

2002 The long way back

Season 2002 began with only one major change at the top; David McLaurin took over from the long serving and very efficient Secretary Brian Green. Ray Steyger continued on as President and also Treasurer.

On the field George Steiner was again appointed playing coach with the return of some former players and the recruitment of a few new players instilled some optimism in the club.

The first challenge was at Thornton where the home side had also recruited well. The game began tentatively as each side tested the other out but it was Thornton who soon got on top and went further away as the game progressed. Alex. 4.6 to T.E. 15.15. Brad Kidd, Paul Griffiths, Aaron Heard, Andrew Cumming, Cory Jack and Boz Miljkovic were the award winners. The Reserves embarrassingly were goalless for the preceding game.

Steven Hedger led the Rebels out on the occasion of his 200th game against Violet Town at the Showgrounds but the visitors had built a match winning lead by the half time break. Alex. tried hard to get back into the game in the third quarter but the visitors answered each Alex. goal and went away with the wind in the last quarter to win comfortably 20.9 to 12.10. The Awards this week were shared by Michael Rouget, Shane Carney, Wayne Haggis, Aaron Heard, Brad Kidd and Boz Miljkovic.

On April 27th Alex travelled to Mercury drive to play Rumbalara and welcomed Tim Bayard and Duncan Hill to the club for their first games. The home side started the game much better and was some ten goals in front when teams went in for the half time break. Alex tried hard to get back into the game but could not reduce the big margin that Rumbalara had established although the second half was much more even. Rumbalara 21.15 to Alex. 10.12. The young Kidd brothers, Sam and James along with Shane McDonald, Boz Miljkovic, Brian Ward and Luke Ware shared the awards.

Alexandra hosted the Shepparton East club the following week and unfortunately again, a poor first half allowed the Bombers to virtually set up the win. Alex. again performed much better after half time and outscored the visitors in the third quarter to get back into the game. Shepp. East finished well to win comfortably 18.17 to Alex. 11.10. Cory Jack, Michael Rouget, Luke Ware, Shane Carney, Tim Bayard and Shane McDonald earned the votes

Round five saw Alex. travel to Benalla where they started the game well only to again lose touch in the second quarter as had become a pattern. Alex. tried hard to bridge the gap in the third term but the teamwork of the Panthers was too good and they went away to win easily 25.12 to Alex. 13.9. Duncan Hill, Brad Cameron, Luke Ware Daniel Wales, Karl Snow and Boz Miljkovic headed the award winners with Wayne Haggis with 6 goals an effective forward.

Alex. were away again the following week this time to Dookie. The Rebels began the game well aided by the breeze but again the second quarter belonged to the home side. A good third term saw the Rebels in unfamiliar territory, in front, albeit by a point at three quarter time. Dookie got away to a narrow lead but the determined Alex. side leveled the scores with only minutes to go. A kick out-of- bounds on the full gave Dookie a chance to win the game after the siren but the shot was short, leaving scores level Alex. 7.5 to Dookie 6.11. Alexandra had finally broken a run of 23 consecutive losses, the longest in the club's history. Shane McDonald Jason Krijt, Adam McDonald, Aaron Heard, Steve Hedger and Michael Rouget were amongst the better players.

Back to the Showgrounds for round seven where the Yea Tigers were the visitors in front of a good crowd for this clash of traditional rivals. Alex began the game with some confidence after last week's drawn game but ladder leaders Yea were far too good and gave the Rebels a football lesson. 26.18 to 8.4.

Tim Bayard, Cory Jack, Jason Krijt, Boz Miljkovic, Daniel Wales and Sam Kidd tried hard to stem the flow of Tiger goals.

After the Queen's Birthday break for the Inter league game where the Kyabram League 17.20. defeated the C.G.F.L. 6.5. and the C.G.F.L.Under 17s 18.18. defeat Kyabram 11.5 (Ross Cavill and Neil Oakley amongst the best players) Alex was again at home this time to Thornton Eildon who was in third place at this stage. Alex began well but Thornton Eildon kicked six unanswered goals to take control late in the first quarter and from there on continued to increase their lead running out easy winners 15.12 to Alex 6.7. Awards: Shane Carney, Cory Jack, Boz Miljkovic, Michael Rouget, Daniel Wales and Brad Kidd.

Alex next travelled to Violet Town and arrived to be met with welcome wet conditions that had dried up somewhat as the day progressed. Alex. were soon on the back foot as three players were injured and out of the game early as the home side took the advantage. As the Rebels settled they fought the game right out but Violet Town always looked the winner. Alex 8.5 to VT 11.9. Best: Tim Bayard a well balanced player who gets plenty of the ball. Andrew Cumming, Darren Austin, Paul Griffiths, George Steiner and Shane Carney.

Alexandra were next hosts to Rumbalara and while the Rebels had as much of the ball as the visitors they were not able to show the results on the scoreboard. Rumbalara took control of the game in the third quarter but Alex, coming home to the town end, showed what they were capable of with eight last quarter goals. Alex 13.11 to 19.18. Tim Bayard, Peter Hoornweg, Colin Gesler, Cory Jack, Jason Krijt and Adam McDonald were award winners...

Alexandra next made the trip to Shepparton East and was very competitive everywhere except on the scoreboard. Alex. were still in the game at half time but the Bombers shifted up a gear in the third quarter to build a big lead, which they increased as the game reached a conclusion. S.E. 22.16 to Alex 10.6. Award winners. Cory Jack, Jason Krijt, Chris Mullins, Carl, Snow, Daniel Wales.

On a cold wet wintery day in early July hosted Benalla All Blacks. The ground, although wet and slippery, was in good condition and a close tight game of wet weather football was played out. The fourth placed Panthers, behind narrowly at quarter time, worked their way to a 20 point lead at half time. Alex. narrowed the gap to 10 points at the last change but unfortunately failed by three points in a tight last quarter. Alex. 9.6 to A.B. 9.9. Best : Cory Jack, Wayne Haggis, George Steiner. Brad Cameron, Sam Kidd, Jason Krijt, Luke Ware and Brad Kidd led the award winners.

At home again, this time to Dookie, Round 13 proved lucky for the Rebels who broke through for their first win since the 2000 grand final (30 games) After an even first quarter where the Rebels did well against the wind. Alex. failed to capitalize on their turn with the breeze and trailed narrowly at half time. Two goals each in a tight third term enabled the visitors to lead by eight points at the last change. After goals to both teams early, Alex kicked the last five goals of the game to finally bring up a much deserved win. 14.8 to 10.11. Award winners were Daniel Crane James and Sam Kidd, Chris Mullins, Daniel Wales and Wayne Haggis from an even team effort.

Alex. were brought back to earth by top side Yea at the Recreation Reserve in very cold wintery conditions in round 14. With six changes to the winning side, Alex kept pace with the Tigers for the first quarter and a bit but then it was all Yea as they ran out eleven goal winners 14.13 to 4.7. Best: Peter Hoornweg, Paul Griffiths and Aaron Heard Incentive Awards were also earned by David Bourke, Shane Carney and Sam Kid

Alexandra made their second short trip east for round 15 this season and were outclassed by the home side looking to earn a double chance come finals time. Thornton Eildon always seem to be at full strength for the "local derby" and won every quarter with Collier, Hall and Parker most effective up forward to accumulate 23.18 to Alex's 9.8. Alex. had very few winners but Cory Jack, Andrew Cumming and Aaron Heard were selected by the home side as Alex's best with Incentive Awards were given to David Bourke, Adam McDonald, Daniel Wales and Peter Hoornweg.

Round 16 and Alexandra were at home hosting Violet Town on a wet August day. Alex opened up a big lead in the second quarter which they were able to hold for the remainder of the game to record their second won for the season 10.15 to V.T 4.10. Award winners were Tim Bayard, Shane Carney, Jason Krijt, Adam McDonald, Daniel Wales and Cory Jack. Earlier in the day, Dean Spinks led the Reserves side on to the ground on the occasion of his 300th game for the club. Dean has been a fine player and clubman over many years. All four sides had wins on this day.

The last away game for 2002 was a second trip to Mercury Drive Shepparton to challenge Rumbalara. Remarkably Alex. had some 30 odd players injured or unavailable and only 24 player to field two open aged teams. In a great display of team spirit most players played two games for the day. Alex were able to keep with the Rumbalara side for the first half although not getting full value for effort on the scoreboard. As expected the fitter, fresher Rumbalara team finished on too strongly for the tired Rebels to win 18.9 to 5.1. The Incentive Awards were shared amongst the 24 players who gave their all this day.

At home for the last game of the season, the Rebels led out by George Steiner playing his 150th game kept with second placed Shepp. East for the first half but the difference in playing personal told in the last half as the Bombers worked their way to a 25.26. to Alex 13.12 win. Incentive Awards for the final game were Andrew Cumming, Peter Hoornweg, Cory Jack, Brad Kidd, Adam McDonald and Paul Griffiths.

The Seniors side had only the two wins and a draw finishing in last place whilst the Reserves (6wins) finished eighth Alexandra's only representatives in the finals were the Under 14s (top of ladder) and the Under 17s (third).

In the B&F club voting Seniors: Paul Griffiths polled 142 Cory Jack 113 and George Steiner 64. Reserves: Steven Hedger 64, David Ferguson 35 and Dean Spinks 27. U.17: Neil Oakley 50, Ross Cavill 55 and Harley Scott 54.

Finals The Under 17s were beaten 13.4 to 15.10 in the Qual. Final at Violet Town by the home side but won the following week in the First Semi. at Thornton. 15.15. to Shepp. East 6.11. The Under 14s won the Second Semi at home 6.10 to 5.2. to go straight through to the Grand Final.

The U17s reversed the result of the First Semi with a good win in the Prelim. Final at Mercury Drive defeating Violet Town 10.7 to 6.6. Best: Michael Gleeson (4gls) Declan Heyes (2) Tom Creighton, Ross Cavill, Cheyne Gilmore and Luke Martin.

In the Grand Final the following week at Shepparton East The Peter Norris coached Under 14s were first up and successful, defeating Rumbalara 3.0 – 4.1 – 7.2 - 8.3.51 to 1.0 – 3.1 – 3.2 - 4.4.28. Best: Mitchell Keddell, Zack Heaslip, Angus McLaurin, Chris Dundas, Ryan Carter and Kyle Munro. Kyle Heaslip with 3 goals and Michael McKew 2 were the multiple goalkickers...

The Larry Scott coached Under 17s who had done a fine job to get to the Grand Final were beaten by Rumbalara 4.5 – 7.9 – 12.10 - 14.13.97 to 2.2 – 6.3 – 8.5 - 9.7. 61. Best: Declan Heyes, Cheyne Gilmore, Neil Oakley (2), Luke Martin, Brendan Haden (3) and Ross Cavill.

Also on this day Stephen Hedger received his CGFL Reserves B&F award and Neil Oakley his Under 17 B&F award.

In separate Presentation nights for the Seniors and Reserves and the Under 17s and 14s, trophies were presented to the following; (Seniors / Reserves / U17s / U14s)

B&F: Paul Griffiths / Steven Hedger / Neil Oakley / Mitchell Keddell. *R/up:* Cory Jack / David Ferguson / Ross Cavill / Ryan Carter. *Most Consistent:* Jason Krijt / James Waugh / Harley Scott / Tim Cavill. *Most Determined:* Daniel Wales / Brendan Purcell / Luke Martin / Kyle Munro. *Most Improved:* David Bourke / Dale Calnan / Cheyne Gilmore / Michael McKew. *Best Utility:* Adam McDonald / Michael Shelton / Michael Gleeson / Angus McLaurin. *Best First Year:* Tim Bayard / Joe Norman / Tom McKinlay / Beau O'Brien. *Coaches Trophy:* Brad Cameron / Matthew Grylls / Ken Whitehead (trainer) / Callum Tranter, Luke Bibby. *Leading Goalkicker:* Wayne Haggis, Darren Austin (41) / Dean Spinks (30) / Ross Cavill (39) / Casey Southurst (62).

Netball Awards were presented to; A, B, B res and D.

B&F: Sally Berg / Heather Shaw / Emma McLaurin / Jessica Shaw. *R/up:* Kerrin Biffin / Lisa Cavill / Kali Hall / Ashleigh Coombs. *Most Improved :* Anita Keddell / Johanna Davis / Lauren Fletcher / Carley Ware. . *Most Determined (D only)* Claire McDonald. *Coaches Trophy:* Lisa Wallace / Melissa Crane / Lauren Colville / Sam Westwood.

The President's Trophy was presented to Ken Argent and the Best Clubman Award was won by Richard Jack. Trainers Trophies were awarded to Anna Birtchnell and Kevin Fischer

Dean Spink's achievement of playing 300 games for the club earned him the honour of being accepted as a Life Member .