

# DRAGON TALES

August 2007



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A serious sportsman, Pat Nicholls



Learning from the worlds best. Lleyton Hewitt (left) and hitting partner Pat Nicholls (right) at the Australian Open



A winning a back-hander at the Wimbolden Singles Championship 2005.



Pat Nicholls pursueing his passion of football.

## TENNIS CHAMP TACKLES FOOTBALL

Patrick (Pat) Nicholls, 17, he's gone from centre court to the grass at Trevor Barker Oval, with a drive to prove himself as more than an elite tennis player, but a competitive footballer too.

Originally from Yarrawonga, Pat moved to Melbourne in 2003 and boarded at Wesley College, where he attended school at that time, to further his tennis career. His parents, Andrew, a doctor, Connie, a nurse and younger brother, Tom, moved to Cheltenham with Pat in 2004.

At 182cm tall, well build and the ability to jump Pat Nicholls has a lot of potential.

Pat started playing tennis when he was 8 years old, moving to Melbourne when he was 13 and stands retired from the game at 16.

At the age of 12 Pat had won the Australian under 13 Singles and Doubles Grasscourt Championships. As a result he was asked by the Head of Men's Development at Tennis Australia to move to Melbourne to be coached personally by Craig Miller.

He then went on to win the Australian under 15 Claycourt Singles Championship at age 13 and the Australian under 16 Grasscourt Singles Championship at age 14.

Pat has represented Australia at tennis on a number of occasions including playing Junior Davis Cup for Australia at age 15 when he was also a hitting partner for the Australian Davis Cup Team.

Continues page 11

**L 120 hours practice.**  
**Make it your goal. TAC**



# Dragon Tales

## Sandringham Dragons Football Club

website: sandringhamdragons.aflvic.com.au  
location: D.C. Bricker Pavilion, Princes Park, Caulfield Sth.  
mail: PO Box 101 Caulfield South 3162.  
e: sdragons@bigpond.net.au  
ph: 03 9532 8688 fax: 9532 9034

### Up-coming Events:

Intimo Game Day – Sunday 26th August  
U18 End of Season Presentation Night – Wednesday 12th September

Thank you for those businesses who attended the recent Business in Sport function. If you wish to add your business to future events, please email your details to mediasd@bigpond.net.au

Magazine Contributors: Wayne Oswald, Tikali Nicholls.  
Special Thanks: Greg Evans, Fairbairn Printing



Sell or rent your home with Hocking Stuart and the Dragons get a welcome funding boost.

Recently, the Dragons resigned a new sponsorship program with our long time supporters – Hocking Stuart. The Community Connections program will ensure a wave of support for the club that is unlimited. The best part of the program is it will be directed by you – that is people selling their homes or having investment properties managed by Hocking Stuart.

The club receives a generous donation at the beginning of each season from Hocking Stuart but this new program allows us to find additional funding when you support Hocking Stuart. In fact it is \$500 for every home sold by Hocking Stuart that is referred by the club and \$100 for every new property that Hocking Stuart manages for a member or friend of the club.

Hocking Stuart director, Peter Kennett said at the announcement of the program “we recognise that the community supports our success in business, so we just love putting something back into the Bayside Community.”

Stephen Tickell, director of the Sandringham Office of Hocking Stuart added, “we have always supported schools and sporting clubs in the local area, but this program in effect allows our community groups (such as Dragons) to get unlimited sponsorship funds, when they refer vendors of homes to Hocking Stuart, we can then make a donation to the community partner who referred them.”

Rod Richardson, director of the Mentone Office said “landlords and tenants could also participate with donations when a vendor is referred by our community partners for a property to be managed by Hocking Stuart.”

The Community Connections program is limited to the Brighton, Sandringham and Mentone Offices and the territories that they cover.

For further information on the Community Connections program please contact Hunter Leonard on 0400 237 647. Referral cards are available from the club or Hocking Stuart.

Hocking Stuart Brighton  
307 Bay Street, Vic 3186 tel: 03 9596 7055  
brighton@hockingstuart.com.au

Hocking Stuart Mentone  
48 Como Parade, Vic 3194 tel: 03 9583 3246  
mentone@hockingstuart.com.au

Hocking Stuart Sandringham  
62-64 Station Street, Vic 3191 tel: 03 9521 9800  
sandringham@hockingstuart.com.au



(l-r) Rod Richardson, Stephen Tickell with Wayne Oswald.



# Dragon Tales



## Auskick 2007



The Bilia Volvo NAB Auskick Super-clinic has proved to be a highlight for so many NAB Auskick participants in the region.

The Melbourne Demons were present at Trevor Barker Oval, with 700 enthusiastic NAB Auskick players and parents. As you can see by the photos, the ground was inundated by football activities and Volvos.

To date, in this region we have registered a record 3950 NAB Auskick participants. This is a 75 percent increase on last years figures.

We look forward to following the progression of so many young enthusiastic people, who may one day continue through Dragon programs.

Coach Education is nearly over for the year. Only one assessment night remains for the final group of 80, aspiring to be Level One Coaches. Once this group has completed the course, there will be a total of 220 coaches attending Coach Education this year.

Regards,  
Ian Kyte  
Development Manager

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# Dragon Tales

## Auskick Clinic Co-ordinator Details

### Ajax

Ronnie Issko  
0402 685 151

### Beaumaris

Graeme Scott  
0419 373 829

### Beaumaris North

Ross Couper-Johnson  
0403 869 905

### Brighton

Andrew Doquile  
0418 351 667

### Caulfield

Darren Stait  
0407 559 383

### Cheltenham Panthers

Anthony Brinkley  
0401 142 791

### Clayton Magpies

John Soldatos  
0433 102 017

### Coatsville

Bill Williams  
0419 286 658

### Dingley

Gary Polson  
0419 889 807

### East Brighton

Carolyn Brydon  
0421 088 861

### East Sandringham

Melissa Hillman  
0433 628 349

### Elsternwick

Ric Quitt  
0418 229 711

### Hampton

Ralph Bergman  
0409 706 200

### Highett

David Sheridan  
0439 110 146

### Keysborough Eagles

Rita Trebilco  
0425 733 083

### Malvern Districts

Peter Fleming 0422 007  
785

### Melbourne Unicorns

Kylie Da Fonte  
0403 069 622

### Mentone

Bernadette Vaux  
0411 201 068

### Murumbeena JFC

Phillip Dent  
0418 365 906

### Noble Park F.C

Steve Allender  
0419 357 577

### Oakleigh

Kerry Ryan  
0413 691 885

### Old Xavs

Michael Hardman  
0415 242 524

### Ormond Blues

Alister Gordon  
0438 821 025

### Packer Park

Joshua Halliwell  
0417 727 923

### Parkdale

Nick Spragg  
0413 521 400

### Parkmore

Ian McLean  
0418 581 517

### Silverton

Greg Price  
0438 104 096

### South Melb Dist

David Gustin  
0402 951 114

### St Peters

Kevin Jemetta  
0438 438 666

### Bentleigh Football Club

#### Tucker Rd

Russell Holmesby  
0418 103 595

### Valkstone

Kristie Katis  
0407 661 181

### Leibler Yavneh

#### College

Gloria Blau  
0404888990

### Multi Cultural Program

Micheal Nguyen  
0403 326 265





# Dragon Tales

VODAFONE UNDER 15 TRAINING SQUAD VODAFONE



UNDER 15 TRAINING SQUAD VODAFONE UNDER 15



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UNDER 15 TRAINING SQUAD VODAFONE UNDER 15



VODAFONE UNDER 15 TRAINING SQUAD



# Dragon Tales

## VODAFONE UNDER 16 TRAINING SQUAD

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Jack	Sperring	M2Corporation
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Edward	Vine	Christopher Vine Design
Nick	Vlad	Cristina Vlad
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## VODAFONE UNDER 16 TRAINING SQUAD



## VODAFONE UNDER 16 TRAINING SQUAD





# Dragon Tales



## Vodafone Under 16's Academy Report

The Sandringham Dragons Vodafone u/16's Academy is in the intensive training phase of the program. In this phase of training, we will be concentrating on game specific drills in preparation for the September carnival.

With the September carnival being the main focus of the program, it is important that we reflect on the Country Carnival, which was held in Bendigo on April 13th and 15th this year.

The Sandringham Dragons were nominated to play in the Country Carnival against the Murray Bushrangers and the North Ballarat Rebels.

This presented us with a different insight into the players and an opportunity to take them out of their comfort zones. Providing them with an experience they hopefully will remember and learn from.

The weekend in Bendigo was all about development. Development both on and off the field. The off field development, is as important to the Dragons as the on field experience the boys gained from playing two games in three days against quality opposition.

The highlight for me as the academy coach was the improvement in the playing group from the Friday game to the Sunday game. The scoreboard is insignificant in the academy program.

It is all about improvement and development. To measure the weekend in Bendigo on these two aspects alone is to say it was an astounding success.

I believe the group came away from the trip with a better understanding of themselves, each other and what is needed to make them better people and players.

At the end of the weekend the Vodafone Dragons were lucky enough to have seven players out of our squad of 25 selected to train for the Victorian u/16s team. They were Jack Watts, George Rowlands, Ben Jakobi, Dylan Jones, Will Broadhurst, Liam Tobin and Tom McMahon.

We are now in the home straight as we focus on the all-important September carnival. From late January these are the games that we have been working and training towards.

All the training, all the information we provide to the group is geared towards September. I'm looking forward to it and I hope you are as well.

Stephen Nash  
Vodafone Academy Coach



# Dragon Tales

2007 UNDER 18 TEAM 2007 UNDER 18 TEAM 2007 UNDER



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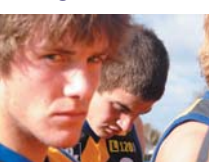
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**L** 120 hours practice. Make it your goal. **HELP** 743



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# Dragon Tales



## Growing Leaders

Leadership is the ability of an individual to inspire the actions of others. This person, sets an example through hard work, dedication and sacrifice - showing others that they too have the ability to achieve great things.

- Mathew Suckling



**120 hours' practice.  
Make it your goal.**



Pictured: 2007 Leadership Group; Tom Curry (c), Hiwad Shakaib, Tristan Burnett, John Shaw, Luke Casey-Leigh. Absent: Mathew Suckling (c), Justin Summons.

I have learnt what it takes to get the most out of myself and the group, but above all, to be a better person, leader and player. It is important to feel comfortable around the club, to overcome this I try to encourage that we trust our ability and seek help when needed.

- Tom Curry

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The Hardest Working Estate Agents

The leadership group I think gives the team, something to look up to and strive for. I believe it is important not to get ahead of ourselves, focus and always keep learning.

- Hiwad Shakaib



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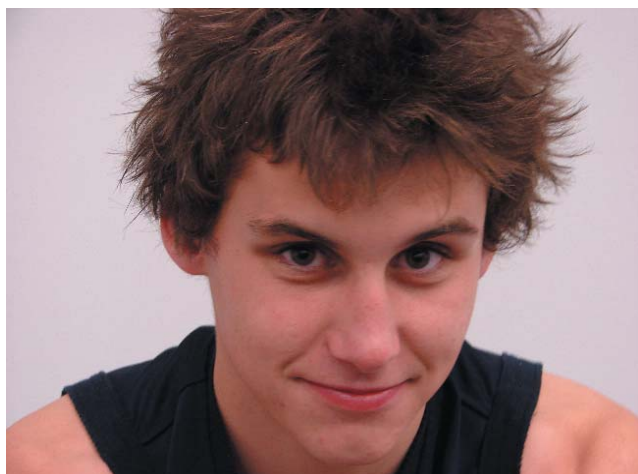
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**120 hours practice. Make it your goal. HELP TAC**



# Dragon Tales



## THROUGH MY EYES:

### Jonno Nash

Jumper No: 3

Height: 186cm

Weight: 80kg

DOB: 30/06/90

From: Caulfield Grammar

**Entry One** - Round one was knocking at the door and the playing group had to deal with various distractions throughout the week to overcome fears of an interrupted preparation.

As Spider likes to suggest, our game preparation is mildly irrelevant due to our consolidated performances during our 'team-bonding' camp in Yinnar.

Team selection for the first week of the TAC cup season and our jumper presentation were highly-anticipated events in our already hectic schedule in the lead-up against the heavily backed Calder Cannons.

It was later announced that our game with the runners-up of the 2006 TAC cup season was to be played at Princes Park, formerly known as Optus Oval. As Australia is experiencing critical drought conditions, knowing that our game was going to be played on a ground that is well treated by the curators was very reassuring.

The change rooms were full of emotions - fear of the unknown, nervousness yet predominantly excitement as we all anticipated the outcome of the first and last bounces. As Calder had the jump on us early, it was difficult to suggest that we, the Sandringham Dragons Football Club, could reverse Calder's flashing brilliance and momentum and come out victors at game's end.

We, as a group, learnt many things about the direction of the coaching staff and ourselves. I felt vulnerable during the early stages of the game and following our 14 goal defeat. While incorrectly connecting with two of my handballs cost us two goals in the first quarter, I feel the actions following my brainless decision-making were difficult to understand. Being an U/17 player and stepping into the world of professionalism, I felt being "benched" was not warranted, regardless of the circumstances. I am a player who will scold myself when I make an error and will be

happy with my efforts when I do something correct. Forcing me on the bench under my fathers suggestion, only further lowered my self-esteem. Being benched, I believe demonstrated a lack of faith, a lack of belief in my ability by the coaching staff.

There was a lot of negativity coming out of the coaching box on that Sunday afternoon.

**Entry Two** - As a club, we needed to regroup and discuss future potential game plans which can influence the playing group's on-field performances.

Easter was the next weekend which enabled us to have a well-deserved break yet having this extended period of rest meant greater intensity was required at training, i.e. more running!

Kingy took advantage of our desire to get better by flogging on us on the track. He made us do a series of 200-metre sprints in repetitions with minimal rest periods. This short duration running training was followed by a grueling session on the track.

Like Spider says, "If it were easy, everybody would be doing it."

Our minds were retuned as our focus was on becoming a more opposing opposition, hoping to be feared by the rest of talented competition.

Team bonding was once again the focal point for the football club to strengthen what is already a strong connection between players and player to coach. This was obvious during our mini golf group championship at the Dingley Miniature Adventure mini-golf course.

Testosterone levels increased as we contested to see who had the steadiest hand on the grueling 36 hole, indoor outdoor course. To my dismay, I couldn't tell you who won, as there was too much on-field quantitative data tampering regardless of

the players being dispersed in mixed leadership groups and observed by witnesses. The perfect case was Tilly Yaman, who always found himself in a 'winning' situation and would lower his overall hole score by at least a shot when the group was watching. No-one said anything because we were all thinking if this kid is willing to cheat to win in a game of mini-golf, well he can just simply go ahead.

**Entry Three** - Redemption was on the cards for our upcoming game against the Bendigo Pioneers whose venue had changed to Maryborough where there would be a triple header. Our game was at 9.30 am, so it only seemed practical to stay in the infamous local motel overnight. The trip up included at least 20 players on the rather large mini bus.

The three-hour trip was taken up with various pointless conversations ending in verbal wrestles and countless disagreements, yet it wasn't all hail and rain for there were moments of sunshine and various tropical birds whistling in the foreground.

Dinner was disorganised by the pub staff who dispersed vast quantities of pasta-based products infrequently. It got to a point where someone would finish their bowl as another person just received their carbohydrate filled meal. An interactive team meeting concluded the night as we all segregated to our designated cabins to get an irregular sleep.

Waking up at 7am is not an ideal preparation but we have certainly proved that preparation is a mere proportion of a win or a loss in a game of football. With players rushing to have breakfast, have a shower and get ready and clean our rooms was difficult as time was our only memory. In a sense, we all had to calm down and refocus on the task at hand - win.

To continue reading about the antics of Jonno Nash click on the extended version of his diary entries at [sandringhamdragons.aflvic.com.au](http://sandringhamdragons.aflvic.com.au).



# Dragon Tales



I believe this program gives the U/17 boys an opportunity to continue to develop their skills while still being emersed in a TAC Cup environment, and gives them a solid grounding in what to expect for the following year.

Being an U/18, this program gave me the opportunity to get myself physically and mentally right during the early rounds after a heavily interrupted pre-season, in a bid to get a guernsey later on down the track.

- Keith De Souza.

Since I've been at the Dragons my whole game has changed and even more importantly, me as a person. From early 2005 when I was there as a 14-15 year old till now, here as a 17 year old rookie, I have learnt all the skills and requirements that a good footballer needs. We've had diet sessions, weight sessions, running sessions and pure skills sessions, numerous times throughout my time here and it has been one of the best things that has ever happened to me.

- Ashley Kalb

Stoked to not only be invtd to the summer training but the to be announced on the rookie list was awesome.

- Jared Evans

## 2007 ROOKIE PROGRAM

Tim Allan  
Steve Edwards  
Dylan Elkmann  
Keith DeSouza  
Ben Hayes  
Taylor Hunt  
Clay Johnston  
Jarrod Lee  
Sam Lees  
Charles Shaw



Keiffer Smith-Cameron

Tim Scott  
Ashley Kalb  
Alexander Carter  
Oliver Ford  
Zachary Parsons  
Nick Loucaides  
Jared Evans  
Thomas Pastura  
Jay Piggini  
Andrew Hibbert



I was very excited to make the Rookie List because I have been given a platform to further my skills.

- Ben Hayes

Dragons has taught me many things about football but life as well. It has shown me that to gain your goals in life from injury as quickly as possible and give you must work hard for them, they will not just happen. me a chance to train with some of the best Dragons has affected my life alot and the lessons I have learnt are priceless. footballers in my age group. It has effectively improved my footbal as a result of this.

- Nick Loucaides

- Zachary Parsons

On my first game day I was nervous and expected the teams preparation to be the same as my junior club just with better facilities. It was not like that at all, everything was very serious and intense.

- Taylor Hunt

Rookies Sponsored by: Exclusive Homes, Cascade Control Pty Ltd, Lowe Lippman Chartered Accountants, Century 21 Wilson Pride, Lindsay Park Racing Stables, McDonalds Wantirna, Joelcorp, Stonnington Locksmiths, Australian Customs Service



# Dragon Tales

## Pat Nicholls

Continued from page 1....

In 2005 he was the youngest player at Junior Wimbledon to reach the semi finals of the doubles. Pat played in the Junior Australian Open in three consecutive years and had his serve clocked at 206kph at age 15 at this tournament.

He had been ranked number one in his age group, for four consecutive years, competing in tournaments and grand slams in America, France, United Kingdom, Spain, across Asia Pacific. Pat says his favourite city was Barcelona because of its energy. "I like knowing where you are and I like Spanish."

The young tennis star also played junior footy until he was 11, when he had to give it up for tennis.

Now at 182cm tall, well build and the ability to jump Pat Nicholls has a lot of potential.

Pat was invited to join the TAC squad training last summer. He's now listed as a player and also represents his school, St Bedes.

Pat enjoys having team mates, as they push him further. "It's easier to train hard with a team around," Pat says. Another love of his new sport is the lack of travelling. "I loved it at the time but I've never really like the travel". Pat says that he is a nervous flyer and always had to sit in the aisle seat so he could walk around, and got sweaty palms when flying.

Although Pat is having a break from the tennis court, he still coaches kids' tennis on a Thursday and says that he now has a better appreciation for coaching as he realises how hard it can be.

He says, "Coaching has taught me how hard it is for a coach to pick up on players [skills and personality]," and believes that good qualities in a coach are: keeping positive, knowing your players, maintaining a professional environment and to be open minded. Pat says that his favourite coach is Jason Stoltenberg, former professional tennis player and former coach of Lleyton Hewitt, because he possesses these good coach qualities. "He cares for each individual, works to improve players and enjoys sitting down and having a chat with his players," Pat says.

"Competing in a sport sense people that succeed; work the hardest and enjoy every moment," he says.

-Elysia Raphael

## Tyrone Vickery



One of the Dragon's exciting under-18 players, Tyrone Vickery, embarked on 'a life changing' experience to South Africa in April, as part of the AIS-AFL Academy program.

Along with 29 fellow football hopefuls, Tyrone participated in an international match against a South African team on Saturday, April 14 in the north-west province city of Potchefstroom. Over the duration of the trip the players helped launch a childrens participation program called 'Footy Wild' in Potchefstroom, Soweto and Cape Town. More than 1000 South African children attended Australian football clinics.

Tyrone describes the experience as "the opportunity of a life time, that really opened [his] eyes." The Hailbury College student was in South Africa from the 8th to the 21st of April and believes the wonderful people were the highlight of the trip.

AIS-AFL Academy Coach Alan McConnell says "the South African tour offers a fantastic opportunity for the young players to develop their football skills and enhance their personal development."

Assistant coaches Jason McCartney and Michael Voss joined the squad on the tour that will also include visits to Soweto, Robben Island and a Table Mountain climb.

The tenth AIS-AFL Academy squad includes 11 Victorians, eight West Australians, three Queenslanders, four South Australians, one player from the NSW/ACT region, one Tasmanian and two players from the Northern Territory.

The AIS-AFL Academy is part of a commitment made by the AFL and the Australian Sports Commission, through the Australian Institute of Sport, to support Australian Football's best young players with their football and education development.

The AIS-AFL Academy offers 30 AIS scholarships following the NAB AFL Under 16 Championships. The Academy offers expert and personal skill development from the Australian Institute of Sport and the AFL for 12 months and involved the opportunity to represent Australia at an Under 17 level in an International Youth Series.





# Dragon Tales

## Living With A Draftee

- Mother Jennifer Hawkins -

Lead-up to the draft: Prior to draft day we had meet with Geelong. They approached us to interview Tom for the father /son rule. As draft day loomed there was a degree of apprehension by all of us due to the long process.

The events included Tom's participations in the National Under 18 Championships. This became partitulary difficult as we are NSW resident's though living eight hours from Sydney (NSW/ACT Rams base) As a boarder at Melbourne Grammer School we did not want Tom to be all over the country side training. This would have been particularly distracting as he was in year 12 and already away from his family and home. Through some wonderful work with the Dragons particularly Wayne Oswald we were able to negotiate his position with the Vic Metro team. This event was partitulary crucial for Tom as he had played little TAC footy mainly due to geography, school and family protocol.

Other events that were important included;

- \*participation in the AIS Program
- \*understanding the father/son rule
- \*discussions with potential mangers
- \*general research.

MOST importantly talking with Tom to gain understanding of where he was coming from.



Tom Hawkins offically a Cat



Moving to Geelong: My family are from Geelong and Jack played footy there for 10 years so the family knows the lie of the land. Our daughters Jane & Edwina both live there, one in Yr 12 and the other at University, so Tom had a closer family network than in Melbourne.

Tom had been a boarder for four years where had gained a degree of independent adjustment already. Tom moved in with a family and continues to boards with them, this is really wonderful and highly recommended. It gives them a wonderfully safe and secure base for the transitional period. You need to work with the Welfare Officer at the club, they do know quite a lot and are a great help. Try to talk to them about how your son operates, this I believe could be very useful to all in their first year.

Obstacles: Difficulties have been associated around the press and a little media hype! Tom found this hard and intrusive. As Geelong is a small place, Tom is seen frequently and still finds this oppressive - but we try to keep our own focus on him and his life rather than just football. The drought helps to refocus on something else!!

Pre season was hard, really hard, both physically and mentally. The highs as you could imagine included doing what you had always dreamed of; finishing school, getting a car, meeting new people etcetera. Lows: not many, but performance, injury prevention, public hype, leaving school and the associated environments.

Tom has continued to develop into being a fine young man and that's the most important thing. He has gained a sense of independence, believe it or not he has become more organised (this has not been an overnight success but we are getting there). He has become more self disciplined, his diet has improved, and his public speaking has been greatly enhanced and has certainly started to develop great goal setting skills.

Tom has played 6 Senior games and 4 VFL games and been on standby twice. He is certainly in a development phase where he has some good games and a couple of not so good ones as well. His fitness is much better and is continuing to evolve. Learning to develop himself and recognize that team participation at all costs is still how he operates- although not everyone has the same objectives.

Future: The future is bright - his club is successful, the stakes are really high and what part he plays in that is still very self determined. Tom sets new goals as he achieves the outcomes and has learnt that its not all it appears on the outside. Tom's goals are to give his life some more depth rather than just football. He is going to do a TAFE course next semester then perhaps a little work experience. His major goals at present is to get back and establish himself as a senior player.

At the end of the day Tom is a one eyed Cats supporter, so a premiership is what he dreams of.



# Dragon Tales



## AFTER DRAGONS with Shane Valenti

Jumper No: 7  
Height: 194cm  
Weight: 96kg

DOB: 29 January 1987  
Club: Sandringham Zebras  
From: Sandringham Dragons / Hailbury College/Cheltenham

Shane Valenti first walked into the Dragons as an under-15 player who has since developed into a consistent senior member at the Sandringham Zebras. In Valenti's four years with the Dragons' he had played in the Under 15's and Under 16's Championships, represented Vic Metro (Under 16) and captained the TAC Cup side in his last year, in the under 18's (2005). I recently caught up with Shane to reminisce on his time at time at Dragons.

Valenti, previously from Cheltenham Football Club, spent his last years of high school at Haileybury College. After the disappointment of not getting drafted, he spent his first year out of the Dragons program trying his hardest to prove himself to the Zebras and the football world. Choosing not to further his education at this stage, Shane picked up a job at Rebel Sport and focused on training. Come round one, 2006 Shane surprisingly found himself in the senior team of the VFL reigning premiers side, and had not lost his place till a recent injury.

Shane describes his time at Dragons as a great experience that he just loved every minute of. "It's not just about footy; it's about life in general there.

"There was always someone around to chat to, like Ozzie and then when Wayne Johnston came down it was good too," Valenti said.

After choosing to concentrate on football, Valenti is now seeking further challenges as he completes a Personal Training qualification with the Australian Institute of Fitness. Then is considering further studies at university in 2008-9, before "it passes" him.

Shane found that having two years of focusing just on football commitments were not a wise decision, on reflection. "I think you play better having school (university or an apprenticeship like his friends), I needed it to take my mind away from footy, and it took a lot more out of you than you think.

"In my eighteenth year I was mostly injured so I found myself sitting around doing nothing," he said.

Shane made decisions that reflects his maturity and commitment from a young age and concedes, "the tough thing about all (elite) footy is you can not get out with your mates as much as you would like, it's a bit easier too at Zebras (then Dragons), but if you want to play AFL that is what you have to do.

"I think you can still have a good time without drinking, a lot of kids go wrong, when they just go out to get 'blind'. I missed out on a few balls and things; it mattered at the time, but not now," he said.

Valenti passionately believes that Dragons is "an opportunity, to have a real shot at it, I reckon everyone should take advantage of the resources, speak to people, don't be afraid to."

To follow Shane and his football ventures, get to Trevor Barker Oval and support the Sandringham Zebras in their journey to the finals.



Tikali Nicholls



# Dragon Tales



## Chris Dawes

Jumper No: 31

Height: 194cm

Weight: 96kg

DOB: 16 May 1988

From: Sandringham Dragons / Brighton Grammer



**L 120 hours practice. Make it your goal. TAC**

It has been eight months since arriving at Collingwood and I am now beginning to get comfortable with the routine of being an AFL player. That said, I am still constantly surprised by the level of excitement at the club and am continually being forced out of my comfort zone. My time at the club has been spent recovering from a knee reconstruction. After months of rehabilitation the finishing line is finally in sight, and I expect to play for Williamstown (our VFL affiliate) within the next month.

To be honest, I have found the road to recovery much more difficult than I had imagined. It has not so much been the ups-and-downs of long-term injury that I've struggled with, but rather finding ways to motivate myself to work hard through the monotony of rehabilitation sessions.

For quite some time my days seemed to be identical: get to the club, sit through a meeting, do a modified training session, do weights, swim, cycle etc. The constant grind was physically tough but felt particularly draining because it seemed I wasn't working towards a particular date of return - I had no clear goals.

One person who was especially helpful in making my job easier was the club's High Performance Manager, Simon Lloyd, who has a background in psychology. Simon has helped me develop a clearer set of goals and also tried to develop my training schedule with more variety. With this new set of goals firmly in place and being able to participate in full training more and more, training has become more manageable in recent months and I feel as though I am in full flight.

One initiative that the club organised for myself, and two other players with long-term injuries (Sean Rusling and John Anthony) was a three day trip to Bright in late May. The three of us, with Brad Scott, (who works in development) and Rob Hunt (who co-ordinates rehabilitation for players) cycled from Bright to Falls Creek and back.

The course was 130km, which included 50km of hill climbs and took about seven hours to complete. The hardest part of the ride was a 34km climb to the top of Falls Creek in the snow. This section of the ride took me about two hours, ten minutes and was the most mentally and physically challenging thing I have ever endured. The ride was a constant grind, and was painful most of the time, but came with a huge sense of achievement once we had finished.

The following day we hiked to the top of Mount Buffalo, which wasn't as challenging as the bike ride on the previous day. Though we were hit by a snow storm at the top and felt very sorry for ourselves for a while. The trip was designed to break up the daily grind, as well as forcing us to stretch our limits, this was deemed by all involved, to be a success.

The routine I spoke about has become easier to manage, and I am now becoming better at organising my life away from football. Where I originally struggled with the demands of taking on two university subjects I have now learnt that, with effective time management, it can be done. I am considering completing a Personal Training Certificate later this year.

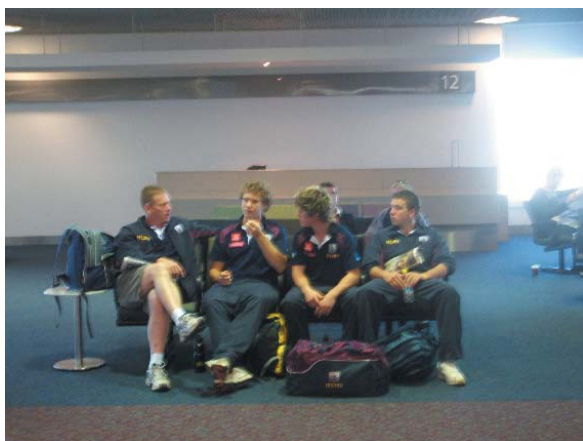
Now that I am about to resume playing, and with Williamstown and Collingwood both playing well, it is an exciting time for me to be at the club. I can't wait to get out on the park and get my hands on the footy again.

Chris Dawes



# Dragon Tales

## Destination: Queensland



On Saturday the 19th of May, the under 18's team departed Melbourne en route to the Gold Coast for the round six clash with Queensland.

The game was the talk among the boys for days leading up to the trip, the excitement and anticipation peaked when the team was read out on the Friday night training session.

At approximately 8:00am, all the boys gathered at the Virgin Blue terminal and although we were looking rather sleep deprived, the morale amongst the group was very high.

The prospect of leaving wet and windy Melbourne for sunny Gold Coast was sinking in more and more as the flight time approached.

When boarding time finally arrived, a few other players and I decided to make our way to our gate. But after a few minutes of frantic searching we realised that we'd been going in completely the wrong direction all along and power walked our way in the right direction. After some anxious minutes, we finally found our way to the correct gate and fortunately saw the remaining Dragons personnel still waiting to board the plane.

After a few minutes of listening to Brad 'Glider' Gilder's tips for the upcoming harness races we boarded.

For many, it would be their maiden flight.

Some boys used the trip as a way to bond, or to discuss the opposition, Queensland state team line-up and how many kicks they would get (Sammy McGarry).

Others, including myself, caught up on some sleep that was lost the previous night and rejuvenate for the upcoming game.

For those that did fall into a slumber, the plane trip would have felt like a bit of a blur but from those that did stay awake, they generally loved the experience and the Virgin Blue air hostesses.

Dave 'Winger' Wing later went on to say, "Ten years ago they would've been in a lot of trouble!" But moving on, the initial phase of the plane trip did produce some nervous faces but thankfully there were no "spew bags" used, which signified a generally calm and relaxed plane trip.

We landed at Gold Coast airport at midday and despite the heat wave which swept us on the tarmac, everyone was very excited whilst relieved.

As we were leaving the airport, some of the top age players noticed that Andrew (Judy) McConnell (who played with us the previous year), had turned up to support the team.

Judy had moved up to the Sunshine State to play a year in the Queensland competition and telling from his golden tan, you could say he was spending a fair bit of time at the beach.

The bus trip to the hotel was being used mostly to educate ourselves with some of the different characteristics that Queensland had. The first aspect that grabbed the most attention was XXXX beer.

Then Myke 'Cooky' Cook excitedly pointed out that they had electronic petrol price boards. Some of the more knowledgeable players pointed out that they did have them in Victoria unbeknown to Cooky.





# Dragon Tales



Half-an-hour later we arrived at the glorious and luxurious El Rancho Hotel in Miami, a 10 minute drive from Surfers.

Of course the hotel was anything but glorious and luxurious but no one complained as we were there to play a game of footy and weren't on a holiday.

This concept became more and more evident as the bus trip to Carrara drew near. We then had a team meeting followed by a light lunch.

I usually like a big meal before a game, so decided to get a roll at the nearby fish 'n' chip store with Justin (Summons). It was there that I realised how elementary Queenslanders knowledge of football was when the lady serving me asked what sport we played. I told her football, and of course being a Queenslander, she responded with "Rugby?" I replied with AFL and so she looked at me rather apprehensively. Justin and I just laughed and used it to motivate ourselves for the upcoming game against the Queenslanders.

We didn't come away with the four points, but did come away with some good lessons and a great experience on how to deal with playing away from home.

Most of the staff and players stuck around for the first half of the Kangaroos vs Carlton game and although I learnt a fair bit about Kingy's property empire, we all decided to head back to the El Rancho.

The coaches and some leaders decided that they'd allow for a bit of fun while we were there and laid down a 2am curfew.

I can't say much about the night and what went on and who did what but I'll just state that all the

boys thoroughly enjoyed what the Gold Coast nightlife had to offer.

The next time morning definitely exposed some dreary eyes that were in need of some more sleep but Kingy ignored this and marched us all to the beach nearby for a recovery session. You could say it was the best recovery we'd ever had considering it was about 25 degrees, sunny, a good swell and not a breath of wind; all at 8am.

Time flew between returning to the hotel and when we boarded the bus. We said our goodbyes to the El Rancho and before we knew it, we were back at the airport ready to leave for Melbourne. When boarding, we noticed some Kangaroo players were on our flight, they were in good spirits from the victory the previous night.

The plane trip back was much calmer than the trip up and after rereading the Age about three times; I noticed the grey skies of Melbourne were clouding up around us.

We got back at about 4pm Sunday afternoon and parted our ways.

The Queensland trip was definitely a memorable time in my sporting life as it would've been for the rest of the players and staff.

It is not everyday you go to Queensland to play a game of footy and I'm sure a lot of the boys would have gained a lot of experience and learnt some lessons on preparation and the game itself.

Most importantly the boys enjoyed themselves in sunny Queensland.

Hiwad Shakaib



# Dragon Tales



## Will Thursfield

Jumper No: 36  
Height: 190cm  
Weight: 76kg  
DOB: 19 March 1986  
From: Sandringham Drgaons / Ormond

Entering the 2005 season.

I felt very confident that I was capable of playing some really good football. The previous season gave me six games experience and a taste of what AFL was all about. However, unfortunately I missed the last month of the season due to stress fractures in my back. I thought I'd done pretty well during those six games, which illustrated that I could perform at the top level.

After doing the whole pre-season, all one wants to do is get out there and play games. I had improved from the previous year by putting on some weight and was feeling good out there.

Then, in round 2, 2006, I wrecked my knee in the clash at the Telstra Dome against St. Kilda and my season was over. Although I'd played a great game I immediately knew that I'd done something very serious. The experience was extremely painful and I couldn't move my leg at all without severe pain. The end result of this was that I tore my anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), my medial ligament and damaged a lot of cartilage in the knee. It was not a standard knee injury and I would be out of football for 10-12 months. The doctors and surgeons said it was one of the worst they had ever seen.

The injury left me on crutches for around seven weeks. Then over a long period of time, I slowly progressed from slow jogging to running. This took hours of training in the pool, gym and on the bike; it was very boring and repetitive. I found it difficult to watch all my friends run around every weekend as that's what I wanted to be doing too, though the reality was that I was miles away from being able to join in.

When you have to train away from everyone, football clubs can be quite lonely because you have to do your own thing. However, the club [Richmond] made my time go well by letting me sit in the coaches' box every week and keeping me involved.

You always hear of players who were never the same after suffering a bad injury, particularly knee and this was a hard thing for me to get my head around. Having such a bad injury there was a time where I thought I wouldn't be able to play at a suitable level for a long, long time.



# Dragon Tales



A lot of things go through your head being such a young inexperienced player, but there were many people who were there to help. Darren Gaspar, a good friend and mentor, helped a lot along with other knee reconstruction victims Mark Coughlan and David Rodan. People around the club are terrific and understanding when it came to supporting those who have fallen victim to injuries.

Eventually after the Christmas break I was able to join in with the main training group and participate in some non-contact drills. After being out for so long it was great to be out, running around again. I progressed really well and was played in some practice matches, which made me feel good about my ability to get back out there.

However, there were a few complications. Firstly, my knee started to ache badly, so the doctors decided I needed some pins removed from the knee. This set my progress back a couple of weeks; after that my knee became infected, for reasons unknown and swelled up a lot. I had to go back to hospital and get it cleaned out again. This set me back for about a month.

From thinking that I could play a full season this year, I had not played a match and it was round five. I went on to play three games for our reserves team, Coburg and then returned for Richmond in round eight.

All the recovery and countless hours had paid off and I finally forgot about my knee. The feeling of running on game day was amazing. The return felt like my first game.

I have since played every game with the Tigers and am gradually getting my fitness back and feeling better out there. My knee now feels great.

Being out for so long and having a bad run with injuries really has taught me not to take football for granted. Nothing beats playing with your friends and I hope I can do it for so much longer.

Will Thursfield.

# Dragon Tales

Recently the Dragons lost a great friend and valuable member of our team. Terry Macdonald had been with the club from the beginning and continued to serve and love the Dragons to the end.

Terry contributed in so many ways to the Dragons, though more commonly known for his time-keeping responsibilities. Each player that has past through the club has been cheered, encouraged and adored by Terry. The Dragons were his family, his passion and for this honour, Terry will always be remembered as the true heart and soul of the Dragons, a 'giver'. In memory of Terry we learn that to give for others is priceless, to do it with passion and loyalty is unheard of.



Club man: Terry Macdonald

## Season 200



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# Dragon Tales

## Matt Thomas

Jumper No: 32  
Height: 185cm  
Weight: 85kg  
DOB: 27 February 1987  
From: Sandringham Dragons/Murrumbena  
Draft History: Pick eight pre-season Draft to Port Adelaide



### *What are your memories of the Dragons?*

I have lots of fantastic memories from the Dragons, I came through with such a fantastic group of guys, from as early as under 15's we formed a bond, which made going to training and playing just easy. Typical of a football club, there were always lots of practical jokes and competitiveness between the boys. I remember boxing in our coach's car when he was in a rush to leave; all the boys in the car park surrounded his car so he could not even get in...very funny. Memories of playing with my mates are some of my fondest. I continue to keep in touch with these blokes now and watch them play.

### *How and what happened in the draft process for you?*

I had a very unusual draft process. I was overlooked in the national draft, which in itself was a very frustrating and an emotional time. Those who miss out are really the only ones who can understand. It ripped my guts out. You prepare yourself knowing it may not happen, but nothing can really prepare you for it until you actually miss out.

I was lucky enough to get invited to a couple of clubs to take part in their pre seasons before the pre season and rookie draft. Being overlooked made me determined to prove to myself and (to some degree) others, that the goal I had worked towards since I could remember, was still within my reach and I was going to play. It was a nervous time for my family and I. Thankfully the Power gave me a chance which I will always be grateful for.

### *Do you like Adelaide? Who do you live with?*

I love it here in Adelaide. I have settled in really well. In my first year I lived with a host family to help with the transition into a new state. This year I moved into a place with another player, Ryan Willits, he and I played together in under 16's Vic Metro, here in Adelaide. It is a lot quieter than Melbourne but has a rich footy culture which is a very good place to play football. I have met so many people here already, which has helped make footy the focus, knowing things off the field are taken care of.

### *How have you been training and playing?*

This year has been very interrupted for me, spending over a month in hospital saw me start a long way behind the eight-ball in January completing only 30% of pre season having lots of soreness etc. So I have really been playing catch up all year, I played some great footy early in the season at Norwood earning a spot in the Power side again for four games, until I was reported for one week. Upon returning I tore the medial ligament in my knee, missing eight weeks. I have recently resumed full training, but a little interrupted would be the best way to describe my year to date.

### *Who or what was your first impression at the club?*

My first impression of the club was just amazement. I had seen this team win a premiership and I had seen all the players on TV before, I really had to pinch myself when they were talking to me, or kicking with them.

The club itself has so many amazing people, in particular Michael Wilson, I model my game on his, he was my mentor in my first year and continues to be. Michael portrays everything Port Adelaide is. It is a very hard working, high expectation, competitive environment.

To put it all in perspective, the club is that teacher in school that everyone did their homework for, and were too scared to even consider not doing it. It really gets the best out of you if you want to succeed.

### *What valuable lessons do you feel you have learnt to date?*

- Don't take what you have for granted, my operation made me see that.
- Work on the things you don't do well, to become better you must except your flaws and mistakes then make them your strengths.
- Challenge everything. Make sure you have the final say when it becomes your future or your decision, no matter how big or small.
- The harder you work the more rewards seem to come your way - preparation in the key.
- Don't worry about anyone else, only you can control what you do.

The people I have met along the way have been so influential in the choices I have made. Somehow not always getting the easy road has made me except others and put everything into what I do, to make sure there are no doubts along the way. I think earning the respect of others is priceless, and will come back ten fold.



# Dragon Tales

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