



**FITZROY
FOOTBALL CLUB**
INCORPORATING THE FITZROY REDS

135th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Report of the 2019 activities

By Fitzroy President, Joan Eddy

THE SEASON

Well, what an amazing rollercoaster of a year it's been. Following the elevation to Premier B in our senior men's competition, and the retirement of so many experienced and accomplished senior players, we always knew we'd have to dig deep to maintain our position this year.

In a true team effort, with support from across our seven individual teams – from our players, coaches, support staff, trainers, volunteers and, of course, our amazing and loyal supporters – we fought the good fight and did what we set out to do: cement our place in Premier B.

And with that momentum, take it one step further in 2020 – into the finals and making every effort to experience success in those finals.

Coming off an undeniably successful year last year, where we not only moved back into B, but netted two premierships for the Senior Men's squads and a berth in the grand final for our Reserves Women in Premier, this rollercoaster year posed some interesting challenges and some great highlights.

The Premierships also led to strong off-field results in 2018, which have not been matched this year.

2019 HIGHLIGHTS

On field

This year our Senior Women hosted archrivals West Brunswick for the very first time any Senior team has played under lights at the spiritual home of the Fitzroy Football Club.

For our women's teams, the year has been undeniably tough. With significant injuries cruelling their progress at vital points along the way, and falling short in a number of games by the narrowest of margins, the Roy girls nevertheless stuck together with their characteristic sense of purpose. They will play in Women's Premier B in season 2020 after being relegated this season and they are determined to bounce back next season with the energy and humour that marks everything they do.

A definite bright spot has been the performance of senior player, Teresa Zampaglione. Not only was Razor named best on ground in the Big V game against AFL Goldfields, she was runner-up in this year's VAFA's Premier Women's Best and Fairest. Inaugural VAFA Premier Women's B&F, Tash Ross Harris, who came back to footy after a year off and in just 7 (and a bit) games managed a top 10 finish alongside Razor.

Under Monty Stuart's inspirational leadership, the Under 19s have kept the faith and continued giving their all each week, striving to do their best for the club. Again in 2019 the U19s gave up a number of players to the senior ranks, all of whom more than held their own week on week and doing more than just a little towards ensuring we maintained our position in Premier B. Special mention to Marcel Laidlaw on his top five finish in the VAFA Under 19s Div 1 best and fairest awards.

The Thirds enjoyed another stellar season, sitting on the top rungs of the ladder throughout the season and moving effortlessly into the finals campaign again, under coach, Trent Coleman. Due recognition needs to go to Tim De Natris who not only led them honorably as captain and mentor, but managed to get the nod as the leading goal kicker for the VAFA Thirds Division 1. It was a shame that the boys' in-season momentum fell away in two tough games against Caulfield and then De La Salle at the pointy end of the season.

Special mention to Tony Keehan and the U23s who hit the field for the first time this season under his impressive leadership. It's always hard going to set up a new team from scratch, and Tony and the boys conducted themselves in an exemplary fashion, doing it tough in the early stages, but growing in stature and confidence and securing four gutsy wins by the season's end. The U23 Best and Fairest Award was named in honour of our much loved and respected Club coach, Tim Bell.

Under the incredible leadership of Luke Mahoney and Bernie Carter, our senior men's squads endured a tough season and prevailed – to the acclaim of not just the Fitzroy Football Club but the entire Victorian Amateur Football Association.

We are very proud of all our players – their grit and determination, endurance under pressure, never-say-die attitude, and dedication to the footy cause. The future looks very bright.

Off field

The Brunswick Street lights are the result of just one of our successful grants last year, with a new electronic scoreboard at Brunswick Street, new lights at Ramsden, and a complete redevelopment of clubroom facilities at Brunswick Street Oval, to be rolled out over the next few years.

These developments are crucial to our long-term viability. We have worked strongly and collaboratively with our Edinburgh Gardens Sporting Precinct partners, the City of Yarra, State and Federal government. We'd particularly like to acknowledge the enormous efforts of Director Gabrielle Murphy, who has championed our cause very strongly throughout all negotiations. Keep watching for more news in the next stages of the redevelopment.

President Joan Eddy received the acknowledgement of the VAFA and the AFL Community with a number of awards marking her significant contribution to community football, named as the AFL Community Football Woman of the Year, receiving a Certificate of Merit – VAFA's highest honour – and being the first woman to deliver the toast to open the VAFA season in its very long history.

An important initiative this year has been our work on Player Wellbeing, led by Michael Pickering, with the involvement of a number of current and former players. Pickers has been busy behind the scenes introducing programs and developing approaches to provide all our players with the support they need not only to play footy, but to be able to live their lives to the full. We are putting in place programs to help players in three key areas – mental health, professional development and personal development.

Other achievements this year include:

- Establishing the Fitzroy sustainability fund (working title being the Fitzroy Forever Future Fund) through the Australian Sports Foundation
- Deepening our partnership with the ACU and establishing the start of an intern program
- Increasing our membership returns
- Working on a number of improvements to our governance including the drafting of new policies (childsafes, illegal drugs) and a code of conduct

- Broadening our sponsorship base and increasing our weekly player awards
- Bringing to market a number of new merchandise items, particularly the very popular supporter gear
- Running another extremely successful raffle, which raised over \$10,000
- Celebrating the Sir Doug Nicholls Indigenous Round, with a beautiful smoking ceremony performed by Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle Ron Jones at BSO and marking the solemnity of Anzac Day with a bugler playing the last post pre game
- Our game-day lunches, which help us engage our local community, supporters, members and other key stakeholders, covering topics as diverse as mental health (with former Carlton legend Ken Hunter), gambling and alcohol impacts on young people in sport, women in football, sporting literature and more.
- Winning two VFA media awards and we have just been shortlisted for nine more, across four categories.

LIFE MEMBERS

Congratulations to the four nominees for life membership this year.

- Michael Cussen – for 10 years as a player
- Max Ellis – for 10 years as a player
- Julian Turner – for 10 years as a player, the last two as captain
- Steve Hurl – for 12 years as Seniors’ fitness coach and administrator of the D Squad.

THANK YOU

TO OUR SPONSORS

Thanks to our wonderful, supportive sponsors; we can’t do what we do without their financial and in-kind backing:

- Australian Catholic University
- Jellis Craig, The Royal Derby and Fitzroy IT
- Clifton Hill/North Fitzroy Community Bank Branch of the Bendigo Bank
- Fitzroy Victoria Bowling and Sports Club
- The Reds Foundation
- Universal Traveller
- Bontempo Pizzeria
- APS Benefits Group
- CGU

- VIC Medical Doctors
- Brisbane Lions
- And all player sponsors.

TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our seven teams could not do what they do without an army of wonderful volunteers. Ours is a small but committed army and they do the best job. We'd like to particularly acknowledge the significant work of the team managers, 2019 club person of the year, Steve Maniatakis, and ACU interns Ellie Mitsch and Juliette Fava.

TO OUR COACHES

We'd like to express our gratitude and admiration for all our coaches – Luke Mahoney, Bernie Carter, Gray Barton, Simon Jackson, Monty Stuart, Tony Keehan and Trent Coleman – and the assistants who supported them, on and off the field. We'd like to wish Gray and Monty all the best in their future coaching careers after they stepped down at the end of the season.

AND THE BOARD

Finally, I want to pay special thanks to the Fitzroy Board. This year we have been joined by some stellar talents, a number of whom celebrate one year on the Board at this year's AGM.

The achievements above have been significantly driven with the help of our newer Directors – David Leydon, Rob Olney, Michael Pickering and Lesley Dredge, who joined us during the year. Today we welcome Dr Kasey Symons, meaning we fill our full quota of Directors for the first time in a number of years.

We've laughed together, worked together, had a few respectful tussles, and together, joined forces to represent the club in the VAFA and the wider community, to keep Fitzroy healthy and thriving for the good of us all. On field and off, the job they do has been done so well.

I'd like to say thank you to everyone who's been involved with the Club this year – coaches, players and their families, members, life members, supporters and everyone involved in our wonderful Fitzroy community. You've all played your part and we couldn't have done it without you.

Joan Eddy, President

On behalf of the Directors of the Fitzroy Football Club (incorporating the Fitzroy Reds)