

Manly Bombers Junior Australian Football Club

2007 Season Review

The 2007 season was the most successful yet for the Manly Bombers, both on and off the field.

The main challenge for the year was managing the Club's growth. Consider the following:

- Registered players in 2007 amounted to 248, compared to 174 in 2006 and 122 in 2005.
- The Club fielded 9 competition teams in 2007 plus Auskick, compared to 6 competition teams and Auskick in 2006.
- More games were played at Weldon Oval in 2007 than were played at both Pittwater and Forest combined.
- There are 68 clubs in the Greater Sydney Juniors. The Manly Bombers ranks 6th in size as measured by registered players.

A club of our size requires significant management. This year, teams were responsible for their own ground management and this will continue next year. Everyone needs to be mindful that it is not possible to have one or two hearty souls ringing sirens, changing ground configurations, collecting match day paperwork and manning the canteen. Our Club is simply too big to think in such terms. Parents and supporters need to pull together to manage their football experience by ensuring that each team is adequately resourced. As a Club, we made significant progress this year in better managing our operations but we will need more people to become more involved next year - particularly in match day duties.

2007 in Retrospect

This year, the Club fielded two teams in Under 9, Under 10 and Under 11 age groups, as well as single teams in Under 12, Under 13 and Under 16 competitions. With Frank Grey Reserve (our overflow field), being resurfaced over winter, the Committee set about finding ways to accommodate our ever expanding number of teams. The experiment of setting up two junior ovals running north-south on Weldon Oval proved an overwhelming success with both players and spectators alike. Having two teams playing at once with supporters spread through the centre of Weldon Oval created a festival atmosphere and was extremely popular.

Financially, the Club is secure, however, it will need to make a contribution towards the construction of new clubrooms over the next few years. The Committee is actively reserving excess funds to ensure that it can meet its obligations in this regard. There are many entities making contributions to the new clubrooms, including the AFL for which we are grateful. The objective is to begin construction in 2009.

It was revealed at the AGM in September, that the Club would be without Weldon Oval in 2008 due to a council decision to resurface the ground. Council has since overturned its decision and will delay this work until 2009. This may suit the Club

better given the likely commencement of construction of the new clubrooms at the same time. As part of our negotiations with Council, Frank Grey Reserve has been secured for the Bombers for play on Sundays in 2008. The efforts of Geoff Pridgeon need to be recognized in this regard and we extend our thanks to Geoff who has represented the Club to the Council and Sporting Union.

Unfortunately, not everything went to plan this year. A preseason plan to combine our Under 13 and Under 14 teams with the Forest Lions club failed and threatened the very survival of our own Under 13 team. The experience highlights the fragility of joint ventures and the need for such initiatives to be micro managed.

The Club was also short of umpires this year. The Club is responsible for providing umpires for home games from Under 9s to Under 12s and relied heavily on the co-operation of neighbouring clubs to fulfil our obligations. We are grateful for the support we received from the Mosman, Forest and Pittwater clubs and will seek to recruit trainee umpires from our older age groups early in 2008.

Team Reviews

Auskick

Auskick continued to be our biggest group with some 90 children participating in our Auskick program held on Wednesdays and Sundays. With Frank Grey Reserve out of commission and Weldon Oval operating from 8.30am on most Sundays, Auskick was conducted on the netball courts at the eastern end of the Oval. Auskick is where our future Bombers get their grounding in football and, for this reason, is by far the Club's most important group. Our Auskick Co-ordinators, Kelvin Millsom and Gabrielle McKinnon and their army of volunteers deserve our congratulations and thanks for another wonderful Auskick season at the Manly Bombers. In a new initiative this year, training for our 8 year olds in Under 9 rules continued past the regular season to better prepare them for the rigours of Under 9 football in 2008.

Under 9

The Under 9s had a slow start to the season but both teams finished strongly, winning a number of games and playing competitive football over the closing rounds. Our thanks go to coaches Craig Allomes and Hugh Zochling for their patience and expertise with our Under 9s which included a significant number of more adventurous Auskickers this year.

Under 10

The Under 10s had a great year with our two teams finishing the season in fourth and fifth place in a twelve team competition. Congratulations to Anthony Scott and Trent Burton for creating two highly competitive teams. The Reds played in the finals which was a great experience for these young players.

Under 11

The Under 11 group was very strong this year. Both teams played an exciting and tough brand of football. Having spent most of the season in the top four, the Reds team finished in sixth position, however, the Blacks finished in second and went on to play in the grand final. Although they didn't win the premiership, the Club is very proud of their efforts and many thanks to coaches David Hallett and Ashley Parker for their guidance with this very talented squad.

Under 12

The Under 12s played in the Association's first division competition this year which duly recognises the team as one of the finest Under 12 teams in Sydney. The Bombers held their own in this high quality competition and finished the season just outside the final four. Many thanks to coaches Anthony Rudolph and Kevin Morgan for their ongoing support for this group of players. They continue to develop great players and achieve great results for the Club.

Under 13

The Under 13s experienced the highs and lows of football this year. Our joint venture with Forest in the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups was in disarray after the first round with our Under 13 Bombers struggling for players. Thanks to the determination of coach Haydon Bray, and managers David Fitzgerald and Monique Nicholls, an early season recruiting drive paid dividends and the team's player pool swelled. In a fantastic effort by all involved with this team, the Under 13s went on to not only play competitive football, but played off in the preliminary final for a place in the grand final. Unfortunately, a grand final berth just wasn't to be but the players, team management and parents can be extremely proud of what they achieved this year.

Credit should also be given to the Under 12s who helped out the Under 13s when player numbers were down. The co-operation between the Under 12s and Under 13s this year demonstrates the depth of club spirit at the Manly Bombers.

Under 16

The Under 16s struggled for numbers this year. Despite being the only Under 16 team on the northern beaches, few players from neighbouring clubs joined the team which played under the Warringah Wolves banner. A mid season merger with Drummoyne gave the team some critical mass and the team played out the season with great spirit and pride. Our thanks go to the coach Richard McMillan for his efforts in keeping the team together and to those Under 16 players who are effectively finishing their junior playing careers. We acknowledge the role that many of these young men have played in building the Club – some of whom have been playing since the Club's first year. Good luck boys and thanks for your contribution!

The Future

Since its inaugural season in 2001, the Manly Bombers is now regarded as one of the leading junior Australian Football clubs in Sydney - but with leadership comes

expectation. There is the expectation that the Club will be well managed and will continue to grow. The Club is expected to take leadership roles to assist other clubs as and when required, such as making Weldon Oval available to other clubs for their "home" games. The Club's committee members and coaches are often sought to provide counsel to the Association and related AFL bodies.

It is fair to say that the high expectations placed on the Manly Bombers will continue to require a strong and well resourced leadership group into the foreseeable future. I ask the parents and supporters to not only support today's leaders, but also consider the Club's leadership needs over the coming years. The Club will need to cultivate new leaders to take the reigns from the current leadership group over the next 2 or 3 years.

2007 was a landmark year in the Club's evolution. The Bombers is a proud club and continues to develop enduring traditions. The Committee looks forward to working with the coaches and parents in 2008 as we continue to develop our children both physically and emotionally to be the best they can possibly be.

The Club could not have achieved its goals without the continued support of its sponsors and we thank the following organisations for their support in 2007.

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President: Ashley Parker
Treasurer: Howard Durling
Secretary: Trent Burton
Registrar: Claire Pitcher
Vice President - Football Operations: David Fitzgerald
Vice President - Auskick: Kelvin Millsom
Committee Members: Stefan Hanke, Tony Pitcher, John Curtis, David Hurrell,
Richard McMillan, Mark Love, Fiona Parker, Phil Hooper