



Letter from the coach:

As I sit here writing this letter to the Ivanhoe community the Victorian government has implemented stage 2 in the fight against COVID-19 with stage 3 imminent. I have been stood down from my role at Collingwood Football Club who have employed me for the last 7 years and the VAFA have suspended competition until the 31st of May, yet I remain optimistic.

I am one of the lucky ones, I am connected to a community that shares genuine concern in times of need and celebrates our little wins and successes when the time is right. The Ivanhoe Football Club has always provided me with a sense of community and belonging since the day I first walked in the door into the under 19's program as a 17 year old and as I transitioned out of high school into university, Ivanhoe provided an environment for us all to come together, kick a footy around on a Saturday and create life long memories. When the opportunity arose to coach the Ivanhoe Amateur Football Club those amazing memories and friendships I created in my time at Ivanhoe came flooding back, making the decision much simpler. I am absolutely honored to have the opportunity to coach the football club that has always been number one in my heart no matter where I was with my footy.

Since I last played at Ivanhoe in 2013 things have changed at the footy club, most notably the introduction of the women's program (the Ivies). What an amazing evolution that has been for our footy club and our sport. In my brief time returning all my dealings with the Ivies have been so positive and to now be entering a second women's team for the 2020 season is something everyone at the football club is extremely proud of. I look forward to offering any support I can to both the teams and working together to create an environment that fosters a sense of belonging for all our players in both programs.

To the players who have extended themselves in pre-season you have done yourselves extremely proud. The attitude and effort that was applied will not go to waste. The strength and enjoyment I got out of watching the playing group learn, evolve and improve is enough to keep me going however long we are stuck in isolation. My commitment to you is to continue to create an environment that challenges and encourages growth during these uncertain times. Our competitive advantage on the competition will be how we spend this time; learning our structures, keeping fit and showing genuine care and support to everyone at our football club and the Ivanhoe community.

As much as we all crave the elusive senior premierships that has avoided us for many years now, I encourage you all to dig a little deeper. Let's find opportunity in times of hardship to share our vulnerabilities and concerns to develop deeper connections, extend ourselves to provide support to each other and challenge our physical capabilities when no one is watching. This will go a long way into creating the culture that will not be matched by any other team when we are given the opportunity to represent the Ivanhoe Amateur Football Club again.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the wonderful support staff we have working tirelessly behind the scenes. Your work has not been for nothing and as a playing group we hope we do you proud every time we wear the Ivanhoe jumper. To my partner Steph, thank you so much for always encouraging and supporting me to achieve my goals and welcome to the Ivanhoe community. To our sponsors, thank you so much for the support. Our club's existence relies on your support and we hope that these times aren't too trying on your businesses. Our club will support you anyway we can. To our supporters and volunteers, we have big plans for the short and medium term and we need your support more than ever. If any of our supporters are looking for a place to escape our current crazy climate, look no further than the amazing people at the Ivanhoe Amateur Football Club. Finally, I would like to finish off by saying what an honour it is to coach the Ivanhoe Amateur Football Club for the 2020 season, the coaching staff will stop at nothing to deliver success in the short term while also creating an environment that provides everyone with a sense of community and belonging.

Be safe and GO HOES!

Ash Close
IAFC Senior Coach