

## SUB-DISTRICT CRICKET

# Tigers ready to pounce

## HEATH PRITCHARD BOLSTERS STRONG LINE-UP LOOKING TO GO ONE BETTER THIS YEAR

Luke D'Anello

EXPECT Werribee to go deep into this season's Sub-District Cricket Association finals.

The Tigers boasted enormous batting depth last summer and a consistent set of bowlers, which led them to slingshot from the bottom section of the ladder to the grand final.

While the locals lost the decider against powerhouse Melton, they enter this season with a superior line-up after securing the signature of experienced Caulfield all-rounder Heath Pritchard.

While it would be foolhardy to write off the Lions, reigning RM Hatch Medal winner Michael Allen is set to miss the season after breaking his leg in a football grand final and Oakleigh is shaping as Werribee's main rival in the East-West group.

"Obviously we go in to this year expecting to play finals again and hopefully go one better than we did last year," Werribee skipper Shaun Dean said.

"Last year, we were a bit of an unknown. We knew we had a decent side on paper, but a few guys hadn't played cricket for a while and we managed to put it together.

"I expect blokes like Jake Purton to rise to another level to last year. I'm expecting more from him and guys like Kyle (Andrews) and the younger crew, who have had two or three years at it now to probably have more of a



Heath Pritchard bowling for Caulfield last summer.

breakout season and not rely on the experienced players as much.

"You need your second tier to perform at a senior level. If that happens during the season, I think we'll be very close to where we were last year."

Dean and vice-captain Tim O'Brien spearheaded the batting last season, as they both plundered more than 600 runs.

However, Tigers David Wolfe (knee), Wade McCall (broken hand) and Andrews (broken arm) are recovering from injuries.

Dean said Wolfe and Andrews were likely to play against Box Hill in Round 1 on Saturday, but McCall could miss out.

Pritchard arrives at the Tigers with a lofty reputation after logging 1288 runs and 135 wickets in the past five years.

"Heath has obviously been around the Sub-District scene for a long time, so he brings a lot of experience and nous to our team," Dean said.

"That's what we were looking for. I think we lacked that one extra senior player in that grand final. He'll probably bat middle-order for us and be handy there, and he'll also be handy with the ball.

"We think his bowling will be more of an asset.

"Having the batting depth we did last year, his batting is a bonus."



Tim O'Brien in action for Werribee last summer.

Picture: MARK DADSWELL

## WESTERN REGION FOOTBALL LEAGUE

## Chapman takes charge as move lets club begin new chapter

Luke D'Anello

FORMER Sydney Swan Wade Chapman will coach Werribee Districts next season.

Chapman replaces long-time Tigers boss Kirk Norton at the helm, as the team moves from the Victorian Amateur Football Association to the Western Region Football League.

Chapman, 37, played 51 games for the Swans from

1994-99 and has built an impressive coaching resume, leading Drysdale to back-to-back Bellarine Football League premierships from 2009-10.

He was then midfield coach at VFL club Werribee for two seasons before taking a year off.

"With Kirk and myself having strong ties at Werribee, we got some information that he would be someone who would suit us and be

fantastic for what we need," a happy Werribee Districts president Rod Harrington said.

"We asked around and everyone we spoke to gave him a fantastic rap. He just brought to the table a lot of things we were looking for.

"Generally, he's just a good citizen and that was first and foremost. His record really stood out for us.

"We would reasonably expect and hope he'd bring

some players across and some other key coaching personnel. All that's been part of the conversations we've had."

Chapman, who played in the 1996 AFL grand final and lives in Geelong, has also previously coached North Shore.

Harrington is confident that the Tigers' playing list will remain intact after they finished bottom of the VAFA Premier B ladder with just

three wins this season. The departure of several players in recent years was a key reason in the club's move to the WRFL.

VAFA clubs are unable to pay players, meaning they are vulnerable to raids from cashed-up rivals in other competitions.

"We've got a fairly good list, but they're a young list. We need a couple of bigger, stronger bodies," Harrington said.

Werribee Districts' preference is to be placed in WRFL Division 1, but the league is yet to confirm its structure for next season.

"There's a really fresh enthusiasm in the club," Harrington said.

"We're excited, but it's a nervous excitement because we don't know what to expect, but the other side of the coin is that the competition doesn't know what to expect from us."

## PENNANT LAWN BOWLS

## Werribee faces a tough path back to top tier without key bowlers

Luke D'Anello

WERRIBEE will confront a new set of opponents this season after being relegated from Premier Division last summer.

The Bees are in Division 1-Section 1 this season, but the locals are no guarantee to bowl over their oppo-

nents after waving goodbye to four players - Ben Major (overseas), Trent Curtis (season off), Darren Christie (Albert Park) and Mark Brunato (Deer Park).

"They (Major and Christie) were both skipping, which would have helped us in Division 1," Bees veteran Brendan Barker said.

"When we dropped down, we would have been a chance to nearly finish a fair way up. We're really hoping to consolidate and maybe make the top four."

Attention has turned to the club's young talent, with Jayden Christie the standout. "We're playing a couple of young ones as we

speak. We've got a young one in the state side, Jayden Christie," Barker said.

"He'll be playing in the top side. He was last year, but he'll be playing in a higher position as well."

Werribee will start its campaign against Kingsbury away from home on Saturday.

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