd has recently relocated from New South Wales to Victoria and will play for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup in 2013. The Academy also wishes to congratulate Jedd on his selection in the NSW/ACT U18 State squad.

TODD VANDER HAAR



Son of Paul, 201 games

Todd will line up for Xavier College as a medium-sized forward in this year's APS competition. A reflection of his recent improvement, Todd was also invited to try out for the Oakleigh Chargers U18 squad at the end of 2012.

JAKE LONG



Son of Michael, 190 games

A midfielder with pace to burn, Jake will play for Scotch College this season in the APS competition. The Academy is also pleased to announce Jake's selection in the Northern Territory U18 State squad.

JETT BEWICK



Son of Darren, 238 games

Young Jett will be looking for lift-off in 2013 as he pulls on the boots for the Airport West U17's in the EDFL. Jett predominantly plays as a small midfielder and was also invited to try out for the Calder Cannons U16 development squad at the end of 2012.

TOM WALLIS



Son of Dean, 127 games

A midfielder by trade, Tom will run out for the Doutta Stars U18's in the EDFL this year. Tom is also in the Calder Cannons U16 development squad and will compete at the tryouts for VIC Metro's U16 State squad.

HARVEY DANIHER



Son of Chris, 124 games

Harvey is a tall utility who will play for Mangoplah U17's in the NSW Riverina Football League in 2013. In further evidence of Harvey's potential, he has also been selected in the GWS U16 Academy squad and will participate in the tryouts for the NSW U16 State team.



CALLUM DANIHER



Son of Chris, 124 games

A versatile tall utility, Callum will line up for Mangoplah U18's in the NSW Riverina Football League and will also play senior football with Ungarie in the Northern Riverina Football League. Unfortunately, Callum tore his ACL late last year but will hopefully resume playing towards the end of 2013. The Academy wishes Callum all the best with his recovery and looks forward to seeing him back out on the field soon.

MATTHEW NEAGLE



Son of Merv, 147 games

Matthew is a small forward who will play for Walla Walla U17's in the Hume League in 2013. The energetic goal-sneak was also invited to try out for the Murray Bushrangers U16 development squad.

NATHAN NEAGLE



Son of Merv, 147 games

A medium-sized midfielder, Nathan will play for Walla Walla U17's in the Hume League for season 2013. Kicked a goal in their Premiership win over Aspley.





BIG SES IS BACK IN RED AND BLACK

by Zoe Cotsis

AFTER A PRESEASON OF UNREST, THE SOUNDS OF LAUGHTER ARE ONCE AGAIN ECHOING AROUND WINDY HILL AND ONE VOICE REVERBERATES LOUDER THAN MOST.

Steven Alessio, better known to Essendon fans and the wider football community as, 'Big SES' is back in the fold at Bomberland and the loveable larrikin is bringing a lot more than just his trademark sense of humour with him.

Assuming duties as Essendon's Football Operations Manager, Alessio is thrilled to return to the club that has provided so many wonderful memories. "I'm very excited and very humbled to be back at the club, especially in this Football Operations role," the beaming Bomber big-man reveals. "You're always a part of the club in terms of when you've been a player, especially a premiership player but it's good to be back among the surrounds and seeing a lot of familiar faces."

After a successful playing career that encompassed 184 games between 1992 and 2003, Steve shifted his focus to off-field matters and secured a long-term position as General Manager of Player Development with the highly regarded AFL Players' Association. The role involved assisting AFL players with career and personal choices away from the field and also saw the establishment of the AFL Players' Alumni to support former VFL and AFL Players.

Boasting a wealth of experience within the football industry, the 2000 premiership player is confident that he can aid the Bombers in the endeavour to underscore their standing as one of the AFL's powerhouses.

"I spent the last seven years at the AFL Players' Association, which is obviously the representative body of all AFL Players. In that role, you're looking out for the best interests of the players and you work with football people at every level within the industry. So, when this opportunity came up I was really excited to take those years of learning and hopefully implement all that experience to the benefit of the Essendon Football Club."

Alessio is astounded at the degree the game has changed on and off the field since his playing days and knows the relentlessly competitive landscape of AFL football is

constantly evolving. "The whole industry has continued to be on the rise and with that, we have to make sure that we get more professional as a club. That includes not only from a football and development perspective but also off-field from an operations point of view and even financially. So in that regard, I'm really looking forward to providing some support and direction in helping us be a successful club."

The new Football Operations Manager is the latest in a raft of former players who have returned to the club in recent times and Alessio believes this is a positive reflection of Essendon's strong, all-embracing culture.

"MY BOYS CERTAINLY ENJOY COMING DOWN TO THE ACADEMY SESSIONS AND KICKING THE BALL AROUND, IT'S A FANTASTIC INITIATIVE. FROM MY PERSPECTIVE, IT'S REALLY GOOD TO SEE SO MANY OF MY EX-TEAMMATES AND CATCH UP ON OLD TIMES."

He explains, "When you've been at the club for a certain amount of time, you establish a deep connection and love for it. You understand what the club stands for and you want to make sure that you leave it in a better place than how you found it. Working alongside former teammates including James Hird, Sean Wellman and Bomber Thompson makes it all even more enjoyable."

Aside from making a name for himself in the administration side of footy, Alessio has also been busy raising a young family during the past 10 years since hanging up the boots. Family has always been an important part of the towering ruckman's life and is something he cherishes.

"This is a very enjoyable phase of life; starting a family and just experiencing the enjoyment that you get with kids running around. I'm fortunate to have three healthy boys and being able to combine all aspects of family, career and business has been absolutely wonderful."

“WHEN YOU’RE PART OF THE CLUB AND YOU’RE HERE DAY-TO-DAY, YOU ESTABLISH A UNIQUE BOND WITH THE PLACE AND I THINK THE JAMES HIRD ACADEMY IS AN EXTENSION OF THAT. IT’S GREAT THAT THROUGH THE ACADEMY, OUR BOYS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH THAT STRONG LINK WE HAVE AS EX-PLAYERS AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT.”

Alessio’s three sons, Luca, Alex and Max, are part of an ever-expanding list of Baby Bombers to participate in the James Hird Academy – a venture that the proud father fully supports.

“My boys certainly enjoy coming down to the Academy sessions and kicking the ball around, it’s a fantastic initiative. From my perspective, it’s really good to see so many of my ex-teammates and catch up on old times.”

Steve also contends that the Academy is an ideal way for past players to keep in touch with the club, while simultaneously introducing their children to the possibility of becoming AFL footballers.

“When you’re part of the club and you’re here day-to-day, you establish a unique bond with the place and I think the James Hird Academy is an extension of that. It’s great that through the Academy, our boys have the opportunity to establish that strong link we have as ex-players and understand what it’s all about.”

Alessio continues with a wry smile, “You hear stories about how Jobe Watson used to hang around in the clubrooms as a kid and knock-off lollies while the team was warming up and to think he’s a Brownlow medallist now, there’s a bit of sentimentality there. In turn, it’s good for the culture and the environment of the club to provide opportunities to have the family around and for them to experience what life is like as a professional footballer these days.”

The former ruckman is hopeful of seeing his own sons run out in red and black someday but is cautious of inadvertently placing any undue pressure on the young trio. “My path into football was very different to what’s expected today. I never really had any intentions of playing AFL football before I was lucky enough to be recruited after walking into a training session. So it will be similar with my boys, I won’t push them in any way. I’ve been very reluctant to show them old videos and say, ‘there’s dad doing his stuff,’” he laughs.

“It’s something that you would hope your kids would be able to do one day but there’s no pressure. You just hope that they grow up loving their sport and enjoying whatever they want to do – whether it’s football or anything else they want to achieve and as parents we’ll be there to support them.”

It’s this level-headed approach that Alessio also applies when offering advice to current members of the James Hird Academy. “When you’re growing up, I think playing as much sport as possible when you get the opportunity is always a good thing. Make sure you keep a bit of balance with your sport commitments and school work, so try to keep ticking all those boxes as well”.

Steve imparts, “At the elite level you need to have a real passion for football, so if you haven’t got that it just becomes too hard. But if you develop that love and connection with the game as a junior and you are lucky enough to play at the highest level then the desire will be there and you’ll love it for the rest of your life.”

Alessio himself still has that burning desire to help guide the Bombers back to football’s grandest stage and admits that a lot of hard work lies ahead. “The club is in a position now where we’ve got a few challenges in front of us, so to be able to meet those issues head-on and see ourselves through this period is the main focus for now.”

He maintains a strong belief that the tribulations of the off-season have helped forge a sense of determination and unity that has galvanised the playing group.

“The resilience the guys have shown throughout the preseason has been really great; their ability to just knuckle-down and address the training demands set before them has been fantastic. We saw the way they performed in Round 1 against Adelaide and the way that we approached the game was second to none,” Alessio discloses. “The team as a whole is a pretty close unit at the moment and we can just hope that same approach continues week-in, week-out through the season.”

The impact that, ‘Big SES’ has had on the club since returning in an official capacity as Football Operations Manager is already showing evidence of success on the field, with the Bombers perched atop the ladder armed with a positive outlook and clean bill of health. “So far, the lack of injuries has been great but that’s no fluke; the players and high performance staff have been very methodical in their application and dedication. Hopefully we’ll see that effort pay off during the course of the year.”

The Essendon Football Club has declared to do whatever it takes in season 2013; a pledge that drives all players, coaches and officials at Windy Hill to strive for glory. You can rest assured that Steve Alessio will also be playing his part and just like his affectionate nickname; this could be the start of something very big.



Alex, Max and Luca Alessio

GRADUATE UPDATE

The James Hird Academy wishes to congratulate Joe Daniher on being drafted to the Essendon Football Club with the Bombers' first pick in the 2012 NAB AFL National Draft. Joe's meteoric rise through the ranks should serve as inspiration for all current and future Academy Members to not only chase your dreams but capture them. The JHA wishes Joe all the best of luck for his debut season in the red and black.



PLAYER BIRTHDAY'S

Koby Bewick	10 January (Age 4)
Jaxon Neagle	30 January (Age 13)
Jake Long	3 February (Age 17)
Tom Wallis	14 February (Age 16)
Matthew Neagle	19 February (Age 15)
William Hird	20 February (Age 4)
Kurtis Barnard	20 February (Age 12)
Will Hamilton	1 March (Age 8)
Luke Barnard	4 March (Age 8)
Tom Hird	28 March (Age 12)
Mason Fletcher	8 April (Age 13)
Joshua Misiti	11 April (Age 10)
Daniel Thompson	30 April (Age 19)

JHA 2013 EVENTS CALENDAR

Match Day Experience Essendon vs Carlton	7 June, MCG
Guard of Honor Game Essendon vs Gold Coast	15 June, Etihad
James Hird Academy Camp 1	7 July - 9 July, Windy Hill
James Hird Academy Dinner	9 July, TBC
Match Day Experience Essendon vs Hawthorn	26 July, Etihad
James Hird Academy Camp 2	30 Sep - 1 Oct, Windy Hill

WELCOME TO THE ACADEMY



The James Hird Academy also extends warm congratulations to Matthew Lloyd and Dean Solomon on the birth of their Baby Bombers. We look forward to inducting Jacob Lloyd and Lenny Solomon into the Academy ranks very soon.

MEMBER IN PROFILE

JEDD CLOTHIER	
AGE	17 years old
TEAM	Calder Cannons (TAC Cup)
POSITION	Half-Back
FAVOURITE PLAYER	Rory Sloane
HOBBIES & INTERESTS	Surfing
FAVOURITE MOVIE	Die Hard (all 5)
FAVOURITE TV SHOW	Wicked Tuna



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The James Hird Academy wishes to announce the availability of major and individual player sponsorship opportunities for season 2013. 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 for more information.