

Sport Spotlight

Westside Football hails a New Year with another bumper edition of football news, views and photographs from all around Australia ... PLUS a special feature on Claremont Speedway, a target for many footy fans on summer nights.

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Vol 14, No. 1 Edition No. 355

Thursday January 9, 1992

WESTSIDE Football

\$1

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A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS PUBLICATION

INSIDE:

KIM HAGDORN speculates on the future of the WAFL and where they will be located ... and talks to a Mal Brown coaching protege
ALAN EAST talks to a real footy 'old timer' who still has a fierce love of the game ... and discovers an old Bulldog off the beaten track
TANIA ARMSTRONG catches up with an Eagle enjoying wedded bliss ... and a few players recovering from operations



WESTSIDE Football

Bigger than big ... that's the message from Eagles star Dwayne Lamb as he prepares for a fishing trip with team-mates Glen Jakovich, Peter Sumich and John Worsfold. The quartet took to the water over summer, investing in a joint boating venture, with the big ones of the ocean their target. But it's now down to football fitness as the West Coasters step up their pre-season training, with the Big One at the end of winter their target.



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Summertime footy gossip

with **KIM HAGDORN** reporting from Ascot

The partying is nearly over . . .

PERTH Cup race day has notoriously become a summer-time reunion for footballers.

Many of the State's leading AFL and WAFL players gather at beautiful Ascot Racecourse for the biggest day on the turf scene; it's the turning point in the off-season period for the players.

In the midst of the only real break from their rigorous summer programme, players are known to let their hair down in no uncertain manner.

This year's Perth Cup on New Year's Day was no exception.

Leading West Coast Eagles players, Eastern States-based AFL players and local footballers mingled as one big happy sporting fraternity.

Eagles forward Karl Langdon was a winner on the day and 1991 club champion Craig Turley won the "incognito" award for the day with a casual outfit that hid his true identity, enabling rela-

tively free access through the huge 32,000-strong crowd.

Turley, rivalled only by Chris Lewis and Chris Mainwaring, is perhaps the most recognised Eagles star.

Some of the other football personalities spotted trying to earn a quick dollar on Perth Cup day included Peter Sumich, Dwayne Lamb, Alex Ishchenko, Michael Christian, Darren O'Brien, Mike and Steve Richardson,

Earl Spalding, David Bain and Mark Zanotti.

And, as usual, Eagles football manager Trevor Nisbett was there to keep a watchful eye on the club's prized commodities

Or maybe he was taking the opportunity to see if any of the boys back home on holidays from the East might be interested in a more permanent return . . .

Unhappy Bulldog

DISGRUNTLED South Fremantle ruckman Richard Graham could be the first Bulldog to re-unite with his old coach Stan Magro, now at East Perth.

Injury and an abundance of big men at Souths restricted Graham (22) to just two senior games in 1991, taking his career total to 32.

He would be an asset to the Royals, who relied heavily on part-time Eagles big man Ryan Turnbull to carry ruck duties almost single-handedly last season.

Graham is a player with huge potential, but he hasn't gone on with a promising start back in 1987. Maybe the challenge of a change of environment could be just what he needs.

Russian's new chance

FORMER West Coast Eagles big man Alex Ishchenko could be headed back into AFL ranks, despite announcing his retirement at the end of the 1991 season.

Ishchenko, who completed the season as a member of Brisbane's premiership reserves combination, is tipped to enter the March AFL draft . . . and is reportedly in North Melbourne's sights.

Ishchenko, who was restricted to just nine senior games with the Bears last season because of recurring knee troubles, would be a valuable asset to North's undermanned following department.

North rely heavily on Michael Gallagher to carry the big man duties and back-up ruck support is a priority.

Ishchenko is willing to consider a move to continue his AFL career, but is firm in his conviction only to play with a Melbourne club, where the softer grounds will help him survive. The pioneering Eagle has made 72 senior appearances, but is handicapped by nagging knee and leg complaints.

Ishchenko, who runs a security business on the Gold Coast, has also been linked with a possible move to Canberra.

He is understood to be a candidate to win appointment to the ACT National League as general manager.



Alex Ishchenko ... a March draft candidate.

Mixing it with the best at the Hopman Cup



The recent Hopman Cup by Swan Gold teams tournament at the Burswood Superdome featured more than just some of the world's top tennis players.

Eagles stars Dwayne Lamb and Guy McKenna were invited to represent the West Coasters in a special Hopman Cup celebrity clash with Wildcats basketball stars Mike Ellis and Eric Watterson.

The Eagles duo took to the centre court with their flashing racquets and after squandering a massive lead, managed to just squeeze home in front of the bouncing basketballers.

Eagles tennis stars Guy McKenna and Dwayne Lamb warm up before their celebrity appearance. The winners are pictured on the right 'toasting' their rivals after the tussle.



Road to recovery

CARLTON utility player Stephen Edgar received some good news just before the Christmas break.

The former East Fremantle half-back was adamant that his troublesome groin injury required surgery, despite the more educated opinions of medics.

Edgar persuaded doctors to perform surgery and it was revealed that after 12 months of recurring muscle tears, he, in fact, had a large hernia lump in his groin.

The tissue has been removed and Edgar is now expected back in full training within three weeks.

Edgar's constant groin traumas have restricted him to just 14 league games in two seasons since joining the Blues via the 1989 national draft.

With renewed enthusiasm after the successful operation and the air of expectancy around Princes Park,

with the recruitment of Australia's premier centremen Greg Williams, Edgar is now set to make an impact on the national league.

Breman setback

RICHMOND and former Eagles utility player Todd Breman has overcome a debilitating blood disorder and is ready to resume full training.

Breman, recruited to the Tigers after a brilliant finals series with Subiaco at full-forward, equalling a WAFL record with 10 goals in the preliminary final against Swan Districts, resumed with Richmond last Monday.

He is part of the ambitious recruiting campaign to lift the tradition-steeped Tigers back into the finals.

Along with another former Eagle in Stevan Jackson, Breman and talented Tiger Jeff Hogg could form one of the most formidable forward lines in the AFL.

Looking to the future . . .

A SPECIAL meeting of the eight WAFL club presidents this Friday will take a crucial look into the future of WA football.

High on the agenda will be discussion of a WA Football Commission report, which is expected to announce a \$40 million redevelopment of Subiaco Oval and make some hard-hitting suggestions about future locations of clubs.

The long-awaited extension of the State's football headquarters will increase the capacity of Subiaco Oval to about 60,000 fans.

It will also hasten the introduction of WA's second AFL club to complement the success of the West Coast Eagles, who have been great crowd-pullers.

The bulk of funding for the redevelopment will probably come from Government grants, but the football industry may have to borrow up to \$15 million.

The Commission is believed to have held discussions with several leading Perth business houses as prospective sponsors for the redevelopment — as cricket did at the WACA Ground.

Other items under consideration in-

Clubs face some tough decisions

By **KIM HAGDORN**

clude corporate sponsorship of two new clubs into the WAFL and the WAFC to release some of its direct control over football back to the clubs.

Up to five existing WAFL clubs face relocation under the WAFC's plan for the future.

Two new WAFL teams — from Kalgoorlie and the southern suburban corridor — could be introduced as early as 1993.

A team from the Kelmscott region could be invited to join the WAFL if Perth continue to resist overtures from the Commission to relocate into the southern suburbs.

Perth's board of management gave members an undertaking last year that the club would retain Lathlain Park as its home ground for at least another 10 years.

The proud Demons rallied by raising \$170,000 for the Demons Plight fund, helping put the club on the path to financial recovery.

Tradition-steeped East Fremantle and arch Port rivals South Fremantle, the financially-sound Subiaco and West Perth are also on the Commission's list for relocation.

Under the radical proposals, East Fremantle will be expected to eventually operate from the Willetton district and South Fremantle to be based in Rockingham.

Subiaco, who just last season negoti-

ated a deal with the Subiaco City Council to remain at League headquarters till the year 2011, will be expected to move into the Warwick district.

West Perth have already agreed to move to Joondalup.

However, the Falcons have made it clear they will not move till the development of a modern new sporting complex in Joondalup is completed and capable of staging league football.

The latest report on future directions for WA football is certain to meet with staunch opposition from local clubs and leading football authorities.

If the Commission insists on implementing its recommendations, at a time when local football has a real identity crisis with the success of the national league, a number of leading club officials are sure to turn their backs on the sport.

The WA Football Commission is already facing pressure for change from the WAFL clubs. Seven of the eight clubs recently supported a motion seeking a restructure of the WAFC and calling for clubs to retain tighter control on the workings of the Commission.

Handley ready for challenge

FOOTBALL is a whole new ball game for Steven Handley now that he has moved to Geelong. The man who snared a place in local folklore in just one senior season has accepted his AFL call-up — with no hard feelings about the West.

The affable big man became the first player to be sent off under the WAFL's controversial rule when he incurred the wrath of field umpire Phil O'Reilly in the qualifying final at Subiaco Oval.

"It's something that happened and I now just want to put it behind me," says Handley, who has resumed back at Geelong after Christmas home in Perth.

Handley (21) charged into a pack of players where, unfortunately, Lions forward Andrew Macnish was just arising and copped a body blow that looked far worse on TV than it really was.

By **ALAN EAST**

The incident came less than a minute after the normally-docile Handley had received some unkind treatment to his groin area and his humour wasn't the best.

But, as TV commentators crucified the rookie and O'Reilly reacted instinctively — but outside the rules, as it eventuated — Handley received his marching orders.

"But I've got no ill-feelings about what happened," he says from his new-found home down on Victoria's southern coast.

"The umpire did what he thought was correct and I pleaded guilty at the tribunal to a charge of unduly rough play.

"It really looked bad on TV, so I just had to cop the four-week sentence."

The continual TV replays of the incident will leave Handley in the limelight for some time to come — but he isn't worried about the reputation.

"It was something that happened on the spur of the moment and I certainly regret it," he says.

"But I have to put it behind me; I'm not going to dwell on it. Every player has something that they would rather forget. But the TV probably isn't going to help me forget it."

Handley, who played his junior football with Noranda, in East Perth's territory, went to Brisbane as a teenager and was part of the Bears camp for two years.

He played 20 reserves games with Brisbane and lined up with Southport, in the Queensland domestic competition, when he wasn't playing with the Bears.

He trained under Bears coaches Peter Knights, Paul Feltham and Norm Dare and also did a pre-season with current coach Robert Walls.

"I was prepared to stay in Perth for another season," says Handley. "Another year with Swans would have been good for my football, but the opportunity was there at Geelong, so I thought it best to take it now."

Handley has done some part-time work at the Geelong Football Club as he settles in, sharing accommodation with Cats star Billy Brownless and enjoying the early-season work with coach Malcolm Blight.



Steven Handley . . . a young footballer who still wears old-fashioned high-ankle boots — and determined to make a new name for himself

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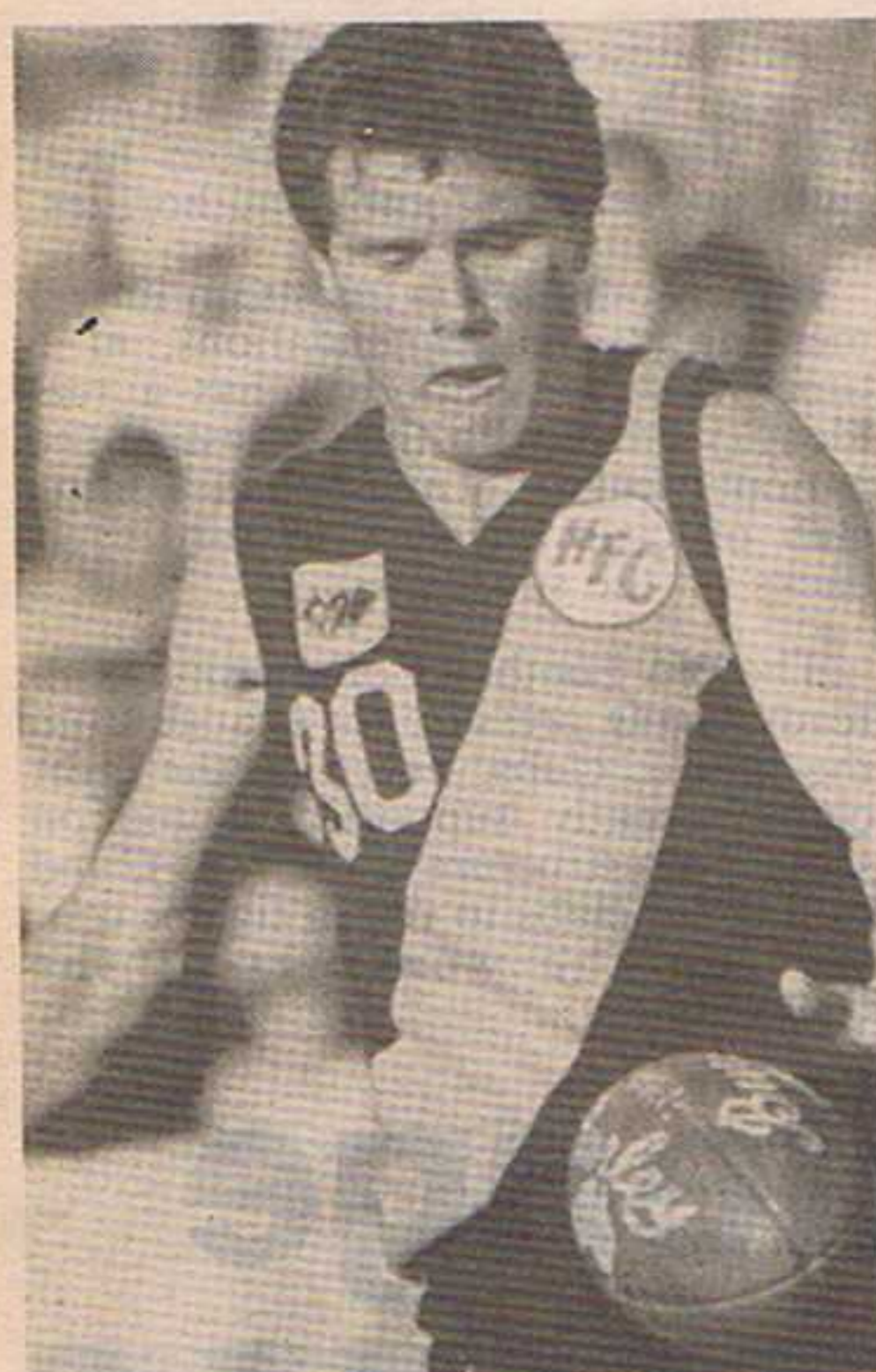


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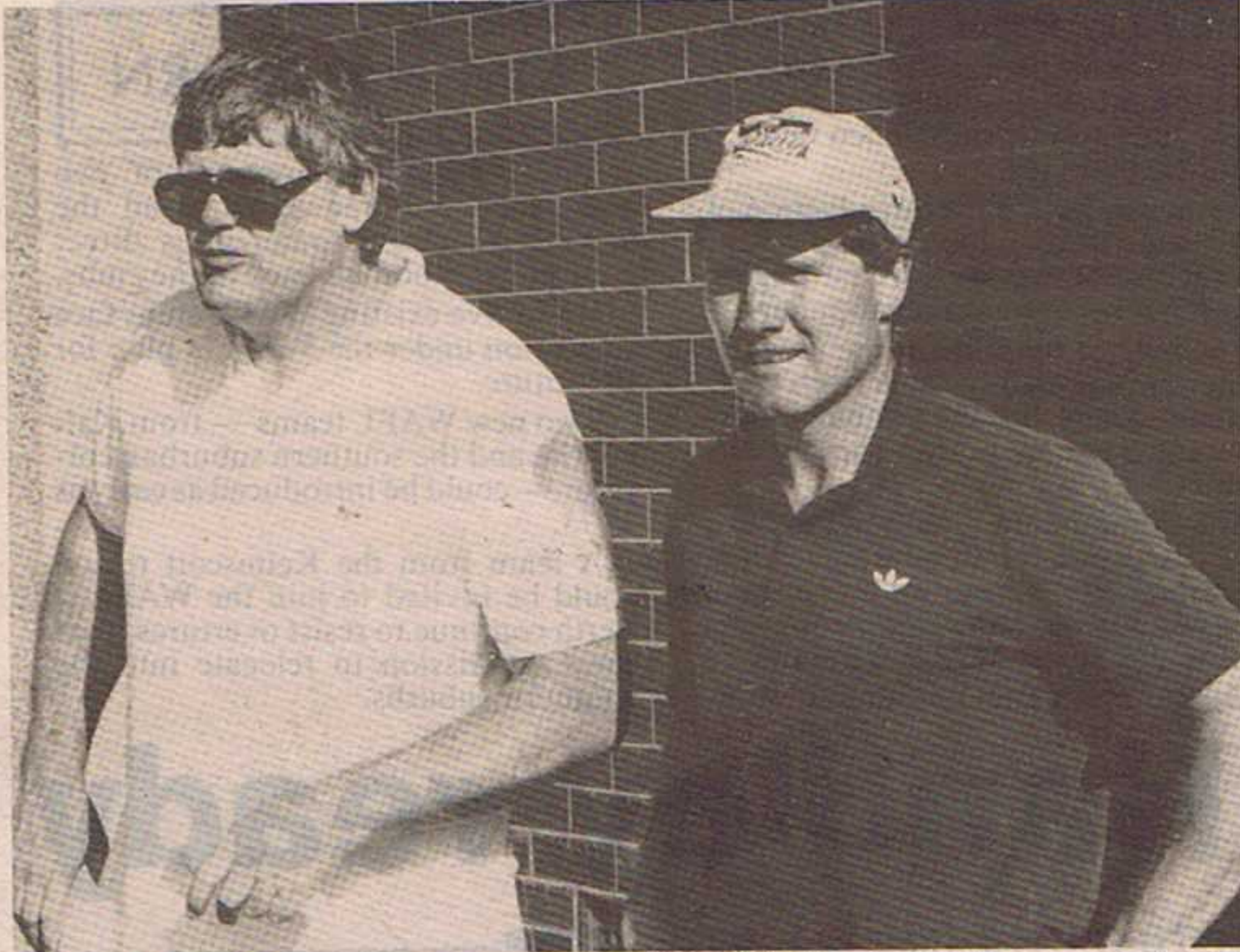
Now it's Mark Watson . . .



MARK WATSON . . . starting as a player with Claremont . . .



. . . winning a Sandover Medal with Perth . . .



. . . and now a coaching apprenticeship with Malcolm Brown at South Fremantle

SOUTH Fremantle assistant coach Mark Watson pulls no punches when he admits he is after coaching legend Mal Brown's job.

Watson will resume a long and amicable association with Brown at the Port this year and is straight to the point when he admits he has league coaching aspirations.

The 1987 Sandover Medallist stepped into the deep end at the trouble-riddled Souths to co-ordinate pre-Christmas training with his new club, while Brown was overseas on a three-month holiday.

Watson (31) hasn't ruled out the possibility of a return to playing league football with his third WAFL club.

The former Claremont and Perth rover is in pre-season training in case his services are required in the Bulldogs on-ball division.

"While Mal has been away, my playing future hasn't been discussed," he says.

RECRUITS

"I've been too busy trying to keep everything running smoothly and negotiating a few things with current players and possible recruits.

"But now that Malcolm has returned and we're getting closer to knowing where everybody stands, I guess we'll have a look at my position.

"It wouldn't be any real advantage to the club to have me playing. We have enough youngsters to do the on-ball and mid-field work.

"But every team needs experienced players on the ground and if we failed to have Wally Matera and Mark Collins back with us, my playing might take on a more serious aspect."

THE COACHING APPRENTICE

Watson likens the Bob Hawke-Paul Keating political association of the past decade, to his connection with Brown — but minus any back-stabbing bitterness.

Watson makes it clear that Brown is the boss and he is serving a coaching apprenticeship under one of WA's most respected football brains.

"Brownie and I go back a long way and it has always been one of mutual respect," Watson said.

"I have a great respect for Mal's coaching and if I am to make it as a coach myself, I couldn't think of anyone I'd rather learn from.

"We jokingly liken the Hawke-Keating leadership saga to our position.

"I call him Bob and he calls me Paul.

"Naturally in time I'd like to coach a league side and it makes sense that I serve an apprenticeship under Mal with a view to the future at Souths.

"It has been extremely easy to fit in at Souths. There is definitely a determined approach to turn around what was a disappointing time last season."

Watson's arrival at South Fremantle is ironic in a way. When he first moved to the city from country town Denmark in 1980, he wanted to join Brown at Souths. But under country zoning regulations, the skillful rover was forced to join Claremont.

When Brown took up the reins at Perth for the 1985 season, Watson left the Tigers and achieved his link with

his former coaching idol — albeit at the unlikely Lathlain Park headquarters.

The union culminated with Watson winning his Sandover Medal and he retired at the end of 1990, with 192 league games to his credit and a reputation as one of the fairest men to play the game.

Watson was lured into coaching with some astute words of advice from Brown. Amateur club North Fremantle had a bad start to the season, losing their coach early and Watson was persuaded to try his hand.

"When I retired at the end of '90, Brownie told me not to get lost to football and when the invitation from North Fremantle came out of the blue, I decided to give it a go," Watson recalled.

"It was challenging taking over a club hit with the troubles of losing a senior coach and not winning a game.

"I learnt a lot fairly quickly."

CONFIDENT

Typical of Brown's ever-present confident outlook on football and life in general, Watson is convinced Souths will resume a position of authority in WAFL ranks in 1992.

Brown's self-professed understudy is convinced the Bulldogs will make the final five.

"I'm not saying we're going to race back to the top of the ladder or anything rash like that," Watson said.

"But we will improve markedly on

last year. I'd be disappointed if we didn't finish in the top five.

"Early indications are that our fitness is up and we have a heap of good young kids at South.

"The club takes a reserves premiership from 1991 into the new season and that can only be of benefit to the promising youngsters in the club.

"The emergence of young, promising footballers means that some of the senior players, who have had a relatively comfortable existence, now face some pressure from below.

"The senior players will be aware that the axe can be wielded.

"What we're trying to establish at Souths this year is a competitiveness among the players.

"There needs to be healthy competition for places in the seniors; that is the mark of a successful club."

Watson draws the analogy of reigning premiers Claremont to support his call for stronger competition for league spots at Souths.

TRENDSETTERS

"Claremont have been the trendsetters under Gerard Neesham," Watson says.

"Gerard has the ability to develop a big squad of players capable of playing league football. That creates competition for positions in the team.

"That's what we need at South Fremantle."

Watson sees Claremont as again being the club to beat for the WAFL premiership and tips East Perth, under former Souths coach Stan Magro, as being a force.

He also expects East Fremantle to be a serious premiership contender after the club's first full pre-season under new coach Ken Judge.



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Members on outer

THE conflict that has arisen between the WA Football Commission and the traditions of the WAFL Members' Club is heading for a nasty show-down.

Basically, the Commission want to take over the facilities so long enjoyed by the Members' Club, who have access to everything that happens at Subiaco Oval, such as prime seating, nice bar facilities and very seldom a shortage of tickets.

WAFC financial director Jeff Ovens denies that the Commission wants to get rid of the Members' Club — he simply says better use must be made of their facilities.

As Ovens said: "It's important that these facilities be used right; we don't think they are being used to their best advantage at present."

Footy honours two stalwarts

FOOTBALL is full of its personalities and celebrities who constantly make the headlines.

But for every big name in the game, there are many workers behind the scenes.

Every year WA football honours its unsung heroes with special Volunteer Service Awards, from a variety of sectors of the industry.

Two long-standing servants of the game in Jim Hull, from the Great Southern Football League and Percy Garrett, from the Sunday Football League, were among this year's recipients.

Mr Hull has served the Tambellup Football Club and the Great Southern League for more than 30 years. He has handled almost every job possible, ranging from president, league delegate and committeeman, to marking the boundary line on Sundays before the first match of the day.

He has also served the GSFL and the old Central Great Southern League as president.

In recent years, Mr Hull has been a selector for the prestigious Wesfarmers All Stars country team.

He was awarded life membership of Tambellup in 1970 and the CGSFL in 1981. Up till 1990 he also found time to commentate Sunday league matches on Katanning's Radio 6WB.

LONG LINK

Mr Garrett's association with Sunday League football in Perth, incredibly, stretches back to 1924, when he started as a player.

He served as president of the Gosnells Football Club between 1951 and 1960 and between 1952 and '59 was president of the South Suburban League. He continued in the presidency chair till 1963 after the amalgamation of the South Suburban and Murray Leagues.

He has coached at both junior and senior levels for most of his life and in recent times, he has served as timekeeper for Gosnells.

Mr Garrett has been honoured with six life memberships — three in football, two in cricket and one in bowls, all in the Gosnells district.

Sharks in race for Hawk

FORMER Hawthorn premiership player Chris Wittman is considering a move to Perth and could play in the WAFL this season.

East Fremantle are leading the race to sign the talented rover.

Wittman, a member of Hawthorn's 1988 and '89 premiership teams, but overlooked for last year's premiership play-off with the West Coast, has had talks with Sharks coach Ken Judge.

Wittman, capable of roving or playing across the centre, would be a recruiting coup for the WAFL.

While Judge declined to comment on the possibility of the skilful follower joining East Fremantle, it is believed Wittman spent a weekend in Perth before Christmas.

East Fremantle, or any other WAFL club for that matter, would face a difficult task completing a deal to attract Wittman to the West.

Though he was overlooked for the grand final, he still managed 15 senior appearances with the Hawks, taking his career tally to 85 since making his debut in 1986.

He is considered a high-priority player with Hawthorn and held a lucrative contract in 1991.

An incentive in Wittman's move, however, is that his two brothers live and work in Perth.

He is believed to be anxious to move across and join them.

Royals get plenty of hints

THE flood of support from football fans to keep East Perth afloat produced a variety of donations — goods, cash, suggestions and simply good luck messages.

Some of the ideas that were forthcoming included a veritable suggestion box of promotional plans, including:

- * Special Royals pizzas
- * A regular Tuesday casino night at the Carlton Hotel (owned by club patron Rod Evans).
- * A lunch-time promotion at the elite Mediterranean Restaurant with mine host Vito Cecchini.

* A fund-raising dinner by the Brigades Football Club, in Geraldton.

* Breakfast workouts at Perth Oval with residential health experts, Aspire Fitness.

* A house-building project via the Loton's Club, East Perth's businessmen's arm.

* An Appealathon Trash-n-Treasure Sunday at Perth Oval.

* A huge drive to collect unwanted copper coins.

* A massive second-hand books sale.

* A special night at the Gloucester Park trots.

Cronan's challenge

MUCH-travelled football veteran Phil Cronan has taken a new turn in his career — a coaching role with amateur club, Mt Lawley.

Cronan has retired from senior ranks after 237 games at South Fremantle, West Perth, St Kilda, Footscray and Woodville.

He seems sure to continue his playing career as he leads from the front to help revive Mt Lawley in A-grade ranks.



LEFT: Country stalwart Jim Hull receives his Certificate of Recognition from WAFL football manager, John O'Connell. BELOW: Sunday Football League veteran Percy Garrett receives his Certificate from SFL's executive director Bill Wake



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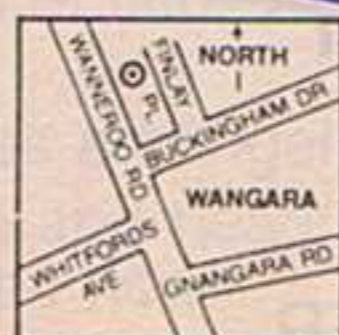
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DOWN ON THE FARM



John Crook and his wife Roma outside their farmhouse near Merredin

Rapid rise for rural rookie

FOOTBALL presents many change-of-circumstances for young men seeking their way in the sporting world.

But few would rank with the dramatic changes that John Crook faced in the months between the end of 1949 and early 1950.

Crook might not be a household name in today's football, with some four decades gone since his Perth playing days. But the family impact on the sport has been most impressive.

As a 21-year-old from the fairly remote wheatbelt siding of Nukarni, just outside Merredin, Crook was catapulted from country football to the interstate arena and capped a remarkable year with a premiership.

Crook stamped himself as a tough, no-nonsense defender with plenty of grit during his teenage years in the eastern wheatbelt area, earning selection in a combined side for the annual Northam country carnival.

He was spotted there by a South Fremantle talent scout and plucked out of his rural life and thrown into the Bulldogs league side for the opening match of 1950.

Ten games later he had earned selection in a star-studded West Australian side and found himself in Brisbane, competing in the 11th Australian championships.

"It was all a bit of a mystery to me," says Crook, now a 63-year-old farmer, still working his original family lands just outside Merredin.

"It was the first time I had left home.

"One year I was at the Northam country carnival, the next year I was playing with South Fremantle and WA.

"I mainly played as a half-back, but against Victoria, I was at centre-half-back on Fred Flanagan."

"It was a pretty tough trip, though. We didn't have much luck with injuries. I wasn't going too well, I had a pinched hip, a busted ankle, a poisoned hand and the flu . . . and I was one of the fit ones!

"We had a lot of players who were ill and I ended up in hospital straight after the game.

"It was a disastrous trip, if I told you everything that happened, I would be sued!"

Crook, the rookie, was the 'baby' of the team, but was in fairly illustrious company, even if the results were not complimentary, beating Tasmania and the VFA, but losing to Victoria and South Australia.

Stan Heal was captain-coach and the side boasted some of WA's all-time greats, including Sonny Maffina, Frank Sparrow, Les McClements, Bernie Naylor and Fred Buttsworth.

"We played on the Exhibition Ground in Brisbane and there wasn't a blade of grass on it," recalls Crook.

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Eagle talk

McKenna's midfield challenge

BRILLIANT West Coast Eagles half-back Guy McKenna has been advised to step up his pre-season training to prepare for a more full-time midfield role this season.

McKenna has earned a reputation as one of the most respected defenders in the AFL, but has been earmarked by Eagles coach Mick Malthouse to play in the centre.

When summer training resumed after Christmas, McKenna was elevated to join the group of players undergoing endurance training.

Those players are tackling an exhaustive schedule of endurance and stamina-building work and include the on-ball performers and centreliners, plus rovers Don Pyke and Trent Nichols.

McKenna, a former Eagles fairest-and-best winner and one of the most effective ball-gatherers in the game, shapes as an ideal midfielder.

His precise ball disposal and a cool, calculating approach across the half-back line was a regular feature of the Eagles run into last year's AFL grand final.

In recent years when the Eagles search for a centreman has turned to McKenna, he has seemed reluctant to take on the role.

Under former Eagles coach John Todd, McKenna was used sparingly in the middle, with limited success.

However, with experience on his side and the enormous respect he has established from within the Eagles camp and other AFL clubs, he now seems ripe for a more permanent midfield responsibility.

Wiley's new role

THE appointment of Eagles runner Rob Wiley as assistant coach has been welcomed by the players, who have enormous respect for the team's message man. Wiley, an inaugural Eagle after a distinguished playing career with Perth and Richmond, is expected to take a lot of the public pressure off coach Mick Malthouse. Wiley's previous role as coach of Perth gave him ample exposure to media demands.



Guy McKenna . . . being groomed for a midfield role



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Off the beaten track

with ALAN EAST



"It was the first time any of us had ever played under lights. There were no lights covering the middle of the ground, so you had to wait around as the ball came down to see where it bounced.

"And it was very muddy. Jim Conway was buried by Charlie Sutton in the middle at one stage and we thought he was drowning; we could only see his fingers moving around. It wasn't in my nature to be over-awed, but it was certainly a lasting impression to be in a WA side, along with some of the game's greats."

Crook found himself at Fremantle Oval courtesy of former Bulldog stalwart, Jack Murray, a tough, rugged centre-half-back who travelled to the Northam carnival at the end of the 1949 season and liked the way Crook played.

"I didn't play very well in the carnival and I told Jack that," says Crook.

"But he said 'well, of all the players I saw, you're the only one worth worrying about' so I was invited to Geraldton for Souths end-of-season trip.

"I decided to go down to Perth for the 1950 season. Most times I drove down on the Saturday and they used to call me the late John Crook because I sometimes didn't get into the ground till 20 past two.

"But they were marvellous times."

Crook's football career started soon after the war ended; a teenager tackling senior ranks on the rock-hard country grounds, where skinned knees were a regular part of the after-match treatments.

After attending the Northam High School, the 16-year-old Crook started with Burracoppin even though the family were living at nearby Nukarni, where they ran the trading store.

One of five brothers — Tom and Paddy were older, Joe and Bill younger — he joined the reformed Nukarni side and was joined by the others in the seniors about 1948, making it a family affair.

"I was the only one lucky enough to go to the city," says Crook.

"It was difficult because we all had to work on the farm. But I got the okay from the others.

"Initially, I went down for a month before the season, chasing a job. But that was hard, so I returned to the farm and travelled.

"I had an Austin A40 ute and I did a fair bit of buying for the store whenever I went down a day or so early."

He arrived in the middle of Souths golden era. They had won premierships in 1947 and '48 and added more flags in 1950, '52, '53 and '54.

Crook was only in that 1950 side — a star-studded team — as increasing farming duties forced him to retire midway through the 1952 year.

"I don't think I could have done much more than I did," he said. "Economically, it just wasn't possible to keep playing as the farm was expanding.

"That first year saw Clive Lewington as captain-coach; he was a fabulous man, a real influence on everyone.

"We won the grand final against Perth by six points.

"I had been lucky to go into such a great team. Winning a premiership and playing State football in the first year were added bonuses.

"Bernie Naylor and Steve Marsh were an unbelievable pair of footballers; they reacted to each other and the other players; Naylor was a real champion, with his leading and marking. He just led out and players put the ball on his chest. Laurie Green at centre-half-forward used to drop it on Naylor's chest without any effort. It used to go like a bullet.



John and Roma Crook look through some old football photographs

"I don't go down to Perth very often now, but I do like to get back for any team re-unions. We had one a couple of years ago at Fremantle Oval and that was tremendous."

Crook was a football addict and his brief flirtation with city success certainly didn't dampen his enthusiasm for the game.

He went on to play with Nukarni till he was 40 years old, retiring in 1968. With a start at 16 and retirement at 40, it was estimated that he played more than 400 games for Nukarni.

And it's that last game that he still remembers like it was yesterday.

"We were playing Bruce Rock in a semi-final and I got filled in and carried off at three-quarter time," he says.

"I busted a shoulder bone and got taken to hospital in Perth. I heard later that I had been named best-on-ground. I had often been knocked out before, but that was the worst injury I'd ever had; it finished me.

"The guys got up to win that game and then they beat Shackleton for me in the grand final."

Crook still follows the local football, but the Nukarni side of 1991 had to accept a runner's-up role in the Eastern Districts grand final, losing to Burracoppin even though they finished on top of the table.



"I felt I had been very lucky to go into such a great team. Winning a premiership and playing State football in the first year were added bonuses."



SOUTH FREMANTLE CROOK—

Played a slashing game on a half-back flank and was the pick of the side. He never made a mistake and safe marking, sound judgment and elusive turning enabled him to wreck many of Old East's advances while his disposal was always effective.



ABOVE: John Crook in the 1950 State team; a Football Budget reference to the young star and on his debut with South Fremantle



Tending to injured animals is a love of farm life for former Bulldogs star defender John Crook

Bulldogs star was an instant success

"I was team manager up to a couple of years ago," he says.

"I only tried coaching for one year, when we came second. I didn't like it much. Joe was the longest-serving coach in the club.

The Crook name is synonymous with Nukarni. With the five brothers making their mark a generation ago, a number of sons have graduated to the seniors. Nukarni recently celebrated its 100th year and the Crooks were part of the big celebrations.

"When we all got together, we drew up a full team of Crooks, what with the five of us and all of our children," he says.

Crook's three children all still live in the area — Andrew (29) and Stephen (33) help run the farm, while daughter Louie-Jane (35) is married and living in Merredin.

Andrew made two Wesfarmers country All-Stars sides, but didn't go to the city. He is still playing and has coaching aspirations, while Stephen retired about four years ago.

"I guess I played for so long because I enjoyed the game," says Crook.

"It really was a game for love, we didn't even have stops on our boots, we had to put these special bars onto our shoes to make our own stops; spriggs would have hurt our feet too much on the hard country grounds.

"I didn't like being beaten; I always played hard and tough, but fair."

"Derbies were great, I loved them, I always seemed to play well in those games."



EMU EXPORT

.... how about you?



Thinking aloud

A column of news and views by ALAN EAST

It's such a little word

Powerful role for lawyer

THE most powerful man in Australian football — that could well be the position Melbourne barrister Sandy Robertson now finds himself in this year.

He has been handed the special investigations role from the AFL to keep track of player payments and salary caps.

Robertson has permission to seek access to the taxation returns and bank accounts of players as the AFL switches the onus of player-payment proof on to the players and their clubs.

AFL clubs currently have a salary cap of \$1.6 million and with fines of up to \$10,000 for breaches, the clubs are certainly going to be wary of telephone calls from Mr Robertson.

New Tigers shape up

RICHMOND fans will certainly be watching the 1992 form of ruckman Steve O'Dwyer, recruited from Melbourne, where he lived in the shadow of Brownlow Medallist Jim Stynes.

He is reportedly set to earn between \$45,000 and \$60,000 a year, depending on his form and with a signing-on fee of around \$50,000, he is the Tigers most expensive recruit.

Life is fairly bubbling at Punt Road, with West Aussies Earl Spalding (from Melbourne) and Eagles discards, Stevan Jackson and Todd Breman settling in quickly under new coach, Allan Jeans.

THOSE of us who are close to the workings of our local football clubs, can't help wondering at times what is their 'real' relationship with the media in this town.

While the two groups don't always see eye-to-eye, they do need each other, especially the eight WAFL clubs who are struggling to get their share of space in the print media or on the electronic airwaves.

A survey of the eight annual reports from the WAFL clubs reveals not ONE mention of the role played by the WA media in season 1991.

There are countless lists of thank-yous for everyone from the club patron and president down to the gate-keeper, the door-keeper and the book-keeper.

The ladies get thanked, the juniors get their tributes, the life members their accolades, the honorary auditors, accountants, fund-raisers and whatever all get their thanks.

But the media? Not on your life! Not even a mention of the role played by the many newspaper and electronic people who work hard for the benefit of the clubs — not always getting paid, either — to make sure the game is presented to the public every which way that's possible.

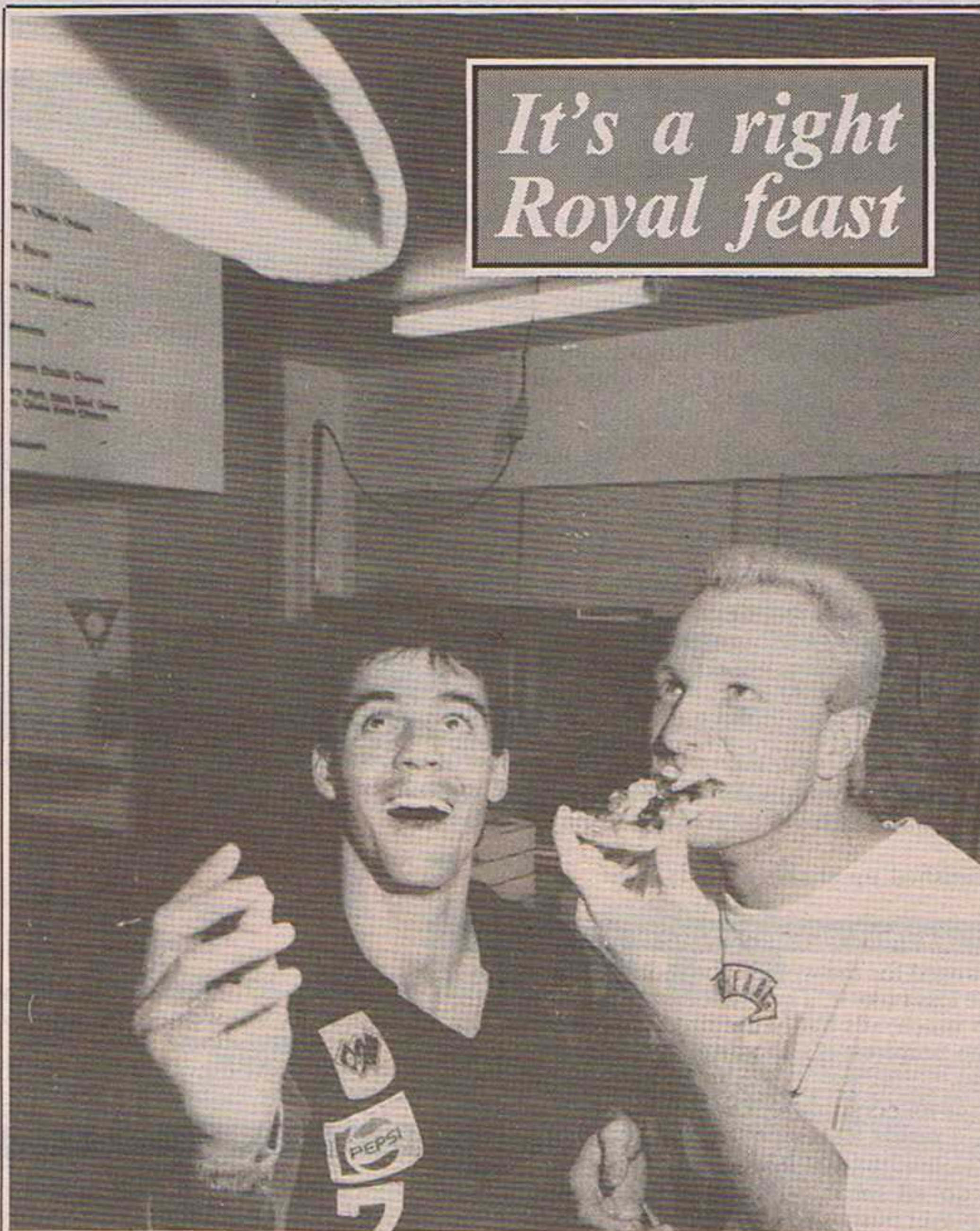
Even those WAFL clubs who 'borrowed' photographs from Westside Football to publish in their annual reports, forgot to say thanks!

Cometti's mark

DON'T let anyone tell you that football's silky-smooth voice of Dennis Cometti hasn't left its mark around town.

The one-time disc jockey turned West Perth player and coach is now recognised as the nation's leading TV commentator, giving Channel Seven a huge smile to base their promos on.

Well, a recent radio quiz question wanted to know who had kicked the most goals in VFL/AFL finals matches and one of the many answers was Dennis Cometti.



TALK about eating your way out of trouble.

The Royals have found plenty of good supporters in their quest for survival, including a local pizza parlour, who have named a new concoction in honour of their favourite football team.

Domino's Pizza — who had a sign up at Subiaco Oval all last season saying 'we're coming soon' — have finally

opened the first of their many franchise stores in Maylands and kicked off with a Royals feast.

Every Royals Pizza bought by customers will see a dollar go into East Perth's fund-raising bin.

That's Eagles forward Karl Langdon tucking into a feed of pizza, while Royals star George Giannakis tries his hand at tossing the dough around

Operations were spread around

NOW that the eight WAFL clubs are back in training after a Christmas hiatus, many footballers are still undergoing the painstakingly slow process of recuperation after a stint on the operating table.

Pre-season is a time of new enthusiasm for some and rehabilitation for others.

Swan Districts utility player Shaun Davey is progressing well after a knee reconstruction a month ago and is expected back in training by the end of January.

Sandover Medal runner-up, Phil Narkle, has had his tonsils removed, as has West Perth's Darren O'Brien — just one of several operations for the Falcons centreman, who also had a knee scraped and bone chips removed from an ankle.

His West Perth teammate and Eagles member Dean Laidley has had further surgery on his troublesome knee, hopefully his last.

South Fremantle's Dean Nalder and Robert Solin have also been in the hands of the surgeon, as have a number of the their Port rivals at East Fremantle.

Sharks Jon Derecourt and Glen Davies have had groin injuries attended to, while Clinton Browning had his knee scraped.

East Fremantle's Glen Symonds has had a knee cartilage repaired and a slight tear in ruckman Lance Durack's Achilles tendon has also come under attention.

Perth pair Mick Hanley and Russell Thomson have been on the operating table for groin and knee surgery respectively.

Kickin' around

with TANLA ARMSTRONG



Gieschen bonus

NEW West Perth coach and former Footscray player Jeff Gieschen has arrived in Perth with an air of expectancy surrounding him — plus a bonus recruit.

Gieschen, who has spent recent seasons coaching in country Victoria, has taken up residence in Carine, as well as bringing a promising recruit to the West.

Former Wodonga player Darren Harris has followed his coach to Leederville and will give the Falcons roving department new depth.

Harris will combine with Eagles squad member Robbie West, a former Wodonga team-mate.

Junior recovers

EXCITING Claremont junior Daniel Southern will be back in action this season after spending 1991 on the sidelines.

The 16-year-old former State schoolboy has undergone knee surgery and will be eager to play his way into this year's Teal Cup squad.

Comeback trail

CLAREMONT premiership player of 1989, defender Peter Owens, is on the comeback trail, which is a relief for the draft-stricken Tigers.

Owens (26) played only two games last season before a crippling knee which required surgery and curtailed his season.

A seasoned defender with 67 games experience, Owens would be a welcome addition to the side which will be laden with newcomers to league football.

Hodyl on move

FORMER Swan Districts skipper Peter Hodyl will leave the club that he first called home back in 1983, when he joins Avon Football Association side Quairading.

Hodyl (29) will play out his career with the country side alongside former West Perth and East Perth player Sean King.

Rookies impress

IT hasn't taken WA recruits Marcus Seecamp and Jeremy Guard long to impress Fitzroy coach Robert Shaw. The pair have been solid workers at Fitzroy's summer training sessions and Seecamp, especially, is keen to prove the West Coast Eagles wrong in overlooking him. "I feel there is a spot on the half-back line for me at Fitzroy," he says.

**A week
in the
life
of ...**

**Summer
break
heralded
wedding
bells**

Adrian Barich

TUESDAY

New Year's Eve is a family get-together at my parent's place in Applecross. My sister, Felicity, who lives and works in Milan, in Italy, came over for my recent wedding, so we are trying to spend as much time together as we can.

We all sat around and reviewed the year of 1991, a year that went pretty well for me. I played seven games for the Eagles, Perth made the finals, I'm happy with my job at Social Security and I capped off the year with my marriage to Jenny.

We all made our New Year's resolutions and mine is to make a 100 percent effort at being a good husband!

WEDNESDAY

New Year's Day is spent at the Ascot races for a big Perth Cup day gathering with friends and teammates. A few of the boys had a tent and we caught up with some former Eagles such as Alex Ishchenko, David O'Connell, Mark Zanotti and Peter Davidson, as well as some opponents in Earl Spalding and Steve Da Rui.

I had a few bets on the main race and most of my money was on Ideal Centreman, of course — which didn't come in and I sure hope that's not an omen for the season.

Jenny had her money on the winner Mirror Magic, so the household did alright. My former coach Mal Brown sent a telegram to Jenny at our wedding, which read: "I hope you get some use of the mirror at your house" so she thought she liked the sound of Mirror Magic.

After an 8.30pm finish at Ascot, Jenny and I headed to Northbridge for a meal at Uncle Vincent's, with her parents — my new in-laws.

THURSDAY

After a big New Year's Day I had a lie in and got up around 10am. There's still no work for me, as I'm

As told to TANIA ARMSTRONG

on holidays after our honeymoon in Nusa Dua, in Indonesia.

We live in Northbridge, so we walked down to the Lake Street Cafe for breakfast. Then we spent the morning unwrapping and putting away our wedding presents, as we hadn't had a chance to do so after only getting home on Sunday.

At 4 o'clock I joined my 13-year-old brother Anthony at the cricket nets for a hit. He goes to Aquinas College and wanted to test out his new bat (which he bought at Miller's Sports, of course — you've got to keep in good with the selectors!)

Jenny's brother Paul got his TEE results back today and he got into University, so we went out for a little celebration.

FRIDAY

Jenny and I went to the photographers and had a look at how we scrubbed up in our wedding photos. We had some taken on the beach at Cottesloe. It was a bit windy, but they turned out really well, so we were happy.

We then had a hit of tennis at some courts close to home in North Perth.

At 4 o'clock we went to Jenny's mum's place in Wembley for a post-wedding get-together with her side of the family.

SATURDAY

Started the day with a bit of exercise and went for a 5km run in the morning. I'm just easing into running and it was one of the first since a post-season hernia operation.

Went to North Cottesloe, the regular beach spot, with Jenny, my brother and sister for a swim.

Had dinner at Uncle Vincent's, one of our favourite spots, before kicking on to the Arcadia Hotel.



Newly-weds Adrian and Jenny Barich unpack some of their wedding presents ... and look more-than-happy with life on the balcony of their Northbridge apartment



SUNDAY

My brother Anthony turned 14 so we went to the folk's house for a birthday bash.

The whole family then headed to North Cottesloe for a laze on the beach and Jenny and I went on to the Cottesloe Hotel for the Sunday session.

A group of us followed that with a dinner at Mario's Reef and Beef in Northbridge.

MONDAY

Went for another run to get in the mood for Wednesday afternoon when the Eagles squad will re-assemble for full-on training.

Did a bit of work around the house and caught up on a bit of reading before venturing to the beach once again.

Another family get-together over dinner was the go at night, as Felicity is heading back to Italy tomorrow and we had to give her a proper send-off.

WESTSIDE Football

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS PUBLICATION

*Publisher/Editor: ALAN EAST
Advertising manager: WILL BUTUN
OFFICE: Community Newspapers
120 Roe Street, Perth, WA 6000
PHONE: Editorial, Advertising
and Distribution 227 6722
FAX No. 227 6440/227 9487*

*Correspondence:
PO BOX 119, Northbridge, WA 6865*

*Printed by Colourpress
Briggs Street, Victoria Park
Distributed by WA Newspapers
54 Hasler Road, Herdsman Business Park
For Subscriptions or Home Deliveries
PHONE: 227 6722*

*or write to:
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SUMMER DIARY

Did you miss this...

DECEMBER 9: East Perth's Crisis Campaign received a last-minute boost when \$22,000 in raffle ticket sales pushed their appeal tally up to \$91,000.

DECEMBER 10: Essendon veteran Tim Watson announced his retirement after 15 years of senior football, with 282 games for the Bombers. EAST Fremantle joined other WAFL clubs in calling for a restructure of the WAFC. The Sharks recorded a profit of almost \$5000, helped by a debt-reduction grant of \$12,000 from the WAFC.

DECEMBER 11: Subiaco posted a healthy profit of almost \$52,000, a slight increase on the previous year. Directors Peter Metropolis and Ian Brown were elected to the board, along with retiring member, Brian Warren. Lions members voted in favour of a motion to restructure the WAFC, along the lines of the South Australian National Football League.

DECEMBER 12: Former Perth champion player and coach Robert Wiley was named assistant coach to Eagles mentor, Mick Malthouse. Wiley will combine the role with his current duties of league team runner. The Eagles also named Glen Stewart as their

weights coach. SWAN Districts joined other WAFL clubs in carrying a motion calling for the restructure of the WA Football Commission. Swans also asked for the WAFC to be expanded to nine Commissioners, allowing four club presidents to join on a rotational basis. Swans reported a profit of \$10,787, with John Farris and Steve Gillespie re-elected to the board, along with new director Alan Raynor.

DECEMBER 13: Reigning AFL premiers Hawthorn made the long-awaited announcement that Gary Ayres (31) would captain the side next season with the retirement of Michael Tuck.

DECEMBER 15: East Perth and Perth were having renewed talks about the possibility of a merger to form one city-based club.

DECEMBER 16: The WAFC says they are not pushing Perth and East Perth into a merger situation, but conceded that one city team would suit their future plans, with a new side entering the WAFL, based in the Kelmscott region. PERTH joined other WAFL clubs in a call for the restructuring of the WAFC. Former player Greg Brehaut won election to the board, with Pat Astone, Vince Pental and Pe-

ter Brophy re-elected. THE Adelaide Crows reported a profit of almost \$800,000 for their inaugural year in the AFL.

DECEMBER 17: The Sunday Football League has expanded its Metropolitan Football League competition with the addition of Mandurah and Belmont, making it a 12-team competition next season.

DECEMBER 18: North Melbourne rejected suggestions that they would merge with Carlton, who had obtained shares in the Roos public company through some associated businessmen.

DECEMBER 19: East Perth's future will depend on the outcome of a meeting between the club's board of directors and the WAFC, with the likelihood of a caretaker manager being put in place. The Royals board of directors agreed to resign, but that was deferred till agreement with the Commission

was finalised. FITZROY members were told that the club still owes \$772,000 to creditors.

DECEMBER 21: Subiaco's 1991 Sandover Medallist Ian Dargie was devastated at news from the West Coast Eagles that he had been axed off the club's list.

DECEMBER 22: Former Sydney Swans centreman Greg Williams, who has switched to Carlton for this year, is being investigated by the AFL's special officer over alleged breaches of the salary cap.

JANUARY 4: Eagles skipper John Worsfold is recovering from a groin operation which will keep him out of the West Coast's Foster's Cup clash with Collingwood on February 9. Forwards Karl Langdon and Peter Wilson are also recovering from foot operations.

JANUARY 5: The challenge to the AFL draft by young Norwood ruckman Brett Cook has been withdrawn.

JANUARY 6: New West Perth coach Jeff Gieschen arrived back in Perth to settle, bringing with him a surprise recruit in rover Darren Harris, from Wodonga.



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Ian Dargie ... axed from the Eagles.

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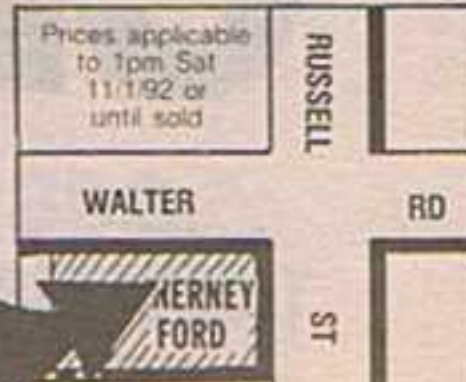
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What's happening in sport

SUMMER sporting activities in Perth are many and varied — and football fans indulge in a host of alternative activities. Masters Dairy present this round-up of prominent events over coming weeks.

SPEEDWAY

Friday: Healthways Claremont Speedway — Western Australia versus United States sprint car series.

BASEBALL

The Perth Heat return to Parry Field next Wednesday to play Melbourne, followed by a double-header on Thursday. The State Super League continues on Friday with Aces v Boomers (6.30pm) and Hornets v Firebirds (9pm). Friday, January 17 sees Boomers v Hornets (6.30pm) and Scorpions v Aces (9pm).

CRICKET

Sheffield Shield — WA v Tasmania, starts at the WACA Ground this Friday. National under-19s championship, various venues, from January 13 to 24.

WACA fixtures (round nine) start this Saturday (home club first): Willetton v University; Fremantle v Scarborough; Melville v North Perth; Claremont-Nedlands v Bayswater-Morley; Midland-Guildford v Gosnells; South Perth v Perth; Wanneroo v Mt Lawley; Subiaco-Floreat bye.

TRIATHLON

Cottesloe Quit Triathlon, Cottesloe Beach, 8am Sunday, January 19

YACHTING

International yachting comes to Perth early in the New Year with the world tornado championships at Jervois Bay, from January 10 to 20 and the Australia Cup at the Royal Perth Yacht Club, from January 25 to February 2.

The 34th State Pelican championships start at the South of Perth Yacht Club from Sunday through to Friday.

GREYHOUNDS

Thursday, January 23: Heats of the Cannington Gold Cup, Cannington Raceway

TENNIS

City of Fremantle championships, January 25-27

Footy books you should have in your library

Bonus buy

THE annual grand final Football Budget produced for the WA Football League is a magnificent review of the 1991 season.

The 84-page glossy four-colour publication has a summary of each WAFL club; a look back on the year that was; a glance into the future with WA's best rookies and a tribute to the veterans of the game.

It is full of facts and figures relating to the local competition, with the statistical section covering the Sandover Medal — including all the voting in the Sandover, Prendergast and Medallists Medals — previous grand final results and premierships teams and all the goalcorers for the WAFL season.

As a bonus for Westside Football readers, anyone who purchases a copy of Eagles for the Flag (at the discounted price of \$5, including postage) can receive a copy of the Football Budget for an extra \$2.

Send this coupon off to Australian Sports Publications, PO Box 58, North Perth, WA, 6006 and add both publications to your library.

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Christmas, that time for giving gifts, might be passed; but that's no reason to leave your sporting library short of some of the excellent publications that are available. This edition, Westside Football looks at some of the books on the market.

So near . . . yet so far

THE West Coast Eagles made a gallant bid to win last season's AFL premiership and almost went all the way — going down to Hawthorn in the premiership play-off.

While that defeat still hurts, there were many good features of last year's football season, with the Eagles triumphant march through to the grand final at Waverley leaving many pleasant memories.

Those highlights are captured in a magnificent book, Eagles for the Flag, which was published during last year's finals series and incorporates some great reading and outstanding colour photographs.

Produced in Perth, the 100-page glossy publication profiles all of the Eagles squad and has feature articles on coach Mick Malthouse and his wife Nanette; the Brownlow Medal and its national significance; behind-the-scenes stories on the Eagles at work; how the recruiting programme works and how the players enjoy themselves.

Many of the leading players are profiled in depth and you can discover what Peter Sumich thinks about his kicking style, how John Worsfold sees his image as a tough guy, how Craig Turley handles all the media hype and why Karl Langdon plays the way he does.

Melbourne football journalist Jim Main takes an interesting look at Malthouse, the man he watched play for Richmond and now coaches one of

Eagles for the Flag, published by Australian Sports Publications, PO Box 58, North Perth, WA 6006. Available by mail order only at a discounted price of \$5 incl. postage.

the most exciting teams in the expanded national league. There is certainly mixed feelings in Victoria about Malthouse, especially with his defection to the West.

But he has quickly become a hero in WA and he has given the Eagles that touch of Victorian strength needed to succeed.

Westside winners

Rhonda Taylor, of Manjimup and Neville Redmond, of Balga, were winners of The Magnificent Seven book contest in our last edition of Westside Football. Their entries correctly named South Fremantle as the club that produced three of the Magnificent Seven Eagles players.

Winners of Westside's Hopman Cup by Swan Gold competition were Mrs H. Mediale, of St James and L. Twohill, of Kingsley. They correctly named Germany as top seeds for this year's Hopman Cup at the Burswood Superdome.

On the East Coast

with **KEN PIESSE**

Puzzle for two big men

THE drawn-out and not-very-private deliberations over whether Paul Salmon would join the Brisbane Bears or stay with Essendon had an immediate bearing on the 1992 destinations of two other top-line AFL ruckmen.

His Essendon teammate Peter Somerville, yet to sign for '92, and Fitzroy veteran Matt Rendell, drafted to the Bears, were waiting on Salmon before making a commitment.

If Salmon had gone to the Gold Coast — on a reported salary that would have been more than the Prime Minister's, \$105,000-plus — Somerville would have stayed at Windy Hill and Rendell would either stay in retirement in Melbourne or return to Adelaide.

However, once Salmon decided to stay, Somerville and Rendell had to make their decisions.

Rendell has opted to try a revival campaign with the Bears, while Somerville is likely to look around for a new home.

Bucky looks fit again

FORMER Subiaco and Hawthorn champion Gary Buckenara isn't talking comebacks — just yet.

But he's definitely losing a little of that tummy flab as he leads from the front in Sydney's attempt to bridge the gap with the best teams from Melbourne.

Bucky has made regular trips to Melbourne checking on the fitness of several of his Victorian-based players.

His former Hawthorn teammate and close friend, Jason Dunstall, says Bucky is almost back to his best playing weight.

Dunstall's target

JASON Dunstall has declared that if he plays every game in 1992, he will kick 100 goals.

"If I don't, I'll have only my own form to blame," he says, in between hectic training sessions centred on improving his strength and speed off the mark after ankle problems in 1991.

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Costly reminder

HIGH-priced Greg Williams couldn't resist a gentle dig at the Carlton hierarchy after terms were agreed for his return to Melbourne.

"I reminded them it would have been cheaper had they kept me," he said, referring to his previous axing in 1981-82, when the Blues twice told him he was too slow for League football.

Williams is said to be on almost \$200,000 a year.

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Diary of a few nervous days

THE international clash with three of America's leading sprint car drivers is a highlight of this Friday night's programme at the Healthways Claremont Speedway.

It is the third night of the clash with WA's top drivers — but it wasn't an easy production to put on stage.

A series of frustrating delays forced a postponement before last weekend's debut at Claremont and Bunbury, but the determination of the speedway fraternity saw out in the end.

The cars and spares inventory were originally scheduled to arrive in Perth on December 26, giving the crews plenty of time to assemble everything before the January 3 race date.

When the initial delay was announced, December 31 was set for their arrival — and things started to get anxious when that date was also cancelled.

Due to a mix-up in Fremantle Harbour, the ship carrying the cars was unable to dock by December 31 and so the date was again postponed.

With the race date drawing ominously near, it was revealed that the cars would arrive on the morning of January 3 — the day of the racing, giving the crews just seven hours to make-ready three sprint cars.

It was the morning of January 3 when the unthinkable happened . . .

The cars would not be unloaded till the morning after, thereby extending an appearance at Bunbury's Speedway by one day as well, pushing them back to Sunday night.

A State-wide media campaign was immediately launched to alert the speedway public that the meeting had been postponed and the staff and drivers crossed their fingers for confirmation of the Saturday morning arrival.



Unhappy ending for Garry Sartori as he is unfolded from the fence.

It was 10.30am on Saturday, January 4 when the 12-metre container carrying the cars, the spares inventory and the hopes of the speedway public rolled into the Claremont Showgrounds to be unloaded.

American crews worked side by side with rival Australians in a special task force set up to aid in the assembly of the three race cars.

Feverish activity in the Pits resulted in the first two cars (those of Bill Bailey and team captain Fran Hogue) being completed within two hours. But the Jimmy Martin car required more work than the others.

But, in the end, it all came together in true speedway style.



Them and us . . . the container is unloaded and the feverish work begins for the Americans. BELOW: The impressive line-up of WA cars in the Claremont pits



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The speedway show rolls on

A GREAT deal of dust has flown around the track since the hurly-burly days of 1927, when Claremont Speedway first introduced the world to the sport of dirt track motorcycle racing.

Massive advances in technology, professionalism and overall crowd enthusiasm have played an integral part in the establishment of speedway as an exciting spectator medium.

Claremont Speedway promotions officer WADE AUNGER looks at a challenge that is met in traditional speedway style

As speedway forges steadily into the 1990's, even in the face of almost complete media ignorance, one has little time to ponder what has been the driv-

ing force behind the growth and re-growth of the sport.

However, having worked alongside managing director Con Migro in the Healthways Claremont Speedway office for the last five months, I may have found the secret to speedway's "fountain of youth."

What I have discovered is hardly startling.

Every year Claremont Speedway hosts the WA Sprintcar Speedweek, boasting a three-man team of crack American sprintcar hot-shots as the feature attraction.

However, this particular year has been a series of heartaches, disappointments and frustrations for the organisers — Healthways Claremont Speedway and Bunbury City Speedway — with the fully-imported American cars being involved in a shipping delay.

Throughout all the confusion, the frustration and the uncertainty, the Healthways Claremont Speedway juggernaut rolled on. Never, for one instant, was there any concession that the WA speedway spectator fraternity would not see the show they had so patiently waited for.

Though it's a painfully-overused adage, "The show must go on" was the theme of the operation and when the USA sprintcar team cars rolled onto the hallowed dirt of the Claremont



Show grounds last Friday night, a big group of exhausted people breathed a collective sigh of relief.

It is situations like this — and the tough decision to leave the financial shelter of the tobacco giant Winfield for the Health Promotion Foundation because of Government legislation banning cigarette advertising — that bring out the best in Migro and his dedicated speedway team.

The never-say-die attitude, the commitment to bringing to WA a level of dirt track speedway entertainment that is unparalleled in this nation and the ability to function in an environment chock-filled with adversity, all add up to the secret behind the on-going success of one of the world's favourite speedway venues.

So there you have it.

Like I said, no 11-secret herbs and spices. Just good old fashioned guts and determination.

Healthways Claremont Speedway will keep rolling on, combatting the niggling inconsistency that this sport sometimes dishes out and — in between — just continue on as they have for the last 65 years, displaying some of the best speedway entertainment available anywhere in the world.

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American ace Bill Bailey (No. 5) tangles with WA driver Sharon Marriott

Americans out for revenge

THE visiting American sprint car drivers will be hell-bent on revenge when they tackle WA's best in the Emu Export Speedweek series at the Healthways Claremont Speedway this Friday night.

After last week's frustrating delays, the US speed kings were humbled by the West Aussies, both at Claremont and at Bunbury.

Opening night honours at Claremont went to Ron Krikke, who took the feature event when his WA teammate Mark Wells spun out on the final corner.

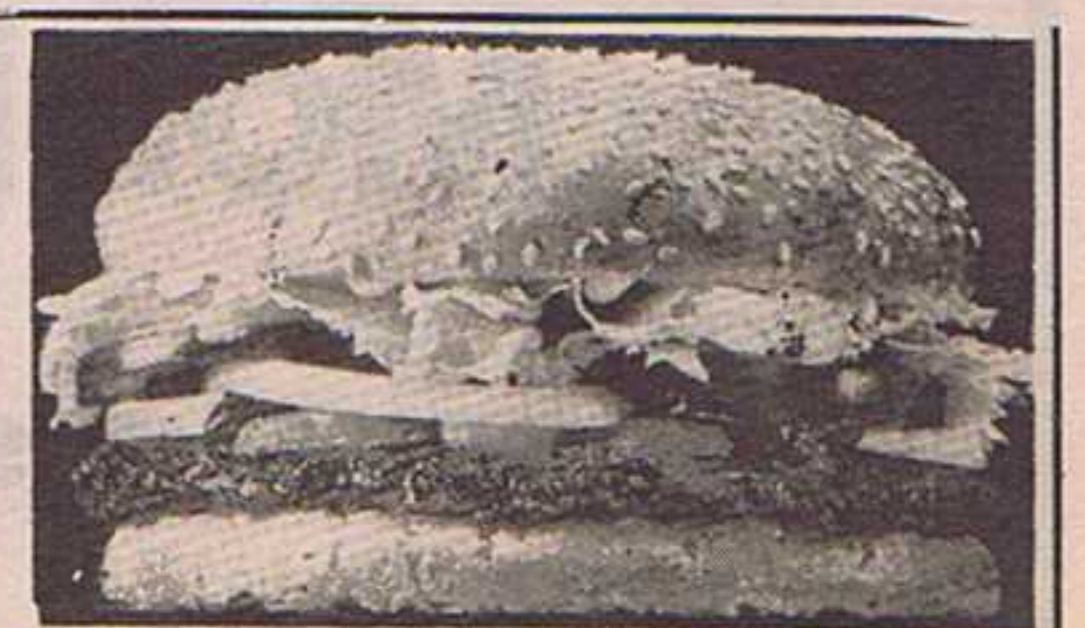
Wells atoned by winning at Bunbury, with Krikke, the local hero, taking second spot, ahead of his brother

John.

American ace Bill Bailey won all his heat events, but couldn't repeat that form in the feature final.

Bailey's self-built car looks a real treat and along with Fran Hogue's Buckley machine and Jimmy Martin's Shaw car, the Americans are no mean opposition.

A host of crashes featured in last Friday's Claremont raceway and while the West Aussies will be put under pressure again this Friday, the Americans will obviously be out to avoid race-ending trouble.



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