

28 May

CONGRATS BRAD STAFFORD, OUR FIRST INDIGENOUS PLAYER

By Phil Skeggs



Brad Stafford in action against Brunswick NOBSPC last weekend. Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs.

When Brad Stafford ran onto Ivanhoe Park to play his first game for the reserves in Round 3, in all probability he was the senior club's first-ever Aboriginal player. Brad, a key forward who rotates in the ruck, quickly impressed coaches and team-mates with his strong marks, tackles and accuracy in front of goals. Brad kicked 10 goals in five reserves games, including four goals against Brunswick NOBSPC last Saturday.

Now Brad is set to make his senior debut against Whitefriars today – the same weekend the AFL is holding its annual Indigenous Round to recognise and celebrate indigenous players and culture. The round has been named after the late Sir Doug Nicholls, who played 54 games for VFL club Fitzroy, later served as the Governor of South Australia, became the first Aborigine to be knighted, and in retirement lived in Ivanhoe with his wife Lady Nicholls. I can still recall seeing Sir Doug seated under the gum trees at the Lower Heidelberg Rd end of Ivanhoe Park, watching an Ivanhoe game back in the 80s. Sir Doug was well known for his pastoral work with Aborigines in Northcote and came to epitomise the spirit of reconciliation. Imagine how thrilled he might have been to see Brad running out for Ivanhoe?

Several of our club elders were asked this week if they could recall any Aboriginal footballers playing seniors or reserves, and no one could. Nor have I seen any mention of Aboriginal players in my research of the club's early history going back to 1910. More recently, Ivanhoe Juniors has hosted youngsters from the Tiwi Islands.

Brad Stafford came to Melbourne from Alice Springs a year ago and last season played seniors and reserves for Northern Football League Division 2 amateur club Fitzroy Stars. In 2013, he played as a ruckman for the Anmatjere Cowboys in the Central Australian Football League. Anmatjere is one of three major Aboriginal

languages spoken in the Central Desert region. Apart from the lush green surface of Traeger Park in Alice Springs, Brad played most of his footy on rock-hard, red dirt grounds. He also worked as a station hand at Monitjie Station.

Ivanhoe reserves were struggling for numbers during pre-season, so when reserves coach Bill Emerson got a call from Rob Pearce about a bloke who had “just rocked up” at Ivanhoe Park wanting a training run, Bill was quick to get him to Ford Park.

Brad is popular with team-mates and his early impression is that Ivanhoe is a “really good club”. He brought his brother Billy to the club. Billy debuted in Round 6 against Prahran-Assumption, but was sidelined by an ankle injury. Brad is keen to get other relatives to play at Ivanhoe. In the meantime, work is also a priority. At present, he’s working part-time with a relocation company but says he “would love a full-time job...love to do anything at the moment.” So if anyone thinks they can help Brad, let him or club officials know.

For more information about the life and times of Sir Doug Nicholls, there are some brilliant documentary clips on the AFL website. Go to: <http://www.afl.com.au/indigenousround>

26 May

JESS GRACES THE ‘G AGAIN!

Ivanhoe AFC trainer Jessica Dal Pos played on the hallowed turf of the MCG in an AFL curtain-raiser last Sunday. Jess is a member of the Melbourne Football Club’s women’s team, which clobbered Brisbane by 71 points in an exhibition match. The AFL will launch its national women’s league next year and Jess is hoping she and four other Darebin Falcons team-mates will stay on the Melbourne list. You can see Jess (#14) in a highlights reel on this link, [click here](#). Well done Jess!



Jessica in her role with IAFC, but it was her work on Sunday that really was impressive! Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs.

HOERS FROM THE 60s GET TOGETHER FOR TRIPLE B&F WINNER BARRY SPROULE

Former players got together in support of Ivanhoe's Team of the Century centreman, state rep and triple B&F Barry Sproule at the Dick Whittington Hotel in St Kilda last Sunday. Barry's beautiful wife of 50 years, Enid, died suddenly on March 16 after a short illness. The Chapel Street pub, which is owned by 1969 B grade premiership player John Paterson, hosted a group of 60s players, including some of the 1969 team, for Barry's 77th birthday. Being a big Magpies fan as well as an Ivanhoe legend, Barry got to cut a footy cake representing both great clubs. These past players have hooked up regularly since that formative decade and loyalties to each other have seen them sticking together, even in the tough times.

– Don Blackwood



Black & white cake: Barry Sproule (left) with pub owner John Paterson. Photo courtesy Don Blackwood.



Teammates forever: Hoes from the 60s (from left) Robin Hick, Kevin McLean, Barry Sproule, Euan Logan, Russell Knight, Don Blackwood, John Paterson, and Peter Cairns. Photo courtesy Don Blackwood.

15 May

ANOTHER WEEK, ANOTHER MILESTONE. KINGA BRINGS UP HIS 100

Congratulations to Ivanhoe Amateurs' Chris Kingsford on playing his 100th game for the club on Saturday. 'Kinga' is a plumber who absolutely digs playing with his mates at Ivanhoe. A half-back flanker, Kinga is renowned for his dash, particularly during switch plays. He played two seasons of under 19s at Ivanhoe and walked straight into the senior team when he returned to the club in 2012. He was runner-up by just one vote in the club's B&F in 2014 and has played an integral role in the Hoes' rise up the grades.



Chris Kingsford is chaired off after his 100th game for Ivanhoe Amateurs. Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs.

9 May

50 GAMES MILESTONE FOR IVANHOE AMATEUR'S MITCH REES

Ivanhoe Amateurs congratulates MITCH REES on his 50th game for the club last week. Mitch was a key member of the Hoes' drought-breaking under 19s premiership team in 2014. He's since made the transition to reserves footy as a reliable half-forward flanker with safe hands and accurate disposal. We look forward to many more seasons from this fine young clubman.



Mitch Rees, 50 club games for Ivanhoe Amateurs. Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs.

8 May

HOES ON THE MOVE

Does the name Ford Park ring a bell for any VAFA old timers? Ivanhoe Amateurs played at the club's new home ground at Ford Park in Bellfield on Saturday.



Ivanhoe skipper Mitch Lovell leads the Hoes onto Ford Park, which is the club's new home ground this season. Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs

The club has been using Ford Park as a training base for the past two years. Ivanhoe Juniors are also co-tenants. Ivanhoe has been previously relocated to Heidelberg Park, Chelsworth Park in Ivanhoe, and even VAFA headquarters at Elsternwick Park when its home ground on The Boulevard has been unavailable.

But how many past players remember the seniors playing a couple of games in C grade about 25 years ago while council did work to improve the surface at Ivanhoe Park? A life member who copped a whack in the head against Old Ivanhoe at Ford Park that needed several stitches swears it was either in 1988 or 1989. Another says it was in the early '90s. It's a great trivia question!

Bellfield, which was a VAFA member between 1950-65 and folded about 20 years ago, was the previous full-time tenant Aussie Rules club.



Ivanhoe Amateurs stalwarts Don Blackwood, John Miles and son Greg Miles watching the Hoes from the Ford Park pavilion. Photo courtesy Phil Skeggs.

Ivanhoe stalwart Don Blackwood recalled playing Bellfield in an under 19s game at Ford Park back in the 60s, while others remembered the seniors staging practice matches at the Oriel Rd venue. Let's hope the Oriel Rd venue becomes a place of happy memories for us this season.

– PHIL SKEGGS