

2017 YVHC Mens Section Report

Director – Kin Smith

++ Promotion to the Premier League ++

2017 saw YVHC return to the Mens Premier League for the first time in almost 2 decades. Achieving all required League Entry Criteria including on and off field requirements, Yarra was 1 of 3 teams promoted to the top tier of Victorian Hockey.

After 3 successful years, YVHC retained Zac Hawes as head coach, with the reserves coaching role filled by Matthew Slade. Matt came to the club after a long association with the sport and other sports administration experience, including the FIH, Hockey Australia and Cricket Australia.

YVHC once again fielded 6 teams, a success as growth through the metro and pennant grades, particularly involving older juniors players, provided excellent numbers. YVHC also was promoted to Pennant B at the conclusion of the 2016 season.

In the roll of director, Kin Smith was again supported by Rob Johnston who, though not in an official role, was instrumental in organising umpire and coaching appointments and monitoring section statistics to ensure game eligibility and compliance.

The section implemented an initiative to support Pennant and Metro grade teams by rostering Premier League or Premier League Reserves players as umpires and coaches on a rotating basis. This provided support and eased the need to coordinate umpires, and the coaching was well received by the teams. Closer relationships across teams within YVHC were also developed.

A key focus for the section was to improve support and performance in the Metro and Pennant ranks. YVHC produced a competitive year across Metro B and A competitions. The Metro B team achieved a finals position for the first time in many years and were victorious in their first match against Croydon Rangers. They fell 0-1 to Doncaster in the Preliminary final, a great result after heavy losses throughout the round games.

In Metro A, the team produced a positive year and but for a significant amount of draws or tight losses (7 games drawn or lost by 1 goal!). A far more competitive year than previously with the additions of players and greater depth.

Pennant E produced an excellent season, making the Grand Final. The club scoring champion was once again Toby Johnston, who played in the Pennant E team. Toby also coached and ran the Metro/Pennant trainings.

Pennant B was supported brilliantly by the Pennant E squad in particular during weeks where numbers in the Pennant teams were stretched thin.

Pennant B, a young squad stepping up into a tough grade, faced a difficult year.

The highlights were the exposure of up and coming players increasing their skills at this level of competition. They achieved several victories and a number of close encounters. The improvement in the team was evident throughout the year. Where possible, the squad was supported in a coaching capacity by players from Premier League, however the lack of a full time coach was detrimental, and a key focus for the administration over the off season.

YVHC's Premier League Reserves squad first year in the top competition was a competitive first season. Including further youth and exposing new players to the level was an integral part of the clubs strategy to develop depth. Though only achieving 1 win for the year alongside several draws, the team was extremely competitive against all but the top 3 teams in the competition. The team must work towards consistency and finishing games well to move into the mid table. The group responded positively to coach Slade who brought energy and a deeper level of analysis to the teams performance.

- Premier League -

YVHC was one of three teams promoted to the MPL for 2017 alongside Mentone and TEM.

YVHC finished the most successful of the promoted clubs in 13th position.

The group was the only promoted team to earn wins against established PL clubs in Essendon (2-0) and Waverley (3-2). The Waverly victory was a special occasion, the team fighting back from 0-2 down with 15 minutes to go. Goals to Fergus Poynter, Sam Cosgrave and in the final minute, English import Tom Bean, secured the win.

The team was competitive defensively, with one of the better records until 2/3 of the way into the season.

YVHC welcomed three international players in Tom Bean and Tom Chatfield (England) and Richard Forrest (Ireland). All three were significant contributors to the club both on and off the field.

Tom Bean was awarded the club Best and Fairest.

A successful first season upon which we look to build for 2018.

The performance of several junior players was a standout, as was the selection of several of our junior players in state teams and SSV squads.

The team must continue to develop depth and recruit positively to improve results. Our performances drew comments from established, successful PL clubs that they were impressed, and our development was obvious. This is a significant achievement, especially given our lack of access to Cyril Cummins Park for the first half of the year.

We look forward to having Zac Hawes as coach once again in 2018 who continues to develop the team as a whole, but also the individuals within it.

++ Areas of focus ++

The mens section must develop a committee to spread administrative duties.

The director role is now too large to be handled by a single person, and in 2018 we will implement a Metro and Pennant Representative to manage team selections and communication.

The director should remain the board representative.

A person to oversee statistics and eligibility is also required.

This is important for quality of administration and also to ensure significant load does not place too much pressure on any individual person.

Continued Junior Representation.

The last few years have been successful in engaging U18 and U16 players in the Metro/Pennant grades. This should continue with the director liaising with the junior age co-ordinators to identify

interested parties. This increases numbers, develops skill and has seen the metro/pennant teams become more success on the pitch.

Coaching support extension.

It is evident to the board and representatives that we must extend our support of appointed coaches. Goals for 2018 include formal coaching structure for Pennant B. This is important as many talented junior players will begin their senior's careers in this level.

It will also limit the separation between the Reserves squad and the clubs 3rds.

In conclusion, an exciting year of growth for the YVHC mens section.

It is important we continue to set goals and strive for improvement if we are to remain a successful club which is attractive to players locally and internationally. This was the start of a long journey.

We also recognise with gratitude the host families of our three internationals who opened their homes, providing a great experience and developing new friendships.

The Brightling family, Cosgrave Family and Stuart Owen/Jaime Waterland.

Further statistical breakdown will be available at a later date.

Regards,

Kin Smith

YVHC Mens Director