

JAMES HIRD

ACADEMY

EST. 2010

OCTOBER 2017

WELCOME MESSAGE



Hello and welcome to another edition of the James Hird Academy Newsletter

Hello and welcome to another edition of the JHA Newsletter.

The culmination of the 2017 AFL Home & Away Season marked the return of the Bombers as a finals competitor for the first time since 2014.

Although the Dons were outclassed by a seasoned Sydney outfit in the elimination final, this year has seen the team take some important steps forward.

Earning finals qualifications in what was the latest chapter of 'Our Comeback Story' stands as testament to the resilience of the Essendon Football Club and its playing group.

One of the young stars who was at the forefront of the Dons' push to September, was Joe Daniher who produced a career-best season and took home the 2017 Crichton Medal as Essendon's Best & Fairest winner. The inaugural James Hird Academy graduate was rewarded with

selection in the AFL All Australian Team for the first time and finished the year with 65 goals.

While Joe continues his enthralling journey at AFL level, the academy is also celebrating some exciting advances across its junior ranks.

This past year has seen strong links forming between the JHA and the Next Generation Academy (NGA). Select players performing well amongst the NGA ranks have been invited to join the JHA's Acceleration Group, with both junior pathway programs coming together for a number of training programs and events.

The NGA is already proving dividends with several promising prospects bobbing up amongst 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!

2017 - 2018 Sponsorship Opportunities:

The James Hird Academy wishes to announce the availability of major and individual player sponsorship opportunities for season 2018. 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 Brenton Humphreys on (03) 8340 2182 or bhumphreys@essendonfc.com.au for more information.

James Hird Academy - ACCELERATION GROUP

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

James Hird Academy - NEXT GENERATION

PLAYER	AGE	FATHER
Max Fletcher	15	Dustin Fletcher
Joshua Misiti	14	Joe Misiti
Nyawi Moore	14	Nathan Lovett-Murray
Tex Wanganen	13	Gavin Wanganen
Alex Hird	14	James Hird
Alwyn Davey Jnr	13	Alywn Davey
Jayden Davey	13	Alywn Davey
Luca Alessio	12	Steve Alessio
Will Hamilton	12	Paul Hamilton
Luke Barnard	12	Kurtis Barnard
Alex Alessio	10	Alex Alessio
Noah Caracella	11	Blake Caracella

James Hird Academy - Baby Bombers

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

AROUND THE GROUNDS

ACCELERATION GROUP:

DANIEL HANNA (NGA)

A 200cm surprise packet out of the St. Bernards football program, Daniel played for Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup this season, while also taking part in JHA Acceleration Group commitments. Although Calder missed the finals, Daniel had more success at school level with St. Bernards beating St Bedes Mentone in the ACC final, which earned the team a place in the elite Herald Sun Shield competition. Daniel booted two goals in St. Bernard's Preliminary Final win and was part of the Grand Final victory over St. Patricks Ballarat, topping off an impressive year for the youngster.

JAXON NEAGLE (FATHER-SON)

2017 has seen Jaxon take the next step forward in his football development, playing his first year of senior football, whilst also juggling duties at reserve level for the Wodonga Raiders in the Ovens & Murray Football League. With the seniors falling short after their week one elimination final loss, Jaxon's attention turned to chasing glory with the Raiders reserves. After ending the Home & Away Season on top of the ladder, the Raiders defeated Lavington in the Grand Final 16.8.104 to 7.6.48 with Jaxon named 4th best on ground for the day. The JHA congratulates Jaxon on a great season!

ISMAIL MOUSSA (NGA)

Ismail has enjoyed a busy season playing for Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup and Essendon Keilor College (EKC) at school level. By winning the SSV Finals, EKC earned a place in the Herald Sun Shield competition with EKC going down to St. Patricks in the Semi Final. 'Izzy' was also part of the Aberfeldie Under-17 Division 1 Premiership team in the EDFL, defeating Strathmore by six points in the Grand Final.

MASON FLETCHER (FATHER-SON)

The eldest son of Bombers champion and games record holder Dustin Fletcher, Mason plays for PEGS at school level and also notched up ten games as a bottom-ager for the Calder Cannons in the TAC Cup. PEGS exited the AGSV Finals at the hands of Marcellin College, but the highlight for Mason came in June of this year when he played for the Vic Metro Futures Under-17 side.

KYLE GILLARD (NGA)

A prodigious hoop talent, Kyle comes from a non-conventional football background and plays basketball at the Maribyrnong Sports Academy. Despite not currently playing competitive football, Kyle's athleticism leaves plenty of upside should he decide to make the transition to Aussie Rules.

JAKE FIREBRACE (NGA)

Jake plays for Calder Cannons (TAC Cup) and Craigieburn's Under-17 Division 2 team in the EDFL. Craigieburn finished 5th on the ladder and unfortunately missed out on finals qualification. Jake also played for Craigieburn Secondary College throughout the year.

KURTIS BARNARD (FATHER-SON)

The eldest son of Essendon 2000 Premiership hero Paul Barnard, Kurtis enjoyed Grand Final success in the EDFL with Aberfeldie's Under-17 Division 2 side defeating Greenvale 12.8.80 to 4.15.39.

LACHLAN JOHNSON (NGA)

Lachlan (son of triple Premiership defender Chris Johnson) is part of Essendon's Next Generation Academy and is also eligible to be drafted by the Brisbane Lions as a Father-Son pick in the 2019 draft.



Daniel Hanna officially inducted into the JHA



Jaxon Neagle celebrating the Wodonga Raiders Reserves Premiership with brother Jydon.



Ismail with JHA Academy Coach Greg Williams



Kyle Gillard with Greg Williams at the JHA NGA Induction



Calder Cannon's player Jake Firebrace with Greg Williams

AROUND THE GROUNDS

FLIGHT SQUAD:

MAX FLETCHER (FATHER-SON)

Dustin Fletcher's youngest son, Max played for the Aberfeldie Under-15 Division 1 Grand Final team that lost to Keilor 10.14.74 to 7.10.52.

JOSH MISITI (FATHER-SON)

The son of dual-Premiership Bomber Smokin' Joe Misiti, Josh booted two goals in Aberfeldie's Grand Final win over Strathmore in the EDFL's Under-15 Division 3 decider. Final scores were 10.11.71 to 6.5.41.

NYAWI MOORE (FATHER-SON)

The son of former Essendon enforcer Nathan Lovett-Murray, Nyawi enjoyed a fantastic season with the Premiership-winning Woorinen Tigers Under-14.5s in the Poole Accountants League. Nyawi was named Best on Ground (BOG) in the decider which saw the Tigers run out winners against Lake Boga 6.7.43 to 5.7.37. The exciting youngster also took out the team's Best & Fairest Award. Congratulations on a stellar year Nyawi!

TEX WANGANEEN (FATHER-SON)

The son of former Essendon Brownlow Medallist Gavin Wanganeen, Tex plays for the Walkerville (Red) Junior Football Club in the Under-14 Division 1 North, SANFL Juniors competition. Walkerville earned finals qualification but was eliminated in the Preliminary Final by Modbury in a nail-biter (5.5.35 to 5.9.39). Tex booted 23 goals in 14 home & away games this year.

LUCA ALESSIO (FATHER-SON)

The eldest son of Bombers Premiership ruckman Steve Alessio, Luca was part of Strathmore's Under-13 Division 1 EDFL Grand Final team that ultimately went down to Maribyrnong Park in a nail-biting 2-point defeat (6.8.44 to 6.6.42).

ALWYN JNR & JAYDEN DAVEY (FATHER-SON)

The twin sons of ex-Essendon livewire Alwyn Davey, Jayden and Alwyn Jnr play for the Palmerston Magpies Under-14's in the Northern Territory Football League. This is the second year of Under-14's footy for the boys, after playing in the Division 1 Gunderson competition with their team finishing 3rd on the ladder. The Davey brothers regularly featured in the bests throughout the year. They have now commenced pre-season training - good luck boys!

WILL HAMILTON (FATHER-SON)

The son of ex-Don Paul Hamilton, Will plays for St. Francis Under-12A's in the Bendigo Junior Football League. After enjoying a strong year and finishing 2nd on the ladder, St. Francis defeated Kyneton 10.9.69 to 4.3.27 in the grand final, with Will voted 2nd BOG on the big day. Congratulations Will!

LUKE BARNARD (FATHER-SON)

The youngest son of Paul Barnard, Luke played the 2017 season for Aberfeldie's Under-13 Division 3 team and St. John Boscos at school level.

ALEX ALESSIO (FATHER-SON)

Alex enjoyed grand final success with his Strathmore Under-11 Division 1 side smashing Keilor in the EDFL season decider 8.6.54 to 1.1.7. Great work Alex!

NOAH CARACELLA (FATHER-SON)

The son of 2000 Premiership player Blake Caracalla, Noah enjoyed an undefeated season playing with Newtown in the Newtown Little League and will run out for the Under-12's again next year.



Josh Misiti celebrating the Premiership with Bombers legend and father Joe Misiti



Nyawi Moore capped off a fantastic season by winning the Best & Fairest for the U14.5 Woorinen Tigers

AROUND THE GROUNDS

BABY BOMBERS:

KOBY BEWICK (FATHER-SON)

The youngest son of former Essendon fan-favourite Darren 'Boris' Bewick, Koby enjoyed an impressive season for the Airport West Under-11 Division 5 team in the EDFL. Airport West defeated Burnside Heights in the Grand Final (2.1.13 to 0.3.3), with Koby earning 2nd BOG honours and also winning the club's Best & Fairest Award for a second year running. Congratulations Koby!



Proud father and former Bomber Darren Bewick with son Koby Bewick

CHENAE DEMPSEY (FATHER-DAUGHTER)

The dashing daughter of ex-Bomber Courtenay Dempsey, Chenae is part of Greenvale's Under-12 Division 1 girls' football team. The Greenvale girls were pipped to the Premiership by Strathmore (3.1.19 to 2.1.13). 2017 is also the first year that the Greenvale Football Club fielded women's teams. Well done on a great season Chenae!



Smiles all round for Chenae Dempsey with parents Courtenay and Danielle

The JHA officially congratulates all members for their fantastic efforts this season across various competitions. Well done to all of you, and we wish you the best of luck for next year!



NEWS & NOTES

All-Australian Joey with a B&F to Boot!

The JHA is celebrating its first AFL All Australian (AA) member, after Bombers spearhead Joe Daniher was awarded the honour along with fellow Essendon teammates Michael Hurley and Zach Merrett.

The AA nod is another important step in Daniher's career at the top level, and follows a season where the high-flying forward stamped his authority on the game.

Daniher topped the Bombers goal-kicking tally for a fourth consecutive year with a career-high 65 majors, and also took home the AFL Mark of The Year for his leap over Jake Carlisle during Essendon's thrilling Round 17 win against the Saints.

Joe capped off a fantastic season by winning the Crichton Medal as Essendon's Best & Fairest Player for 2017.

The James Hird Academy officially congratulates Joe on his achievements.



FROM THE COACH GREG 'DIESEL' WILLIAMS

Greetings to all Academy Members and your families!

It's been a great year of learning and progress in my first year as JHA Coach. I've thoroughly enjoyed watching and helping many of you take the next steps in your footy journey. Getting a chance to work with our NGA members has also been a highlight.

In order to be a good footballer, you need to get the basics right and that's been a focus for us this year. We have spent the past few months working on technique in regards to marking, kicking and handballing.

A lot of young players don't kick the football properly. Making the ball spin correctly, executing the stab-pass action with strong pointed toes,

and following through with your action are all important parts of kicking.

Remember - practice, practice, practice!

Well done to those of you who participated in the finals series and congratulations to all members for a stellar effort this season. I look forward to an even bigger and better 2018.

Until next time, go Bombers!

- Greg 'Diesel' Williams,
JHA Coach



Next Generation Academy Update

The AFL's Next Generation Academy plays a vital role in the attraction, growth and retention of talented players (both male and female), whilst growing participation levels in underrepresented segments of the Australian community.

Essendon's dedicated NGA talent recruitment zones include the Hume, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Mitchell and Macedon Ranges regions in Victoria; as well as West Arnhem and Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory.

The NGA pathway not only aims to expose young athletes to the game who otherwise may have missed the opportunity, but was also established to provide further support to talent coming out of football's traditional heartland regions.

Earlier this year, a number of talented NGA members were officially inducted into the JHA Acceleration Group, where they have been training every Monday afternoon under the tutelage of AFL legend and JHA Coach Greg 'Diesel' Williams.

Essendon's NGA members were treated to a unique match day experience when the Bombers faced off against the Crows earlier this year. The NGA footballers were invited into the Essendon dressing rooms pre-game to see how the modern day greats prepare for battle, then each NGA member was assigned an AFL player to track throughout the game while EFC recruiter Rob Forster-Knight educated them on playing the 'Essendon Way'. The recruiting guru also imparted vital knowledge about what talent scouts look for when assessing potential draftees.

The NGA is one of the fastest growing AFL talent pathways, and there's plenty to be excited about from a red and black perspective!

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 pics and more. Hash-tag #JamesHirdAcademy to feature on our page!



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



Practice Makes Perfect

The Flight Squad and Baby Bombers make up the younger ranks of the James Hird Academy, but these kids take their footy seriously!

The JHA has enjoyed hosting the Flight Squad members at the EFC High Performance Centre for two specialized training sessions this season, along with four after-school training sessions.

Senior Club officials including Bombers Coach John Worsfold and Captain Dyson Heppell made special appearances and imparted valuable knowledge to the group in attendance. Discussion topics included what it takes to be an elite athlete, while Game Performance Manager Mark Neeld also spoke about the importance of conditioning, training and hard work.

JHA Coach Greg Williams was on-hand to take the youngsters through their paces with fun and educational skills sessions.

Meanwhile, the Baby Bombers also got their chance with a dedicated clinic that saw over 35 JHA members and family take over 'The Hangar'.

Parents mingled over a fully-catered lunch, while the youngsters ran amok with footy drills, games and a fun-filled obstacle course. The huge inflatable jumping castle was a big hit, and Bombers mascot Skeeta also got in on the festivities.

The JHA thanks all Academy members, parents, Club staff and volunteers for making these events truly something special. We look forward to seeing you all again soon at the Essendon Football Club!



JHA MEMBER IN PROFILE

NYAWI MOORE

Age:	14
Nickname:	Nyars
Football Club:	Woorinen Tigers
Position:	Centre Half-Forward, Ruck
Hobbies & Interests:	Basketball, football and hanging out with mates
Favourite AFL Player:	Eddie Betts, Dustin Martin & Cyril Rioli
Favourite Musician:	Ed Sheeran



JHA 2017 PHOTO GALLERY



Daniel Hanna and the St Bernards Team



Gemma and Darren Bewick are all smiles



Jaxon Neagle and the Premiership Wodonga Raiders Reserves Team



Taj McPhee



Jacob Lloyd



Aidan Ramanauskas



Jaeda Lloyd



Charli Johnson

JHA 2017 PHOTO GALLERY



Noah Peverill



Baby Bombers Clinic



Charli Johnson



Chenae Dempsey



Matthew Lloyd with son Jacob



Rylan Johnson



Taj McPhee



Koby Bewick

An Eye for Talent

Inside Essendon's Recruiting Team

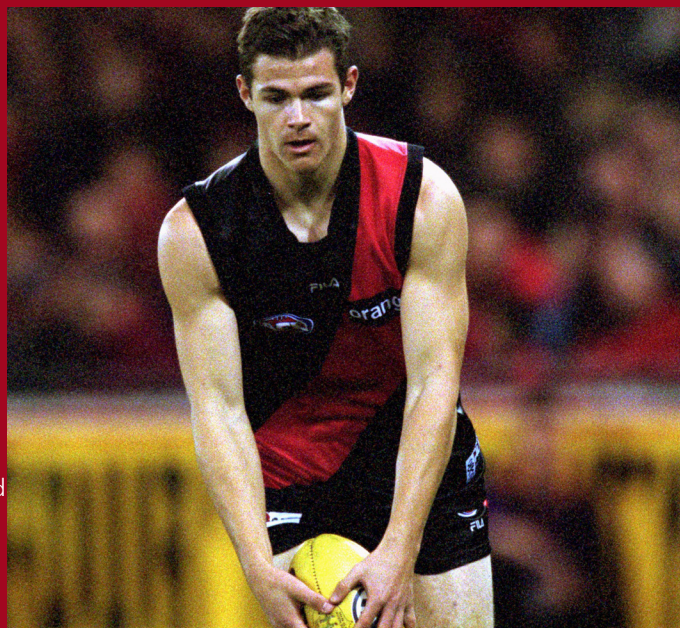
Q&A with EFC Recruiting Officer Rob Forster-Knight

What made you want to be a recruiter?

I've always been passionate about the game and post playing, I wanted to stay connected with the elite level. My original plan was to take up a role within S&C (Strength and Conditioning), however I've always been fascinated by the recruiting caper and the skills required to identify talent. I spoke to a few people within the industry and was lucky enough to be given an opportunity back at Essendon.

How have you developed in your role at Essendon since hanging up the boots?

I'm always developing in my role and have thrived on being given greater responsibilities over the years. I've been required to continually upskill myself in quite a few areas. When it comes to assessing players, recruiters are expected to have some knowledge regarding skill acquisition/ biomechanics, physiology and even psychology. It's fair to say that my IT skills have come a long way during my time also (laughs).



Do you feel that having played AFL at the highest level better positions you as a recruiter in not only identifying talent but also relating to the young draftees coming through the ranks?

I believe it has helped to some degree but playing at the highest level is not a pre-requisite to becoming a good recruiter. The skill set to identify talent is quite unique and takes years to develop. I've been in my role for 7 years and I'm always learning something new.

How important are junior academies like the JHA in the modern recruiting landscape?

Extremely important. Club academies are one of only a few ways where clubs can gain a competitive advantage. The JHA gives us a chance to fast track members so they are better prepared for professional football... and we get first rights to the talent we help develop!

Are you a fan of the Father-Son Rule and the tradition/nostalgia it inspires through footy family dynasties like the Watsons'/Daniher's'/Fletcher's' etc?

Certainly. I think supporters really appreciate seeing the next generation come through. Many of the sons/daughters have virtually grown up at our Club, so it would be sad to see them playing anywhere else. I would love to see my son/daughter play at Essendon but I fell much short of the mark (only 31 games!).

How much has the recruiting world changed since your own playing days and your experiences in being drafted to an AFL Club?

Player recruitment is evolving all the time. There are new rules and ways to acquire talent (such as Free Agency for example). The amount of information we collect on each player is amazing. These kids are scrutinized at a much higher level than what I was coming through the pathway. The whole football environment is much more professional now.

Do recruiters get just as nervous before the AFL Draft as the young draftees do?

I would be lying if I said we didn't get nervous but it's a different sort of nerves. There is a lot of luck on the night and you're just hoping that your planning and preparation pays off.

What's the most satisfying part about your job?

That's easy. Calling out a player's name on draft night and knowing that I've played a role in helping the player fulfil a lifelong dream.

What's the biggest challenge you face in your job?

Prioritizing our workloads can be challenging. We're expected to have strong knowledge on all 'draftable' talent throughout Australia, so we have to really plan our fixturing/travel to ensure that we have enough coverage across the various competitions. The lifestyle of a recruiter during the footy season is also pretty hectic, so finding balance on the home front is important.

An Eye for Talent

Inside Essendon's Recruiting Team

Q&A with EFC Recruiting Officer Rob Forster-Knight

You work closely with two of the most established figures in the AFL recruiting circle - what have you learned from Merv Keane and Adrian Dodoro over the years?

I've been fortunate enough to learn from two fantastic mentors who are well respected within the industry. Both are very different. Adrian has a very strategic mind so I try to learn from his creativity. Merv's people skills and work ethic are second to none.

Do you have a favourite recruiting story (personal or otherwise) you'd like to share with the readers of the JHA Newsletter?

There have been quite a few nice surprises over the journey. In one of the first drafts I was involved with, we selected Mark Baguley with pick 47 in the Rookie Draft. It has been great to see him develop into a Club Vice-Captain and 100 game player, I really admire the way he goes about it.

Last year was the first time the Bombers went into the draft with the #1 selection up our sleeve, what was that experience like?

It was good in a way, as this was the first time we went into a draft knowing that we could lock away a player that we wanted without worrying about other clubs. When working through our decision, we tried to block out any external noise and focus on our process. At the same time, we were all well aware that this was Essendon's very first No. 1 draft pick and we had an obligation to get it right. It was reassuring that there were quite a few quality candidates to pick from.

How gratifying was it to see Andy McGrath have such a great first year and win the Rising Star Award?

As recruiters, we're really invested in all of our picks, but I was extremely proud of Andy's year. He is a fantastic young person and footballer. To see him embrace the pressure and perform with maturity was really satisfying. It's rare that the No. 1 pick ends up being the best player in the draft but I'm confident that Andy has even more growth left in him, so Bomber fans should be excited.

Tell us a bit about Anthony McDonald Tipungwuti's incredible football story and the role the recruiting department played in getting Walla to the Dons.

Anthony grew up on the Tiwi Islands before moving to Gippsland as a 16-year-old to further his schooling/football. English was his second language so he had to make up a lot of ground so that he could even integrate into a new community. Walla's innate football ability was obvious through his time with Gippsland Power, however, he didn't have the fitness capacity to show it often enough. We saw his potential and invited him to our VFL program (where he spent 3 years developing his craft). Anthony's drive to reach AFL level was remarkable and he basically forced us to put him on the Rookie List. The rest is history. Walla is now an important player to our team - and best of all - he is a well rounded, humble person.

What do you look for when scouting for potential draft candidates?

There are many factors that allow a player to succeed at the highest level.

Recruiters put a high value on the following:

- 1) Football Talent (skills, smarts, clean hands)
- 2) Physical Capacity (running ability/durability)
- 3) Character Traits (work ethic, competitiveness)

Could you provide some tips to the aspiring footballers reading this newsletter to help improve their chances of getting noticed by recruiters?

First of all I would say that you need to work hard to improve and listen to your coaches so that you know what you need to develop (and how to do it). Establishing a point of difference (an elite quality) will help you to get noticed.