



FEATURE STORY

RESERVES UNDER REVIEW (Part 1)

By Phil Herden

For the past 22 seasons the SANFL has learnt to adjust and still exist under the shadow of a local AFL team, firstly the Crows in 1991 then the Power as well in 1997.

Both additions to the AFL competition had an impact on the local league in terms of profile, crowds and media coverage. However through it all the SANFL managed to retain it's identity as the best state sporting league in the country.

Now a new upheaval lies on the horizon, one which has the potential to further devalue the SANFL to the point where it is no longer a competition where success is measured by winning a state league premiership but instead a mere feeder body where development of AFL listed players becomes the 1st priority.

The issue revolves around how surplus AFL players at the Crows and Power are managed including calls for both clubs to have a reserves team in the SANFL League competition.

Over the next few issues I will take a look at the following six questions regarding the SA AFL Reserves issue.

- 1) Why is there a surplus?
- 2) What happens at other AFL clubs?
- 3) What are the important factors to consider?
- 4) What is wrong with the current structure?
- 5) Is there a better option than the status quo?
- 6) What should happen from here?



Will the Port Magpies still exist to win premierships?

Images - Peter Argent - 0411 178 444

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LAST WEEK
v Gold Coast

POWER LIST (45)

PLAYED AFL

Travis Boak
Matthew Broadbent
Aplipate Carlile
Dom Cassisi
Troy Chaplin
Kane Cornes
Brad Ebert
Brett Ebert
Hamish Hartlett
Ben Jacobs
John McCarthy
Danyl Pearce
Darren Pfeiffer
Brent Renouf
Daniel Stewart
Paul Stewart
Jacob Surjan
Matt Thomas
Jackson Trengove
Jay Schulz
Justin Westhoff
Chad Wingard

INJURED (7)

John Butcher
Aaron Young
Jasper Pittard
Nick Salter
Robbie Gray
Cam Hitchcock
Mitch Banner

SURPLUS (16)

Brendon AhChee
Nathan Blee
® Danny Butcher
® Mitch Curnow
® Jarrad Irons
® Tom Jonas#
Matthew Lobbe
Tom Logan
Andrew Moore
Ben Newton
Cameron O'Shea
Simon Phillips
Jarrad Redden
David Rodan
Steven Salopek
® Daniel Webb

® Rookie Listed
(s) Suspended

1) WHY IS THERE A SURPLUS?

As you can see by the attached lists in the AFL senior teams have up to 47 players (including Rookies).

Only 22 can play in any given AFL game which leaves up to another 25 who are either injured, a travelling emergency, suspended or looking for another game.

If there are no injuries that works out to an average of 5 to 6 players playing for each SANFL club either at league or reserves level in a given week.

Last weekend the Power had 16 players, the Crows 21 who would normally have played in the SANFL (except there was a state game so they all has a week off).

Of these 37 players, 26 last played at SANFL league whilst 11 last competed in the SANFL reserves competition.

These surplus players can be anyone ranging from a young 17 year old draft pick (ie Brad Crouch), through 15 rookie listed players to veterans near the end of their AFL career trying to get back into the main team (28yo David Rodan.)

Since 1991 these "surplus" players have been allocated to an SANFL club. If they were drafted from outside South Australia this allocation has been done by a mini draft with the lowest ranked team for the previous season getting the first pick.

Usually players stay allocated to the same SANFL club whilst on an AFL list however there are occasional changes of SANFL clubs, especially if the player is demoted to SANFL reserves level. Steven Salopek is the latest example of this where he is leaving Glenelg to go to the Port Magpies.

LAST WEEK
v Collingwood

CROWS LIST (47)

PLAYED AFL

Ian Callinan
Patrick Dangerfield
Michael Doughty
Richard Douglass
Ricky Henderson
Sam Jacobs
Matthew Jaensch
Josh Jenkins
Graham Johncock
David Mackay
Jared Petrenko
Jason Porplyzia
Brett Reilly
Ben Rutten
Rory Sloane
Brodie Smith
Daniel Talia
Kurt Tippet
Scott Thompson
Nathan Van Berlo
Bernie Vince
Matthew Wright

INJURED (3)

Brad Crouch
Aidan Riley
® Will Young

SURPLUS (22)

Luke Brown
® James Craig
® Ben Dowdell
Cam Ellis-Yolmen
Mitchell Grigg
Lewis Johnston
Nick Joyce
Sam Kerridge
Chris Knights
® Rory Laird
Tom Lynch
Brodie Martin
® Sam Martyn
® Tim McIntyre
Shaun McKernan
® Dylan Orval
Andy Otten
Sam Shaw
Brad Symes
Richard Tambling
Luke Thompson
(s) Taylor Walker



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2) WHAT HAPPENS AT OTHER AFL CLUBS?

Victoria

From 1992 to 1999 Victorian based AFL clubs (plus Sydney & Brisbane) played in an AFL reserves competition called the VSFL.

In 2000 the VFSL disbanded and a merger of sorts occurred with AFL reserves players competing under a variety of structures in the VFL.

Currently the VFL has 13 clubs

2 are sole AFL Reserves teams

- Geelong
- Collingwood

2 have no AFL affiliation (stand alone VFL)

- Frankston
- Port Melbourne

7 have affiliations with AFL sides

- Werribee partially with North Melbourne
- North Ballarat partially with North Melbourne
- Williamstown with Western Bulldogs
- Bendigo Gold with Essendon*
- Casey Scorpions with Melbourne
- Sandringham Zebras with St Kilda
- Box Hill Hawks with Hawthorn
- Northern Blues with Carlton
- Coburg Tigers with Richmond

* Essendon will have its own team in VFL in 2012 and Bendigo Gold will become a stand alone VFL club.

Stand alone AFL clubs have been charged a licence fee in recent years of \$110,000 to play in the VFL plus they pay for their own team coaches & officials which leads to only the most financial clubs having their own sides.

Carlton had a stand alone side in 2000-02 whilst Sydney had a partial alignment with Port Melbourne in 2001-2002.

Crow listed Luke Thompson
In action for the Eagles
Images —Peter Argent
0411 178 444



Having so many AFL reserves players in the VFL has led the league to be branded as an “unofficial” AFL reserves competition rather than portrayed as league competition in its own right.

Back in March, Woodville West Torrens premiership player and now Bendigo Bombers coach Hayden Skipworth created a storm by stating the following about the alignment with Bendigo this season;

“It’s been made very clear to me from the powers (that) be at Essendon that it’s not about win-loss—it’s all about playing the young Essendon guys in the positions they need to be played in”

“If we lose games because of that, then so be it.”
(Herald Sun March 9th 2012)

With this lack of focus on winning premierships it is should be to no surprise that VFL Media coverage is minimal with almost all of it focussed around AFL players involved and crowd support is now so low attendance figures are no longer published. .

If this is the future of the SANFL with AFL Reserves teams included then it is a far from rosy one.

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Western Australia

Currently the arrangement for West Coast Eagles and Fremantle Dockers players are very similar to that in the SANFL with all on the list allocated to one of nine WAFL clubs.

However in 1999 for three seasons the WAFL tried a “Host Club” arrangement where all the Eagles players went to Claremont (1999) & East Perth (2000-01) and Dockers players went across the oval to South Fremantle (1999-01).

As the South Fremantle web site history page illustrates it did not work as planned.

“In season 1999, the club's one hundredth, South Fremantle became the 'host club' for most of the spare players for Fremantle Oval co-tenants, the Fremantle Dockers.

Boosted by the injection of talent the Bulldogs climbed from sixth to earn the minor premiership. However, the host club arrangement saw much home-grown talent leave the club (a career move that brought Gus Seebeck a Sandover Medal) and which saw local draftees playing against their old clubs, to the fury of rival clubs and their supporters.

The club entered the finals with the worst of both worlds - antagonism from the football public and muted support from the Dockers who refused to release all eligible players for the finals campaign” (www.sffc.com.au)

Claremont ditched the deal after just one season having lost many players who left for greater opportunities at other clubs, these departures not offset but the addition of available Eagles.

East Perth decided to have a go in 2000 and it paid instant dividends, the Royals ending 22 years in the

Would Jason Davenport
have developed better
in a Power Reserves Side?
Images - Peter Argent
- 0411 178 444



wilderness rising from 8th to secure back to back flags, the 2001 premiership against fellow Host Club, South Fremantle.

With the competition appearing to have become unbalanced WAFL club presidents voted 8-1 (East Perth the sole objector) to go back to spreading the players around, the only difference being interstate players for the Eagles would go to the four clubs north of the Swan River, whilst interstate Dockers recruits would go to the five clubs South.

What should be noted from this failed arrangement is that it corresponded with both the Eagles & Dockers dropping down the ladder.

	West Coast	Fremantle	Total win
Spread			
1998	12-10 (7th)	7-15 (15th)	19
Host Club			
1999	12-10 (5th)	5-17 (15th)	17
2000	7-14-1 (13th)	8-14 (12th)	15
2001	5-17 (14th)	2-20 (16th)	7
Spread			
2002	11-11 (8th)	9-13 (13th)	20
2003	12-8-2 (7th)	14-8 (5th)	26

So if the whole purpose was to enhance the depth and preparation for the AFL teams, even at the expense of the WAFL as a league competition, that was not reflected on the scoreboard.



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Indeed when the structure went back to a spread system both clubs won at least an extra 6 games the following season.

Despite this history the Dockers and Eagles have revived this issue in recent years pushing it much harder than their AFL counterparts in South Australia.

However having been burned once, WAFL clubs do not want a bar of it.

The most recent proposal this year was for the WAFL to stay as is but with a 18 game home and away season which will given each club 4 byes to play scratch matches against Eagles and Dockers reserves sides.

Earlier this month six of the nine clubs indicated they had no interest in the proposal whatsoever and the other three remained sceptical.

“We are 100 per cent opposed to it” said Falcons President Brett Raponi. “It would devalue the competition, confuse the next generation of football followers and weaken the talent pool.”

Swan Districts President Peter Harvey did not want to see the WAFL follow the demise of the VFL. *“It’s alarming what has happened in Victoria. The WAFL and local AFL clubs need to take heed of what has happened there. There is a strong football culture here ...why would anyone want to jeopardise that?”* (The West Australian May 9th 2012)

Unlike the move to join the VFL with the West Coast Eagles in 1987 it is unlikely that the WAFL clubs will blink first with this issue.



Queensland & New South Wales

Brisbane and Sydney were the odd ones out for many years with their surplus players.

The Bears jumped from having a team in the QAFL (1987-88) to the AFL Reserves (1989-92) and then back to the QAFL (1993-96).

After the merger with Fitzroy they remained in the QAFL under various names (Lion Cubs, Suncoast Lions) before the new NEAFL North Conference was formed where they are simply the Brisbane Lions.

For Sydney, they had as South Melbourne a long association in the VFL/AFL Reserves until that competition ended in 1999.

In 2000 they played as the Redbacks in the Sydney league but were far too strong and became the first minor premier in recent state league history to **refuse to play in the finals series.**

In 2001-02 they had experienced players aligned to Port Melbourne whilst young kids still stayed at the Redbacks.

Then in 2003 they joined the ACTAFL and dominated that competition with flags in 2005, 2006 & 2007 before the league became the NEAFL East Conference in 2011.

The Gold Coast Suns league squad played in the VFL in 2010 before their AFL debut in 2011, with their reserves now based in the NEAFL North Conference.

Greater Western Sydney debuted in the NEAFL East Conference in 2011 in preparation for their AFL entry this year whilst their 2012 reserves remain in this league.

The NEAFL is made up of 19 clubs across NT, ACT, NSW and Queensland include 4 AFL Reserves sides.

COMING UP—PART TWO

How long will Crows Rookie Tim McIntyre stay in Double Blue colours?

**Images —Peter Argent
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