

THUNDER & VICTORIAN ELITE LEAGUE

Hello all. To say it has been an eventful off-season would be something of an understatement, given all that has transpired since the end of the 2018 roster. I'm sure most people would now be aware that Basketball

Australia, in their wisdom, decided that there was no longer a place in the Australian national basketball landscape for a SEABL league, even if that league was willing to administer and finance its' own operations. The disbanding of the league was a tremendous shock to everyone involved and we were subsequently delighted to hear that Basketball Victoria was intending to set up their own elite league to replace SEABL and all former Tasmanian SEABL teams were able to nominate for inclusion. We were duly accepted into this league, but our previous positive attitude was then tempered by news that the new management committee wished us to play all our games as double-headers with the Launceston Tornadoes. This of course would result in a 50% loss of door takings over the season and a similar flow-on impact to sponsorship dollars and the sale of catered boxes and reserved premium seating along with merchandise sales, bar receipts and so on. There has been a lot of discussion, numerous meetings and a host of emails and phone calls around this aspect and we made a detailed presentation to the league outlining the critical financial implications that the joint-games proposal would have on our bottom line. It was therefore very pleasing to receive advice from a further meeting in Melbourne on the 1st December that in the main, we will be able to continue with separate venues for Thunder and Tornadoes games during the 2019 Super league. There may be a couple of double-headers but we should be able to host at least 9 home fixtures. This is not a permanent arrangement and there is an expectation that over the next couple of seasons, we will work towards a fully amalgamated Thunder/Tornadoes roster. This still of course comes with the same financial concerns and we are going to have to off-set lost revenue with new income streams if we are to survive for the foreseeable future. For now, we will concentrate on getting our house in order and trying to put a competitive team on the floor. In conjunction with yesterday's meeting, the Victorian Basketball team put out this release covering aspects of the new competition.

"BASKETBALL Victoria has hosted all 18 foundation licence-holders for the inaugural Victorian-managed Senior Elite League Forum. With the league set to tip off for the first time in 2019, Basketball Victoria brought together leaders from all licence-holders on Saturday to discuss the inaugural season. The name and branding of the new league is expected to be announced later this year, with commercial discussions still underway. The league can confirm some details ahead of the official announcement later this month, with the inaugural season set to tip off on 29th March. This will usher in the start of a 15-round season, including a Top-8 finals series consisting of single game elimination finals and a Championship Game held on 17th August at the State Basketball Centre, Wantirna South. Every game throughout the league will be live-streamed, including a multi-camera Game of the Week.

Basketball Victoria's Senior Elite League Manager Dean Anglin said the forum, which included all Victorian and Tasmanian licence-holders, showcased the energy and excitement heading in to the first season. 'It's important to provide clear direction as we strive to deliver an exciting product for the basketball community. We look forward to working together with all the clubs, and we will release further strategic details for 2019 in the coming weeks' Anglin said. 'Basketball Victoria will work closely with all 18 foundation licence holders to ensure the stability and success of the league going forward.'

ELITE LEAGUE TEAMS

The list of teams that will compete in the newly formed Victorian league in 2019 has been announced and there are many familiar names as well as some new faces on the scene. From last year's Seabl roster, there will be the four Tasmanian teams plus:-

- Albury-Wodonga Ballarat Bendigo Kilsyth
- Dandenong Diamond Valley Frankston Melbourne Tigers
- Nunawading Geelong Sandringham
- Basketball Australia Centre of Excellence

Teams making their debut or returning after a spell away from the top level will be:-

- Eltham Knox Ringwood Waverley

THUNDER PLAYING LIST

It is perhaps not surprising, that with all the uncertainty around our playing situation in 2019, that our playing stocks have taken a hit, with many of this year's squad moving on to explore other options. We have already lost the two prime movers in our back court, Lachie Barker and Mason Bragg, who have signed with other teams, while Ben Richmond has been lured back to football and will play with the Wynyard cats in the North West NTL competition. Youngster Ben Woolley is another who won't be returning and at this point in time, it is unlikely that we will see either Jeremiah Ingram or Darcy Malone back in Thunder colours next year. Fortunately, Sam Armstrong has been reappointed as coach and he is leaving no stone unturned in terms of seeking out good quality replacement players. We hope to have some more news on that front in the near future.

JEREMIAH INGRAM

The life of a professional basketballer is a busy one and Jeremiah Ingram has not let the grass grow under his feet since leaving our shores in August. After a couple of catch-up weeks with family back in the States, "J" quickly hit the boards again with his new team, the crazily named Svendborg Rabbits in Denmark, (the league also includes bears and wolves!). At time of writing the Rabbits were on top of the ladder with an 8-1 record and "J" is leading all scorers with an 18.5 average. We wish him continued success and hope that he "jags" a premiership with "the bunnies".

**Svendborg
Rabbits**

Basketball team



Svendborg Rabbits is a Danish professional basketball team, from Svendborg. The club currently plays in the Basketligaen, the top division of basketball in Denmark. The home ground of the club is the Svendborg Idrætscenter, nicknamed the Kaninhulen. [Wikipedia](#)

Head coach: Luca Ciaboco

Location: Svendborg, Denmark

League: Basketligaen

Founded: 1958

Championships: 3

TRE ARMSTRONG

It has been a sensational year for Thunder “young gun” Tre Armstrong who was selected to play for the Australian Emus in the Under 18 Asian Championships in Bangkok in August, coming away with a gold medal after beating New Zealand 72–63 in the final.



In even further exciting news, towards the end of the year, Tre achieved a life-long dream winning a spot in the US College basketball system with California Baptist University next year. An extract from the Advocate story on the appointment appears below:–

The 18-year-old from Wynyard announced this week his plans for 2019, crediting his work with the North-West Thunder and the quality of the now-defunct SEABL competition as playing a key role in him being noticed.

“This is huge, as it has been a dream of mine since I was a young kid to go play Division 1 basketball, and something I have set out to do for a very long time,” said Armstrong, who has also represented Wynyard, Tasmania and the Australian Emus in recent times.

“In terms of an achievement it is a really big tick for what I want to achieve in the sport, which is to play professionally. When I finish at the college after the four years, I hope to have had a significant impact on the program and do well in college. It was my work with the Thunder in the SEABL that really got their attention, so that was where this all really started.”

Armstrong recently returned from the US where he toured California Baptist University.

He said that college *“felt like home”*, which will make being away from family and friends all the more easy during his four year stint.

“I visited two schools, California Baptist and Drexel University in Philadelphia, and straight away I knew that Cal Baptist was a really good fit for me and what I want to achieve for my college basketball career,” he said. *“They are actually transitioning from division 2 to division 1, this coming season, which I won’t be a part of as I won’t be moving over until next year. So when I do get over there I will get to be part of something new and something that is building to be part of something special.”*

LACHIE BARKER

Thunder would like to extend a hearty congratulations to Lachie Barker who has secured a development player spot with the Sydney Kings in the NBL. It is just reward for all of Lachie’s hard work and perhaps not a surprise given his stellar season with Thunder in 2018. The following “blurb” was issued by the Kings Media arm after the signing:–

“The Sydney Kings are proud to announce that three outstanding young men have been chosen to join the team as development players for the 2018-19 National Basketball League season. Sam Daly returns for his second year on the development squad, joined by debutants Liam Thomas and Lachlan Barker. Sydney.” Kings General Manager of Basketball, Jeff Van Groningen, hailed the group as vitally important to the team’s fortunes in the club’s 30th Anniversary Season.

‘The DP squad is really indicative of the depth of your team,’ Mr Van Groningen said. ‘If you have three strong development players, it really puts that ‘bottom-up’ pressure on the intensity at training; the intensity of the practice sessions, when those DPs are highly motivated and highly skilled. We’ve been blessed over the last couple of seasons to have guys who are both pushing the regulars and trying to make an NBL team. They’ve got to have the right mentality and find the balance between helping the team and making their own way. Our philosophy is we don’t want to name a DP guy that we don’t believe has a prospect of making an NBL roster. ‘It’s not about when they’ll make it, it’s that we think that with the right development, they can make it.’

Barker, a 179cm guard, has played in the SEABL competition for North West Thunder and was a member of the Kings’ training squad for a number of years. In 2015 he was called up to the main roster for a game against the Townsville Crocodiles, but while he saw no court time, it was a glimpse of his undoubted talent and willingness to work hard at his craft.



‘Lachlan Barker is a real surprise packet,’ Mr Van Groningen commented. ‘His story is really interesting to watch. He’s seized every opportunity that’s been given to him, even just as a member of the training squad last year.’ ‘But the last month at practice has been an example of the development of his game, particularly in his ability to knock down shots in a high-tempo transition environment.’ ‘He can shoot the three, and the thing is he’s a really good athlete. He’s got sneaky good hops.’ ‘Lachlan is the type of guy who could really go places given his exponential development and the confidence that he is now showing to back himself. The Kings are thrilled to welcome Sam, Liam and Lachlan to the team.’

Sadly, Lachie will not be returning to Thunder in 2019 having decided to join a mainland super league team. No doubt we will see him back in town during the course of the season.

“THE UNION” PUBLICATION

I am sure that many of our members and fans are now in possession of the great new basketball publication “The Union” written by our own Nick Haywood. Nick has spent countless hours of research and “hard yakka” in putting together a book that is a mine of information on all aspects of the North West Basketball Union and the teams and personalities that have shaped the league since its’ inception back in 1974. It is really a “must read” for all basketball fans and sports lovers in general and would make a great Christmas present. The book is sprinkled with some fantastic interviews from some of the game’s greats and copies can be bought via the following link:-

the-union-nwbu.myshopify.com



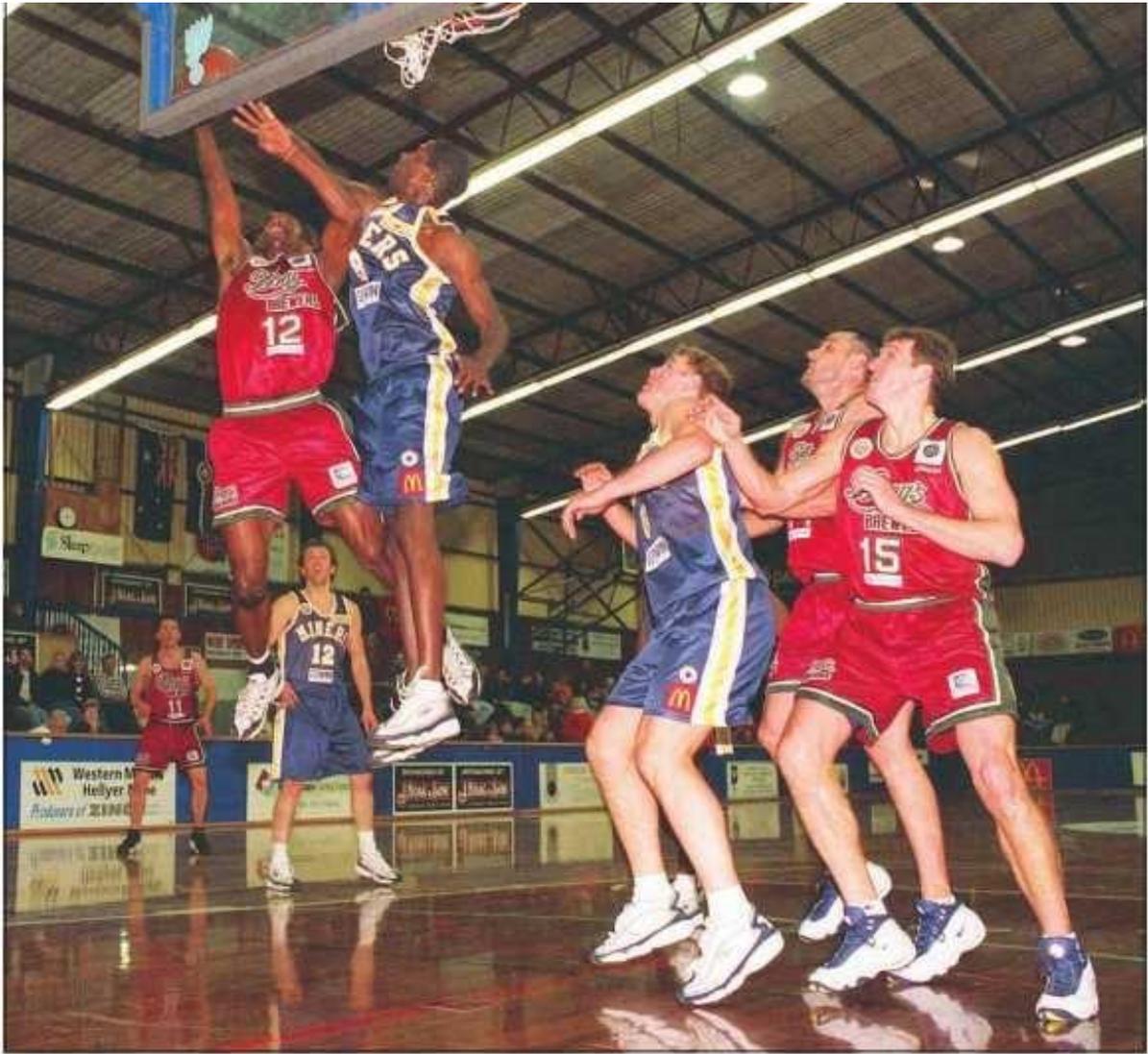
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The club recently held its Annual General Meeting and the majority of board members will be returning for season 2019. Tony Barker will again be Chairperson and Deb Lynch rounds out our Executive spots in her ongoing role as Administrator. General committee members in Kellie Jones, Raelene Salter, Kirsten and Mandy Archer, Graham Ratcliffe, Scot Postlethwaite and John Beard are all back on deck for another season and Greg Miller will again fill the vital role of NWBU liaison. We are still on the lookout for a new Vice-Chairperson after the retirement of Mike Gaffney and long-serving board member Trudy Pearce and Amanda Chilcott will also be absent in 2019. We thank all three for their service, particularly Trudy who has been a mainstay of the organisation for many, many years and an invaluable servant of the Thunder organisation. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours. These vacant spots do provide an opportunity for some “new blood”, so if anyone is keen to become a part of our Thunder administration, please let a board member know. It is a rewarding job and we have a terrific, hard-working crew that will help any newcomers seamlessly fit in to the role.

TRAINING

The first official Thunder training will be held on Thursday 6th December at the Ulverstone stadium, commencing at 6:30 pm. Everyone is welcome. It is likely that we will continue with Monday and Thursday sessions with actual venues still to be finalised. All details in due course.

HISTORY



UP THEY GO: North-West Brewer LaMonte Ware (left) puts up a shot during his team's ABA game against the Ballarat Miners on Saturday night. Picture: Stuart Wilson.

