

The WestVic Senior Women's Hockey Journey

Destination Number 2: Parkville in Ballarat (Saturday 26th April)

The WestVic Senior Men had taken the field in their game against the boys from St Bernard when the women started to arrive and prepare for their second round match against Parkville. Research indicated that the Parkville women finished in the top four teams in 2007. Although their club rooms are at Melbourne and Victoria's premier hockey site – the State Hockey Centre, it's a sad indictment that they don't always have training and match priority when it comes to their SL4 women's team. Nonetheless we realised that they were a good team and that we would have to play well to match or better them.

Our Team for the day:

Team Members: Megan Churchill (Captain), Kym Southwell (Vice-Captain), Ebony Stephen, Beck Hodgetts, Tammy Hansford, Emily Innes, Kathryn Clark, Claire McKenzie, Ali Williams, Anna Ryan, Gemma Walton, Jacinta Polmear and Kaylene Ferrier.

Players unavailable: Emma Kearney

Coach: Kim Halbert-Pere

Pre-Game

Here it is...our first double header at home. Our first match on home turf in front of family and friends – on what was a cold, wet Ballarat kinda-day. We headed for the change room and got down to the business of pre-game pep talks and preparation.

The Game

The first half was dominated by WestVic's attack, with both left and right sides getting into the action early. Anna Ryan's inclusion in the team this week proved to be a positive, with a high work rate in both attack and defense. Her understanding of the game really stood out to other team members as an example to follow.

Claire McKenzie was denied a convincing penalty corner opportunity early on. Ebony Stephen slotted the first goal from a strong attacking move assisted by her supporting players. To Parkville's credit they put up a strong defense and held WestVic to a 1-0 score at half time.

The rain came and slowed the pace of the game in the later stages of the first half. Many scoring opportunities came and went as the WestVic strikers led by Tammy Hansford

peppered the goal. Parkville's stand in goalkeeping was outstanding and proved difficult to outmaneuver.

With heavy rain continuing to fall during the second half, the WestVic women were able to convert a further four times. Strong rotations off the bench allowed players such as captain Megan Churchill to spend some time in the mid field, creating scoring opportunities to be crumbed by the strikers.

Congratulations to Anna and Emily for registering their first goals of the season. The support given to the strikers by defense and midfield cannot go unmentioned, as without their strong, accurate deliveries, the scoring opportunities would have been reduced.

Next week, the team hopes to improve its penalty corner conversion rate as well as overall movement on and off the ball.

Goal scorers: Ebony (2), Tammy (1), Emily (1) and Anna (1)

Special Thanks to our Sponsors: Bendigo Bank and Ballarat Gold Bus

Notable mentions: Jeff Sly and Andy for umpiring at short notice in the rain

Traveling to Brunswick this Saturday should prove another challenge for the WestVic Senior Women. .

Report compiled by Kim Halbert-Pere – WestVic Senior Women's Coach

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Destination Number 3: Brunswick (Saturday 3rd May)

Brunswick is a team to beat in 2008. They have been relegated from SL3 and expected to dominate the game in the Women's SL4 competition. Brunswick are an old and respected club that have worked hard to maintain players, coaches and club success; so much so that they now have one of Melbourne's newest water/sand based turfs. This was the venue on Saturday that saw the Bendigo Bank WestVic Senior Women stamp authority as a possible team to beat in 2008.

Our Team for the day:

Team Members: Megan Churchill (Captain), Kym Southwell (Vice-Captain), Tammy Hansford, Emily Innes, Kathryn Clark, Emma Kearney, Claire McKenzie, Ali Williams, Anna Ryan, Jacinta Polmear and Siddhi (GK)

Bench: Beck Hodgetts

Players unavailable: Ebony Stephen, Gemma Walton (GK), Kaylene Ferrier.

Coach: Kim Halbert-Pere

Bus Driver and First Aider: Terri Polmear

Pre-Game

Traveling to Melbourne on the sponsored Gold Bus mini coach has been a significant bonus for the team. It allows us all to talk about ourselves, our opponents and factors that influence the game. At times we maybe distracted by the antics of men waiting at bus stops trying to gain the attention of a bus full women or the musical attempts at (or just Ali) composing and singing a team song to the tune of 'mustang sally'go 'WestVic hockey'lalala!

The new ground was vibrant green, soft underfoot and apparently 'lumpy'. Nonetheless the ground was well patroned and the women took advantage of warming up and playing tag in the Brunswick Sec. College gymnasium.

The Game

The game started at a cracking pace. The WestVic women wanted to walk away from the game with their third straight win, but Brunswick penetrated their defence within the first couple of minutes. This would be the only time in the first half that they did so. Our defence was strong and as soon as we gained possession of the ball the game swung well and truly into WestVic's favour. Not only did team members demonstrate some

impressive ducking and weaving, but they also adjusted to the bounce and various challenges the Brunswick team and their new pitch put forward. The first half was dominated with over 20 circle penetrations by the WestVic strikers and mid-fielders – most notably Tammy taking a well-timed leading ball from Kat confronting the goalie head on. Tammy may not of converted on that occasion but set up one of many penalty corners for the team and she convincingly demonstrated not only courage but the tenacity that comes with being a key striker for the team.

The team had many penalty corners in the first half. Claire stepped up to the challenge and converted on a direct shot at goal; so too did Emily. Claire was to go on and score a well-earned field goal, as did Emily with a well-connected reverse stick. Tammy was rewarded with a goal and was also instrumental in passing to Jacinta in the circle which allowed her to register her first goal for the season. The half-time score was 6-0.

The second half was evenly matched. Brunswick certainly lifted and managed to have more ball time than what they had in the first half. They kept us scoreless – but this was not without some superhuman effort by their goalie and their defenders. They proved fitter and had the legs to get through the game.

The halves and midfielders worked tirelessly all game and proved to be strong attackers and defenders running back and offering solid tackles on the loose Brunswick attackers. Claire, Anna and Emma offered strong solo runs from defence and into attack. Meg always offers nothing but her best in defence and in captaining her team – but showed her skills and adaptability when asked to move forward into an attacking right half position. Kym talked up positioning and made sure that all team members helped to carry WestVic through to it's third straight win for the season.

Ali was solid in defence offering valuable information to players that restricted Brunswick being able to penetrate the defensive zone. She also put Siddhi our newest recruit (goalkeeper) at ease while Gemma is away in Europe.

This game saw some players rotated from their normal playing positions testing their comfort zones. Claire, Kat and Beck all rotated through the back defence. Megan and Ali also had the chance to move up; for Ali a move to half-back and for Megan half-back with a dash of mid-field. What soon came apparent is that as attackers the girls made very good defenders. Brunswick increased their attacking rate in the second half of the game and notably made one field shot goal and made it into the 25m attacking zone on 10 different occasions – however, at no time did they look threatening. WestVic had a solid defence throughout with both Beck and Kat displaying courage under fire. As attackers it is important for players to have the opportunity learn and understand the stress that defenders control throughout a game.

Our journey will only continue to be full of challenges and exciting game moments as we continue with 13 more stops before we get to the final rounds.

Goal scorers: Claire (2), Tammy (1), Emily (2) and Jacinta (1)

Special Thanks to our Sponsors: Bendigo Bank, Ballarat Gold Bus and Hockey Ballarat.

Notable mentions: Friends and family members who made the effort to travel with the team or meet us at the ground. Your support is invaluable.

Next Week: We take on Swinburne at Ballarat. 3.30pm

Report compiled by Kim Halbert-Pere – WestVic Senior Women's Coach

The Westvic Senior Women's Hockey Journey

Destination Number 1: Sandringham Game in Brighton (Sunday 20th April)

Playing and representing our Region in the State League competition has been a 'long-time' coming for many of our hockey women. To be the first to wear the red, white and blue of the WestVic uniform complete with local corporate sponsorship and community endorsement is a privilege that has been accepted with pride and responsibility. The senior women realise that 'where they go' and 'how they go' will help shape the direction of representative hockey for players in the near future. So to that end the team makes a commitment to keeping you (the reader) informed of the 'journey' however it may happen. Where our journey will take the women this year is largely unknown. But what we do know is that the journey is now officially underway.

The Team

Team Members: Ebony Stephen, Beck Hodgetts, Tammy Hansford, Emma Kearney, Emily Innes, Kathryn Clark, Claire McKenzie, Kym Southwell (Vice-Captain), Ali Williams, Megan Churchill (Captian), Anna Ryan, Gemma Walton and Jacinta Polmear. **Coach:** Kim Halbert-Pere

The team is comprised of a talented and committed bunch of players from our regional townships like Ararat, Maryborough, Hamilton, Ballarat and from as far afield as Tasmania (notable mention to Ali). There is also a real spread in ages, professions, hockey experience and representation and driving ability. Above all, each player brings a love for hockey and a willingness to give this SL competition a 'real crack'.

After enduring a fitness and strength orientated pre-season our much-anticipated WestVic Senior Women's SL4 Team finally got their 'skorts' and bolted into the business of representing the Region and playing as a team.

Pre-Game

Ballarat Gold Bus supplied the transport, Steve McKenzie drove and soon enough we found ourselves at the hockey field in Brighton. The girls took advantage of the early arrival and persuaded the coach and driver to do a beach drive-by where they received some praise and admiration from unsuspecting beach goers and visitors.

Now it was time to head back to field and dress in the new skorts, socks, and shirts – time to put them and the women's skills and fitness to the real test. This was our first official game in SL4 and the Sandringham coach informed us that we are regarded as the 'great unknown team' of the League this year.

The Game

The game really started at a reasonably quick pace. Sandringham were able to make the most out of their first half circle penetrations with most of their circle attacks being converted into penalty corners. WestVic came back with attacking play through the right and center of the field. Meg, Kat and Beck set up some good breaks on the wing that got us into the attacking half and the allowed the girls to try out their scoring plays. Emma looked as if she was on a hatrick with two early field goals but Tammy the talented senior player manipulated the ball past the goalie and a bevy of backline defence. The girls scored from their third penalty corner after having to stop for injury time where the ball deflected from the boot of the Sandringham goalie onto the top of the head of their own defender. She recovered from the incident and will be moving to Ballarat in the near future to play in the women's social league. The half time score was increased to 5-0 after Claire scored from both the penalty corner and a filed shot.

The second half bought no relief for the Sandringham team either by the weather or the score card. The WestVic women were keen to work on their teamwork and play making. The attack came from all parts of the field. Kym orchestrated the movement of the ball to both sides of the field with Megan (Captain) continuing to support and communicate the opportunities that opened in the field. The total playing tempo slowed in the second half but the player rotations to the bench didn't. The play became a little smoother and more efficient with better ball movement from the halves to the forwards. Claire played a good running game feeding the ball through to the forwards as well as being there to back them up when the needed. Ebony scored the first field goal in the second half, soon followed by another Tammy score. Emily worked hard leading and weaving and came close to scoring on several occasions. We all know she likes putting her body on the line for the team and her trademark slide didn't fail to impress us all – we just wish she'd save it for the water based turf instead of sand. Bec came a cropper near the end of the game with a bump to the face but managed to get back on the field and play the game out. Emma scored her third field goal for the day and the Claire put one through on the last penalty corner. The game wasn't without errors and room for improvement – but on the whole a wonderful start to the season. The final score 9-0.

Goal scorers: Emma (3), Claire (3), Tammy (2) and Ebony (1)

Wannabe scorers: Everyone else including Gemma

Special Thanks to our Sponsors: Bendigo Bank and Ballarat Gold Bus

Notable mentions: McKenzie Family and Meg's Mum for umpiring!

Join us this Saturday when we play top seeded Parkville here in Ballarat, 3.30pm for a very challenging match.

What an absolute privilege it is to represent the Region.

Report compiled by Kim Halbert-Pere – WestVic Senior Women's Coach

