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I'm only new here, but...

BEN LENNON
Taylor Group Media

We've almost made it. Last week a cool change blew through Renmark for the first time since I moved here in November last year. It signalled two equally important things: 1) I might actually be able to sleep at night, and 2) winter sports are just around the corner.

Don't get me wrong, I'm a cricket tragic and the basketball up here is something to behold, but there's nothing quite like grabbing a hot chocolate on a Friday night and watching some under 9s try and get a kick in some blustery conditions.

Some of you might relish the sunshine, sweat and softball that summer brings with it, and that's okay,

that's where we come in. If you find yourself down in the dumps that summer is done, then let our team of journos get you up and about for the months of winter and the wonderful sport that it brings with it.

We spoke with coaches and office bearers from all ends of the Riverland to talk soccer (I call it football, but that might not fly here), netball, Aussie rules and hockey, and judging by the responses, we're in for a belter of a season.

In footy, Josh Vater and his Renmark Rovers are set to break the leash and hunt yet another RFL premiership, but can a Helbig recruit in black and white throw a spanner in the works?

Tom Wood has enlisted

the services of one of the competition's most prolific goalkickers, Dean Hill, to help his Wunkar Bulldogs in their pursuit of reigning Independent premiers Ramco. Can the big man fire them to a flag or can a new-look BSR under Alan Harvey make the jump up the ladder into contention?

Ali Altundag has taken the reins of Renmark Olympic Soccer Club as the club looks to make it back-to-back titles. We saw how fleet of foot Barmera United can be at the Nippy's Gift; can the side win another race in 2022 and finish first in the pursuit of the cup?

Renmark also took out the A1 netball title last year. As a Renmark resident, have I accidentally moved

in to the best sporting town in the Riverland? I'm sure Berri, Barmera, Loxton and Waikerie all have something to say about that.

Still, Renmark holds the crown in women's hockey, but last year's runners-up from Berri will be chomping at the bit to knock them off and get some revenge.

It's a season full of mouth-watering storylines and we've packed as much of it as we can into this bumper edition of The Game Plan. All fantastic photos in this edition are courtesy of the busiest man in the Riverland, Grant Schwartzkopff, but more on him later.

For now, check out what your club has to say about season 2022!

SOCCER BARMERA UNITED



Kevin Barber Sr,
open women's coach

How are the player numbers looking for this year?

We have no new recruits at this stage, with three senior women out:

- Season 2021 captain Tessie Mitchell has set her sights at the next level and is playing for White City FC Beograd in 2022.

- Left midfielder Amber Coombe has a baby on the way, thus is taking the season 2022 off.

- Right back Claudia Wright has relocated to Adelaide to attend university.

Have key names from last

season returned for this year?

Jiji Mitchell, who missed the first half of the 2021 season, is looking for a big season ahead. Pairing up with young super striker Macy Bourton they will make a potent forward line.

In the backline Georgia Skilton will glove up again for her third season, after winning a spot the 2021 Riverland Team of the Year as goalkeeper. Georgia will be supported in the backlines by Riverland Team of the Year duo Sarah Beams and Tilly Albrecht. Kayla Tsorotiotis and Marlee Coombe will marshal the midfield, with Karrie Megan in support.

Youngsters Matilda Mitchell, Makayla Rayner, Hannah Beams, Maddy Munchenberg and Hannah Beams will all play pivotal roles in keeping the team energised.

Did the team play any pre-season games? How do you expect this will help preparations?

We (had) a pre-season game against Nicolas Point. Pre-season matches

allow us to assess our strengths and weaknesses.

What do you feel will be important to replicating last season's success?

To replicate last season's success, first and foremost we will need to remain disciplined, focus on the tasks at hand, remain committed to each other and to our club, be good sports and respectful of the world game.

Are you expecting tough competition from the other sides?

Three different sides have been premiers over the last three seasons, For Barmera, being runners-up in both the 2019 and 2020 premierships, and the Top 4 Cup in 2021, was always going to provide that extra drive for us to succeed. We know we are the side all others want to beat in 2022. There is no such thing as an easy game, so hopefully Covid-19 doesn't get to play a part. Hopefully the best team wins and the Pelican flag waves victorious in 2022.



Neil Bourton,
A grade men's coach

How are the team numbers looking so far?

Early numbers in pre-season are looking strong. It's best we've had for a few years, which is going to make selection for the A grade really difficult.

It's a good problem to have for the A and B grade though.

Are there any big names returning from last season?

Most players are back from last season, which is great to see, and there's a couple new ones. We had a few injuries last season, so if we can get back a fit James Wallace and Marty Barber, it's going to be key for us.

How have things been going in training?

The intensity and dedication shown by the players so far has been really impressive. Like most clubs we're starting to work on match fitness, touch and gelling as a team. In the following weeks we'll be working on formation and set-up on match day.

What do you think will be

important for Barmera's success this season?

Not finishing last would be a start. In all honesty I thought we were competitive in most games last year, only to let a cheap goal in, or have an early one scored against us, which puts us on the back foot. So for me, having a solid defence is big part of how I want to play.

Do you expect it to be a competitive A grade this season?

I thought last season's A grade competition was the best in a long time. Renmark ran away with it in the end, but there were plenty of competitive matches throughout the season.

Players and supporters are really loyal to the club. How does this help?

As a club we've probably got the smallest catchment area in regards to recruitment which is reflected in our playing numbers. Barmera has always punched above its weight I think that's why we have such loyal support from players and supporters. I think we enjoy being the underdog.



Todd Goodman,
club president

Can we expect the young players to shine for Berri again this season?

Berri has always had a young side, because we promote our under 16 or under 17 players to compensate for players who leave to go to Adelaide. Let's say we had a squad of 14 players last year, I would say eight or nine of those have gone to Adelaide, or won't be playing. They are fly-in, fly-out workers, or are going to university.

The younger players always seem to adapt well to the senior competition?

We've got a lot of natural sporting talent, like most senior sides in community sport. There's a lot of young, enthusiastic and skilful players, and they could play soccer or football.

You name it, they are naturally gifted.

The step up to the senior grade is pretty steep, and it takes a while to get into the mindset and the pace of the game. The backline in particular takes a while to settle, and get used to where their teammates are going to be.

After a couple of weeks of gelling and building chemistry, they'll get used to reading the game.

What will be key to going that extra step and claiming the premiership this season?

There was a lot of 'what ifs' last season. We struggled against Loxton last year, but I think that was more mentally than anything.

We started the season with four losses, but similar to this year, we lost quite a few players out of the district. We had a new backline and midfield, and we were bringing some of our under 16 and 17 players into that side.

It took a while for them to gel, but once they did, we held our own. By the end of the season we were around the mark.

Are you expecting a tough A grade competition in 2022?

It's pretty tight year in, year out. In a four-team competition, someone can skip away, or it can be really close.

(In 2020) it came down to the last round we had against Barmera, and I would expect the same kind of competition this year.



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Patty Fournaros-Carney, women's coach

How is the women's team shaping up?

We eased our way into the outdoor season after futsal ended. The squad is growing from week to week with almost enough players to field two women's teams. There will be great opportunities to work with youthful enthusiasm and a wealth of experience. The challenge I'm looking forward to as a coach is working toward the perfect balance for our team/s.

Any changes from the side from last year?

Many players have returned from last season, some have moved on. The excellent problem for Loxton United to have is the large number of juniors putting their hands up to play, and former players coming back after several seasons away.

Are there players to look out for this season?

Several LUSC players have just finished an outstanding season of futsal. Ruby Payne and Makayla Lockwood will be strong players to look out for. They continue to challenge each other to grow and strengthen their skills. I personally can't wait to see what that will translate into for season 2022. Gretel Pumpa was our most consistent player last season and she will again be such an important player for the

LUSC women's team, as will Lisa-Marie Perre and Eira Dalzell.

How are some of the young players on the team improving?

LUSC is in an extremely fortunate position regarding the young players on the women's team. Last year Eira Dalzell, Lisa-Marie Perre and Charlotte Formby were all identified as part of the Football SA U12 State Identification Program (SIP). The amount of talent that these young players have is tremendous. It is a very exciting time for the club. The fact that they will have an incredible influence over the success of the women's team this year at such a young age is all credit to them. Sarah Setchell is another young player to look out for in 2022.

What are your goals as a team this season?

The goals that we are setting as a team for the season are along the lines of us setting a higher standard for ourselves development-wise. We had some success last year which was a reward for our effort. It is pleasing to hear from a coach's perspective that the group wants to continue to strive to improve on multiple levels, to work together and support each other for even greater achievements this year.

What's been happening with the men's team?

The major out from last season would be the retirement of former LUSC president/captain Geordie Franks, who has been the beating heart of the LUSC senior men's teams for many years. His departure leaves a huge void. From a playing perspective he is irreplaceable. More than half of the senior team have gone to Adelaide in 2022 for tertiary studies and the remaining players have left the Riverland area or are unavailable due to their work commitments.

Any players to keep an eye on?

LUSC will be exploring the opportunity to have visiting seasonal workers play this season. International players have been the reason for the success of other Riverland clubs in past seasons. They bring a very exciting brand of the world game to the Riverland which is always a pleasure to see.

How is the team hoping to build on a Top 4 Cup Final appearance last season?

Currently the main goal for LUSC is to be able to field an A grade team for season 2022. The numbers are slowly growing for the B grade team however it is a requirement for the first team to be filled. All avenues are being explored to ensure that a competitive team can be added to the RSA competition.

Is the competition expected to be more even overall this year?

It is hard to say. There wasn't a huge opportunity for pre-season fixtures due to Covid protocols. How even the season will be overall, remains to be seen.

Ali Altundag,
A grade men's coach

Have key players returned to the team from last season?

This year will be different. After everyone comes to training, it's not important for me so much if they are a good or bad player. It's important who has put in the effort to come to training.

Names are not important for me. It's important who has put the effort there, and to look toward the young players for the future.

Are you going to focus on giving playing time to some of the younger players?

That's my target.

Last year we had a lot of the backpacker players that helped the club. We are thankful for that, but it's important to focus on the local players, and the young players that will be the future of the club. You have to look after the kids who will be the future. Even the result is not the most important thing for me.

I'm going to focus on giving chances to the younger players, and helping them to develop their skills.

Are you expecting tough competition from the other teams?

I've heard all the other clubs really want to put that effort in, because Renmark had such a good season last year. The other clubs would have had to make changes, and it will become clearer when the season starts. Good luck to everyone.

Are you expecting it will take a few weeks for the team to gel?

After a couple of games we'll have a clearer picture of how the team is building and working together, after I see everyone's condition, how they are running, and their fitness.

I'm focused on the future of the club, not the short term. You always need to be thinking about the long term.



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Brett Stokes, club president and A grade men's coach

How are the teams shaping up this year – both men's and women's?

The men's (A grade) team will have quite a few changes due to others either moving on or leaving the game. We have still got a good core group of players, however it will be quite a disjointed season with many players having other commitments like work and study that may clash with training and game times. I feel confident that the squad as a whole will be able to maintain a strong bond over the season and make it work.

How has pre-season gone?

We started our season with come-and-try nights and training. We have seen good numbers out at training with an early focus on fitness and skills. The game plan execution will come just prior to the season starting.

Are there any players we should be keeping an eye on in 2022?

Riley Burgess is by far the most committed in the team this year. This has extended from the end of last year, when he played in Adelaide as well as in the Riverland. He had been involved in the senior Riverland side and is now starting to find himself as one of the better players in the competition and a leader within our team. Jarryd Roberts has put his hand up for a big year and we look forward to him stepping up. There may be a few positional changes to the team structure which will be interesting to see how they play out.

Tell me something good that's happening at the club.

The club has been really successful in junior recruitment and participation and there has been a real focus on the values and participation of club members and volunteers.

Who are the coaches and



people in charge this year?

Committee: Brett Stokes (president/secretary), Ray Burgess (vice-president), Kristin Hibberd (treasurer). Coaches: Under 9 H2H, Kiralee Jury; U12, Ryan Vallelonga; U14, Riley Burgess; U17 girls, Brooke Kelly; U17 boys, Brett Stokes; B women, Kris Weir; B men, Ryan Vallelonga; A women, Danial Shawyer; A men, Brett Stokes.

What is the main objective this year? Is it about winning, seeing the team grow, or a mixture of both?

We will be looking to introduce some juniors to the senior ranks this year with the intention to give them limited game time and make it more about the experience of playing at senior level. We want to make sure we promote and display high standards of performance both around the game and in representing the club at all levels.

Rebecca Schaefer and Robin Schaefer,
club committee members

How is the men's A grade team shaping up?

This year will be a challenging year for our senior men's teams, having lost quite a lot of experience over the last few years.

So what are some of the changes to last year's side?

Riverland best and fairest, midfielder Sean Herbert, has moved to Adelaide for work and to play premier league which is a big loss to the team. Caleb Schaefer, who tied for Riverland best and fairest last year, is also playing in Adelaide so won't be available every week. Backman Corey Gow has moved to Adelaide to study and will only be able to return occasionally to play. Matt Irvine has moved to Renmark and Jay Botten has returned to Renmark, to help bolster their team. Haiden Button and Josh Baird are having a break from the game this year.

Who are players to keep an eye on for this year?

Caleb Schaefer will be interesting to watch as his skill development playing in the Adelaide competition continues. Toby McDonald will likely play his first season of A grade. It will be good to watch his skills develop.

What do you guys have to do to build on last season?

As you can see we have lost a lot of players from last season. We will be working to build the skills of a number of new entrants into our team.

Is another premiership a realistic goal for this season?

Our goal for this season will be to rebuild our team while still remaining competitive with the other teams.





Daniel Radloff,
A grade men's coach

How are the teams shaping up this year?

The men are getting pretty good numbers out on the park now and we have got some guys from Mildura and Adelaide that are coming to play for us as well.

So the team, on paper, is looking pretty good.

Renmark A grade men didn't put a team in last year, so first year back in the competition we are looking okay.

How has pre-season gone?

The men started off lightly, just to brush the rust off. These guys haven't done too much over summer.

How are you looking to build on last season?

Last season the A men didn't put a

team in at all so anything we do will build on that.

If all goes to plan, we should be quite a competitive side this year.

Last season the women had a grand final win, our third year in a row for a premiership.

But if we were to go ahead this year, we would be looking at a rebuilding stage.

What players should we be keeping an eye on this season?

Certainly Nick Hocking is one to keep an eye on. He is in form.

Kydan Radloff played for Berri last year and has come back to play for Renmark.

Lincoln Matulin seems to have sorted his back issues out and he is doing quite well.

And we have James Hutchins

coming back from Adelaide, and Josh Flemming and Mark Lohmeyer coming over from Mildura. These are pretty good players to watch.

What other good things are happening at the club at the moment?

We have an active committee on board at the club, and they are shaping up plans to be a really social club, and get the atmosphere back to where we have been.

We are calling the Renmark Bowling Club our home base, so hopefully we get a bit more of a social aspect back into the club that has been lacking the past few years.

Other coaches for 2022?

Callum McNorton will coach the B women, and B men will be Dean Beer.



Sarah Schiller, spokesperson

How are the teams shaping up this year – both men and women?

Waikerie has good numbers for both A and B men for the 2022 season and will once again be very competitive. James ('Jimmy') Smith is stepping up into the A grade men's coach position after Rowan ('Rocca') Kleeman has left the Waikerie area. Jimmy will be taking on the challenging task of being a playing coach. The A grade men are also excited to test out their skills against the Barossa teams this year as hopefully they will be playing one full round against them later in the season.

Michael Camilleri is back again this year as the B grade men's coach. Women is another story.

Waikerie is hoping to have two senior women's teams. We are currently unsure how the women's comp will look this year with numerous clubs struggling to fill an A grade side.

If we can get the numbers and skill level for an A grade team it will once

again be a very young side, led by Trinity Schmidt and Justice Ebert. Our B grade team will have numerous brand new senior players who have been attracted to the sport by our recent 'come and play' nights.

Tell me something good that's happening at the club.

Waikerie Hockey Club has recently completed three 'come and play' nights. These were held on Tuesday nights and were open to any age group and skill level.

We had lots of young new players come out and try hockey for the first time and got the opportunity to play games run by Nina Rayner and Brenton Kroehn.

By the second session we had enough new and interested seniors to run a senior game as well for new adults who were interested in playing hockey. Our final session saw nearly 40 interested participants enjoying the games, the fun giveaways and sausage sizzle that were provided.

While we may not pick up all of these players for the 2022 season we have

achieved what we set out to do, which was establishing hockey as another option for sport as well as increasing the profile of Waikerie Hockey Club as a fun and family-orientated club.

Who are the other coaches at the club/who have you got helping you out?

Our under 9s program will be run by Kirsty Sargson and Trinity Schmidt. They will be supported by some of our younger players like Ellen Kroehn and Zali Schiller. It is awesome to have our young under 17 club members volunteering their time to help out at the club.

Brenton Kroehn is back looking after the under 12s. He is one of our most positive and supportive club members and his experience and enthusiasm is invaluable at this age level.

Trinity Schmidt is excited to be taking on the new grade of under 14 mixed. She has developed her coaching skills and built positive relationships with the under 15 girls last year and is keen to extend this into a mixed scenario.

NETBALL BARMERA



Shane Phillips,
A1 coach

How is the team shaping up this year?

We are sort of like everyone else, we lose a few players and get a few that come in. But I think we have got good replacement players for the ones we have lost. We have good likes-for-like, which I think is positive.

How has preseason gone?

We started with some tryouts and pre-season training started in late March. We went in with the focus to just get faster. Our aim is to try and improve our speed over last year by about five to 10 per cent. We are going to try and speed up our hand release, so we get quicker through our hands. I think that's an area where, at times, we were a little bit slow last year. We have got some drills that we are going to be incorporating into training to get our speed of ball movement up. We were fairly quick last year, so if we can get faster again... that is the style we want to play.

How else are you looking to build on last season?

We want to build on our structured stuff. It is about first year when you look at it, and the second year you can refine it and get more of the structured, set-piece plays incorporated with more confidence because people have played it a bit more. That is what we are hoping to do. Consolidate what we did last season and actually do it a lot faster.

Tell me something good that's happening at the club in 2022?

I have been the main campaigner to get back out there. Like everyone, our numbers have been solid but we are just seeing that these girls want to work as hard as they can, which is really encouraging.

Who are the other coaches at the club/who have you got helping you out?

Benita Dillon is coaching the A2s, so we'll be covering for each other if one of us is not available. Leonie (Haigh) has stepped back as club president and she's taken the team manager's role, so that is a little bit of a change. We are probably unusual, for netball, to be in a fairly steady, stable state.



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Rachael Stoeckel,
president

How are the teams shaping up this year?

The teams are looking great. We have a good mix of juniors and seniors this year, which will be a good balance for the A squad.

Has pre-season started at all and what have you been up to so far?

Pre-season has started with a focus on fitness and basic footwork.

How are you looking to build on last season?

Coming off a successful season in 2021, this year we will focus on improving our game and intensity in all areas of the court. The competition was strong last year, so we will go into this year expecting the same.

Which A1 players should we be keeping an eye on in 2022?

This is a tough one to answer. Lauren Collins had an amazing season last year, as well as Sonja Modlinski and Emma Stockman.

What other good things are happening at the club?

Renmark Netball Club has put a lot of thought into how to create a cohesive and supportive club environment, starting with senior and junior trainings (being) all on the same days and times: Tuesday and Wednesday respectively.

The idea behind this is that every team will have another to train with, with mutual support across all grades. Head coach Lyn Leuders, along with

other senior players, will be able to assist throughout the season with junior trainings and provide support for coaches. What an asset to have for our club.

It is a great vibe and a real community feeling to all be out at trainings together – a positive start to the 2022 season.

Who are your other coaches, and any others helping you out?

Ann Noack is once again coaching the A2 team, with Lauren Gardner her team manager while she recovers from her knee injury.

Simone Gardner will be team manager of the A1 team and Reeni Blackley will be helping us out where she can as well.

NETBALL LOXTON NORTH



Kelly Moore,
A1 coach

How is the team shaping up this year?

We are looking strong and have a lot of depth throughout our playing group. Everyone brings a different skill-set so it is about working that all out at the moment, but we have a group that is motivated to succeed and have fun.

How has pre-season gone?

We started back in February and had great numbers register for our tryouts. We have had a focus on our fitness, incorporating lots of match play which has been great to experiment with some different positional combinations. The girls have also been doing bootcamps with one of our sponsors, Mammoth Fitness, on a regular basis.

How are you looking to build on last season?

We are setting some strong team and individual goals and values right from the start of the season that will give us a solid base to build on. We will see what we can produce as a team from there. We have an abundance of talent, so it's about having the right mindset,

putting the right strategies in place and connecting as a team.

Are there any players we should be keeping an eye on in 2022?

We have a strong focus on team so I can't single anyone out but we have been lucky enough to retain many from last year, with some returning and new players to the team.

Tell me something good that's happening at the club.

For a new person coming into the club I would have to say the sense of inclusiveness.

But something we are really excited about as a club are the junior workshops being run by Caroline and Katie from Your Choice Education for our 11, 13 and 15 and under teams with their coach. They will help to really build those solid foundations of a club, including a strong focus on goal setting, gratitude, overcoming challenges and even touching on nutrition and sleep etc. This will also incorporate a personalised journal

which follows them through their season's challenges and journey.

We have a strong focus on junior development and we will be collaborating regularly with the junior A grade coaches to converse about identifying talent within the club that needs rewarding. Hopefully we will see some of these talented kids working their way into the senior A squad pathway through our buddy systems.

The club will also be running an umpiring academy for any members, parents or other interested individuals. This is a new addition this season and one that will no doubt benefit the club for many years to come.

Who are the other coaches at the club/who have you got helping you out?

We have Abby Pavlich taking on the A2 role and we are working very closely together. North have many netball icons that I will certainly be utilising throughout the season for support. Lori Sandland is the team manager, so her knowledge from playing last year will be invaluable.



Ann Biele,
club president

How is the team shaping up this year?

The 2022 season looks to be an exciting year ahead for the Loxton Netball Club, with the introduction of the under 11s into the association. Seeing future netballers out on court brings a sense of excitement to the club and a promising future for netball in the Loxton Netball Club.

How has preseason been?

Pre-season started in February for the whole club. We have done that in the past and did again this year, making it a whole-club event over a few sessions. This brings all our players together, right through from the A grade squad to the under 11s. When everyone trains together we build a stronger and supportive club.

What are the teams looking to build on from last season?

The announcement of our A1 coaches bring not only a wealth of knowledge and skill to our club, but numerous experiences including past finals wins. We are looking at strengthening the A squad, but we're also building skill and resilience within our juniors who make up a portion of the A squad. The focus should not only be on the A squad, because a huge part of our teams are made up of juniors, starting with the under 11s right through to the under 17s, with a solid nine teams representing our club. Developing these junior teams will be a large part of our focus for 2022.

Are there any players we should be keeping an eye on in 2022?

This year we have some fantastic

players making a comeback. I think for the A squad it is more a case of 'watch this space' and see what we have to offer as a team and not just as individuals. Those stepping back on court with Loxton Netball Club have a wealth of knowledge and experience. A few players to look out for this season are Elise Foulds, Hollie Bullock, Taylor Dabinett, Talita DeWet and newcomer Maisie Hicks. Our juniors stepping back on court for the A squad are Chloe Abbott, Zoe Hahn and Jarra Gibbs, who have shown growth since last season.

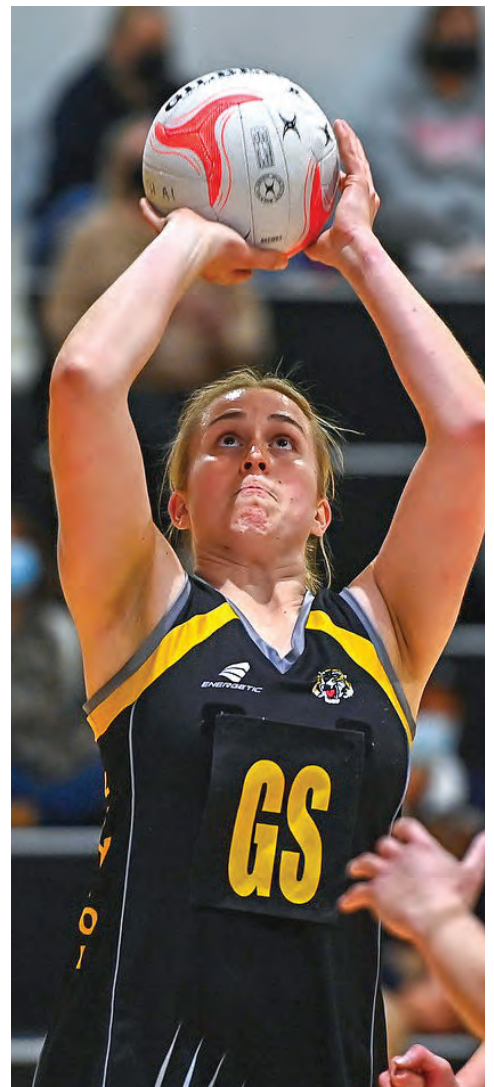
Returning to court this year after injury last season is Leah Uren, who offers great guidance and support having taken on last year's leadership role and the top job of coaching the A1 team.

Tell us something good that's happening at the club.

The amazing support that all the netballers show towards one another as well as the juniors coming through the ranks.

Who are the coaches at the club this year and what can we expect from them?

Both our coaches this year are returning coaches for the Loxton Netball Club. This year will see them share the role of A1 coach. So, in truth, we've been blessed with not just one, but two highly credible coaches in Eve Will and Jill Lange. I am sure that having a set of skilled coaches back in the driving seat will ignite that excitement and passion within the club. These ladies bring out the best of the sport and individuals, plus a wealth of knowledge, skills and valuable information in relation to netball.



NETBALL BERRI



Chrissy Eleftheriadis,
A grade senior coach

How are the teams shaping up this year?

We have a squad of 18 girls. We have some new players and some girls have returned to Berri.

So it was a little bit difficult with attendance because of Covid-19. But, we are just hoping to be competitive this year.

How are you looking to build on last season?

We have been trying to give some young players some experience, and they had that last year.

So we are hoping that with a year under their belt, that they will get that

bit more experience playing senior netball.

We are just really trying to work out combinations, trying to work out where everyone best fits, and see where we can slot in some of the new players as well.

Are there any players that we should be keeping an eye on for 2022?

I think Charlie Gates will have a big season for us.

She played a bit of A1 and A2 last year, and is a very exciting young player.

And also I think Emily Westley, who has come back to Berri.

I am expecting big things from Em.

Can you tell me something good that is happening at the club at the moment?

Things have been a little hectic, trying to get everything arranged.

Attendance and close contacts will be quite challenging throughout the whole season and how we are going to deal with it all.

The A squad have got myself as senior coach with Caroline Martin and Kelly Minchella assisting.

The three of us will be co-coaching all the A1 and A2 together.



2021 was the year of the Rover as Renmark stormed home in an electric finals series to take out the RFL premiership.

In 2022, it all starts fresh and once again, the rest of the competition will be keen to knock the Rovers off of their perch.

Waikerie look the likeliest, with the return of former Richmond player Bradley Helbig to the Magpie line-up, alongside a couple of other handy ins.

The Magpies would have fancied themselves last year but fell at the final hurdle, so this year, revenge is on the agenda.

Berri has brought back a number of familiar faces and some experienced ones at that. Under new coach Clint Ridgway they will be looking to push further up the ladder in 2022.

Loxton North and Barmera-Monash endured testing years in 2021, but the future looks bright for both, with

a number of talented kids coming through the junior ranks.

Dillon Millard's Loxton have new lights, new clubrooms and a new chance to stake their claim as premiership contenders after falling in straight sets last year.

It's going to be a pulsating RFL season and we will be there every step of the way with our Weekly Game Plan magazine as well as all the news you need from The Murray Pioneer.

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RFL ALL GRADES DRAW 2022

1 SATURDAY APRIL 23 Renmark v Loxton Berri v Waikerie Loxton North v Barmera-Monash	9 SATURDAY JUNE 25 Loxton v Barmera-Monash Loxton North v Waikerie Renmark v Berri
2 SATURDAY APRIL 30 Waikerie v Renmark Barmera-Monash v Berri Loxton v Loxton North	10 SATURDAY JULY 2 Waikerie v Loxton Berri v Loxton North Barmera-Monash v Renmark
3 SATURDAY MAY 7 Loxton v Berri Renmark v Loxton North Waikerie v Barmera-Monash	11 SATURDAY JULY 9 Renmark v Loxton Berri v Waikerie Loxton North v Barmera-Monash
4 SATURDAY MAY 14 Barmera-Monash v Loxton Loxton North v Waikerie Berri v Renmark	BYE SATURDAY JULY 16 SA COUNTRY CHAMPS
5 SATURDAY MAY 21 Renmark v Barmera-Monash Loxton North v Berri Junior & B Grade Loxton v Waikerie SUNDAY MAY 22 Loxton v Waikerie A Grade and State League Game	12 SATURDAY JULY 23 Waikerie v Renmark (Gill-Lehmann Cup) Barmera-Monash v Berri (Fisher Cup) Loxton v Loxton North (Proud Cup)
6 SATURDAY MAY 28 Loxton v Renmark Waikerie v Berri Barmera-Monash v Loxton North	13 SATURDAY JULY 30 Berri v Loxton Loxton North v Renmark Barmera-Monash v Waikerie
7 SATURDAY JUNE 4 Renmark v Waikerie Berri v Barmera-Monash Loxton North v Loxton	14 SATURDAY AUGUST 6 Loxton v Barmera-Monash Waikerie v Loxton North Renmark v Berri
BYE SATURDAY JUNE 11 INTERLEAGUE	15 SATURDAY AUGUST 13 Waikerie v Loxton Loxton North v Berri Barmera-Monash v Renmark
8 SATURDAY JUNE 18 Berri v Loxton Renmark v Loxton North Waikerie v Barmera-Monash	SATURDAY AUGUST 20 1ST SEMI FINAL @ Loxton North
	SATURDAY AUGUST 27 2ND SEMI FINAL @ Renmark
	SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 3 PRELIMINARY FINAL @ Waikerie
	SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 10 GRAND FINAL @ Barmera-Monash

RFL INDEPENDENTS DRAW 2022

11.30PM

1 SATURDAY APRIL 23	BSR v Sedan-Cambrai Brown's Well v Wunkar Paringa v Ramco	<i>Double Header Played at BSR</i>
2 SATURDAY APRIL 30	Ramco v BSR Wunkar v Paringa Sedan-Cambrai v Brown's Well	
3 SATURDAY MAY 7	BSR v Paringa Sedan-Cambrai v Wunkar Ramco v Brown's Well	
4 SATURDAY MAY 14	Brown's Well v BSR Wunkar v Ramco Paringa v Sedan-Cambrai	
5 SATURDAY MAY 21	Sedan-Cambrai v Ramco Brown's Well v Paringa BSR v Wunkar	
6 SATURDAY MAY 28	Sedan-Cambrai v BSR Ramco v Paringa Wunkar v Brown's Well	
7 SATURDAY JUNE 4	Paringa v Wunkar Sedan-Cambrai v Brown's Well BSR v Ramco	<i>Double Header Played at Paringa</i>
BYE SATURDAY JUNE 11	LONG WEEKEND	
8 SATURDAY JUNE 18	Paringa v BSR Wunkar v Sedan-Cambrai Brown's Well v Ramco	
9 SATURDAY JUNE 25	BSR v Brown's Well Ramco v Wunkar Sedan-Cambrai v Paringa	
10 SATURDAY JULY 2	Paringa v Brown's Well Wunkar v BSR Ramco v Sedan-Cambrai	
11 SATURDAY JULY 9	BSR v Sedan-Cambrai Paringa v Ramco Brown's Well v Wunkar	
BYE SATURDAY JULY 16	SA COUNTRY CHAMPS	
12 SATURDAY JULY 23	Ramco v BSR Wunkar v Paringa Sedan-Cambrai v Brown's Well	
13 SATURDAY JULY 30	BSR v Paringa Wunkar v Sedan-Cambrai Ramco v Brown's Well	
14 SATURDAY AUGUST 6	Brown's Well v BSR Wunkar v Ramco Paringa v Sedan-Cambrai	
15 SATURDAY AUGUST 6	Brown's Well v Paringa BSR v Wunkar Sedan-Cambrai v Ramco	<i>Double Header Played at Brown's Well</i>
SATURDAY AUGUST 20		
2ND SEMI FINAL @ Cambrai		
SATURDAY AUGUST 20		
1ST SEMI FINAL @ Cambrai		
SATURDAY AUGUST 27		
PRELIMINARY FINAL @ Wunkar		
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 3		
GRAND FINAL @ Ramco		



Footy's back!

"Footy's back" normally gets rolled out in the middle of April with the return of the RFL season – but this year, things were a little different.

The Riverland welcomed the return of footy at the start of March, with the inaugural under 15 girls competition kicking off in Berri on a perfect Monday night.

There have been some bumps along the road, with both Loxton and Loxton North having to pull out, but all in all it has been a terrific initiative.

Waikerie, Berri, Renmark and Barmera-Monash youngsters have suited up in great numbers each week, as the competition has toured the RFL grounds.

Parents, friends, club

members and senior footballers have taken to the sidelines to cheer on their girls on a weekly basis and so they should, the girls are dynamite.

They play without fear, without caution and more importantly, they've shown every week how to play with a smile.

I have no doubt that some of the seniors watching on could take something away from these vibrant youngsters, as they play the game how it is meant to be played.

Congratulations to those involved in setting up the competition, it's a fantastic way to promote women's footy in the region and an even bigger congrats to the girls on the oval, you're smashing it every week.



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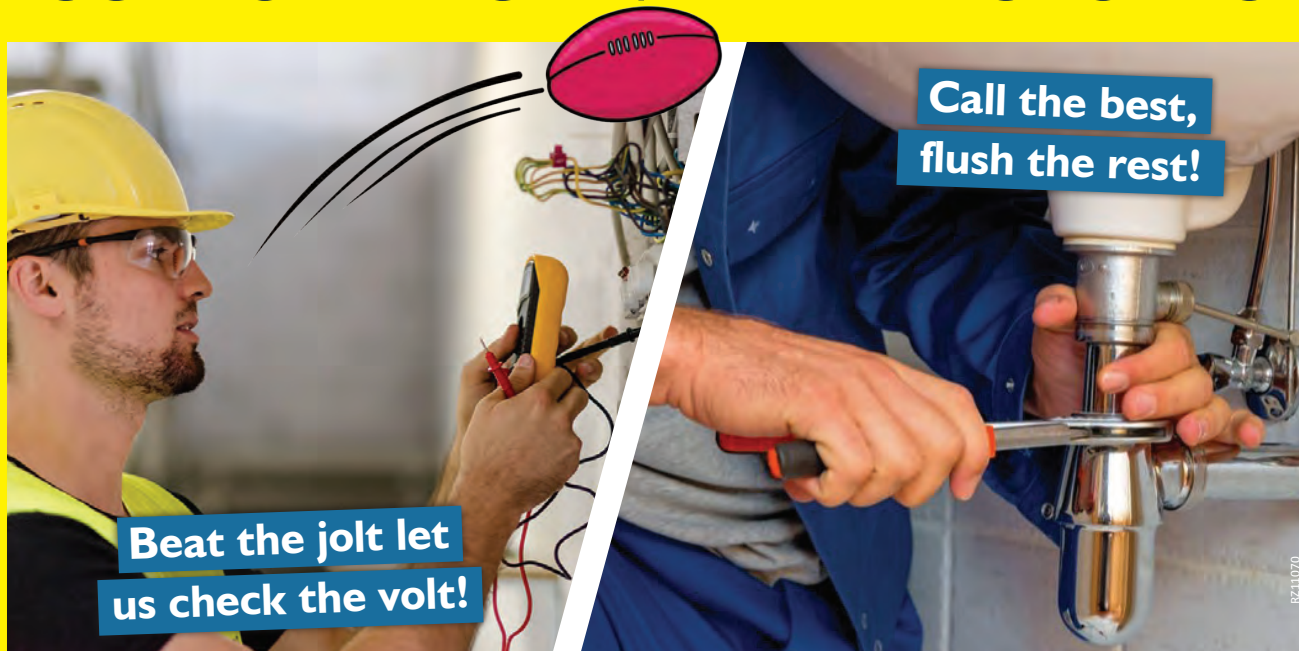


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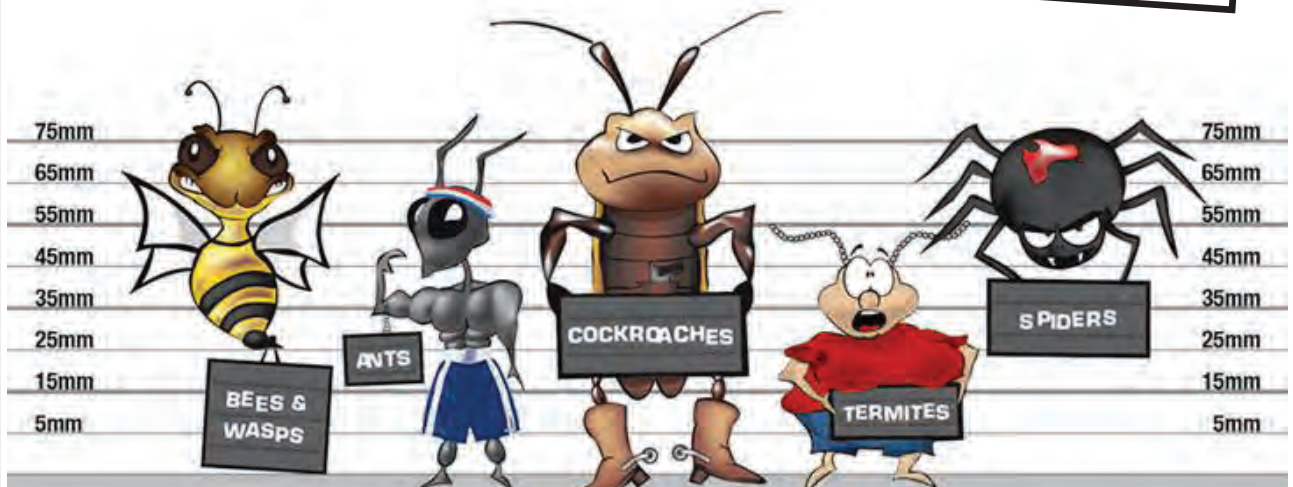
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LOXTON NORTH PANTHERS



Brett Tschirpig,
senior coach

Such a strong crop of under 18s last year, have many transitioned into the seniors and how big will that be for 2022?

Yes, we have been able to retain seven of the nine who have come up from the U18s. They will be a great asset to our senior teams.

If you've got a younger list, does it call for a change in how you're going to play?

Even though our list is on the younger side, we still have some experienced players who will be able to help develop the younger players.

Going winless last year, has it been difficult to get guys up and about in the pre-season? Or has it motivated them more?

Pre-season is always hard due to work commitments for this time of year, such as harvest. But we have had a good, consistent group out on the track and we look forward to a better 2022.

Has it been more about trying to add players or consolidating with the group you have and building on that?

To be honest it has been about keeping the group we have and also building on that with some local players returning. There are a couple of new people to the town and also a couple recruits from Adelaide.

Who is coaching the other teams in the club?

AusKick, Josh Sandland; U9s, Daniel Cass and Dave Andriske; U11s, Haydn Jones and Nathan Schiller; U13s, Darren Schwarz; U15s, Brandon Martin; U18s, Ben Miller; B grade, Josh Nelson.



LOXTON NORTH PANTHERS

How is the women's team shaping up this year?

They are training on Tuesday and Thursday nights at Loxton North at 6.30pm so if you are interested please come out for a kick. Anyone is welcome.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022.

The influx of quality under 18s into the senior grades is exciting. Also this year's under 18s group has some promising talent and some will push for a spot in the seniors, which is also great for the club. With the inclusion of a few new guys to the club and with some past players back, our numbers look good. We are looking forward to a great year on and off the field.

The inclusion of the Loxton North Auskick is exciting too.



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Shayne Stevens,
senior men's coach

So close yet so far last year, what can you learn from the grand final loss?

As a group we played below standard on the biggest day of the year, so we really need to make sure that we don't let that happen again. We also didn't have much luck go our way in regards to copping some serious injuries to key players that upset our structures.

Is it a case of changing things significantly, or just looking to try to replicate last year?

I don't think that we need to change very much at all. Our system has made us competitive for the last couple of years but we have probably focused on adding more flexibility to our playing group.

Have you lost players and if

so, how do you replace those players structurally? Does it call for a change of game plan at all?

We have lost a couple of players but we have picked up a couple as well. We also have a few really good juniors who are ready to step into A grade footy and make an impact that we put game time into last year.

We have made small adjustments to our game plan but we have probably focused on the quality of our ball movement over the preseason.

Have you picked up any new guys we should be looking out for?

We have a couple of returning players to our football club in Anthony Daish and Brad Helbig as well as Antonio Lociano, who all have been in the SANFL system at some stage. I think our improvement



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will come from juniors who are ready to step up and senior players looking to get more out of themselves.

What was the focus in pre-season and how intense was it?

We had a solid pre-season focusing on building running capacity and intensity within the playing group. We put an emphasis on improving skill level and improving our ball movement around the ground.

Who is coaching the other

teams in the club?

B grade, Damian Stevens; U18s, Stephen Hausler; U15s, 'Red' Collins; U13s, Steven Liebich; senior women, Tim O'Hara; U15 girls, Sarah Schiller.

How is the women's team shaping up this year?

Tim has had the girls out training from just after Christmas which is a good sign that the girls are ready to go again in 2022. I believe they have lost a few girls moving to Adelaide but there are

few more local girls who have got the footy bug.

How cool is it to see so many kids in the under 15 girls side?

Sarah Schiller and Jeany Winter have really got the side up and running. They have had around 15-18 girls put their hand up to have a kick. They seem to be really enjoying it and what I have seen there is quite a bit of natural footy talent within the Waikerie side.

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Clint Ridgway, senior men's coach

Fourth last season, how do you bridge the gap and is there a big gap between the top two and the rest?

To be honest I don't believe it is hard to bridge the gap in a six-team competition, but what we as a club have done really well over the past few years is retain our juniors, in particular those lads coming out of under 18s. This extra depth within our senior ranks makes a lot of difference as you're not relying on topping up teams week in and week out with young kids. The thing Waikerie and Renmark have had over the rest of the competition in the last few years is the depth within their senior ranks, which is shown through both A and B grade ladder positions. The biggest challenge for us is changing the mindset and perceptions of not only players but supporters, and external eyes regarding pre-conceived ideas around how good those top two teams are compared to the rest of the competition.

Coming in this year, are there any drastic changes to be made?

No drastic changes. I've always said I'm here to build on what 'Booga' (former coach Brian Gates) started. I was a part of that change and shared that vision he started. I just bring some new ideas and a different voice, with more emphasis on team structures and on-field leadership. Something we now have is depth within our senior teams which is evident, not just with the A grade team making finals last year but with the recent success in under U18s, and our B grade being more competitive week in week out.

Hosting the first ever under 15 girls fixtures, with plenty of people around the club, what is the mood like currently and how much can you draw on the positive vibe as a playing group?

Firstly the under 15 girls looked very impressive in their first competition, with great numbers taking the field. From a club point of view, it's great, it brings more people to the club and builds the culture especially among the local community. We as a senior team have made sure our trainings cross over through the pre-season to be a presence, especially while the girls are training and when they hosted the first match

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of the season at home. I'm sure as a young football group they would have loved seeing the seniors all kitted up on the sidelines supporting them.

Marty Barber coming back to the club, obviously a former premiership player, how important is his experience and what role does he have?

Barbs is a loved bloke around the club, but again he brings that senior on-field leadership and experience, just like our other recruits Matt Hodge, Jake Egel and Michael Corbett. This on-field leadership is vital to our success and building the capacity and development of our young list.

The under 18s went top last year. Are there any that are ready to make a big impact in senior footy from that side?

Yes, definitely. Under 18 league medallist Archie Holtham will join his brother in the senior side and slot straight into our back six rotations, where he will develop his defensive

skills on some of the league's most dangerous forwards. Patrick Minchella is probably the other first-year player who has been putting in the hard yards on the track and his speed and skill will be on show throughout the year.

Who is coaching the other teams in the club?

Other coaches of the club are Mark Wenman (B grade), Tom Jolly (U18s), Adam Langford (U15s), Max Blanck (U13s), Darren Tieste (senior girls), Bec Keynes (U15 girls), and Missy Blanck (U11s). Under 9s to be confirmed.

How is the women's team shaping up this year?

They are looking strong, with 27 girls on the list to choose from each week. New recruits Katie Schwertfeger and Melissa Greer are training well. The squad are slowly ramping up their training, moving into two nights a week, so we are expecting big things.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022.

We have lots of exciting things happening around the club, such as

the '02 and '92 reunions but the best thing about our club at the moment is the culture, specifically the community spirit and connection with the people within. Unfortunately, our club has recently endured the passing of one of its favourite sons in Josh Williss. But through these hard times the culture of the club has shone through by seeing the community pulling together, and the support that is shown to every present, past and future member of our club. In round one we are having a 'bad shirt day' and Leukemia Foundation fundraiser in honour of Josh as well, which was planned before his passing.

This culture and connection we have with each other is the most exciting thing for the Berri Football Club right now and we are expecting this to be transferred to on-field success.



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Dillon Millard senior men's coach

A strong season last year ending in disappointing fashion in the prelim final. How has the side reacted?

We just took it as some much-needed finals experience. Renmark and Waikerie were excellent and came out with a plan and executed well.

We just look at what they did and learn from that. Now we know what it takes to win a finals game and how much preparation goes into it.

Is it a case of building on last year, starting over, or somewhere in between?

The team changes a little every year so I guess you are constantly experimenting and trying to find the right dynamics for the team. We definitely want to build on last year as we want to get better every training, every game, every year. We have a really good group here and it's great to see them grow as they gather more experience.

How has pre-season gone? What has been the key message/goal?

The message was 'don't rest on your laurels'. We had a great season last year in comparison to the previous one, but now

we want to remember what our/your goals are and keep pushing for them.

New lights and facilities at Loxton Oval. How is the vibe around the club heading into 2022?

We had them on last night and they're really bright. There's no excuses now for kicking to the wrong player, haha! We're very excited. The community has done a great job to provide us with state-of-the-art facilities.

Who is coaching the other teams in the club?

B grade, Wade Pritchard; U18, Luke Harder; U15, Daniel Evans; U13, Adrian Hogg.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022?

Moving the club rooms to the mezzanine floor of The Precinct. We had dinner there for the first time recently and it was really impressive.

Playing under lights would be great too. Hopefully we can get a couple clubs to want to do that.

Two of our juniors have moved to Adelaide to pursue sport: one for football and one for basketball. This will really open the door for other juniors to have a crack at playing A grade. I'm really looking forward to watching them play.





BARMERA-MONASH ROOS



Corey Gilgen, senior men's coach

After a tough year, how has the side responded in the build up to 2022?

The players have been training hard during the pre-season and are really keen to get out there and have a crack at the 2022 season. It was obviously challenging last year but the club needs to keep looking forward now.

What must change to climb into the top four?

I think we just need to keep backing our younger guys and keep developing them going forward.

What's the make-up of the side looking like?

It is a fairly young group this year which is pretty exciting for the future.

We have brought in a few lads who should cover the few that have moved on from last season. There is a good senior core there too that are very driven and keen to help the younger guys improve.

With the under 18s and the Bs both finishing bottom, how does the club progress?

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Our juniors have actually been pretty successful in previous years so there is some exciting talent coming through the ranks. We need to concentrate on keeping those kids at the club and progressing them through to senior football.

Who is coaching the other teams in the club?

Kane Thiele (B grade), Michael Scordo (U18), Brendan Francis (senior women), Steve Sullivan/Sam

Butterworth (U15), Steve Marks (U13), Daniel Clarke/James Ivanovic (U11) and Andrew Ivanovic (U9).

How is the women's team shaping up this year?

The women's team seems to be shaping up pretty well. The girls have been training for a few weeks now and really looking forward to the season.

Tell us something good

happening at your club in 2022.

With new lighting for the oval and new changeroom facilities due to be built, our grounds continue to improve and these changes will complement our club, which has had extensive upgrades in recent times.

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Barmera Club



Josh Vater, senior men's coach

Has it been tough to motivate guys after winning the ultimate last year?

No, not for the majority of the group. There are a large number of the group that for a long time hadn't experienced much success, so they understand very well that it doesn't come around very often as well as the amount of work it takes to make it happen.

Are you looking to change much in terms of game plan or personnel?

We are always looking to improve and refine how we play and there are always aspects of our game that need improvement. There will be a couple of personnel changes. We thank Jack Agostino for his fantastic contribution last season and it is unfortunate that he has had to call an end to his football playing days. We welcome Dan Woolford to the club and look forward to seeing him run around with brothers Matt and Tim. We also welcome to the group Dave Kinnear, who has moved back to the area, as well as a bunch of local players up from the U18s.



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Who do you see as the biggest threat to the crown?

Waikerie will always be strong. They continue to produce quality year on year. Loxton and Berri look like they both will take it to another level this year. Both seem to have held their existing squad while adding a number of players, so I expect them both to be strong.



How have you managed coaching and playing over the last few years?

I am very fortunate to have great support around me both from the club, coaching staff, playing group and most importantly my wife Sarah, as at times it is very challenging to manage my time commitments. Having a clear understanding of the things I can have the most impact on as a coach and player helps me to split my focus at different times.

Who is coaching the other teams in the club?

Reserves, Aaron Camplin; U18s, Tarque Williamson; U15s, Dean Schumann; U13s, Brandon Willis; Women, Anthony Rothe; U15 girls, Anthony Rothe and Brett Blackwell.

How is the women's team shaping up this year?

Good. We had some good numbers at the early training sessions. We're always keen to encourage more girls to get out and give it a go. We're looking forward to another good season.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022

The club's social committee is up and running, with the first event being a family fun day on March 26 at the football oval before our first trial game. We have social events planned throughout the season.

Clubrooms/bar renovations will happen early in the season over our bye weekends.



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BROWN'S WELL BOMBERS



BROWN'S WELL FOOTBALL CLUB



James Shannon,
club president

As a new president, has it helped being in familiar surroundings having been a player with Brown's Well?

Having been associated with the club for a few years now it is easy to pinpoint our strength and weakness. This year our focus has been on creating a club culture which is inviting to all demographics. We have selectively been recruiting players that fill the gaps in our game, but also fit and enhance our club culture.

After going winless last year, what are the keys to turning that around?

Although 2021 wasn't a successful year for us on the field, our camaraderie off the field was really strengthened, bringing us together as a team. Our focus this year is to play some competitive football, so we have been focusing on our fitness and endurance, an area in which we have always lacked. With a strong turnout at preseason training and recruitment of some new, dedicated players we hope we can play some quality football.

Has there been a recruitment push or are you looking to have a similar group?

Since October 2021 we have worked hard to find suitable recruits for our club. We identified the areas on the field in which we were lacking and selectively recruited players who fitted the key positions, while also ensuring they would fit and add to our club culture. We have been mindful in who we have selected as we have wanted to ensure the positions of our dedicated Bomber footballers remain available.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022

With a young and energized 2022 committee and a strong support from the senior Bomber community there is no doubt it will be a successful year. Our football and netball teams are looking strong and cannot wait to get on the field/court. Our clubroom has had a makeover and is ready to bring the Bomber community back together for many years to come. With a trial match coming up against Barmera on April 9, it'll be good to see where we stand as a team.



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Christopher Eaton, coach

A top-two finish and beaten grand finalists. It was a good season last year, all things considered. How is the group looking?

The group is looking good. We have increased our squad and basically only lost one due to the untimely passing of Bradley Walkley. We have targeted what we need and have been lucky enough to get players to fill those roles.

Is there much you need to change to go that one step further?

Sedan-Cambrai has been a powerhouse over the past four seasons. We've made three grand finals and a preliminary final. So, with only one premiership during that time, the club and playing group would like to get more success. After filling the roles we needed, we feel we have the playing group to go one step better in 2022.

Have you retained a lot of that grand final side?

Retaining a grand final side is difficult as players come and go, but we have improved our side in 2022, so our team will be different.

How long have you been coaching out here now and how important is having that stability and consistency?

I have been coaching at Sedan-Cambrai now for three years, but we all lost 2020 due to Covid. I've been senior coach or assistant senior coach now for 10 years.

Over my time as a senior coach I feel stability and consistency is important but adaptability and change in some way is more important as sides change year in year out.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022.

At Sedan-Cambrai we have a great year planned socially. I think our "legend night" is great, as it allows past players to be honoured for their services to the club. Plus our services auction is always a good fundraiser for the club. As a club and playing group we are looking forward to the 15 games this year and the double-header rounds that the league has organised.





Alan Harvey, coach



How is life treating you having just come into the role?

Life is treating me absolutely sensationally. After a few years away coaching in other leagues it feels absolutely fantastic to be back.

You've had a bit of time now, who have been the standouts in pre-season?

We have been averaging 16-20 every night since November 2021 so everyone is in really good shape and fit but if I had to pick I'd say Jake Medhurst would be one. Jake is in super nick – the fittest I've ever seen him and is a natural leader. He does a lot in his own time to keep the body right. Another is Cameron Horstman. Cameron is the ultra-professional and another that has his body in perfect shape and is primed to let his footy do the talking.

What type of footy can we expect from BSR this year?

You can expect to see a totally different BSR this year. We will be a workman-like side that will rely on all 22 playing their role rather than one or two to carry the side. We will be super-fast and ultra-attacking, but will be a team-defence side rather than defending individually side.

What's the vibe like around BSR at the moment?

The vibe is really good at the moment. Being our 50th anniversary year everyone is keen to cash in, but we understand it takes a lot of work beforehand and having everyone buy in makes it so exciting.

How do you measure success? Is it wins and premierships or something else?

Great question. I'd say premierships are definitely one way of judging success and for those on the outside that would be the main gauge. But I focus on win/losses from the previous year and also the development of players, bigger scores, attracting better footballers the year after and the amount of supporters that come out to help and be involved in the club.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022

It's a huge year for our club. We have our 50th anniversary of founding our great club as well as our 10-year reunion since our last flag. We also are very hopeful of getting two netball sides together which is super exciting for the club.



Jamie O'Callaghan,
coach



After such an impressive year, where to now? What does the goal become this year? Is it as simple as wanting to go back-to-back?

Back-to-back would be nice but we're not getting too far ahead of ourselves. Our main priority is to get to finals and see what happens from there.

Has there been a challenge motivating guys so far, given they hit the heights last year?

Yeah, it's always challenging getting lads out on the track. We were competing with cricket and basketball and lads working vintage too. It's probably no different to any other year though.

What do you think was the

key to last year's success?

That's a tough one. It's hard to pinpoint one thing, but probably having everyone committed was a big one. We recruited well for the 2020 season and thought we would have done really well but unfortunately we didn't get to play.

Having everyone recommit for 2021 definitely helped and everyone was hungry to see what we could do. Everyone bought in from the start basically and it just grew from there as the season went on. We got into it pretty much straight after Christmas/New Year.

Moving forward this year, do you look to change much or just build on last season?

Change has probably been thrust

upon us personnel wise. We have turned over a few players but also have some good new blokes coming in and some former players coming back. From a game-style point of view, not really.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022

We're a pretty simple breed down here, mate, and that's a good thing about the club. Probably just the numbers around the place and keenness. We had a bit of a call-out to the younger people around the place to join the committee and get involved, and they've really put their hand up to help out. Even the netball numbers are looking really good, so we're looking forward to another good year in 2022.

WUNKAR BULLDOGS



Tom Wood, coach

Strong season in 2021 – how do you kick on now and go further to win the premiership?

We have been around the mark the past few years, it's just a matter of the young ones getting more finals experience and being able to handle the increase in intensity that comes with finals. We have added a couple more players with a lot of premiership experience that will be invaluable for a team that hasn't won one in a long while.

What's the mix of player ages looking like? Any young kids to keep an eye on?

Really good. There is a core group that have been playing in the team since they were 15-16 that are now 21-22 and we have also added some older players to fit in with them. We have three or four players in their early 30s and the ever-young Shane Schulz, who is a little older. The rest are all 20-27. Some of those 16-year-olds that are now early 20s include Tarquin Schultz, Cody Schulz, Llayton Biele, Bailly Hill, Jack Jeffrey and

Heath Kelly. They are all hitting their peak football years and I'm sure they will all have great years.

Have you picked up any new faces heading into 2022?

Most importantly we haven't really lost any of last year's team, but yes we have had a few return to the club in Kaine Petch, Nathan Hentschke, Harley Bennall and Jack Bobilak. Bailey Hill has come out to play with some of his mates. Dean Hill and Tyson Gray have come across due to Cobby having the year off. Steve Raeder has come out after a few years off. There are still a couple others sitting on the fence, that will hopefully decide to come out as well. So numbers are looking really good.

What was the biggest focus during pre-season?

Pre-season started a little earlier than I would usually, around the 19th of January. This was driven by the playing group who were really keen to get started. It was a slow build with numbers, with a few unavailable through other sporting commitments. But we had really great numbers at our first trainings at Wunkar. We have

had a real focus on being competitive in the contest, running and taking the game on, which I think is a strength of ours.

Was there much of a difference with the 16-a-side rule last year and does that come into the equation at all in terms of game plan?

Not really, I think we only played with it once or twice last year, and we look like having really good numbers this year, so hopefully the other teams do as well and it won't be required.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022.

There's always something good happening out at Wunkar. The committee has been working hard in the off season – they have installed a large wood-fired pizza oven which will be good for Thursday and Saturday night meals. We have the Bulldog Ball to kick the season off.



Peter Siddall,
coach

Middle of the pack last year, how do you build on that and ensure it doesn't go the other way and you slip down?

We have worked hard on getting some senior guys back, to allow us the depth to be a competitive side. We are also working really hard on securing a couple big-name players.

Have you been able to retain players again and keep a similar core group?

We have gained more players than we have lost, so I'd say yes.

How did the boys go during pre-season?

I was really excited with the way the lads tackled pre-season. We worked hard to make sure we are ready to go round one.

What has been the biggest focus so far?

Our biggest focus has been getting the guys fit and firing for the season ahead. Behind the scenes the recruiting has been a real positive for our club.

Any players coming in to look out for this year?

I think with the talent we have there will be plenty of players to look out for this year, we have a really good group of lads and are building something special.

The new juniors coming in, how massive is that for the club and how are the seniors going to be involved?

The juniors are huge for our club and we are really excited to get the kids out having a kick. Three of our senior guys have taken on the coaching role of the under 9s and under 11s. We have also put their training on the same nights as we train, so our lads can get involved and help out.

Tell us something good happening at your club in 2022.

The juniors are a great step forward for our club. Also our senior team is coming along nicely.





Don't take enormous contribution for granted

FOR the past decade and more, Grant Schwartzkopff's contribution to Riverland sport has been enormous.

Indeed, some would argue he is a Riverland Citizen of the Year in waiting.

From casually and generously offering to take a few photos for The Murray Pioneer many years ago, Grant has become a key figure in Riverland sport – almost by accident.

Through all four weather seasons, his photographs bring Riverland sport to life by illuminating its participants.

At his own cost, Grant has continued to hone his skills and update his equipment, and now delivers arguably the best quality photographs in country South Australia.

In colder months, Grant provides wonderful coverage of the Riverland Football League fixtures in particular. Because his largely self-imposed schedule is so jam-packed, he covers various grades of football – but he always makes an effort to get to multiple games.

This desire to cover as much as possible is evident by glancing at his weekend schedule. It is usually chock full of criss-crossing the region, trying to get to as many venues and cover as many different sports as possible.

Grant is a naturally generous person and this generosity often leads to him spreading himself thinly, attempting to cover all bases and accommodate all requests.

Naturally, his talents are sometimes in demand, and as mentioned above,

he finds saying 'no' difficult. However, we must all remember that while Grant loves what he does, he remains a volunteer.

Highlighting that fact serves two purposes.

Firstly, it elevates the enormity of his weekend commitments.

Secondly, hopefully it ensures locals never take him for granted (no pun intended). Grant isn't compelled to be anywhere – and that's worth remembering.

In the meantime, may we continue to enjoy his substantial contribution to Riverland sport for many more years to come.

And from the Riverland sporting fraternity, thanks, Grant.

- PAUL MITCHELL



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