

ANNUAL REPORT, FOOTBALL SECTION, 1973-4

The 1974 season was Belconnen Football Club's most successful to date. Both the senior and reserve teams played in the finals, and the under-19 grade team won the premiership as did the under-17 Division 2 side. In addition the club will have gone close to eliminating its debts by the end of the year.

Many people contributed to this record of success but the greatest credit must go to Larry Pickering whose generous donation of \$3,000 for the recruitment of players did more than enable the club to retain Tom Allison as coach and obtain the services of Mick Chinnick, Winston Gregory, Mal Lawn and Robert White. It gave the whole club a psychological boost that resulted in increased enthusiasm and confidence. The whole club puts on record its gratitude to Larry.

The Committee:

With a new and untried President much work naturally devolved upon the committee who in a club not overblessed with numbers must necessarily toil all the harder. Every member of the committee played his part to the utmost and to a large extent the way in which the Pickering donation was built upon resulted from their efforts. If Frank Goddard (team manager), Cleve Weatherill (secretary and fund-raiser), Ray Baguley and Mick Burgess (social) are singled out this implies no criticism of other members of a singularly faction-free and assiduous committee.

The Senior Team:

This team, coached by Tom Allison, benefitted greatly from the recruitment of new players made possible by the Pickering donation. Three of the first four places in the best-and-fairest count were filled by players we would not have had without that fund. There was also the contribution of Under-19 players whose adjustment to the demands of senior football was encouraging.

The first half of the season, to the splitting of the competition, provided all the team's victories and most of its good football. Thereafter weaknesses became manifest, and it was a hesitant side that went under in the elimination semi-final to ANU. At times the team played sparkling football but each section had its failings. The forwards too often kicked poorly, the defence was too often loose, and rucks, rovers and centre-line failed too often to help outnumbered backs. Determination, confidence and hard work needs to be more fully sustained, at training and in the games if the team is to be more successful. Promise is not enough, but even so the club would welcome League proposals that would help weaker teams to help themselves.

Trophy Winners:

Best & Fairest	:	Robert White
Runner-up	:	Mal Lawn
Most Improved	:	Mick Burgess
Most Consistent	:	Tim Grant
<u>Coach's Trophy</u>	:	Mal Manson

The Reserves:

In mid-season Larry Pickering took up an appointment in Sydney and Cleve Weatherill volunteered to coach the side. His efforts, and a changed selection policy, led to the team playing off with RMC for the right to play Eastlake in the elimination semi-final, winning that right, then losing a game they could have won against the eventual grand-finalists. A new approach to and by the reserves was apparent and necessarily so if the team is to be what it purports - a reserve for the seniors. Next season should be an extension of the second half of this year, to the benefit of the whole club.

Trophy winners:

Best and Fairest	:	Rob Baguley
Runner-Up	:	Pat Sheedy
Most Improved	:	Ross Byrne
Most Consistent	:	Paul McGaw

The Under-19s:

Under a new coach, Bill Cameron, the side fulfilled expectations. Its only competition came from Eastlake, whom it beat three times and lost to once. A spectacular side to watch, it suffered from over-confidence bred of years of victories. It is hard for such a side to always give of its very best, but when it had to, in the second half of the Grand Final it demonstrated power, determination and skill that should serve Belconnen well for many years to come.

Trophy Winners:

Best and Fairest	:	John Manson
Runner-Up	:	Mal Manson
Most Consistent	:	John Blake

Mal Manson also won the Best and Fairest Trophy awarded by the CANFL (Under-Age section) for the under-19 competition.

The Under 17s:

In Division I the joint Belconnen-Turner side battled out that hardest of seasons - a year without a win. That the team never gave up, remained generally cheerful, and saw out the season reflects credit on all concerned, especially the players.

In Division II Canberra's most successful coach, John Stankevicius, won yet another premiership. The team was never really extended, even when it lost its one game of the season and the Grand Final victory was a formality. But such teams don't just happen and the excellent football played demonstrated the depth of the Belconnen club's resources at the under-age and junior level.

Trophy Winners:Division I

Best and Fairest	:	N. Riley
Runner-Up	:	P. Southwell
Most Consistent	:	P. Campbell

Division II

Best and Fairest	:	R. Sinovic
Runner-Up	:	A. Lamont
Most Consistent	:	D. Gregor

D. Bennett won the CANFL (Under-Age section) trophy for the Best and Fairest player in Under-17 (Division II) competition.

General:Awards:

Specific thanks must be given to those who contributed to a merit awards scheme for senior and reserve players who were not on contract. The scheme added interest to Saturday nights at the club and gave some sort of reward to players who do much for little return. The contributors were Russ Brown, Brian Falconer, Jimmy Hurt, George Langley, Keith Mortimer (specifically for the Reserves), and Harry Phillips.

Social: The club's many functions this year were both pleasurable and profitable. A pre-season gathering at the Gundaroo Hotel was so successful that it will be repeated next year and throughout the season dances at the Club were well attended. A special function arranged for vote-counting was an innovation likely to be repeated, as too was an event of a rather more controversial nature held at the Showgrounds, one from which a large profit may be deemed to have compensated for bad publicity. It was largely the efforts of Ray Baguley on the social and fund-raising side that resulted in his being awarded the Best Clubman trophy, but he would be the first to acknowledge the help given him by Mick Burgess, Diane and Sue Baguley and Ross Byrne.

The Future:

Much will depend upon the CANTU's attitude to the unbalanced nature of the competition. Despite intensive work in junior football and the judicious use of limited funds at our disposal the prospects of even appearing in a Grand Final in Canberra seem remote. Clearly the stage has been reached where the rich are getting richer and the poor even poorer, with demonstrable consequences for Australian Rules football in this city. The district clubs, Belconnen, Queanbeyan and West Canberra have, to put it bluntly, no hope whatever of a premiership in the foreseeable future, if they remain in the competition as at present constituted. Australian Rules in Canberra, in competition as it is with three other codes, will continue to suffer the consequences of poor administration, selfishness and lack of foresight unless drastic action is rapidly taken, even at the expense of lowering the standard of the competition, although how the worst Australian Rules competition qua competition anywhere in Australia could get worse is open to question. Belconnen will continue to encourage Rules in its area, and develop it as best a club can that is unable to offer its players any more than a pittance, or any more than the prospect of finishing fourth (or by a fluke perhaps third) for as long as those players play football. I pay sincere tribute to those who stick with Belconnen, both to play and administrate. It is a labour of love by the overworked both on and off the field.

W. F. Mandle

Vice-President (Football)