



**Harvey Norman**

*Proudly Supporting  
Men's & Women's Football  
in the Local Community*

**Newsletter June 10, 2020**

## **IT'S ON! TSL SEASON TO COMMENCE ON JULY 18!**

Great news with the announcement on June 10 that the TSL season will go ahead!

The season will commence on Saturday July 18 with the grand final on the weekend of October 17/18.

It will be a 12-game season so each team will play each other twice.

There will be a two-week finals series where 1<sup>st</sup> will play 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> will play 3<sup>rd</sup> with the winners playing in the grand final at a venue to be confirmed.

A roster will be worked on over the next week or so and be released as soon as possible.

We are also confident of crowds of up to 500 providing there are no more cases of coronavirus in the state and the decision on that will be made by Public Health.



Jack McCulloch (left) and Fin Poke can't wait for July 18!!

## Vale, The Great JL

John Leedham (20 May 1928-30 May 2020)



Tasmanian Football has lost one of its greatest in John Leedham who passed away on May 30, aged 92.

Many believe him to be the greatest Tasmanian player not to have played in the VFL/AFL, and that's borne out by him being named Vice-Captain to Darrel Baldock in Tasmania's team of the century, announced in 2004.

John is revered, loved, and respected by everyone who knew him.

An extraordinarily gifted left footer, in his playing days the great JL was one of the finest players in the country and unbeatable. He made a habit of regularly beating high profile interstate players in state games.

The late Jim Manson, former Glenorchy ruckman and footy commentator, recalled watching John "take apart two of Victoria's top players in Bill Twomey and John Brady at North Hobart in 1957".

Incredibly, he didn't play competition football at school yet within a couple of years of joining North Launceston he was in the Tasmanian team.

Born in Campbell Town in 1928, John was an only child and lived on a farm 20 kilometres west of Campbell Town. Life was tough and he wasn't exposed to sport at a young age.

The army arrived and set up a depot at Ross in 1944 and footy became much more prominent in the district.



He started playing with Campbell Town in 1944 and his freakish skills were soon under notice and at 16 he started playing with North Launceston.

He'd rise early on Saturday mornings and catch the bus to Launceston to play and return the following morning.

John quickly became a valuable player with the most successful North Launceston team ever and one of the greatest teams Tasmania has ever seen. They won five successive premierships from 1946 to 1950 and won the state premiership in 1947, 49 and 1950.

At just 19 John was selected to play for Tasmania at the 1947 National Carnival at North Hobart.

Tasmania won the second division title that year winning all its games.

After the carnival he was recruited by Melbourne in 1948. John played well in the pre-season practice games and was a certainty to be picked in the side for the first game of the season at Centre Half Back.

Unfortunately, he hurt the cartilage in his knee at training and he decided to return home to Tasmania to have it operated on. John said he never regretted returning home because that's where his family and friends were, and the money back then wasn't all that different to what he'd get playing in Melbourne.

After a stint running a pub in the country and marrying the great love of his life Evelyn ('Bubbles') Bingham in 1951, John returned to the big time as captain-coach of North Launceston in 1953.

The team finished 3<sup>rd</sup> and that year John distinguished himself by starring for Tasmania at the national carnival in Adelaide becoming the first Tasmanian to win All-Australian selection in the first ever All-Australian team.

John was also runner-up in the Tassie medal for the best player at the carnival.

After 124 games with North Launceston, he crossed to North Hobart in 1954 playing 114 games and captain-coached the club from 1954 – 1959.

Beaten by New Town by 5 points in the 1956 Grand Final, North Hobart wanted and got revenge in 1957, beating the newly badged Glenorchy in the Grand Final.

It was a cracking game and the crowd of over 16,000 got more than their money's worth.



The lead changed multiple times all day with North running out winners by 12 points.

The match was a personal triumph for John and this iconic photo of him being chaired off the ground shows how much the flag meant to North Hobart supporters.

In the 1958 National Carnival John captain-coached Tasmania in Division I against the best footballers in Australia.

The team emerged as the greatest-ever Tasmanian representative side beating Western Australia and South Australia.

When the team arrived home thousands of Tasmanians turned out at the airport to greet their heroes. This really was a pinnacle in the golden era of Tasmanian football.

For those that never saw him play he was a left footer with beautiful hands, he never fumbled, had an uncanny ability to find the ball in heavy traffic, had incredible evasion skills and was impossible to lay a glove on.



But he was also a showman. He believed that if people came to the footy, they had to be entertained.

John was a larger than life figure who was always warm and engaging. You were also never left in any doubt about what he thought about the opposition or the umpires when he was watching a game.

He was a lovable larrikin who loved his family, his footy and friends.



I was fortunate enough to be coached by John at Rose Bay High School and it was wonderful experience. He coached us to a flag in 1978 in the under 15s. It was an honour to know him since then.

In 2004 John was selected as ruck-rover and vice-captain in the official Tasmanian 'Team of the Century' and then in 2005 was an inaugural inductee as a Legend in the AFL Tasmania Hall of Fame.

John was elevated to AFL Tasmania Icon status in 2014 and in that year was also inducted into the Tasmanian Sporting Hall of Fame.

He is ruck-rover and co-vice-captain of the North Hobart Team of the Century.

His contribution to North Hobart didn't end once his playing career was over. John served as Club President with great distinction from 1998-2009.

John is a Life Member of North Hobart and a Member of the Club's Hall of Fame.

Tasmania has lost an absolute legend and we are all the sadder for it. But those who knew him will remember him with great warmth and reverence.

John lost his beloved wife Evelyn 'Bubbles' in 2007 and our deepest sympathies go to his children Jennifer, John, and Phillipa at this very sad time.

North Hobart will name the new coaches and media box at North Hobart Oval in honour of John and another North Hobart legend in John Devine. It will be known as the Leedham and Devine Centre.



Given the situation with COVID-19, there was a private family funeral for John, however once it's safe to do so the North Hobart Football Club will hold a public memorial event at North Hobart Oval to celebrate John's life.

Craig Martin

President

North Hobart Football Club

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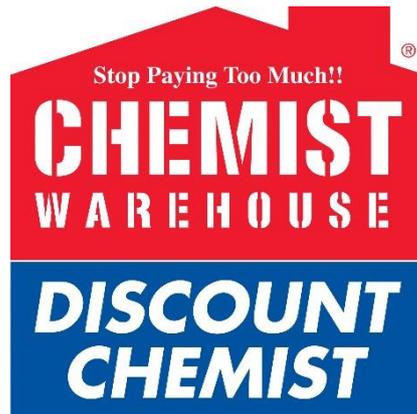
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