

2009 Season Review

Good Morning. I am pleased to report that the Manly Bombers has had another record year with 342 registered players and 13 competition teams. This makes the Manly Bombers the third largest Club in the entire Greater Sydney Juniors Association which takes in some 70 junior AFL clubs stretching from the Illawarra to Newcastle. The Club is in a sound financial position and continues to be managed prudently by your hard working Committee.

2009 was a challenging year given the uncertainty over the timing of remedial work on Weldon Oval. The Committee is grateful to the Harbord Harlequins Junior Rugby Union Club and the North Curl Curl Knights Junior Rugby League Clubs for sharing their training fields with us over winter. We are particularly thankful to the Pittwater Tigers Junior AFL Club and their President Kirk Sampson, for allowing our Under 14 and Under 16 joint venture teams to both train and play at North Narrabeen Reserve during 2009. Without the support of these sporting clubs, the Manly Bombers would have had to seriously curtail its activities this year and we are most appreciative of the support we have received.

The Club enjoyed on-field success this year with three teams, Under 12 Division 1 and both Under 16 joint venture teams playing finals football. Our three Under 9 teams played with great gusto this season with the Under 9 Buccaneers finishing the season undefeated. There were many individual achievements with some 29 Manly Bombers players chosen to represent North Shore this season. 15 have since gone on to represent Sydney North in the State Championships and one has been selected for the AIS Academy squad. In addition, two players have finished in the top three of the Association Best & Fairest voting.

Much of the credit for these individual achievements can be attributed to our quality coaching staff and in particular our Director of Coaching, Haydon Bray. In November of last year, Haydon established a Summer training program which became known as the Advanced Training Group (or ATG). Players from Under 12 to Under 16 were invited to join the ATG which sought to extend and challenge our more talented players to improve their skills and football knowledge. The ATG quickly established a reputation for football excellence on the Northern Beaches and AFL scouts from Collingwood, Brisbane, Adelaide, St Kilda, West Coast and Sydney became actively involved in the program. The ATG will undergo further refinement for the 2009/2010 Summer as more AFL clubs becoming involved in the program and, hopefully, some AFL funding for specialist coaches. The Committee has also decided to set aside some funds each year to help families with the costs associated with getting players to State Championships.

Many of you will recall that the Club donated \$1500 to the fire ravaged football club of Long Gully in Bendigo, Victoria following the February bushfires. While the Club was motivated to make this donation for humanitarian and kinship reasons, the Club has received much kudos from this gesture, particularly from the Essendon Football Club. There were two outcomes from this:

1. Essendon agreed to host our Under 13 team at Windy Hill in Melbourne to play an interstate friendly against the Eaglehawk Football Club from Bendigo, as well as provide free tickets to an AFL match.
2. It paved the way for the Essendon player visit in July.

Engagement with Essendon has deepened over the year and they have also asked to be part of our Advanced Training Group program over the coming Summer. While swine flu prevented the interstate friendly from going ahead, we will be pushing for another visit next year so stay tuned.

Priorities for 2010

There are four priorities for 2010

Priority # 1: Tenth Anniversary Celebrations. Next year is our tenth season and there will be many events to mark this occasion. The Committee, for example, is considering a one off specially designed tenth anniversary training jumper as well as some registration fee discounts for players. We may also replace the Trivia Night with an Art Auction (and disco!) where we auction off pieces of football art created by our very own players. In fact, this has already begun with some well travelled football thanks to one of our Under 9 parents! The Manly Bombers has assumed a position of prominence among the junior sporting associations of the lower Northern Beaches and our tenth anniversary is a great time to reflect and celebrate the achievements of our Club.

Priority # 2: Committee Succession Planning for 2011. 2010 will be the last year for at least three of the five Executive Committee members – the President, the Registrar and the VP Football Operations. Their involvement is skewed towards the older age groups which means they are gradually losing touch with the people and the issues that are affecting the younger grades where there is most growth. We will therefore, be seeking to recruit a team of people to take over the management of the Club in 2011.

The worst scenario for incoming executive Committee members is being left to work it out for themselves. The key to ensuring a smooth transition is to have an extended handover period. Please have a think about becoming a Committee member and discuss forming a ticket with like-minded Bombers parents over Summer. The Manly Bombers has an ample financial resources, (will have) first class facilities and a highly engaged membership base to enable you to make your mark in the community. This is your chance to put your stamp on a quality sporting organization which is a leader among its peers. Leadership Transition is about asking *what YOU CAN DO for your Club, not WHAT YOUR CLUB CAN DO FOR YOU!* Which is where we all start – but not where we finish. Your Club needs you to step up and take it forward to the next stage of its development.

Priority # 3: Clubroom Renovation. With the remedial work on Weldon Oval well underway, the renovation of the Clubrooms will now be pursued with renewed vigour. A start is not expected before the end of the year and we expect that we will be without a Clubhouse for most, if not all, of next season. Club Weldon, the body made up of the three co-tenants, will be holding a major fundraising event in the first half of next year. We will be supporting this event as a member of Club Weldon and I look forward to providing you with details in due course.

Priority # 4: Development of a Northern Beaches AFL Centre of Excellence. In recent years, the Manly Bombers has been seen as a small junior AFL that has been able to become very big, very quickly. In effect, we have become an AFL case study in how to build a junior AFL club. The success of the Advanced Training Group, however, has shined the AFL spotlight onto our Club as a “developer of talent” and our positioning is changing. The NSW/ACT AFL Commission have not only endorsed our activities, but have provided provisional agreement to fund specialist coaching activities (including a paid Director of Coaching for the Manly Bombers) as well as funding for cross sport promotion on the Northern Beaches. As a result, the Committee sees this as an opportunity to not only further enhance the Club’s reputation as a preferred pathway to AFL Clubs, but also to greatly accelerate the development of our players so that more players can reach their full potential, which means more players receiving AFL scholarships and more players playing at the highest level. The development of the Club as an AFL Centre of Excellence is our fourth priority for 2010.

A few words of thanks.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Pitcher family at this, their final Presentation Day. Junior sports clubs are built on committed families for they are the worker bees of the Club. They are the people who get things done when everyone else says “not me” . Few Manly Bombers families have put their shoulder to the wheel quite like the Pitchers. Claire and Tony Pitcher are stalwarts of this Club with both having held Committee positions throughout their six year association with the Bombers and whose contribution was always measured, not in hours, but in mornings or afternoons (and many of them, mostly around the canteen). Young TJ started his career as an Auskicker in 2004 and finished with 71 games with the Manly Bombers, while his sisters Sarah and Katie virtually grew up in the Weldon Oval canteen, always providing welcome help (and light relief). Claire’s contribution was recognized in 2007 when she became the Club’s seventh “ Clubman of the Year”. We wish the Pitcher family well for their new future in Beechworth in country Victoria. We are most grateful for their contribution to the Club, their humour in the late afternoon sun and their friendship which we will always treasure.

I would like to thank our wonderful team managers. As the Club grows, teams have to become self sufficient and it is the Team Managers who are bearing more and more responsibility in this regard. I’d also like to thank the Ground Managers who volunteered their time this year. Ground management is the single most important role on Game Day because it is effectively our organizational skills on display to other Clubs and the AFL. I’d like to thank our coaches – for they are the foundation stones upon which teams are built. For your commitment, patience and skill – my humble thanks on behalf of all the parents and your players. Finally, I’d like to thank the 2009 Committee for its guidance and assistance to me as President. The Committee continues to manage the Club prudently and, rest assured, that your committeemen and women are outstanding ambassadors for your Club.

I thank the members for their support during 2009 and look forward to serving the Club in my final year as President in 2010.

Ashley Parker
President – Manly Bombers JAFC