

Western Demons Presidents Report 2011

Welcome to the western Demons 2011 Annual General Meeting and to my Presidents Report of our supporter group activities for the past year.

At last year's Annual General Meeting and elections we welcomed a number of new faces to the committee for 2011.

The new committee agreed to meet monthly and established a number of working sub committees to conduct the group's activities for the year. Specific objectives were set for the year and whilst they were modelled primarily on what had been undertaken in prior years, they were designed to encourage our local West Australian Melbourne Football Club supporters to meet socially throughout the year and most importantly to support the team when they travelled to Perth to play.

Financially we commenced the year with a healthy bank balance, having supported both the Melbourne Football Club and the Football Department significantly throughout the prior year.

Trevor Johnston accepted to act as our Patron for 2011 and we thank him for his services to our group.

Sponsorship is paramount to the successful operation of any supporter group and the western Demons were well supported during 2011. We welcomed two new sponsors for the first time in 2011 and we welcomed back two past sponsors who rejoined for the year.

To raise funds to operate our supporter's services in WA, the committee agreed to continue running our annual Footy Tipping competition, sell our supporter car number plates, and run a pre-game function prior to Melbourne game in April. These services, these being our web page, news information line, Facebook and photo competition, which are designed to inform and involve our local western Demon supporters, were all maintained from the funds raised.

Early in the year we received a renewed approach from the community-based Radio Station 91.3 Sport FM offering the western Demons an opportunity to conduct a weekly half-hour radio programme on the station which would be targeted to Melbourne Football club supporters here in Western Australia and via their world-wide web net operation. An agreement to run the programme was reached with the radio station and 3Dee Radio was born in 2011. Some of the costs to conduct this programme were able to be offset by offering radio advertisements on the station and four of our western Demons sponsors agreed to participate in our radio-advertising format.

The on air programme over the season was conducted by Ian Fisher, Ian Mills, Greg Harper, Tim Mahon and myself and it kept our local die-hard Demon supporters up to date with all the happenings at the western Demons. Whilst this year was very much a first for the group I'm certain that if sponsorship of the radio programme can be maintained then it can be developed and gain greater recognition for our club in what is very much a closed and restricted two-football-club town.

For the radio format to be a success it must be supported by the Football Club, sadly this was not the case this year as none of the promised on-air interviews from the club eventuated. To make 3Dee radio more interesting and successful in 2012 there will need to be greater support from the club and access to key personnel for interviews.

Now to the football events of the year.

The eradication of the club's debt and a season of game day fixtures, which had the club playing most of its games at the MCG and against similar ranked clubs, had most of us looking forward to the year with great enthusiasm and hope. Membership of the Football Club was up and this reflected in our local numbers registered as supporters here in Western Australia. There was a really good vibe around our group and many of us felt that finals football would be part of the clubs agenda this year and it would prove to be a major stepping-stone towards the elusive 13th premiership.

Melbourne were allocated one Perth game for the 2011 season, that being a round 6 Thursday night game against the West Coast Eagles on the 26th April. This fixture fell within the gazetted Easter and school holiday period when many of our supporters and their families were away but the committee still undertook to conduct a pre-game function on the Tuesday evening before the game and to be there to support the team for the Thursday game.

The football club requested that it coordinate the game-day ticketing for this years game.

The pre-game function mentioned above was again the highlight of our year and Lachie Reid compared it magnificently. The night was attended by the entire travelling group of players, coaching and support staff. Whilst our numbers were down on the prior year it was great to see an increase in the number of families and young children attending the night and having the chance to mix with their favourite players. Our thanks must go to Chris Connolly and Dean Bailey for their support in allowing the playing group to attend and for their input on the night.

The success we have had in conducting pre-game functions in the west can be directly attributed to having the playing and coaching staff attending. Functions without the playing group are simply not the same and it is a joy to see the excited looks on the faces of the young kids as their idols are up close and nearby, even the oldies enjoy the opportunity to have a chat and a photo and we trust that this trend can be maintained with future Perth games.

During the night we presented the Gordon Jones memorial trophy to James Frawley for his best-on-ground performance in last year's game here in Perth and also presented a cheque to the club for \$3000.00. This donation would enable the club to have the artwork in the foyer at AAMI Park and in the coaching and indigenous rooms completed.

Our total profit for the night including raffles, auction items and special events totalled more than \$8500.00. This is a credit to the hard work and dedication of all of the western Demons committee - well done.

Unfortunately the result of the game didn't reflect the enthusiasm at the function as the Demons were soundly defeated by the West Coast by 56 points - a game which many expected Melbourne to win, given the Eagles past season, inexperience, and current ladder position, plus an incentive that Melbourne have not won at Paterson /Subiaco stadium since 2004. To the credit of the young Eagles, they demonstrated what desire and commitment means, as the game was well and truly over by mid-way through the 3rd quarter and we had to endure the pain of another humiliation in the West. Our dreams of hearing the Melbourne theme song being played at Paterson stadium will be realised, I only hope it is in my lifetime!

Sadly 2011 will not be remembered as being a wonderful year for the club as we witnessed the Paterson Stadium loss develop into a trend for the remainder of the season. The club suffered its worst ever defeat in Round 19 by a margin of 186 points by Geelong which resulted in the termination of Dean Bailey's coaching position and the club slide to finish the year in 13th position on the ladder with 8 wins and a draw - a far cry from where we envisaged the club to be, but we continued to gather each week to watch the demise and suffered the pain whilst attempting to gather some positives from the unfolding decline.

Since the end of the season we have also witnessed the defection of our 2009 round one draft pick Tom Scully to the new Greater Western Sydney franchise, which requires comment. Tom and a number of other young AFL talents are the victims of an opportunist loophole that has been exploited by a club with a view to gaining a competitive edge against its rivals, and whilst other clubs and Melbourne have also exploited rules in the past, this latest AFL sanctioned loophole does nothing to please the average Football supporter. The speculation regarding Tom's future had a demoralising effect on the club and its supporters. It was off-putting, unnecessary and had an enormous impact on the latter half of the year; simply there must be a better way if this type of trading is to continue.

I was always taught that you play footy to win premierships and to be part of a select group of individuals who bond together for this common goal. Supporters follow clubs to be part of that success. We are informed by clubs and experts that it is foolish to offer long-term contract periods to players given their short life expectancy in the game, yet we have just witnessed exactly that and one wonders who will be held accountable if and when it goes so horribly wrong. I don't begrudge the youngsters of today's game grabbing their opportunities but I do hope that my football club can assist those who take the money over team glory to never achieve a premiership goal. I also hope that the Tom Scully experience inspires our club and its playing group to prove to its opposition that it can rise above this and all other adversity to break a 47-year premiership drought.

After such a poor season major changes at the club were inevitable and have resulted in the departure of some fine people on and off the field, plus changing roles for others. We say thank you to them all for their contribution and support to the Western Demons, which enabled our members to be involved with their football club whenever they were here in Western Australia.

To our local sponsors we sincerely appreciate your past support. We could not conduct our group's activities without your valuable contribution and we trust that you will see fit to continue in 2012.

To the committee I appreciate the support and effort you have all personally given throughout the year. The results achieved reflect your commitment and hard work which has allowed the western Demons to continue to grow even during the times when things are not running so smoothly on the field.

It's been my privilege to serve as President of our local western Demons supporters group for a number of years – but like the club times are a changing. As I stand down at today's AGM, and we hand over to a new committee, I do so knowing that our group here in Western Australia remains financially sound and is very much “alive and kicking”. 2012 brings big challenges to our football club. Success drives positive results and I trust that those who have brought about the changes at our club and those employed by it understand their responsibilities to deliver on their promises. We have heard many promises before, many times over and over, but sadly to no avail.

It is time for the Melbourne Football Club to stand up, reach the pinnacle of the mountain and silence its disbelievers and critics.

Go the Dees in 2012

Roger Wingate
President western Demons