



## HISTORY of the

# Weston Creek WILDCATS Junior Australian Football Club (WCWJAFC)

28 Sep 2009

### Weston Creek 1962 - 1971

Canberra was growing so rapidly because of the transfer of Public Service departments in the **1960s** that new residential areas had to be developed, either by increasing the density of the existing city-areas and allowing a sprawl of suburbs to take place as in other Australian cities; or by planning new towns (satellite cities) adjacent to North and South Canberra.

The first new town, **Woden**, was begun 12 km south of the Civic Centre in **1962** and an adjoining valley, **Weston Creek**, was later added to accommodate more than 60 000 people. Woden-Weston Creek today has its own town centre, Phillip a major employment area with around 8,000 people currently engaged in government administration, retail and service trades activities.

**Weston Creek's** eight suburbs were established in the late **1960s**, as a smaller offshoot of the "satellite city" of Phillip in the Woden Valley. The area is anchored by Canberra's first entirely roofed regional shopping centre, Cooleman Court, with its important and adjacent Community Centre.

The Weston Creek district was part of Yarralumla Station, a 40,000 acre (162 km<sup>2</sup>) property dating back to 1828. It was resumed by the Commonwealth in 1913 and in 1920 9,000 acres (36 km<sup>2</sup>) of the Woden Valley, including the Weston Creek district, were subdivided for soldier settlement leases.

A 1950's map of the district shows four paddocks, Weston paddock, Track paddock, Brown Hill paddock and Oakey Hill paddock intersecting the area which is now the suburb of Waramanga. Long Gully Road ran through the suburb and the nearest homestead was Cooleman on the Kambah Road just west of the present suburb of Fisher. Other properties in the district were Avondale and Weston whose homesteads were in the present suburb of Holder.

By **1971** all Weston Creek suburbs were populated with just over 24,000 adults and the area supported eight Primary Schools for Years 1-6, two High Schools for Years 7-10 and a College for years 11-12 which catered for older teenagers; and Australian Football stalwarts formed the **Weston Creek Junior Australian Football Club** (the Club) for young boys.

## **Weston Creek Australian Football Club - Early 1970s**

There were to be three significant phases in the evolution of the Club. The first was when the Club fielded its first teams in the Canberra Australian National Football Junior League (CANFJL) in the **1972** season. The Club's first Premiership was won in **1973** by the Under 12 team and two years after formation the Club adopted the alliterative nickname "Wildcats". Thanks to positive commercial support from up to 10 advertising sponsors, sufficient funds became available to produce an excellent weekly A5 sized stapled Newsletter for the **1974** season when eight teams were fielded.

**1974** was a significant year in the development and progress of the Club. A new committee formed. Office bearers were President **Geoff Rackham**, Secretary **Ted Quinlan**, Treasurer **Bruce Betts** and Vice President **Bob Osborne**. Committee meetings were held in the temporary Weston Creek Community Centre in Chapman. The following resume of the 1974 season details the trials, tribulations and successes of a typical season conducted throughout the 1970s as more teams and young players were administered.

Registration fees for **1974** were \$1 a player with the Club providing jumpers and accident insurance under the auspice of the CANJFL. Two major fund raising activities were the \$2 a ticket Silver Circle lottery and funds raised at the Club's annual Wildcats Carnival Day held at Forestry Oval, Yarralumla.

On 27<sup>th</sup> April six Weston Creek school teams participated in the Canberra Times School Carnival. Weston Creek High thrashed Queanbeyan High to win the Under 14 trophy and the Weston Creek High Under 13s lost their Consolation Final to Queanbeyan by 1 point.

The well loved and familiar Club logo of a snarling wildcat with a paw holding fast to a football was introduced on 11<sup>th</sup> May on that day's edition of the weekly Newsletter. The original snarling wildcat was drawn by Secretary **Ted Quinlan**.

The Club's annual Wildcats Carnival Day from 10.30am to 3.00pm at Forestry Oval took place on 30<sup>th</sup> June. The program of events included:

- Team photos.
- Combined Under 7 and 9 Curtin Raiser football match (Two five minute halves).
- Combined Under 14 and 15 football match (Standard 15 minute quarters).
- Three BBQs. Hot dog stall. Sweets stall.
- Kick-a-Long (To raise money).
- Team and Club Officials kicking competition
- Ladies Pin Hurling competition.
- Emu race and Carnival close.

The total amount promised from the Kick-a-Long was over \$800.

As to season **1974**, for the young footballers there was some success and a lot of striving without success. There were 15 Rounds of football and all teams played for a Premiership – even the Under 7s. The standout team was the Under 11s who went through the season undefeated. Two remarkable players and rovers were members of the Under 11 team, **Dario Postai** and **Chris Body**. Dario played in every team fielded by the Wildcats and became the inaugural Captain when the first Senior Weston Creek Wildcat team fielded in the ACTAFL in **1991**. Chris played in most grades, captained the Under 18 team and later became the President of the Weston Creek Cricket Club, and in **1992** a Vice President of the Weston Creek Football Club Incorporated.

Weather was a continuous factor with Manager's reports in early **1970's**, Newsletters describing the wet and cold conditions of the playing fields. Descriptions included "atrocious conditions", "deplorable ground", and "the ground was water logged at Latham and the weather was windy and near freezing point."

Below is a recount from the days by former player Michael Henderson. 1977 to 1981

"At that time we were very much a fledging club of juniors so as we progressed through the years being the eldest we were the senior team . I captained the Under 19 side that won the premiership in 1981 against Manuka at Phillip oval and had the pleasure of playing in those years with some great players. Names such as Paul Werner, Mark Meusberger, Simon Overland, David Fisher, John and Dario Postai, Daryl Murphy, Karl Wisdom, Greg Dixon, Michael Henderson Kelly. It really was a great era for the club. Every year we as we progressed we had Shell cup reps, schoolboys reps and also Teal cup reps. From recollection we had no less than seven reps in the Teal Cup side in our under 17 year. The ACT side that year came fourth in the Teal Cup, which is no mean feat and I remember being very proud standing next to Mark Meusberger as his name was called out for the All Australian Team. Paul Werner went on to great things and at the time of his unfortunate death was being chased by Several AFL clubs. There was a picture of a speccy he took hanging the ACT footy headquarters at Phillip oval for years. As far as I understand we are the most senior team to win a premiership at Weston Creek ...even if we were U19s. It was a huge night for the club and celebrations went on for three days. We played in the days when it was on the original huge Stirling oval, which without doubt was the biggest oval in Canberra. It would be remiss of me not to mention the fantastic support team we had behind us at that time. The late Paul Macdonald [coach] his brother Tassi Macdonald, Wally Thompson [manager] the Asher family for their week in week out assistance. As I get older I just wish I could remember all of the names involved, on and off the field. I still recall going to training and then walking over to new club which was under construction at the time to see how it was progressing as we were all exited about having our own club

house. When it was completed we spent many nights there running amok. A little known fact of the time is that four of the players in the U19 premiership team were also a regular band at the club playing for Stirling college functions. I loved my years at the "Creek" and just wish I could remember every name from that great under 19 team."

Yours sincerely

Michael Henderson

### **Weston Creek Football and Sports Club 1979**

In the vernacular "The Club" was in fact the facility formally named the **Weston Creek Football and Sports Club**. The Club was and remains the centre for the administration of the football, cricket and lawn bowls clubs, as well as several social clubs. It is the centre for fund raising such as weekly meat raffles, social events and provides amenities for total socialising including the "Poker Machines" (gaming machines).

From net revenues all such Clubs are required by ACT Government legislation to set aside a percentage of their profits and give this amount to community activities, generally known as their community service obligation. Thus the major sporting clubs, whose members and patrons contributed to the Club's revenues, received funds for their sporting activities in a form of sponsorship.

The Club was officially opened in **1979** by Dr Alan Aylett, the then President of the National Football League (NFL). Weston Creek was one of the first Australian Football clubs in Canberra to have a liquor licence and gaming machines.

A Club stalwart who gave several decades of his time to both the Football Club and the social Club was **Wally Goulding**. Whenever problems of finance or administration arose, Wally always volunteered to fill the breach. Thus it was that in the **1989** Bullants Year Book Wally wrote:

"As President of the bricks and mortar identity which is known as the Weston Creek Football and Sports Club Incorporated I would like to point out to you that I hold in trust on your behalf \$1.5 million in assets.

Some 18 or 19 years ago when we first started playing junior football, even before much of Weston Creek was established, the then parents of those juniors dreamed of the time when they too may have their own clubhouse. Some 10 years ago that dream, in conjunction with the Weston Creek Bowling Club and the Weston Creek Cricket Club, became a reality.

Most of those parents have now left their interest in the club to the parents who follow with the succeeding age groups. They have left the club to you. Please take an interest in the formulation of policy for the club, join in and become a voting member to ensure that when you find it time to take up other interests that the club is passed to the next generation the same or better than before.

Regards, Wally Goulding. 1989.”

### Early 1980s

The period of the early 1980s, leading up to the short-lived amalgamation with Woden Manuka, was one of fruitful success on the football field, increasing numbers of player registrations, and frustrated ambitions within the Club's football community for Weston Creek to join the ACTAFL as a Senior Club.

Two years exemplify this period, **1982** and **1983**.

**1982** was a relatively turbulent year for the Club's administration. Gearing up to field a Club team in the Reserves for the first time was achieved, but the Under 19s were forced to combine with Eastlake – and play in Eastlake colours! President **Barry O'Shannassy** had to resign during the season, but his successor, **Ted Quinlan**, wrote (despite the turmoil) that all officials had to be congratulated on an encouraging year in terms of numbers of players and teams in Finals, and *“a special mention to **Barry O'Shannassy**, President for most of the season, for the tremendous amount of unseen work he performed.”*

The Club managed to put a record 17 teams on the field, including the two senior teams. In all some 330 players registered with the Club.

Out of the 11 groups in which Finals were played, Weston Creek was represented in seven, Under 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 19 (Eastlake/Weston Creek combine) and Reserve Grade. The Under 17 team was again denied in the Grand Final for the second year running, the Under 10s lost their Grand Final to a bigger opposition team, whilst the Under 19 team suffered from the disorganisation of combined administrations, players failing to train together and lack of team discipline. And yet they finished third.

As mentioned, this season was the first time Weston Creek played in Reserve Grade in the ACTAFL. They finished fourth. Most creditably, as over half the team's players were still were eligible for Under 19s. Hopes were raised that a Senior team might follow the next year.

In the **1982** season excellent individual achievements were achieved by:

- **Dario Postai**. A.J.McNamara trophy for Best & Fairest player in ACT Reserve Grade.
- **Paul de Jong**. Best & Fairest ACTAFJL Colts (Under 17) – Division 2.
- **Andrew McKay**. Runner-up Best & Fairest Under 17 National Championships (Teal Cup). All Australian player Under 17.

The Club had 14 ACT Representative players in **1982**, in particular **Dario Postai** and **Leon Buchanan** in ACT Reserve Grade and **Andrew McKay** and **Gavin Quinlan** in the prestigious Under 17 Teal Cup team.

Towards the end of the season the Club's administration off the field concentrated on a major Raffle. The Fund Raising Chairman, **Bill Apostoloff**, stated that to finance Australian Rules in Weston Creek in **1982**, the Club needed to raise over \$15,000. This finance had to cover:

- Fourteen Junior teams.
- Support to boys selected in Representative teams.
- Support for Under 19s and a Reserve Grade team.
- Support to schools in Weston Creek and football development.

The Raffle was very successful and combined with the financial support of major sponsor PA Credit Union, and 15 other minor sponsors that year, the Club was in a sound financial situation. And a Green and Gold Ball was held at the Hellenic Club on 14<sup>th</sup> August.

### **1983**

Once again pre-season turmoil was experienced as the Club endeavoured to be represented at Senior ACTAFL level. This application was again rebuffed and the Club fielded a commendable 15 teams in **1983**. This number included two Senior teams in the Monaro Australian football League rather than the ACTAFL. Nearly 350 players were registered with the Club.

**Barry O'Shannassy** was again President and another Club stalwart of many years, **Peter Hawke** was both Secretary and Treasurer. Peter filled almost all positions within the Club both off field and on the training and coaching field.

The highlight of the season was the Grand Final victory of the Under 13 team coached by **Peter Wallace** and managed by **Bill Apostoloff**. After leading for most of the game, the Wildcats were headed by Belconnen East midway through the last quarter by 7 points. The Wildcats hit back and with courage and their talent, forced the scores to be level at full time. Two extra quarters were ordered and the Wildcats Under 13s won convincingly by over three goals. The President wrote, "*True Wildcat spirit prevailed in their win.*"!

Best & Fairest winner for the Under 13s was **Paul Annett**, an elusive rover with great goal kicking skills. Paul also won Representative honours and proved to be one of the very best footballers to represent the Club in its history.

In addition to the Under 13s success the Under 10 Green team was Joint Premiers in their Grade. (Premierships were not played for in the younger Grades). The team was coached by **Maurie McDonald** with his daughter **Mandy** as Manager. The nucleus of this young Under 10 group was mentored throughout by Maurie from Under 7 to Under 18, culminating in the team becoming Under 18s Premiers in **1990**.

Together with the undefeated **1987** Under 17 Wildcat team (brilliantly coached by **Geoff Bartley**), they can be remembered as two of the most talented under age Australian Football teams ever seen in Canberra.

### **Amalgamation with Manuka Woden Junior Football Club 1985 - 1988**

By the end of the **1984** season, lack of player numbers and committee members at the Woden Valley based Manuka Woden FC, caused the senior Manuka Football Club to propose that their youngsters play with Weston Creek teams. This opportunity to expand the footprint of the Wildcats was accepted with a view to supporting the realisation of the dream of having a team playing First Grade in the ACTAFL.

In support of this amalgamation the Wildcats committee was promised full support in all areas by the Manuka FC. In actuality this was a false promise and Manuka took little interest in the amalgamated Club – except for pressuring Wildcat youngsters to continue their football careers at Manuka.

In the flush of enthusiasm the Wildcats committee agreed to:

- change the jumper colours to that of Manuka Woden (and Manuka FC), being black with a broad red sash,
- change the Club name to Manuka Weston, and
- change the nick name to Bullants to reflect the senior Manuka nick name.

The Club had now entered into its second phase of evolution. The initial President in **1985** was Wildcat stalwart **Andy Kenner**, supported by Vice President **Maurice McDonald**, Treasurer **Arthur Schuster** and Secretary **Claire Routledge**. The Junior League delegates were **Bob Makkinga** and **John Mair**.

**John Mair** was the only Manuka member to help the new Club. Later he became one of the most successful Presidents of the ACTAFL Junior League, being an excellent progressive leader of his committee and the Junior League in particular. Concurrently John also successfully coached ACTAFL under age representative teams during this period, and was a true supporter of Australian Football in Canberra.

The first year as Manuka Weston was most rewarding. Seventeen teams were fielded with over 300 players. The dedicated Committee, Coaches and Managers were so successful in administering football in **1985** that their efforts were recognised by the ACTAF Junior League by being awarded the **Prime Minister's Cup** – a prestigious trophy awarded annually to the Club adjudged to be the best administered in the League. The Club was elated.

Also, the Club finished the season as Premiers in the Under 9, Under 12, Under 15 and Under 17 competitions. The Under 17 team fielded six Teal Cup representatives and won their Flag by one point with a goal after the final siren from a free kick. The coach was **Don Wood**, partner and later husband of the Secretary **Claire Routledge**.

Claire's son Chris, a brilliant footballer who played over 200 games with the juniors, was tragically killed in a car accident at Christmas **1986** after a season in the Manuka Weston Under 19s. Chris was the **1985** Under 17 Best and Fairest player.

The committee inaugurated a **Memorial Trophy to Chris Routledge** for a player in full rules (Under 13s upwards) "who loves football, always tries his hardest and above all remains cool under pressure." The first winner in **1987** was **Guy Cannon**, a champion player who later played for Manuka and coached the team after its amalgamation with Eastlake in the 1990s.

Of interest was that the outstanding Under 17 team in **1987** went through the season undefeated and became both Premiers and Champion team. This exceptional team was brilliantly coached and managed respectively by **Geoff Bartley**, a great stalwart and supporter of the Club throughout its history, and **Roger Evans**, one of the most professional team managers in the ACTAFJL's history. This Under 17 team had seven Teal Cup representatives.

Two players in the team, **Wayne Kenner** and **Ricky Jordan** share a football success story that is almost unbeatable. They started as five year olds in Under 7s in **1976**. In the following 11 years they played in 10 Division 1 Grand Final teams winning seven Premierships, three as Champions, and being Runners-up three times. By the end of season **1987**, Wayne had played 200 games and Ricky 177 games for Woden Manuka and Weston Creek combined.

The period of the Club's history from **1985** to **1988**, which covered the period of the amalgamation of Weston Creek and Manuka Woden to form the "Bullants", should be recognised now as the apogee of the Club's success. It was during this period that:

- the most number of youngsters were registered,
- the most number of teams were fielded,
- the most number of players were selected in all Representative ACTAFJL under age teams, and
- the most number of Premierships were won.

By **1988** very few players were coming to Weston Creek from the Woden Valley area. Most youngsters from this area were being 'poached' by Eastlake and the Catholic Colleges, Marist and St Edmund's. There was neither relationship nor interest shown by Manuka FC, nor were funds provided by them for junior football activities in Weston Creek. Consequently, the Club changed its name to the Weston Creek Bullants, dropping the Manuka connection for season **1989**.

And by the **1990** concern was being expressed by President **Mick Abbey**, at "the declining numbers playing Aussie Footy (Under 7s and 8s)."

## The 'New' Junior Club 1989

The first Newsletter on **April 30<sup>th</sup> 1989** to parents and players retained the former red cover but the subtle change was to show the Newsletter being for the Weston Creek Junior Australian Football Club. The Introduction stated:

“President’s report to start next week.

Hello, I’m Maurie McDonald, your ex-Vice President, and I would like to bring you up to date with what’s happened at the Club since last year. Firstly, the amalgamation between Weston Creek and Manuka has ceased. This was a great disappointment to me and others, but if one looks at it in a business sense, whereby both Clubs need to keep their own identity and run their own affairs, then I suppose there was no option. However on the bright side, both Clubs still have a strong affiliation, and all teams fielded by both Clubs remain in red and black.

Secondly, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate our 1989 committee for the excellent work they have done so far this year. With **Andy Kenner** (our President), **Ray Livingstone** (our Secretary), **Mick and Di Cannon** (our Registrar and Assistant Treasurer) and myself all resigning, we had to replace almost all the Committee. A gentleman by the name of **Mick Abbey** came to the meeting and accepted the Vice President position, and two months later agreed to be our President for 1989.”

Primarily the reason for the change of Committee personal was simply that they had done their fair share of work for the Club. There were no ill feelings and the batons were quickly passed. The **1989** season started with a team in each Under Age group from Under 7 to Under 15, plus an Under 17 and a Monaro competition team. Ten teams altogether.

**Mick Abbey’s** credo for the Club appeared in the next week’s Newsletter on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

“The Club is based on sound fundamentals, of a desire to foster Australian Football in the ACT to instill the ethic of sportsmanship in the Club, and to create a harmonious environment between the players, parents, officials and our opposition. All present and past players, parents and officials can be extremely proud of their endeavours in achieving the above aims.”

In the 17 seasons since inception, the above principles enunciated by **Mick Abbey** had been the paramount doctrine imparted consistently by all Committees, without exception. By this time the Wildcats had achieved a well deserved reputation for sportsmanship and fairness throughout the entire ACT AFJL. Toughness and contestability notwithstanding. Above all, the Club had produced many exceptional junior footballers.

The Vice President of **1989** and **1990**, **Alec Jovanovic**, took a positive approach to the season and the future and wrote in a Newsletter,

“The most important change for **1989** is the fact that we have accepted our own identity in as much as calling ourselves “Weston Creek Australian Football Junior Club”. This in its own leaves the Club open to enormous potential. In the long term for instance, a senior ACTAFL side could be fielded from our Weston Creek Junior Club. This is an area that should be given a lot of thought.

Our other big change for **1989** is the resignation of our Executive Committee of **1988** and of course the years before. I would personally like to give special thanks to **Andy Kenner** our ex-President (**1985 -1988**), and his wife **Heather** for their contribution of effort and work. Their enthusiasm and love for the children and sport have made it hard for anyone to surpass.

Thank you Andy and Heather, you and the old Executive have made the Club what it is today.”

This season brought to further prominence the abilities of several players. This year the Club had three representatives in the Under 17 Teal Cup squad:

- **Lee Cannon** centre half forward,
- **Marcus Sheridan** rover,
- **Troy Hyde** half back flank and

All were to represent the Club when the seniors were formed. Later, Marcus won the prestigious Mulrooney Medal for the Best and Fairest player in the ACTAFL.

Altogether the Club provided 23 players in **1989** for the Junior League’s Under Age Representative and Development Squads, as well as ACT School teams in the Under 16 and Under 12 competitions. **1989** players to progress to and gain Senior Club selection in future years were

- **Michael Altus, David Jansen and Andrew Johnson** (Under 13 team),
- **Stuart Laing and Michael Stevens** (Under 14),
- **John Garnaut, David Fraser,** and ACT Shell Cup team captain **Dennis McDonald** (Under 15),
- **Marcus Sheridan, Luke Eckersley, Lee Cannon, Blake McDonald, Troy Hyde, Paul Boschert and Craig Allen** (Under 17).

Weston Creek Bullant’s small, fast and outrageously skilful rover **Dennis McDonald** had a great season. Formerly from Queanbeyan, he was selected to Captain the ACTAFJL U15 representative team which played in Melbourne against the VFA representative side for the annual trophy. Dennis played with the Club U17 team this particular year, and was a member of the ACTAFJL team that participated in the U 15 Shell Cup side the year before, as well as being eligible in **1989**.

The ACT defeated the VFA U15 team at Toorak Park as the curtain raiser to that day’s Prahran v Preston game. This was the ACT’s first win against the VFA since **1985**. The scores were ACT 12.20.92 – VFA 10.9.69.

In addition to being Captain, Dennis was awarded the trophy for being the ACT's best player; and six other Bullant U15 players were selected in Dennis' team.

Concurrently 10 of the Club's players were selected in the ACT Under 16 Schoolboys team that competed in Darwin on 18<sup>th</sup> August **1989**.

A gala Bush Dance was conducted for players, parents and supporters in the Sports Club on 22<sup>nd</sup> July with music provided by "Redback". The cost was \$17 for a three course meal and complimentary wine. End of season functions for all teams was subsidised by the Committee at an allocation of \$5 per player. This easily covered the usual soft drinks, pies and hot dogs.

During the season and for the first time, a St John Ambulance officer attended each match, showing the Club's concern for improving the Junior footballers well being. A donation was made to the St John Ambulance at the end of the season.

The Club made a profit of \$4,650 from the annual raffle, and was in a good financial state thanks to fund raising, registration fees and the raffle. Credit for this situation was solely due to **Ross Rohrlach** as Treasurer, with great assistance from **Doug Fraser** his assistant. Next season **Doug Fraser** took over as Treasurer. He remained in that position for 13 continuous years until he died in the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2003 bushfires, whilst attempting to save his house. In all, Doug was a Committee member for 15 years.

He was one of the most popular members of the Club. He was a coach, team manager and Treasurer, even after his son David graduated to senior football. David was a superb footballer and was captain of his under age teams throughout his junior years. Fearless, fast and fair, **David Fraser** played over 200 games for Manuka and Eastlake Football Clubs.

The Club introduced a **Memorial Trophy** in memory of **Doug Fraser** in **2003** that "...is awarded to the player from Under 12 to Under 16 who may not be the best footballer, but who through dedication to self and team improvement, best exhibits the similar character of the late **Doug Fraser** of selfless dedication to the Club."

The **1989** Under 15 team were Runner's-Up to Ainslie in the Grand Final at Boomunalla Oval; the Under 17s lost their Semi Final from undisciplined play, probably caused by too much testosterone - but were to gain much revenge the next season.

### **Mulrooney Medallists.**

This **1989** Under 17 team contained many superbly skilled footballers but none more so than **Marcus Sheridan**. One of the fastest and classiest rovers to be seen, despite his stature, Marcus immediately started senior football in **1990** with

Ainslie after 140 games as a junior. He won the prestigious Mulrooney Medal as the ACTAFL's Best and Fairest player in **1992**.

Three other Manuka Woden/Wildcat juniors won the Mulrooney Medal. The **1985** medal was won by **Simon Overland**, playing for Eastlake. Simon had a distinguished career in the Australian Federal Police and in 2002 at the age of 40 he was appointed Assistant Commissioner (Crime) in the Victoria Police. He played with Weston Creek Juniors with **Dario Postai**.

Strong marking centre half back **John Garnaut** won the medal with Southern Districts in **1993**, as the combined Manuka/Eastlake team was called that year; and **Guy Cannon** was awarded the medal in **2000** when Captain and Coach of Eastlake for a superb year of fearless skill and leadership.

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**1990** was another very successful season for the Club, despite declining registrations. Reflecting the skill and dedication of the Club's football coaches and the support from good committee work throughout the season, an inordinate number of players gained recognition and represented the ACT.

Nine players were selected for the Under 18 Australia-wide Teal Cup competition; six players were in the ACT Secondary Schools Team, two players in the Under 15 Shell Cup team, five players selected for the Under 14 Development Squad, four players for the Under 13 Development Squad, and six players for the ACT Primary Schools Team.

Arguably the most talented Under 18 team ever to play in the ACTAFJL since the Club's undefeated **1987** Under 17 team was the Bullants **1990** team. The skills shown at times were breath taking and after an early struggle, they pulled away from St Edmund's in the Grand Final to crown a most successful season. The team had been Runners-up the previous year and the inclusion of three very good Under 16 players, plus three excellent players who joined the Club for their final season of junior football, made the team even stronger and more formidable. The team had been coached continuously throughout their junior years by **Maurie McDonald** and he and Manager **Mandy Morgan** quite rightly celebrated extravagantly at the Club that night.

**Maurice McDonald.** Probably the most influential member of the Weston Creek Football Club, both Junior and Senior, was Maurie McDonald. In his end of year President's Report in the **1990** "Bullants" Year Book, President Mick Abbey wrote:

"Another successful football season has come to an end. .... Without the dedication and commitment of the coaches, managers and parent helpers none of this could be possible..... I would like to make special mention of Maurie McDonald.

Maurie started coaching with the Club in **1979** and has continued through to **1990**. Maurie began his coaching commitment with the Under 7 and has coached through to 1990. His involvement has not only been restricted to junior football; Maurie has been actively involved with representative football, senior football, and he has held various positions on the junior committee as well as being an active fundraiser for football.

His involvement with junior football in Weston Creek will be sadly missed. I am sure that a vast number of past and present players, officials and parents owe Maurie a large debt of gratitude for his hardwork, leadership, inspiration, and commitment to football.”

The next season Maurie became the inaugural President of the **Weston Creek Wildcats Australian Football Club Inc** in **1991**, and was directly responsible for all recruiting and administrative structures relevant to forming the Club’s first ACTAFL First Grade, Reserves, Under 19s and Monaro League teams.

### **ACT Australian Football League (ACTAFL) Entry**

**1991** saw Weston Creek finally accepted into the Senior ACTAFL competition, after Manuka Football Club’s shock decision to merge with Eastlake to become (for a few seasons) the Southern Districts Football Club. Our Junior footballers from Weston Creek who had been playing Senior football with Manuka were thus faced with a difficult decision as to whether to go with the new Southern Districts team or return to their original Club. A large number elected to play for the Wildcats. A strong base was made from the previous year’s marvelous Wildcats Under 18 Premiership team, which included seven Teal Cup representatives.

Weston Creek fielded four Senior teams, including a team in the Monaro League, and signed 140 players to commence the Club’s first year in the ACTAFL. Sadly, there was no goodwill shown to Weston Creek on their entry by either the ACTAFL Executive or the other competition Clubs. On the contrary, several ACTAFL Clubs did not appreciate the aggressive recruitment and refused to clear many players who wished to transfer and play in the new Wildcat teams.

The Club was forced to pay \$10,500 in transfer fees, some of which was for the Club’s own players returning.

Concurrently the lighting at Stirling Oval was upgraded and the field repositioned to make it in 1991 the biggest and best in Canberra. This advancement in training facilities was made through the Club being given a Community Development Grant from the ACT Government. The grant and erection of the four new lighting towers was due to the hard work of **Wally Goulding** and his assistants, senior player **Tim Brown** an electrician and handy-man **Brendon Dorman**.

Another objective of these enhanced facilities beside the Sports Club was to entice Manuka FC to re-locate to Stirling. Unfortunately, parochialism once again won the day and the offer was rejected and Manuka amalgamated with Eastlake.

### **Junior and Senior Club Amalgamation 1991.**

After a tremendous amount of hard work by stalwart Club members over the summer football recess of **1990/1991**, many dreams since **1972** were fulfilled when Weston Creek was admitted to the ACTAFL as a stand alone Club in senior football. Their first season was in **1991**.

As described above former Wildcat junior players were persuaded to return to Weston Creek from ACTAFL clubs to which they had migrated for senior football and continued social camaraderie; and several very good players were encouraged to join from other clubs (and even from interstate) in order to follow coach **Steve Harrison** to the new Club - though the above mentioned hefty transfer fees had to be paid to former Clubs.

Through this exceptional recruiting and excellent coaching, the Club achieved the almost amazing success of finishing equal fourth, but missing the Finals on percentage in this first **1991** season. The high standard of competitive football played was due entirely to the excellent and professional coaching of **Steve Harrison**. Steve had been the Queanbeyan Reserves coach before mentoring the Wildcats.

A major part of administrative committee work over the **1990/1991** summer concerned the desirability of joining the current junior with the new senior committee. With agreement at a Special General Meeting on **17<sup>th</sup> November 1991**, the Wildcats Junior Football Club amalgamated with the Wildcats Senior Club to form the **Weston Creek Wildcats Australian Football Club Incorporated**. A new Constitution drafted by Junior administrator **Mike Taylor** was tabled and accepted at this meeting, and then officially registered. Weston Creek was the first football Club in Canberra to amalgamate their junior and senior teams under the umbrella of one committee

The objective was to allow for the better utilisation of resources, both financial and personnel. Further, the amalgamation was made to encourage greater participation in the football club's numerous social and fundraising events.

Specifically, the constitution stated the objectives of the Club as being:

#### **" 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CLUB**

In achieving the objectives set out in (a) and (b) below, the Club will not operate in a manner inconsistent with the objectives set out in the Constitution of the Weston Creek Australian Football Club Incorporated, which trades as the Weston Creek Football Club and Sports Centre.

- (a) The prime object of the Club shall be, in association with the Weston Creek Football Club

Incorporated, to promote, encourage and administer Australian Football in the Weston Creek and surrounding areas and generally see that the Laws of the game is adhered to.

(b) To promote and assist other sports activities involving its members as determined by the Committee.

Before agreeing to the amalgamation, the junior committee made one very prudent condition. This was that those funds held by the Juniors in a separate Bank account at the time of amalgamation were to be utilised solely for the purposes of administrating Junior teams, as decided by the Junior sub-committee. This sum was about \$20,000, and this condition was agreed by the combined new committee.

All expenses such as new jumpers for Juniors and administrative expenses became the responsibility of the new committee from funds raised, donations and sponsorship monies.

The following were the initial office bearers of the first Weston Creek Wildcats Football Club:

President:	Maurice McDonald
Senior Vice President:	Terry Hyde
Junior Vice President:	Ray Storas
Secretary:	Ian Willis
Assistant Secretary:	Mike Taylor
Treasurer:	Dennis Elms
Assistant Treasurer:	Doug Frazer
Fundraising and Player's Advocate:	Keith Ritchie
Junior Registrar:	Rose Hardy
Senior Registrar:	Jim Ramsay
Junior Equipment and Aussie Footy:	Bob Dunstan
Senior Equipment:	Gordon Hore
ACTAFL Delegate:	Wally Goulding
Publicity Officer and Junior Delegate:	Mike Taylor
First Grade Coach:	Steve Harrison
Reserve Grade Coach:	Paz Rocca
Under 19 Coach:	David Skuta

For the Seniors the **1992** season commenced on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May against Belconnen at Stirling Oval. The Junior's season comprised nine teams. These teams competed in the Under 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17 age groups. The Club was fully sponsored by Mr Kingsley Varr and was known as the "**Kingsley's Chicken Wildcats**", with appropriate logos on the jumpers.

To fulfill ACTAFL obligations, and to strengthen the new Under 19 ACTAFL side, the junior Under 17 team achieved little on field success as their best players were cajoled to play often with the Club's Under 19s. These were players of considerable ability, many of whom progressed to become First Grade players and who had represented the Club throughout their junior days.

Thus immediately on amalgamation the balance between an older successful junior team or a weakened Younger junior team was never properly resolved.

This dismayed U17 players of lesser ability (and their Coach and Manager) and not surprisingly their enjoyment of football; and in the future lead to the dilemma that the amalgamation might be considered to be more beneficial to the seniors than for the average junior footballer.

### **The 90s**

Throughout the Club's short history many well coached junior players from Under 7s and 8s and upwards left the Club on starting secondary schooling to attend Marist and St Edmund's Colleges. This of course diminished the talent pool for the older Age Groups. To exacerbate the loss of these players was that the talented players were later 'poached' from Marist and St Edmunds by Manuka and Eastlake Football Clubs for their senior teams, rather than the boys returning to Weston Creek.

For the junior Weston Creek Wildcats teams, the **1990's** decade seemed to reflect the on field successes of the senior ACTAFL team. The early **90s** saw the seniors compete for five continuous years as a Flag competitor (**1992 – 1996**), in each year of which they finished third. But at the end of the decade the seniors were no longer competitive. Except for season 1999 when they were coached by Dean Laidley of Kangaroos AFL club renown and finished fifth, the seniors were mostly bottom team of the competition from 1997 to 2006.

During this decade the juniors were only able to field between five and seven under age teams.

However to indicate how well the juniors were being run in this period, despite low numbers, at the end of the **1997** season the Weston Creek Wildcats Junior Football Club was awarded the **Prime Minister's Cup** by the ACTAFJL for being the best administered club in the ACT. The President was **Cheryl Cates**. The trophy is judged not only on the performance of the committee, but takes in a range of criteria from the attitude of coaches and parents to the volunteer assistance received for the canteen at Football Park to raise funds for junior ACT football.

### **2000 and Internal Turmoil**

Dissatisfaction over the years with the composition of the Social Club's committee, as delineated in the Constitution, spilt over at this time. A **Special General Meeting** was called by members representing the Club's lawn bowls members. Broadly, the Constitution stated that the majority of committee members were to represent football activities. As the bowlers believed that their members made the greatest contribution to Club takings, yet received a lesser share of sporting subsidies, they sought to have the committee's composition amended to favour the bowlers.

**Maurie McDonald** organised a quiet and discreet membership drive outside the Club, particularly amongst footballers of opposing Clubs. These new members then gave their voting proxies to him, and at the Special General Meeting the voting supported maintenance of the status quo.

Thus the second phase in the Club's evolution ended with dissention amongst members, both sporting and social. This was a period of unsuccessful results on the football field and diminishing numbers of participants in the Juniors, despite a hard working and extremely well lead Junior Committee under the leadership of the **Cates family**. They maintained high morale amongst all associated with junior football activities, and their uncompromising liaison with the seniors showed their determination to work for the betterment of Wildcat football throughout this time.

### **2001 Third Phase of Evolution**

By **2000** the Weston Creek Sports and Football Club, as the social club was known since its inception in **1979**, had endured financial stress for more than 10 years. Bank loans were continually being rolled over and only through the patience of the National Australia Bank did the Club continue to operate. Throughout this time **Wally Goulding** undertook heroic efforts to help the Club remain viable, despite the crushing interest rate repayments of the Keating years of Government.

**Wally Goulding** was associated with the Social Club and its football teams for 22 years from **1979** until **2001**. During this time he was Club Manager, President of the Committee, Football Club Committeeman and at one stage Manager of an Under 15 team. One day he stood in as the Under 15 team coach and celebrated his one and only coaching effort with a win - but Wally has added that the other team had but 14 players against a full strength Wildcat team on the day!

Despite his efforts as Club Manager to keep debtors at bay, the Club bowed to the inevitable in **2001**, and was purchased by the Labor Club. The President at the time was another long serving stalwart, **John Edwards** as was **Ian Willis** who was Vice President at the time.

The Auditor's report on transfer of assets noted that the Club's major debtor, the National Australia Bank of Australia, provided fulsome praise of the efforts of the

Manager, **Wally Goulding**, in addressing all financial problems in a most professional and satisfactory manner throughout his tenure.

The Labor Club assumed all debts and then set about rejuvenating the Club. Interior modifications were undertaken, a new entrance constructed, a paved car park made and a new administration set about making the Club financially viable under the guidance of Labor Club President **Barbara Burns**.

A plaque at the entrance to the new Labor Club commemorates the opening on **25 June 2002** by Simon Crean MP, the Federal Leader of the Australian Labor Party.

The Labor Club in **2002** agreed to sponsor football activities and the juniors felt that their home base was again safe. However recruiting remained low in numbers and only 140 players played in the **2004** season, despite the biggest recruiting drive in its history. Just five teams were fielded.

Thus the third phase in the evolution of the Weston Creek Junior Football Club commenced with the **2001** season. This is because in discussions prior to the season, the seniors formed an affiliation with the Brisbane Lions. The Club changed its name to **Weston Creek Lions Football Club**, and under this umbrella of a combined entity the juniors became the **Weston Creek Cubs**.



The highlight of the **2003** season in which only six teams were fielded (Unders 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 16) was the grand Final success of the Under 16 team. They came from behind Marist to win the Semi Final and become the Club's first Grand Finalists since **1995**.

By three quarter time in the Grand Final against Queanbeyan the scores were level. As for all that season, the team showed great character to keep their heads, chip away and win the game by superior skills and determination. Aided by the frantic sideline antics of the very excited coach, **Rick Gillespie**.

A popular player and coach and committee member **Rick** had been associated with the Club since his junior playing days that started in **1979**. He played in every junior age group as a midfielder and utility player and was a member of premiership teams in **1983**, **1985** and **1987**. Of interest is that at full time in the Under 13 (**1983**) Grand Final the scores were level. Two extra quarters were played and the Wildcats then overran Belconnen east to win by 19 points. **Rick** graduated from the Under 19s to play senior football for Weston Creek, Ainslie and Eastlake.

He first coached his Under 16 Wildcats Premiership team in **2000** when they finished last. In **2001** they were 5<sup>th</sup> and the next year 3<sup>rd</sup>. In their **2003** Premiership year they finished on top as Minor Premiers despite losing the first three games of the season.

Such was his desire to be involved in the Weston Creek junior players, that later on in **2004** Rick became the Club's Junior Development Officer and conducted the Auskick Program.

**Cates Family.** After 11 years association with the Club from coaching Under 7s and 8s at Auskick to being Presidents of the Junior Club, **Peter (1996 – 1998)** and **Cheryl (1999 – 2002) Cates** finally ceased their enormous input to maintaining the Wildcats as a viable Australian Football club for youngsters. Their sons William and Christopher won many under age team awards in the Club, culminating in William being announced the Year **2002** Club Champion. William commenced his Australian football in **1992** in the Under 7s and played in 184 games for the Club.

The **2004** to **2006** season Year Books noted the Club's challenge to field teams in the older age groups, particularly Under 15 and 16s. This was expected to have ramifications on recruiting for the senior ACTAFL teams. Nevertheless a positive side to the story of declining numbers and fewer teams being fielded - and thus youngsters being introduced to Australian Football - was that the Club continued to attract dedicated officials who gave so much of their time to the Club.

The Club also boasted that it had the most qualified coaches of all Junior Clubs in the ACTAFJL. This ensured that all players were well looked after and coached to a high standard. All players had new jumpers courtesy of the major sponsor, the Labor Club, and new socks and shorts from fund raising by each year's committee.

**Eric Reeves.** By the end of season **2006** long standing stalwart **Eric Reeves** stood down after four years (**2003 – 2006**) as President. He had been involved on and off the field at Weston Creek for about 13 years as Coach, Manager and Committee member; and was therefore involved in Canberra football for nearly 45 years.

Eric had toiled manfully to maintain the standards of his predecessors. He kept the Club alive in desperate seasons of adversity compounded by the dismal football standard and continual lack of success on and off the field by the senior teams. Without the resources of the committees of the 80s and early 90s, both financial and in player registration numbers, Eric's tenure as President was an uphill battle to keep the Club viable. That he did so is a tribute to his loyalty and dedication to the Club and Australian Football in general.

During his tenure the Club had targeted the younger age groups to increase numbers. By this time the initiative had started to show fruition and numbers had trebled in the Under 8 group. The difficulty in recruiting youngsters to Australian Football in Weston Creek is best understood from the demographics of the Weston Creek area and Australia's aging population.

When the Club started in **1972** each of Weston Creek's eight suburbs had a Primary School. At the height of attendance, Holder Primary had 421 children attending and Rivett's maximum number was 720! However by the end of the 2006 school year, when it was closed, only 72 had been enrolled at Rivett Primary.

By the mid **1970s** there were eight Primary Schools, two High Schools and one College in Weston Creek. At the end of **2006** all that remained were four Primary Schools, one High school and a moribund College building – for a population of 24,000 people.

**Future Years.** At the end of the **2006** season two dynamic and determined younger parents, former junior player **Mark Ackland** and **John Clark** were enthused by the numbers of very young players joining the Club. Together they were determined to resurrect the enthusiasm for junior football in Weston Creek. They formed a most capable committee for **2007** and showed commitment to continue the successful traditions of the Club in a very professional manner.

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### **Wildcat ACTAFL and AFL Umpires**

**Richard Taylor**, who had played with the Wildcats and Radford College Under Age teams, including an Under 17 Div 2 premiership with Radford and the Under 18 premiership team with the Wildcats (under **Geoff Bartley** and **Roger Evans**), started Field umpiring Under 12s and Under 15s matches in **1985** for \$10 a game. Later on as his umpiring progressed Richard was selected as a Senior field umpire in the ACTAFL. He was honoured at 19 to be one of the two Field Umpires for the **1990** ACTAFL Senior Grand Final at Football Park at which Ainslie defeated Queanbeyan by 27 points.

He also umpired a Sydney AFL Grand Final six years later after graduating from University. During this time Richard umpired several AFL Reserves and U 19 matches at the SCG before working overseas.

**Andrew Toy** commenced his football Career with the Wildcats Under14s in **1979**. Andrew then continued under the experienced coaching of **Ray Walton** to play in the Under 15s and for two years in the Under 17s. Unfortunately in **1981** the Under 17s lost their Grand Final to Marist by a goal; and the **1982** Grand Final to West Canberra at Football Park Phillip was lost by a point. Cruel seasons indeed.

Andrew commenced boundary umpiring in **1981** at age 15 and graduated almost immediately to ACTAFL First Grade that year for his sensational sprinting ability and stamina. In **1986** Andrew was selected as a First Grade ACTAFL field umpire. By the time he placed his umpiring whistle on the shelf Andrew – always a controversial umpire with many supporters, but always supported totally by the

Umpire Board – had achieved remarkable milestones as a very professional umpire. They are:

- 35 AFL Field Umpire matches in Reserves and Under 19s.
- 11 ACTAFL Senior Grand Finals (2 Boundary and 9 Field).
- 4 times winner of the Golden Whistle awarded to the ACTAFL's best Field Umpire.
- 405 games as a Field and Boundary Umpire for the AFL and ACTAFL.
- President of the ACT Australian Football Umpires Association (ACTAFUA) in 1999 and 2000.
- Life Member of the ACTAFUA.

**Michael Kennealy** started his football career with the Weston Creek Wildcats in the Under 9s. After a number of seasons with the Wildcats (and no Finals success) his family moved to Victoria, and he continued playing on the Bellarine Peninsula, near Geelong. Upon his return to Canberra he resumed at Weston Creek and began playing senior football with the club. **Steve Harrison** was senior coach, and Michael found him an excellent motivator and leader. In **1992** another senior ACTAFL umpire friend encouraged Michael to attend some umpire training sessions at Football Park. By the end of that year Michael decided to concentrate all his energies towards umpiring, and he advised Weston Creek of his decision. This turned out to be a great move. Michael has reached the pinnacle of umpiring in the ACT/NSW region, including the following milestones:

- Field Umpire for the last 5 ACTAFL Senior Grand Finals (2002 - 2006).
- Winner of the Golden Whistle on 4 occasions (2002, 2003, 2005, 2006) for best Field Umpire, as decided by the Umpiring Control Board.
- 4 times winner of the Bird & Stirling award (best Field Umpire, as judged by senior club coaches).
- 200 senior games as Field Umpire.
- 300 games in total as Field Umpire.
- Past President of the ACT Australian Football Umpires Association (ACTAFUA).
- Life member of ACTAFUA.
- Numerous representative games involving ACTAFL.

In **1998** Michael was encouraged to move to either Sydney or Melbourne to further his umpiring career. He decided to remain in Canberra for family / work reasons, so who knows where his career may have gone had he relocated.

**Michael Kennealy** was voted the ACT AFL's best Field Umpire in 2006 and that year he umpired his 200<sup>th</sup> senior game.

**Grant Kennealy**

Another Wildcat player who umpired junior games in the **1980s** for the \$10 reward was **Paul Oakman**.

### **Shell Cup and Teal Cup History**

Throughout the seasons from the Club's advent in the early **1970s**, the best Weston Creek Wildcat/Bullant/Cubs players were selected by the ACT Junior League to represent the ACT in national competition. The three competitions were

- The Under 16 Australian Secondary Schoolboys Championship,
- The annual Under 15 (Shell Cup), and
- The Commonwealth Bank Under 17 (Teal Cup) matches.

The latter two competitions ceased in the mid **1990s** when the TAC Cup for Victorian Under 18 players was introduced by the AFL.

**Shell Cup** The Carnival Major Sponsor was the Shell Company of Australia and was recognised by the then National Football League (NFL). The NFL later became the now fully 'national' controlling body, the Australian Football League that formed in 1989 from the Victorian Football League.

The objective of the Shell Cup was to provide a prestigious and intensive competition between States of comparable playing strength and in basically similar stages of football development.

The first competition was in **1961** between New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). That year two matches were played, one in NSW and the other in the ACT who won both matches. Queensland was accepted as a competitor in **1966** and Tasmania entered in **1978**.

Original intentions were for this Under 15 series to emulate the Commonwealth Bank Teal Cup and become totally national in concept. This was abandoned in view of the Under 16 Australian Secondary Schoolboys Championship continuing to incorporate age concessions between States and Territories, and also in recognition that the Shell Cup provided excellent and very even competition for the four bodies involved.

Each year's annual Weston Creek Junior Yearbooks proudly show the names of representatives from the Club in the three Under Age national and near-national competitions. In Australia's Bicentenary year, **1988**, the ACT hosted the Shell Cup and Weston Creek's Junior League Delegate, **Mike Taylor**, organised the Canberra carnival on behalf of the ACTAFJL.

**Teal Cup** In **1951** a Queensland club official, Mr. Roy Phythian, visited Sydney and conferred with the noted identity in NSW junior football, Arthur Bridgewater, with the view to an exchange of football visitations at junior State level. To that time visits were few and far between. Indeed, **1952** saw the first visit to Sydney by a junior team representative of Queensland.

Domiciled in Sydney were dedicated supporters of the Balmain Club, Mr. and Mrs. Teal, formerly of Richmond (VFL). On hearing of the impending annual fixtures with Queensland, they provided the NSW National Football Union with a magnificent trophy, to be known as 'The Teal Cup', with **1953** to be the commencement of the annual exchange. Additionally, the Teal family donated the finance for the NSW State team to travel to Brisbane in **1953** for the inaugural Teal Cup contest.

Queensland annexed the Teal Cup in the first year, though 10 years elapsed before the next interstate match was played, namely **1963**. In the years following, rivalry was extremely keen between the two states, with Queensland being the most successful in holding the Cup.

In **1972**, with an eye to the future, NSW and Queensland resolved to take steps to have the Teal Cup series become national, and **1973** saw the Australian Capital Territory enter the competition.

**1974** marked the occasion when all other States were invited to compete in a national championship, which was fully realised in **1976** when Caltex Oil became sponsors.

Since that time, the annual competition graduated under the auspices first of the VFL, then the AFL to become the premier junior event of the football calendar, and has been played in all states and territories. The Commonwealth Bank claimed naming rights in **1995**, and in **1996** the competition became the AFL National Under 18 Championships.

Teams of NSW and the ACT were united in **1996** when squads were drawn from the NSW-ACT State Football League Under 1s to form the RAMS (Riverina, Murrumbidgee, Albury, Sydney). That year the ACT/NSW RAMS were Runners-up in the Grand Final. Former Wildcat player **Matthew Harrison** kicked 8 goals at full forward and twin brother David was amongst the RAMS' best players. The boys are sons of the senior Club's first coach, **Steve Harrison**.

Strong memories of passion for the game have remained since the Teal Cup began in **1953**, and the Shell Cup in **1961**.

## Club Colours and Football Jumpers

The traditional colours of the Club are Green and Gold. These colours were selected for the first jumpers in **1972**, which were green with a gold sash. From then changes to the design and colours were made by succeeding committees.

**1974 – 1984.** The design changed to a green jumper with firstly a gold yoke at the top of the jumper for a short time; and then to a wide gold V. Shorts were green and socks green with gold tops. Numbers on the back were white.

**1985 – 1990.** The Club changed its name to Manuka Weston and adopted the nickname Bullants in 1985. Jumpers changed that year to those of the Manuka Football Club, being black with a wide red sash – the famous Essendon FC design. Shorts were red in colour with black socks.

**1991 - 2002.** The newly formed senior teams adopted the former green and gold colours. The jumper design was of Green and Gold vertical stripes with a green back and white or gold numbers. As the juniors had amalgamated to form the one Club and Committee, the juniors reverted to their former green and gold jumpers. Most sets were from those put aside at the end of the 1984 season.

**2003 – 2006.** The Senior Club affiliated with the Brisbane Lions and played in their colours from 2003. The Junior Club changed their nickname to Cubs, but did not changeover entirely to a variation of the Lions colours until the 2004 season. The Lions colours of Maroon, Blue & Yellow were incorporated in an all new jumper design. This design had yellow and blue diagonal stripes across the abdomen with a maroon chest, the back of the jumper was predominately yellow with a maroon number. Shorts were blue with a yellow stripe down each side with “Cubs” in Maroon writing also down each side.

**2007 -** With the senior club changing its name to the **Canberra WILDCATS** and colours to light blue, blue and yellow, the junior club incorporated itself as the **Weston Creek WILDCATS Junior Australian Football Club (WCWJ AFC)**. The newly formed junior WILDCATS club retained the colours of the Cubs while adopting the pattern of the senior Canberra Wildcats jumpers. The new jumper design at last had the modern Wildcat logo in the middle of the chest. The new jumper was predominately dark blue with maroon sides. Yellow stripes separated the blue and maroon. Numbers were yellow with white borders. Shorts were again blue with a yellow stripe down each side. “WILDCATS” was added and the new WILDCATS logo was also included within the yellow side stripe.

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## **2007 and beyond**

**2007** saw the junior Wildcats field 3 U8 sides, 2 U9 sides, 1 U11 side, 1 U14 side and for the first time in many years an under 16 side as well as having over 80 young potential players participate in the clubs Auskick program. The U14 side played finals football, a first for the club in many years. The U14 side was coached by Stewart Wood a long time coach of junior Wildcats side and also son of Don Wood a former junior coach many years before.

2 players, David Miller and Nathan Wood were selected in the U13 **CATS** (**C**anberra **A**rea **T**alent **S**quad) representative team and Nathan was further selected as an AFL academy player.

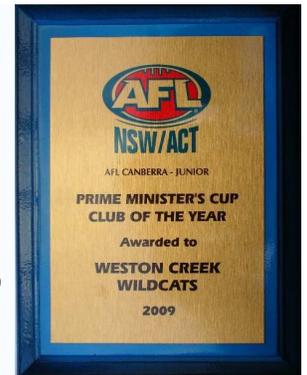
**2008** started with disappointment with the senior club the Canberra Wildcats being officially excluded from the competition by the governing body, AFL Canberra. The senior clubs struggles were well known to the league, what was surprising from the decision was that the league quickly jumped to help another struggling club in Canberra at the time. With no senior club the juniors started the season as it always had over the past 35 years, that is, determined to give young players the opportunity to play Australian Rules Football locally. The juniors fielded 2 U8 sides, 3 U9 sides, 1 U10 side, 1 U12 side, 1 U14 side and a combined U16 side with the Gungahlin Jets junior football club as both clubs were struggling for numbers in the oldest age group of junior football. Again the club had close to 80 participants with the clubs Auskick program.

Towards the end of the 2008 season the club was approached by the Murrumbidgee Juggernauts Football Club seeking an affiliation. The Juggernauts proposal highlighting the benefits of the affiliation was presented to members at a special general meeting. The vote for the affiliation was carried unanimously.

David Miller and Nathan Wood again made the CATS representative squad as U14 players and the club president Mark Ackland was voted AFL Canberra volunteer of the year.

**2009** was a big year for the club highlighted by the club being named as joint winners of the “**Prime Ministers Cup – Club of the year**” with the Gungahlin Jets JAFC, as voted by the AFL Canberra board.

The year began during the spring of 2008 with the inaugural youth girls spring competition organised by AFL Canberra. Ian Anderson, the clubs Vice president, organised Weston Creek’s participation and thanks to Ian’s passion and vision, Weston Creek was one of only three clubs to enter a side. In fact Weston Creek entered two sides. The inaugural youth girls foundation clubs were. Weston Creek WILDCATS, Ainslie, Tuggeraong Hawks. The spring competition led to the inaugural youth girls winter competition. The winter competition consisted of Weston Creek WILDCATS, Ainslie, Tuggeraong Hawks and Eastlake. Weston Creek WILDCATS finished the season as undefeated minor premiers and then the inaugural youth girls premiers, defeating Ainslie in the grand final. The team was coached by long term club member Michael Yates and managed by former junior player Bradley Yates. Weston Creek player Kelly Donnelly was named as the inaugural youth girls AFL Canberra Best & Fairest closely followed by another Weston Creek player, Emma Wisdom.



2009 was not all about the girls. The U14’s also performed strongly rising from wooden spooners in 2008 to minor premiers in 2009. Unfortunately the team did go down in the grand final, losing a highly entertaining and close game to St Edmunds. Marcus Broers coached the team during both seasons. Ben Halse finished second in the AFL Canberra Best & Fairest vote.

The club also continued its outstanding participation numbers in the U8 to U11 age groups. In fact the club fielded two large U10 sides. Auskick numbers also remained healthy nudging 60 participants for the fourth year in a row.

After three years as club president and as per the clubs constitution Mark Ackland vacated the presidents’ position and the end of the season. Andrew Stonehouse stepped smoothly into the presidents’ position. With the club culture very healthy, every committee position occupied, coaches appointed for all age groups and the club in a sound financial position the future for all junior players in the Weston Creek and surrounding areas appeared assured.