

Eagles' favourite son returns

By Liam Twomey

It was a happy homecoming at Western Eagles Football Club last week as it welcomed back former junior star and now Melbourne Victory youth team captain Thomas Deng.

Deng put the next generation of Eagles' players through their paces with a number of training drills and provided insights on what it takes to make it to the next level.

Western Eagles youth co-ordinator Peter Marmura said it was a fantastic night for the club.

"Thomas was very happy to be there and everyone at the club was really excited to have him back, especially the players," he said.

"You should have seen them training and how enthusiastic they were. It was unbelievable.

"We introduced him to the entire group and, after that, he went around to each team and did a couple of drills with them.

"He was working with the different players and different teams, and it was great."

For Melbourne Victory, 18-year-old Deng is a lead defender, holding down the right back and central positions.

His natural leadership has also helped the Victory take top spot in the NPL1 East competition, with the club enjoying seven wins from its eight games this year.

Marmura said it was always clear Deng was going to progress to great heights in the game.

"As a junior, he came into the club and because of his talent was put in the senior team straight away," Marmura said.

"I think he was only about 15 or 16 then. He was playing in the midfield and could just run all day. He had amazing skills.

"I don't think we've ever had a fitter player come through the club. We knew he was extremely talented."

Western Eagles have now turned their attention to finding the next up-and-coming stars from the western suburbs.

Marmura said the club had put a huge focus on its juniors in the off-season, seeing this as

the best way to compete with a number of its Brimbank rivals.

"We're surrounded by these bigger clubs, but we've been around for a long time and are one of the oldest clubs in Victoria," Marmura said.

"The club was established in 1950. It's done very well in the past and we're trying to provide a good family club.

"For some clubs, the juniors can fund the seniors. For us, we want to put that money into training them from an early age and develop them for years to come.

"Hopefully, with that approach, we can keep climbing the ladder."

Thomas Deng put former Western Eagles teammates through their paces last week. (Supplied)



Jets crash as Power apply afterburners

The Western Jets continue to battle through the first half of the TAC Cup season, copping another big loss on Sunday.

The Jets went down to Gippsland Power by a whopping 105 points, 22.22 (154)-7.7 (49).

The Jets did their best work early in the contest, kicking two goals in the opening term to trail by just 10 points at the first break.

Gippsland then kicked into gear, booting six second-quarter goals to extend its lead to 38 at half-time.

Despite fighting on, the Jets were unable to slow their fired-up rivals, eventually giving up 44 scoring shots.

Todd Beck and Sam Skinner were the standouts for Gippsland, combining for six goals.

For the Jets, defender Liam Carter continued his strong season, working hard in the backline, while Brandon Coletta was impressive around the ground.

After five rounds, the Jets are on the bottom of the TAC Cup ladder after failing to register a win.

They will look to change that when they host fellow strugglers the Bendigo Pioneers on Saturday at Burbank Oval.

While the results on field didn't go their way, there was some excitement at the weekend for the Jets as 2014 squad member Corey Ellis made his debut for Richmond in the AFL.

A former Keilor junior, Ellis was named in the Tiger line-up that went down to Geelong by nine points.

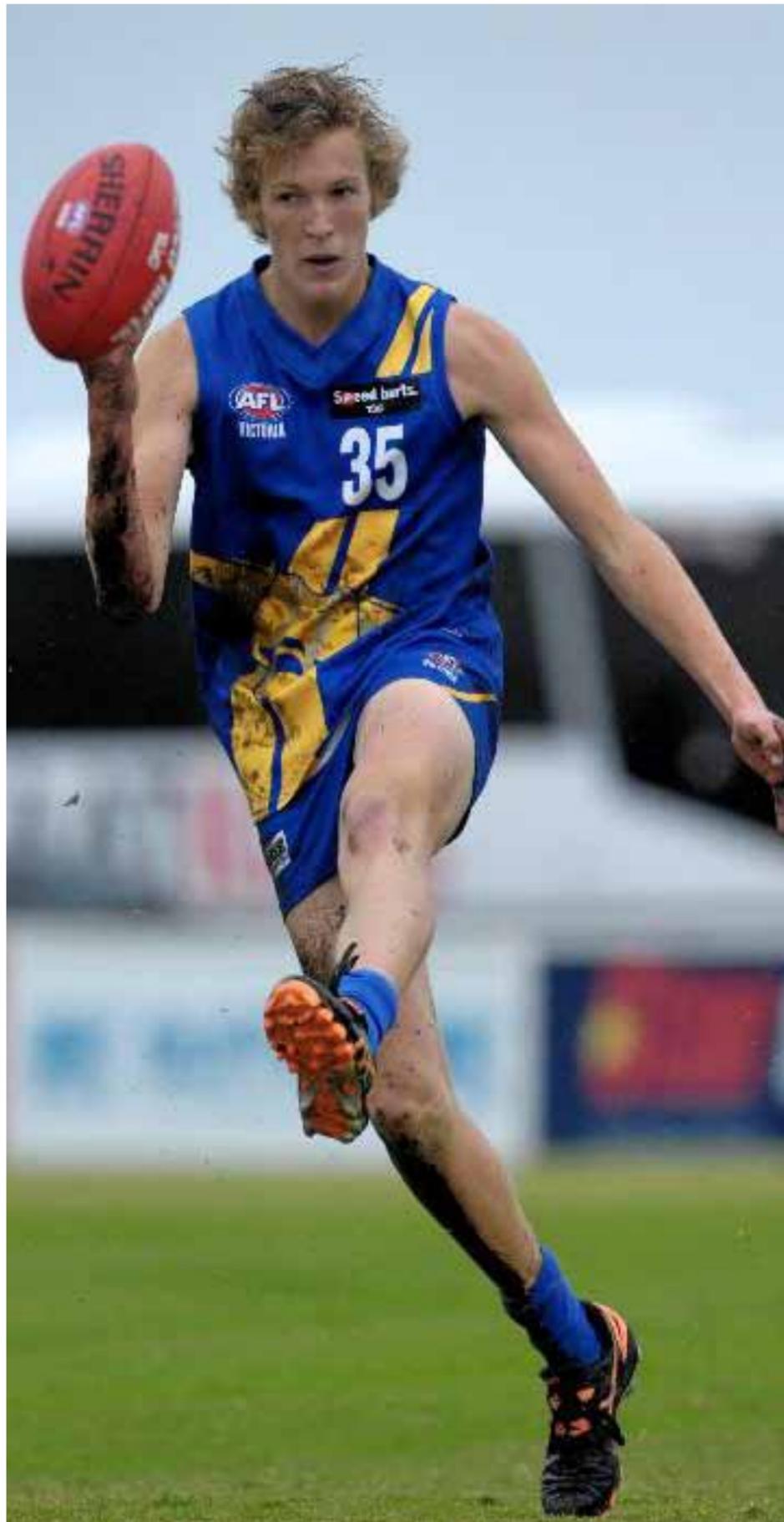
The first-gamer didn't take long to find his feet on the big stage, finishing with 13 disposals and two tackles.

He kicked a late goal as the Tigers tried to pull off a come-from-behind victory.

Ellis joins Western Jets teammate Liam Duggan as players from last year's squad to have debuted in the AFL in 2015.

Duggan played his first match for West Coast last month.

Liam Twomey



Oscar Junker was one of the Jets' better players against Gippsland Power. (Damian Visentini)

Sport shorts

WRFL 1

Albion's tough start to the Western Region Football League division 1 season continued on Saturday. The Cats were handed a 106-point, 23.20 (158)-7.10 (52) thrashing by Werribee Districts. It was tough going from the opening moments for Albion, which failed to kick a goal in the first quarter and managed just two majors up to half-time. There were no such troubles at the other end of the ground, with Werribee Districts booting 12 goals in the first half and having 22 scoring shots. Despite goals being a little easier to come by in the second half, there was no coming back for Albion, which has lost its opening four matches. The Cats are in last place on the WRFL division 1 ladder.

WRFL 2

In Western Region Football League division 2, Caroline Springs got its first win on Saturday. The Lakers proved far too good for Sunshine Heights, winning 17.13 (115)-8.17 (65). Despite the eventual big margin, Caroline Springs didn't have things all its own way and was forced to fight during a hard first quarter. Sunshine Heights had three more scoring shots than the Lakers but was unable to convert in front of goal. As a result, Caroline Springs took a seven-point lead into the first change and continued to increase the margin throughout the afternoon. After four rounds the Lakers are in seventh spot on the division 2 ladder. They will take on third-placed North Footscray this week.

EDFL

Keilor secured a vital away win in the Essendon District Football League premier division on Saturday. The Blues defeated Avondale Heights 15.17 (107)-13.11 (89). Leading the charge was Keilor captain Dylan Joyce, who was outstanding. He was well supported by Kane Barbuto and Rhyce Prismall, who also worked hard for the Blues. Prismall finished the match as one of 12 Keilor goal-kickers. For Avondale Heights, Patrick Rose booted four goals. The result moves Keilor to fifth spot on the EDFL premier division ladder with a 3-2 record. The Blues' next match will be in round six against the Northern Saints.