

RETURN OF MASON BRAGG

North West Tall Timbers Thunder is thrilled to announce that former player and team Captain Mason Bragg will be returning to play for the team in season 2018. One of the Thunder's best loved players, the 6'0" point guard, who has already racked up 105 SEABL games since his debut in 2012, will return to Tasmania from Western Australia, where he achieved the ultimate distinction of an NBL premiership with the highly credentialled Perth Wildcats in season 2016-2017. Mason joined Perth at the end of 2016 and helped the short-handed Wildcats overcome some injury issues, while playing some very energetic and up-tempo minutes through 10 games. Mason will be able to return to Thunder immediately after the Wildcats complete their 2018 NBL roster, including any finals commitments. Mason is a crowd favourite and he is sure to delight Thunder fans again this season with his electrifying pace, his intense defence and his tenacious style of play. In the absence of Ahmad Starks who has taken up a position in Canada, Mason will again assume point guard



responsibilities in conjunction with his back court partner from 2016 in Lachie Barker. His return to the North West coast will certainly delight his fans and bring a smile to all young basketball followers. Mason will also assist Thunder players in a comprehensive program of State Government sponsored



school clinics this year. He is certainly well suited to lift the profile of the sport and generate greater interest in the game at the grass roots level. Mason will join the returning Jeremiah Ingram and new recruit, centre Darcy Malone, as key drawcards for the Thunder in the upcoming season. Their Thunder player cards are all certain to be in very high demand. Mason will also play with the Burnie Tigers in the NWBU. Mason has always been extremely active on the court and a great ambassador for the sport as well as having a great commitment to the wider

community. He recently posted this information to social media outlining his work with the Ocean Heroes program, a charity set up by local Western Australian surfers to provide an outlet and sporting experience for young children and teenagers who are living with autism. This recent quote from Mason highlights the benefits and satisfaction that both helpers and recipients are receiving from this excellent program; *"It's one of the most rewarding experiences, teaching these young kids how to surf, seeing these guys battle their fears and getting into the "deep blue" is truly special; you can almost instantly see a smile and a change in their confidence after they catch a wave."* I think everyone will agree that this is an awesome initiative and Mason is to be applauded for giving up his time to bring some exciting life experiences to these young Aussie kids. You can check out the Ocean heroes website and look at some of their video action at <http://www.oceanheroes.com.au/>



THUNDER SCHOOL CLINIC PROGRAM

In coming weeks, Thunder will commence its State Government sponsored secondary and primary school clinics program. Thunder players will be visiting schools right across the North West and West coasts to demonstrate some basketball fundamentals and encourage students to get involved in the sport via their local club's junior programs. Thunder will work closely with NWBU clubs and hopefully use some of their players as well, while promoting the benefits of programs such as Aussie Hoops and handing out giveaways and free passes to domestic roster and Thunder games. The SEABL program offers all kids a pathway to get to the very top of their sport and we are hopeful that some of our clinic attendees will work their way up through NWBU and SEABL ranks and perhaps one day pull on an NBL or Australian singlet. Clinic applications have already been received from a diverse assortment of schools, including Zeehan, Redpa, Ridgley, Stanley, Montello, Wilmot, Latrobe, Sprent, Sheffield, Penguin, Leighlands, Parklands and Nixon Street in Devonport. We will be encouraging further schools to participate and are confident that our list will grow once the sessions commence.

THUNDER MEMBERSHIPS

Work is continuing on the make-up of our membership packages for season 2018, but while we are finalising details, we are happy to take subscriptions from all interested adult and junior supporters. As in previous years, we will be offering a Tall Timbers accommodation package for one lucky member who will be drawn from a list of the first 100 members to sign up for this year. At this stage, we can confirm that prices will be Adult \$30 and Junior \$20; confirmed adult merchandise items will include the popular Thunder socks that were included a couple of years ago, a good quality drink bottle, a bottle opener and the handy Thunder fridge magnet roster that was introduced last year. Junior packs will also include the sport socks, a team poster and hopefully some "Thundersticks" that can be banged together and enhance the atmosphere at all our home games. More details as they come to hand. Online membership is available via the "Membership" tab on Thunder's homepage at <http://www.nwthunder.com.au/> or you can pass on your subscription to any Thunder committee member.

TAHANEEN BENNELL

Our school clinic programs will, as mentioned, hopefully lead to aspiring basketball stars to follow their dream and eventually head interstate or overseas to further their career. A recent article on Tahaneen Bennell, a former Ulverstone Red Hopper and Tasmanian SEABL player, who has provided assistance to Thunder in the past with junior clinics, highlights this pathway and the success that can be achieved, both on and off the court. Tahaneen moved to Oklahoma in August 2016 after receiving a scholarship that allowed her to study as a student-athlete. She plays guard position for the NOC Lady Mavs basketball team, based in Tonkawa. Miss Bennell said playing with the Lady Mavs means she gets

to travel around parts of America. *"I get around a lot; we have recently been to Texas and Kansas and obviously all around Oklahoma,"* she said. *One thing that is hard when you are travelling is that you miss school classes, but the school and teachers are really good about it."* Unfortunately, she missed out on the previous season due to injuring her knee in the first game. *"I have had my second knee surgery, and I am only 21,"* she said. *"I have sat out more years than I have played, but I'm finally playing ball again, and I am loving it."* Tahaneen was also recently appointed to the Northern Oklahoma College president's honour roll. The honour roll lists students with a perfect grade-point average of 4.00. Tahaneen said she was pleasantly surprised with the way she handles her school work and basketball training. *"I'm managing everything really well; this last semester my time management was really good and 4.00 grade-point is the equivalent of getting all high distinctions."*



Tahaneen is studying a physical education degree and has set herself a goal to move back to Tasmania and teach there. She said that homesickness doesn't really affect her. *"Don't get me wrong I love my family and friends, but I moved to Sydney to do personal training when I was 18, so I'm fine with being independent,"* Tahaneen also provided some sound comments about dealing with pressure and her appreciation of the diversity of playing overseas; *"I'm not the type of person to let pressure impact my life. If I have a bad game, I deal with it and if I have a good game, I'll give myself a pat on the back,"* she said. *"In our team, I'm from Australia; there is a girl from Spain and a girl from Florida; the whole team comes from different backgrounds. I love the whole experience. I'm doing what I love; I get to meet awesome people, coaches and teachers while getting my higher education."*

A great example to all our juniors!

TRAINING

Official Thunder training has commenced from 6:30 to 9:00 pm at the Ulverstone stadium on Monday and Thursday night under the guidance of Sam Armstrong, Nick Haywood and Ryan Carroll. The hotter than normal weather and some of the vigorous fitness routines have certainly had the sweat running freely; don't be shy, stick your head in the door and watch the guys get put through their paces. It's a lot of fun watching the agony from the sidelines! There is good squad treading the boards at the moment, boosted by coastal club imports and the Red Hoppers occasionally attending the initial fitness component. Jeremiah Ingram will be joining the group from Monday, the 30th January with Darcy Malone and Mason Bragg to join the squad after the end of their respective NBL seasons. The season will be here before we know it!!

HISTORY



CBA HOPEFULS: In the women's team to contest the Continental Basketball Association championship this season are (front from left): Jacki Gibson, Mellisa-Sue Allen and Angela Triffitt. (Back from left): Tony Vincent (coach), Jodie Franklin, Stacey Beard, Kristy Rowe, Alisha Barry, Julie Clarke, Lyndel Fuller and Lisa Crombie.



OH FOR THE ORIGINALS: North-West Boags Originals captain Dave Biver (centre) leads his charges down the court during training at Penguin last night. Other team members are (from left) Keith Bragg, Marty Clarke, Shane Hughes, Joe Downs, Mal Beveridge and Sean Sherlock.