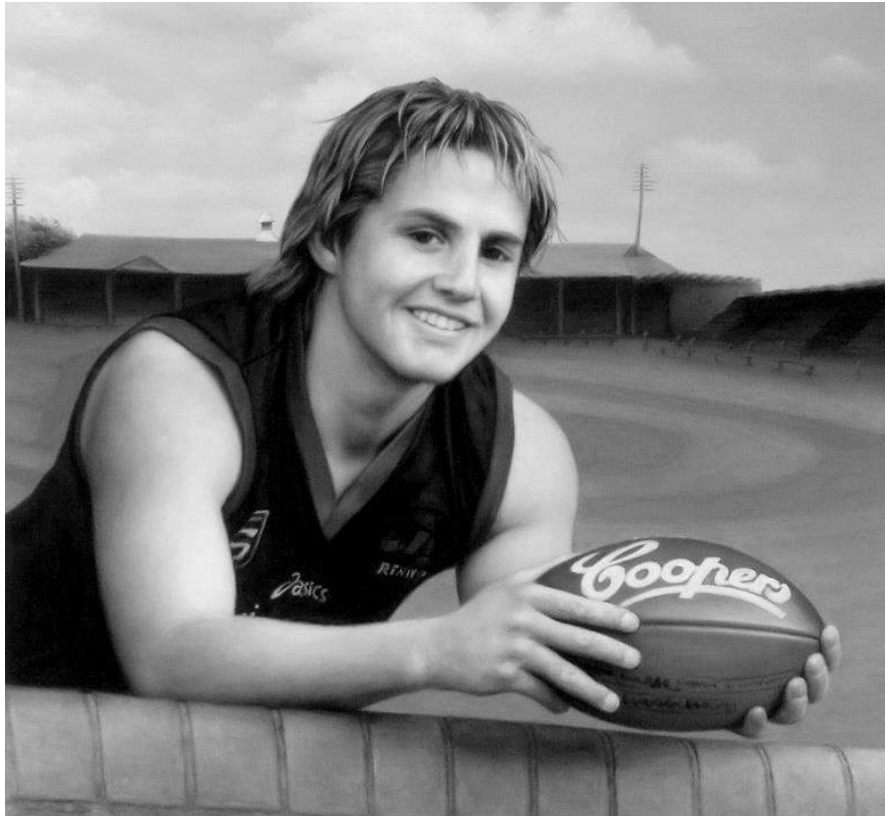




## The Lee Blake Football Story:



Chris Brown



### Cover page photos

Top -Kathy Blake;

Bottom – Steve Fendt

### Acknowledgements:

This publication would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of the following people. Some provided photos, some provided content, and most had personal memories.

#### **Western Australia**

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#### **South Australia**

David Wark  
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Kyle Smith  
Nick Duigan  
Simon Laurie  
Mark Window  
Garry McIntosh  
Robert and Marie Walsh  
Mark Window  
Kyle Smith  
Simon Laurie  
Barry Solomon



## Introduction

The Lee Blake football story is one of great achievement, yet also one of great promise that was unable to be fulfilled. His contributions to football were not just on the field, but also off field. By all accounts, Blake had a huge impact on those around him, wherever he went. Mum Kathy says “he had a smile that just lit up the room”. Former coaches consistently describe him as having “silky skills”. And former team mates all loved being around him – on and off the field.

When Lee Blake joined the Norwood Football Club, he became a part of a club whose motto is “Fortis in Procella”. This is latin for “*strength in adversity*”, or “*brave in the storm*”. It was originally the family motto of the Woods family – esteemed pioneers on and off field at the Norwood Football Club. Woods Street, which runs alongside Norwood Oval, is named in honour of this family. In nearly 150 years, the football club has drawn upon this motto and in his own seven years of association with the club, Lee Blake lived that motto to the letter.

It has been more than fifteen years since the man known as “Blakey” tragically passed away from Leukemia. The Lee Blake story is one that now deserves to be told. Many people held one or more pieces of the story, but this compilation of many of the stories brings together a fuller picture that illustrates the impact that Lee Blake had on everyone around him - a picture of a successful football career and a life well lived amidst incredible adversity, which served as an inspiration to many.

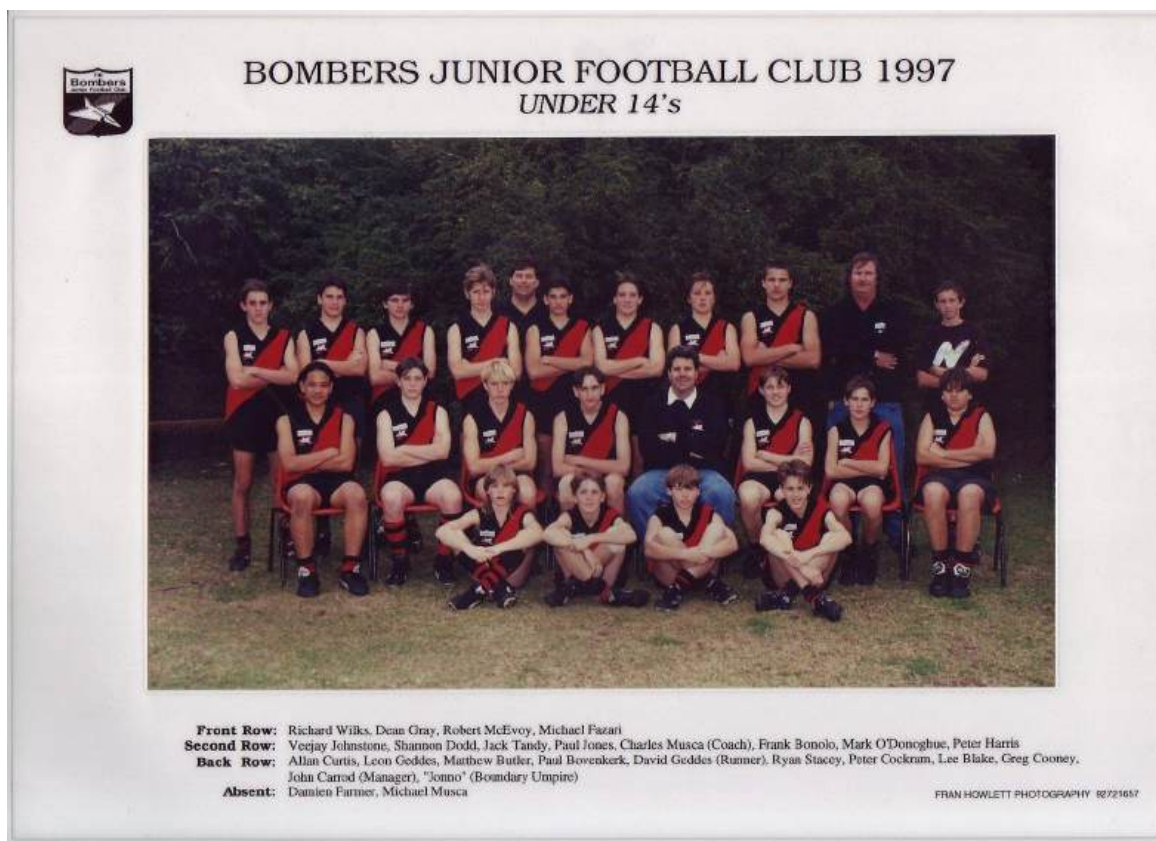


## Junior Football

After moving to Perth, Blake attended Lockridge Senior High School and played club football for the Coolbinia Bombers. Its been suggested (but remains unconfirmed) that he played at the Mt Lawley Roos Junior Football Club at some stage as well.

### 1997

Blake played 16 games for the Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club. As well as being appointed Captain, he won the team's Fairest and Best player award. This season, he kicked around 45 goals in the final seven games of the season after he was moved to centre half forward. His coach, Charles Musca, predicted that he could potentially be a future AFL player. (see report below).



Lee Blake is in the back row, fourth person in from the right. **Photos** – Coolbinia Bombers website.



# UNDER 14s

COACHES REPORT

**O**ur win loss situation was down one game from last year but this doesn't reflect our true position on the ladder.

We lost our Fairest & Best player together with 2 other very good footballers. We also played with 15-16 players on 4 occasions and used U/13's for 3 other games when we were short. In the end we were two games outside the 5 and beat the 2nd top side convincingly on their home ground. We also lost 3 games by a total of 15 points.

Lee Blake (Team Captain) came to us from South Australia with a big reputation. He certainly lived up to that with some breathtaking performances at either end of the ground. The big improvers in the team were Michael Fazari, Paul Bovenkerk and Shannon Dodd.

My job as Coach has never been easier than this year with the help of Team Manager/Assistant Coach John Carrod. John went to the extent of even having the Team's equipment ready for me at training and prepared the players with Runner David Geddes' help prior to each game. John's support certainly prevented me from throwing in the towel when I had some personal trauma to contend with.

I believe this team has exciting prospects. With a few more players to choose from next year, this team will go close to winning a premiership in either 15's or 17's. The conduct of the team throughout the year also must be mentioned, handling the responsibility of the Clubs Senior Team at U/14's admirably.

**CHARLES MUSCA**  
COACH

JOHN CARROD, MANAGER  
DAVID GEDDES, RUNNER

## FAIREST AND BEST LEE BLAKE

Lee won from the narrowest of margins but thoroughly deserved this award. He started as a Key Defender, developed into a Centreman and eventually became our Centre Half Forward finishing with around 45 goals in that position in 7 games.

Lee was also fortunate to play in the pre-season competition Grand Final Winners for East Perth Gunners.

He led the team well as Captain, was very enthusiastic at training and shows maturity above his age. Making statements at a young age is tricky but I'll stick my neck out here by predicting an AFL future for this player. Contratulations Lee.

## RUNNER UP FRANK BONOLO

Frank had a monster year almost winning Fairest & Best. He was our number one rover for the entire season, roving the whole game most weeks. His talent and skill caught the opposition off guard with his precise left foot passes and handy goals.

He is dedicated beyond belief and very popular amongst his team mates. He is thoroughly disciplined and very team orientated. Frank was joint team Vice Captain this year, capping off an exciting season for all his supporters. Frank has a big future.





1998

Progressing to the u/15s, Blake was appointed vice Captain and played another 16 games for the Coolbinia Bombers. In July 1998, he played in the East Perth State Junior Championships. He also began training with the East Perth Colts.

The Bombers made the Grand Final, but lost. Blake was named by his coach as the best player for Coolbinia in that match. He was awarded the trophy for 'Best Utility' that season and won the District's Fairest and Best player award. The Coolbinia Bombers Annual Report for 1998 tells these stories (below).

## UNDER 15s

1998 has been a terrific year for Under 15's, winning 11 games, losing only 2 and finishing second on the Premiership Table. The most important factor is the fantastic improvement in the skills area and maturity shown in team discipline and application.

The influx of players from Osborne Park, and to a lesser extent, Mt Lawley and Noranda, gave us much needed depth which this side lacked since Under 13's.

Our captain, Cameron McDonald, was an inspiration to his team mates, together with vice-captain Lee Blake's huge influence in important games, gave players around them confidence. Our most memorable performance was our last game against Ballajura, where the players really lifted to snatch a great victory in the dying moments of the game.

I had strong, full attendance at training all year and many expert coaches to give the players another opinion on the game.

This has been easily the most satisfying year I've had with the Bombers, tremendously assisted by Assistant Coach/Runner Ken Higgins, and unbelievable support from First Aid Man and Team Manager, Robert Bonolo.

I wish to also thank our President Errol Couch for unqualified support and John Carrod, who was with us all the way.

### FINALS COUNTDOWN

The Under 15's lost the second semi against Ballajura then held off a most spirited Marist to win the qualifying final by 7 points. We then advanced to the Preliminary Final to meet Ballajura once again.

On this occasion we won in what can only be described as a crackerjack game of football. Our players were magnificent in their two victories and played exceptionally well as a team.

Players who stood out in both these victories were Cameron McDonald (Captain), Lee Blake (Vice Captain) Ben Crawley (Full Back) VJ Johnstone (Forward Flank) and Tori Graneri (Wing), Frank Bonolo, Natham Newbey. All other players had even contributions throughout all 3 games.

HOORAY, WE REACHED THE GRAND FINAL!!! After a moral boosting victory in the Preliminary Final, and a great week at Training, Players Tea, etc., we built ourselves up for a great contest against Noranda.

We held Noranda until half time only to find that they came out in the 3rd and 4th quarters with some brilliant passages of play. Whilst we had a few players down, we were not able to match them in any position. They ran out comfortable winners.

Best Players were Lee Blake, Cameron McDonald and Ryan Stacey. I believe our players came a long way from last year to reach the Grand Final and have now learnt that it hurts to lose a big game such as this. Providing we learn from this game, I hope the players can go one step further next year.

Thanks again for all the support throughout the finals by the parents, Errol Couch, John Carrod, Robert Bonolo and Ken Higgins.

**CHARLES MUSCA**  
COACH

# UNDER 15s

AWARDS

## FAIREST AND BEST CAMERON McDONALD

I can't speak more highly of Cameron. For years, since I coached him in Claremont Combined side, we hoped that one day he would play in my side and for our Club.

Cameron has had an outstanding year, polling votes in almost every game he played. His courage, determination and "get the ball at all costs" attitude lifts the team to great heights.

I'm sure Cameron still has a lot of exciting football ahead of him.

## RUNNER UP SHANNON DODD

From being the team's Most Improved Player last year, to this year being Runner Up, is a huge increase in application and desire to improve himself.

Shannon played a big role as a solid Half Back Flanker showing dashes of speed and aggression when turning defence into attack. Shannon had a big influence in the side's improvement this year, being one of the first players picked each week.

If Shannon continues to improve, he can go one step higher next year.

## OUTSTANDING PLAYER AWARD ROCCO PAPALIA

This fellow played some scintillating football on a wing, reminiscent of Phil Kelly's two big seasons for East Perth when winning two Sandover medals.

Rocco's speed, skill and penetrating kicks into the forward line gave us all a thrill on match days. Some of his clashes with other highly skilled and respected wingers were things that we may see in the future at a higher level.

Rocco now has to work on the other side of his body to be the complete footballer.

## BEST UTILITY LEE BLAKE

Lee was just sensational in most of the key positions all year. He played Centre, Centre Half Back, Centre Half Forward and Ruck, showing a polish in skills that very few 15 year olds have.

He is skillful both sides of the body, takes a strong mark and kicks the ball over a long distance, as much as 55-60 metres.

I predict a huge future for Lee, provided he works on his pace and continues his tremendous desire and love of training and football in general.

Lee attracts the attention of Umpires because of his most noticeable attributes and leadership qualities.

## COACHES TROPHY - MOST COURAGEOUS JAMES WATERS

James has been a treat to watch playing as a Rover/Half Forward. He has pace, tenacity and a "never give up" attitude.

James' kicking can sometimes go astray, however he makes up for this slight deficiency with his tremendous first, second and third efforts. James has been a delight to coach with a keen interest in his training, respect for team mates and generally a popular player amongst team mates.

Continue the good work James.





# DISTRICT & STATE

AWARDS

## CENTRAL DISTRICTS JUNIOR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### DISTRICT FAIREST & BEST

#### BOMBER'S JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB BOASTS TWO DISTRICT FAIREST & BEST WINNERS

This will go down as the biggest year in the history of our Club and possibly an effort that may not be matched or repeated by any other Club. We had **2 winners**

#### **UNDER 13's Winner**

**David Waters** on a 3 2 1 voting basis polled **10 Best On Ground** performances to finish with a staggering total of **33 votes**. The nearest rival from another Club player was 24 votes. Other players to figure well in our 13's Team were Peter Maynard and Kellen Dabb.

#### **UNDER 14's**

Tremendous effort by **Kris Clarke** who polled 16 votes finishing 5th overall in the District.

#### **UNDER 15's Winner**

Another herculian effort by **Lee Blake** on a 5 4 3 2 1 voting basis polled **9 Best on Ground** out of 10 days. He won this award by one of the biggest margins in history, polling **49 votes**, with his nearest rival getting 26 votes. Other 15's to poll well were Cameron McDonald and VJ Johnstone.

## EAST PERTH STATE JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 1998

### PLAYERS SELECTED TO TRAIN WITH SQUADS

#### **UNDER 13's**

David Waters, Peter Maynard, Kellen Dabb.

#### **UNDER 14's**

Kris Clarke, Michael Tucker, Stephen Catania

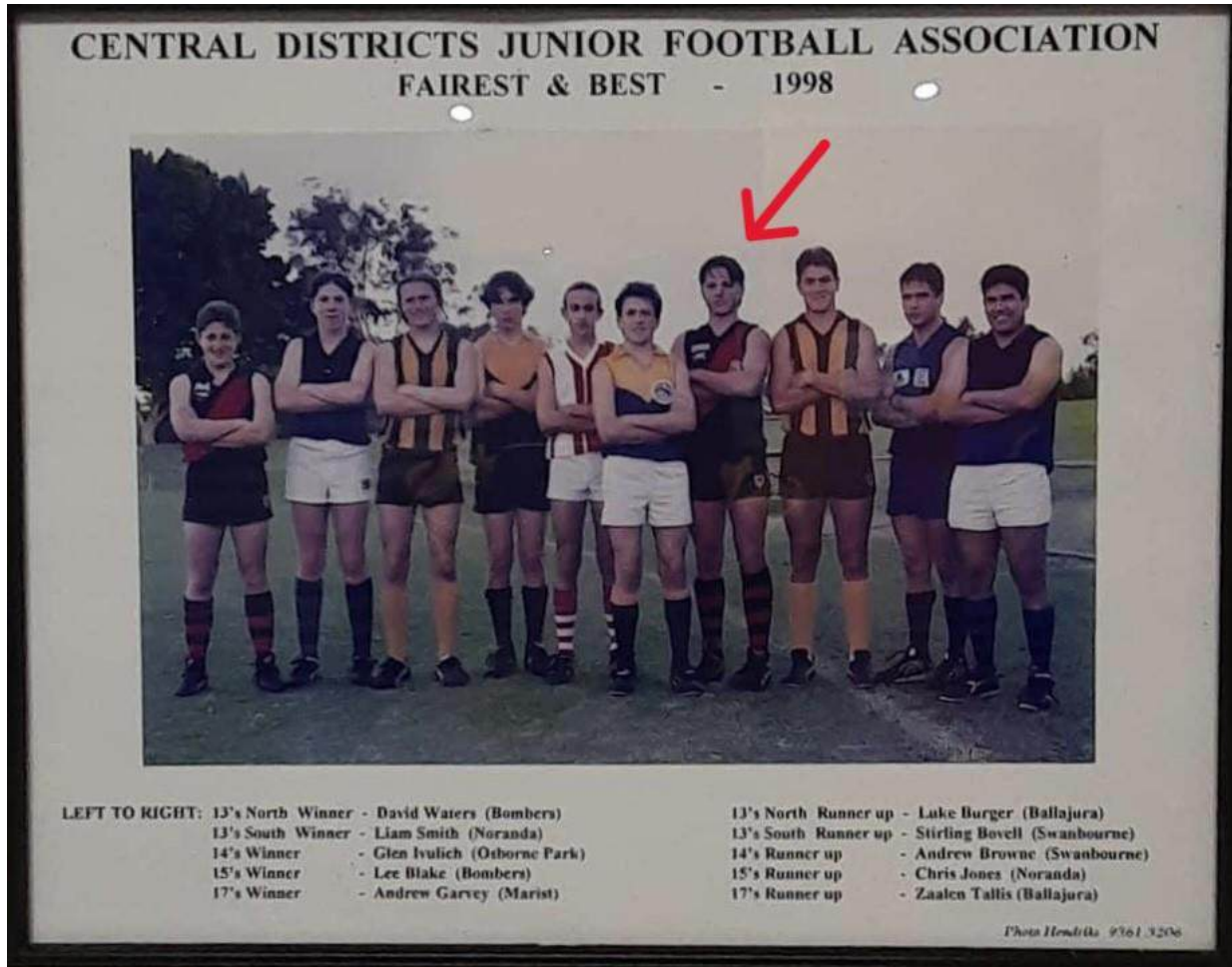
*At the time of this annual report, several other 13's and 14's players are under consideration for selection in series played in October 1998*

#### **UNDER 15's**

Peter Cockram, Ryan Stacey, Frank Bonolo Paul Bovenkerk, Cameron McDonald and Lee Blake played in July 1998. Lee Blake, Peter Cockram and Cameron McDonald were also invited and trained with the East Perth Colts in 1998.







(Photo supplied by Frank Agostino, East Perth Football Club)



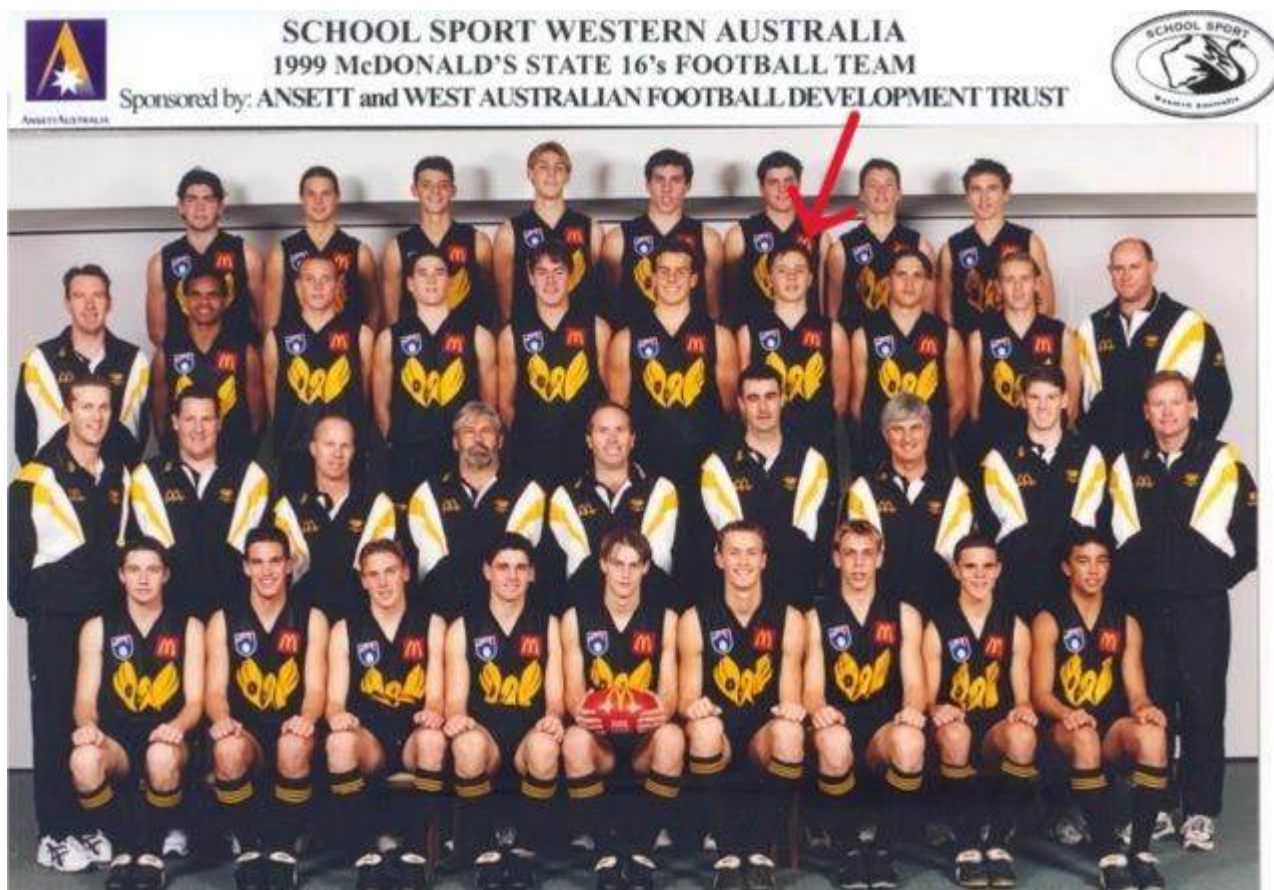
## 1999

In 1999, Blake was selected to represent Western Australia in the u/16 national championships. Of that team, ten players went on to the AFL including some who became household names –

Name	Years Played	Career
Graham Polak	2002-2006 2007-2010	Fremantle (73 games, 9 goals) Richmond (38 games, 16 goals)
Daniel Kerr	2001-2013	West Coast Eagles (220 games, 122 goals)
Ashley Sampi	2002-2006	West Coast Eagles (78 games, 97 goals)
Quinten Lynch	2001-2012  2013-2014	West Coast Eagles (209 games, 281 goals) Collingwood (18 games, 9 goals)
Aiden Parker	2003-2004	Adelaide (0 games)
Ashley McGrath	2001-2014	Brisbane (214 games, 170 goals)
Andrew McDougall	2001-2006  2007-2008	West Coast Eagles (38 games, 48 goals) Western Bulldogs (5 games, 2 goals)
Richard Hadley	2001-2007  2008-2010	Brisbane (41 games, 10 goals) Carlton (25 games, 6 goals)
Mark Williams	2001-2009  2010-2011	Hawthorn (111 games, 242 goals) Essendon (4 games, 5 goals)
Clancy Rudeforth	2002-2004	West Coast Eagles (0 games)



The 1999 WA team also included players who had terrific and decorated careers in the WA Football League.



**Back Row (L to R):** Michael Hales, Graham Polak, Frank Agostino, Andrew McDougall, Quinten Lynch, Mitch Cornell, Richard Hadley, Joshua Pearce.

**Third Row:** Ivan Barret (selector), Ashley Sampi, Michael Johnson, Andrew Kelly, Chris Jones, Chris Rayner, **Lee Blake**, Mark Williams, Adam Salecic, Craig Nelson (selector).

**Second Row:** Scott Hallem (FDT), Cameron Knapton (selector), Shane Yardley (Manager), Brett Barber (Asst. Coach), Ray Barrett (Coach), Todd Menegola (Asst. Coach), John Nykyforak (selector), Ryan Worthington (Umpire), Graeme Hadley (Chair of Selectors).

**Front Row:** Adam Kennelly, Jason Brown, Rhys Fitzpatrick, Clancy Rudeforth (Vice Captain), Craig Glancy (Captain), Aidan Parker (Vice Captain), Chad Indrisie, Ashley McGrath, Daniel Kerr.

(Photo: School Sports WA, via Peter Smith.)



Blake's high school teacher at Lockridge Senior High School was Ray Barrett, who was also the coach of the WA u/16s team. Barrett recalls Blake fondly.

*"He had a challenging home life but he was a nice kid. A beautiful boy who was polite and well mannered. He was a quiet fellow but he got along with everyone really well. He played really well in the 1999 National Championships. He was a silky player who played off the half forward flank. A delightful kick of the ball. The ball always seemed to land in his lap because he always knew where to position himself on the ground. But he was also a hard-nosed player and overall, a really good sportsman. We always used to ask players to come back the next year and speak to the next group coming through. Blake was asked to come back in 2000 to speak to that year's WA u/16 squad. He wasn't a natural candidate as a public speaker but he accepted the request and it went really well. No one ever had a bad word to say about him – he was a very well balanced young man and we could do with more Lee Blakes in this world."*

In 1999, Blake also played five games for the East Perth Colts.

## 2000

Blake narrowly missed selection in the WA state u/18 team. However, he was a member of the East Perth Colts (u/19) Premiership team. They defeated East Fremantle by 7 points on 9 September, at Subiaco Oval.

COLTS						HOW THE COLTS LINED UP			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Pts	BACKS:	Troy Lanza	Chris Jones	Thomas Waddell
EAST PERTH	2.1	7.4	9.6	9.6	(60)	HALF-BACKS:	Victor Petropoulos	Tim Greaney	Lee Blake
EAST FREM	0.3	1.3	3.4	8.5	(53)	CENTRES:	Daniel Young	Gianni Abbandanza	Craig Wulff
GOALS - East Perth: Agostino 3; Lloyd 2; Ipsen, Young, Jeavons, Blake 1.						HALF-FORWARDS:	Shem Garlett	Kyle Jeavons	Luke Hughes
East Fremantle: Polak 3; Glass 2; Bright, Dick, Polce 1.						FORWARDS:	Damien Lloyd	Frank Agostino	Todd Guthridge
BEST - East Perth: Garlett, Blake, Ipsen, Glancy, Abbandanza, Wulff.						RUCK:	Zac Beeck, Mitch Ipsen, Craig Glancy		
East Fremantle: Polak, Hadley, Bowley, Bright, Green, Glass.						INTERCHANGE:	Ben Borrett, Mark Leaman, Dennis Michael, John O'Reilly		
Umpires: Aaron Brown, Todd Keating.						Coach: Warren Mahoney; Assistant coaches: Bill Armstrong, Matt Alvaro.			
Mel Whinnen Medal: Lee Blake (East Perth)						Team Manager: Bill Nesbitt			
48									

(Photo courtesy of Peter Carter)



Bitter. Done our Way.



**DRIVE SAFE CUP - Colts Grand Final**

Subiaco Oval, Saturday 9 September - 8.50am

East Fremantle					East Perth				
Coach: Ken Ferguson Blue and White					Coach: Warren Mahoney Blue and Black				
	Age	Club of Origin	Goals	Point		Age	Club of Origin	Goals	Point
1 READ, David	18	Wesley			1 WULFF, Craig	17	Thornlie		
2 WALSH, Adam	18	Railways, (Geraldton)			3 GARLETT, Shem	18	Morley Bulldogs		
3 NEWHILL, Aaron	17	Palmyra			4 ABBANDANZA, Gianni	18	Noranda		
4 CACKETT, Dean	17	Attadole/Wesley			6 ARMANASCO, Scott	17	Bombers		
5 BRIGHT, Michael(V/Capt)	17	Geelong			7 YOUNG, Daniel (Capt)	18	Girrawheen/Koon		
6 DICK, Kim	18	Chapman Valley			8 PETROPOLUS, Victor	18	Bombers		
7 CREMIN, Matthew (Capt)	17	Willetton			10 HUGHES, Luke	16	Bossendean		
8 WALL, Preston (D/V/Capt)	17	Mullewa			11 GLANCY, Craig (VCapt)	17	Bridgetown		
9 JOHNSON, Kurt	17	Melville			12 LANZA, Troy	18	Caugars		
10 GREEN, Andrew	16	Rostrata			16 JEAUVONS, Kyle	17	Guildford Grammar		
11 DODD, Steven	17	Lynwood/Ferndale			17 JONES, Chris	17	Noranda		
12 GLASS, Ben (D/V/Capt)	18	Lynwood/Ferndale			18 AGOSTINO, Frank	17	Noranda		
13 BOWLEY, Ryan	17	Towns, (Geraldton)			19 GREANEY, Tim	18	Hale		
14 KENNELLY, Adam	17	Palmyra			20 COTTONE, Ryan	17	Noranda		
15 POLCE, Nicholas	18	Aquinas			22 LLOYD, Damien (VCapt)	18	Hale		
16 PHIPPS, Corey	17	Willetton			23 BORRETT, Ben	18	Morley Bulldogs		
17 ARTEMIS, Gary	17	Melville			24 LEAMAN, Mark	18	Bombers		
18 GARTLAND, Tony	18	Bullcreek-Leeming			26 MICHAEL, Dennis	18	Armadale		
19 ALEXANDER, Robert	17	Melville			27 CROWLEY, Ben	17	Bombers		
20 BERTOLATTI, Aaron	18	Kardinia/Aquinas			28 BLAKE, Lee	17	Bombers		
21 RODDA, Lee	18	Bullcreek-Leeming			30 MUHAREMOVIC, Enes	17	Bossendean		
22 HADLEY, Richard	17	Willetton			31 BARNES, Rowan	18	Perth		
23 SANDILANDS, Aaron	17	Willetton			33 O'RIELLY, John	18	Dampier Sharks		
24 McCARREY, Andrew	17	Applecross/Wesley			34 WADDELL, Thomas	18	Bombers		
25 CASS, David	16	Rossmoyne			35 BEECK, Zac	18	Busselton		
26 FARRANT, Joe	16	Palmyra			36 GUTHRIDGE, Todd	17	Nannup		
27 McNALLY, Matthew	17	Bullcreek-Leeming			39 IPSEN, Mitch	18	Manjimup		
28 NICHOLLS, Andrew	18	Hale							
29 RAWLINGS, Dane	18	Willetton							
30 POLAK, Graham	16	Rostrata							
Rushed .....					Rushed .....				

UMPIRES: Field: Aaron Brown, Todd Keating. Boundary: Nathan Whiting, Jack Green Goals: Dale Edwick, Judy Perejano

**Did you know**

Will East Perth's league team become the fifth club to come from eighth place one year and win the premiership the next?

Swans came off the bottom to win the 1961 premiership, as did Claremont in 1964, South Fremantle in 1970 and West Perth in 1975.

**Scoreboard**

	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
East Fremantle				
East Perth				

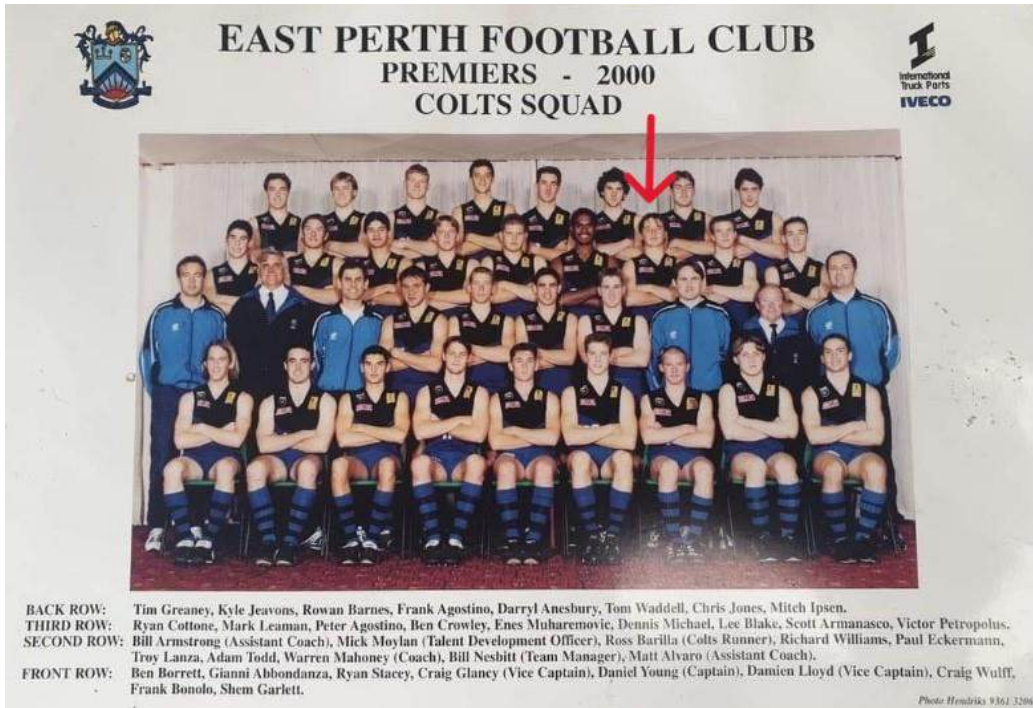


The Town of East Fremantle congratulates  
The East Fremantle Colts, Reserves and League sides  
for qualifying for the Westar Grand Final  
**GO THE SHARKS!!**

BELT UP, SEATBELTS SAVE LIVES

FOOTBALL

(Photo – Harold Membrey)



(Photo courtesy of Harold Membrey)



(Photo above courtesy of Chad Evans)



(Photo above courtesy of Peter Carter. Chris Jones is pictured on the left, Lee Blake on the right. In 1998, Jones was runner up to Blake in for the Under 15s Fairest and Best Player award in the Central Districts Junior Football Association - see earlier photo).

Warren Mahoney was the coach of the East Perth Colts team in 2000. Mahoney's immediate reflections on Blake were that "he was a very good footballer but an even better young man". Mahoney then went on to say that

*"For his age, Blake was a good sized midfielder who was very focussed, dedicated and professional. He worked very hard to get the best out of himself. He came through juniors with a very talented group of players in WA at that time and he was a very talented player himself. He had great footy smarts and awareness and read the play very well. He played as a half back/midfielder and played like a quarterback. He was a very good user of the ball. Although he wasn't super fast and didn't end up being particularly tall, he was highly skilled and didn't lack courage at all. Overall, he was dedicated and professional for his age; he had a great attitude and was always considerate of others. He was a wonderful young man with a great character who was popular with his team mates. I'm grateful for the chance to reflect on Lee as a player and as a person, and I have fond memories of him in both aspects."*

Blake won the Mel Whinnen medal for Best on Ground that day, wearing the number 28 guernsey. This medal has been presented to the player judged best on ground in the Grand Final of the WAFL's colts (u/19) competition, since 1998.



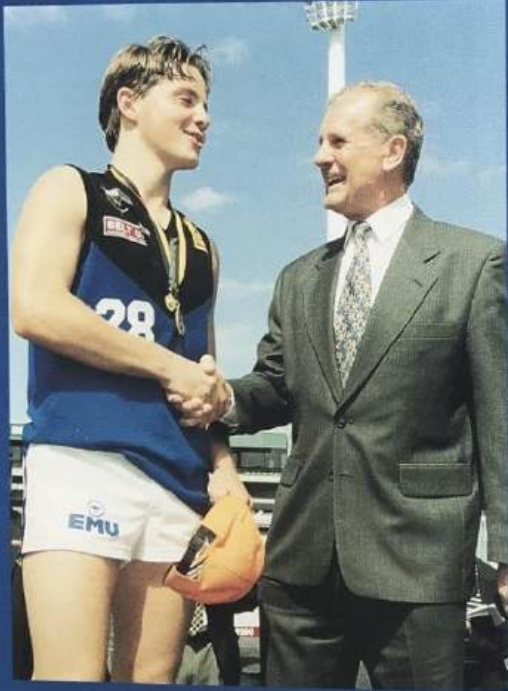
Blake's premiership team mate Shem Garlett said that

*"Blake played half back and was a wall in defence. He was a smooth mover – perfectly balanced. He was quiet but confident. He always got to the contest at just the right time and was a very solid all round player. West Coast Eagles player Jack Williams reminds me a lot of Lee Blake."*

# Bombers boy enjoys the glory

By Stuart McLea

LEE Blake was finding it hard to stop smiling. Not only had he won a premiership medallion with his East Perth colts teammates, but he had just received the Mel Whinnen Medal after being judged best-afield in a quality grand final.



Football legend Mel Whinnen presents Lee Blake with the Mel Whinnen Medal for best-afield in the colts grand final

Blake was inspirational in the seven-point victory, which ended a 20-year premiership drought for the Royals colts. He picked up countless possessions across the half-back line, but also pushed forward at every opportunity and even chipped in with a handy goal in the second quarter. Like most of his teammates, the talented 17-year-old said the victory over East Fremantle was the highlight of his football career.

"This is definitely one of the proudest moments I've ever had," he said. "I ended up being the spare man in defence, so I was able to run around a bit and it really worked for me. "I was shocked when my name was announced for the Medal because we all played really well."

Originally from Adelaide, Blake played for the Coolbinia Bombers before notching just five games in a brief stint in the colts last year. The new year saw his body develop, along with his football skills and he became a regular team member.

Blake admitted that the turning point in the colts' season had been a team meeting after a narrow loss to Claremont seven weeks out from the finals.

"We discussed a few things that we had to work on if we were going to make the finals and we didn't look back from that day," says Blake.

Although the solidly-built defender naturally harbours a desire to play at a higher level, East Perth supporters will be glad to know he will not be leaving the club for at least another season.

"I will definitely be staying at East Perth next year," he says. "I will be loyal to the club because I have been brought up to be loyal, but after next season, I will have another look at things."

(Photo courtesy of Peter Carter)



# Strong run home snared the flag

LAST place in 1999, a small playing squad, shocking training conditions, old footballs — what chance did the East Perth colts squad have of making the final four in 2000, let alone winning a premiership?

Against all the odds, the colts team broke a 20-year premiership drought, on grand final day 2000, defeating East Fremantle 9.6 (60) to 8.5 (33).



*Colts assistant coach and runner Bill Armstrong makes a point during the finals campaign*

The performance will go down as one of the greatest moments in East Perth's proud history, especially in a year when the league side also claimed the premiership spoils.

The colts produced an amazing job to get into the grand final, winning five of their next seven matches after a one-point loss to Claremont in Round 14.

While Perth and East Fremantle were considered clear favourites in the colts competition, few critics rated East Perth's chances of getting last first semi-final opponents South Fremantle, let alone winning the flag.

But reach the grand final they did, with a 12.18 (90) to 11.7 (73) win over the Bulldogs, achieved with a stunning last term and then an 11.9 (75) to 6.7 (43) win against Perth, set up with a blistering opening quarter when the fancied Demons failed to score.

While the quality East Fremantle side was expected to easily account for the plucky Royals, a few hard-nosed East Perth youngsters had other ideas. Led by best-on-ground Lee Blake across half-back, the elusive Shem Garlett in the midfield and captain Daniel Young just about everywhere, the Royals achieved the impossible.

Talented forward Frank Agostino kicked the first goal of the match to settle the early nerves and from then on the Royals were never headed. The tight defence held the Sharks to just three points and then the Royals broke the game open in the second quarter with five goals to one.

The 37-point lead at the main break had the players — looking jubilant, but the coaching staff kept a lid on things. The tackling and desperation of East Perth had been inspirational as Blake and his defensive cohorts refused to allow the ball into their 50-metre arc.

East Fremantle opened the third term with two goals to reduce the margin to four goals, but Agostino's third major settled the side and lively half-forward Damien Lloyd stretched the lead to 38-points.

But the Sharks wouldn't give in and finished powerfully, locking five goals and keeping the Royals scoreless as they closed to within seven points. But one quarter of quality football wasn't enough against a determined East Perth team, who held out desperately in the closing minutes.

Coach Warren Mahoney was an extremely proud man as he addressed the team in the change rooms after the victory.

"Win or lose today we would have been winners," he said.

"From our first training session, with an original squad of just 20-odd players out at Britannia Park with bad footballs and silly things like that, we have all stuck together and the results showed today."

Mahoney told the players not to make the win the highlight of their careers, but rather a stepping stone for them to go on and play league football and then strive for AFL ranks.

— Stuart McLea



*The jubilant Royals after their grand final triumph*

# THE COLTS TRIUMPH ...

By Stuart McLea

SOME people are calling Royals colts coach Warren Mahoney a miracle-worker.

In his first year at East Perth, Mahoney did the impossible and guided his team from last place in 1999, to premiers in season 2000.

After spending most of his playing and coaching career with Perth, Mahoney was coaxed to East Perth in the off-season and it is a decision that all parties have benefitted from.

When Mahoney joined the club, a league coach had still to be appointed; the colts were struggling for numbers and the team was training half-hearted on suburban parks.

Mahoney believes that this unsettled start might have been the key to his team's premiership success.

"We had a few difficulties at first, but we worked through them and I guess the results showed," he said after the victory. "Some nights we had just 25 boys at training when



*Colts coach Warren Mahoney in a relaxed mood on the Sunday after the grand final.*

*Congratulations Royals*



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WELL DONE ROYALS — MALCOLM ATWELL



## ... from humble beginnings arose a team of winners

other clubs such as East Fremantle had about 120 to choose from. The club had no real home base, so we were doing a bit of travelling around."

After a narrow loss to Claremont late in the season, the Royals' brave charge for a finals appearance seemed destined for failure, so Mahoney organised a team meeting and thrashed the issues out - with the stunning result of five wins from the last seven games to claim fourth spot on the table.

"We really had to work through a few problem areas at the meeting and, to their credit, the boys responded on the field," he said. "They didn't play a bad quarter of football after that.

"To lose the grand final would have been disappointing, but we would have been winners no matter what the result simply just by getting there and proving we could do it."

Mahoney said there were several players in his side with the ability to play at a higher level.

"There is an opportunity for four or five boys to at least get their chances at AFL level, if not next year, then certainly the year after," he says. "Certainly there are another four or five who will go on to play Westar Rules, which should continue to boost the club's stocks.

"Our real success will be judged down the track on whether these boys continue to play the game."

Like most rising young coaches, Mahoney would like to coach at a higher level, but for now he's happy to bask in the glory of the club's first colts premiership since 1980.

Mahoney has paid tribute to his support staff for their work during the season. The influence of newly-appointed Talent Development Officer Mick Moylan also added to the confidence of the players.

"The sheer professionalism at East Perth has been first class," he says. "Tony (Micale) has been a big influence at the club."

With reserves coach Clint Roberts moving to the Football Operations post with the Westar Rules office, Mahoney will move up to coach the reserves next season.



*Victor Petropoulos and Mark Leaman lead the charge*



*The Royals colts celebrate as the scoreboard tells the final story*



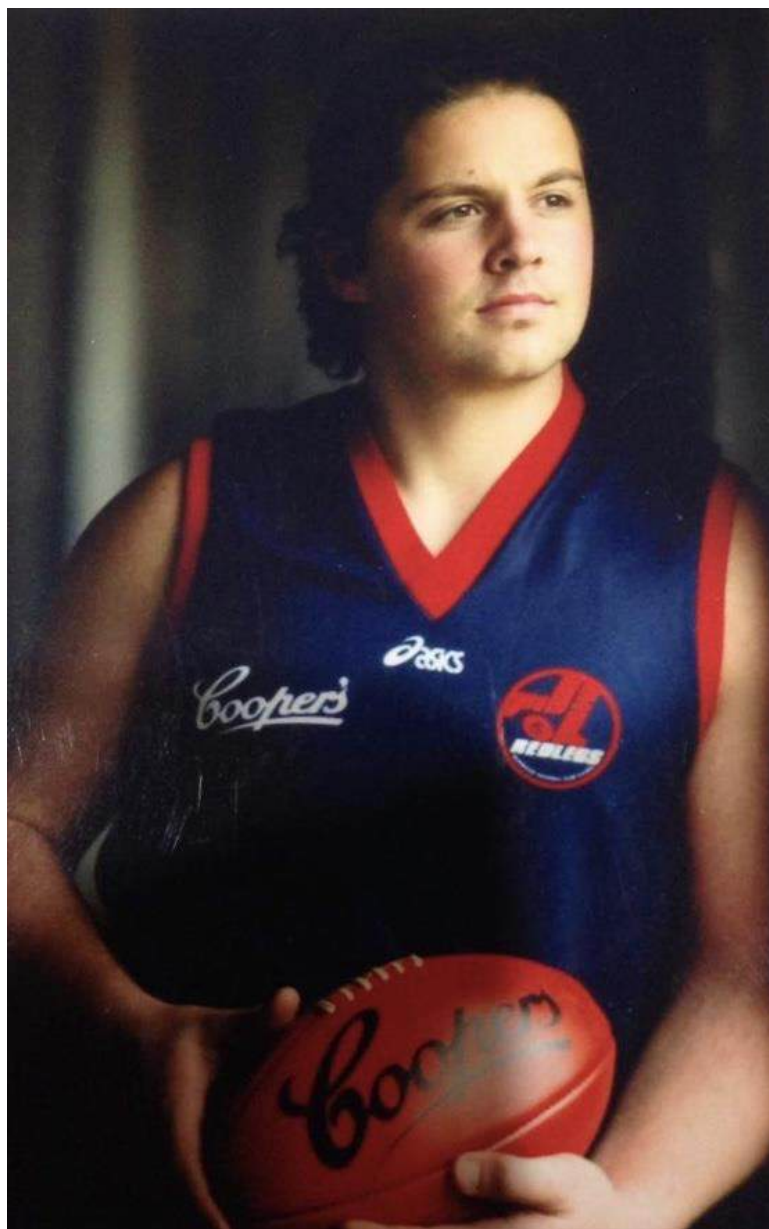


Blake then moved back to Adelaide in December 2000, for family reasons.

## Senior Football

2001

Blake made his way to Adelaide from Perth to spend time with his mother Kathy and brother Shaun in Mount Barker. David Wark was the General Manager of Norwood at the time and recalled that Blake had interest from Port Adelaide initially, but ended up with Norwood.



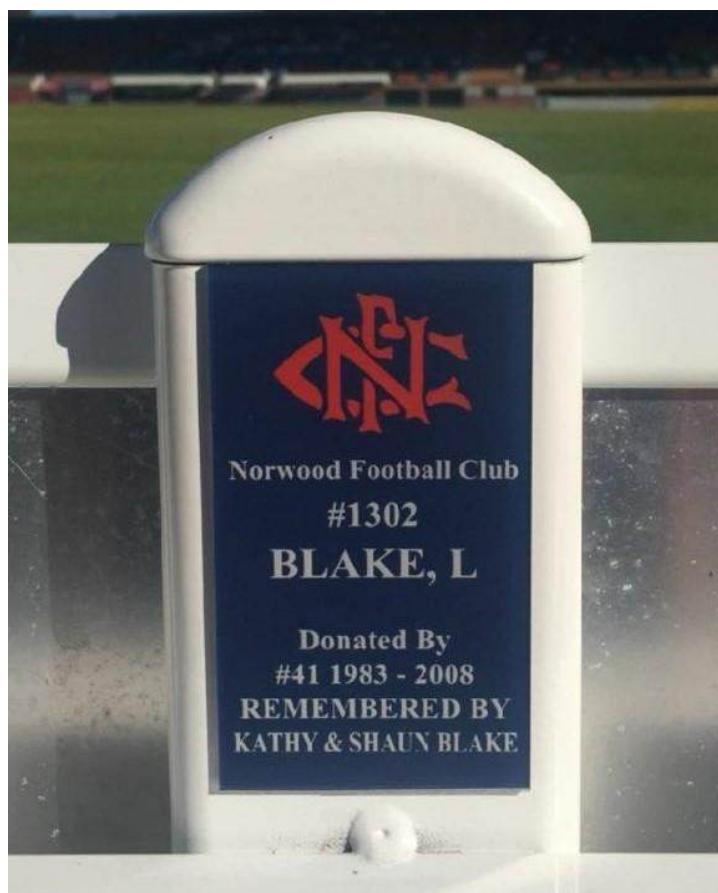
(Photo courtesy of [www.redlegsmuseum.com.au](http://www.redlegsmuseum.com.au) )



Blake began in the u/19s and after three games there and kicking six goals, he was promoted to the reserves. After three games of reserves and within the space of seven weeks playing for Norwood, he was selected to make his league debut as league player number 1,302 against West Adelaide at Norwood Oval on 21 July, 2001. Blake was allocated guernsey number 41.

Neville Roberts was Blake's first League coach. Roberts, an inductee in Norwood's Hall of Fame, recalls Blake's debut year.

*"He was quick but not super fast. He was one of the first half backs to leave their player and go to the ball, almost as if he was a forward, and he was a great interceptor too. He wasn't that tall but he read the ball really well – as well as anyone. When he got the ball he could always hit another Redlegs jumper with his disposals. He had silky skills and moved beautifully – he was a real athlete. I remember when he made his debut the other league players were all very excited."*



(Photo – Lee Blake's league player plaque on the picket fence at Norwood Oval).



Blake played league again the following week, away to Glenelg. Both games resulted in losses to Norwood, but Blake was determined to become a regular league player the following year (2002) and embarked on a big pre-season to give himself the best chance of doing so.

Living in Sturt's zone in Mt Barker, Blake's league debut attracted Sturt's attention and they sought a transfer fee from Norwood. However, under the SANFL rules at the time he was deemed a WA recruit because he had not resided in SA continuously for twelve months after moving back to Adelaide in December of 2000.

No.		Player	Age	Commenced with Norwood	Games Played	Games Agg	Goals 2001	Goals Agg	2001 Sponsor
1		BASSETT, Nathan	24	1994	6	45	6	26	
2		WILSON, Benjamin	24	1999	9	29	3	17	Baring print
3		DIREEN, Scott	28	1998	17	74	5	54	Zamel's Jewellers
4		DANIELS, Stephen	25	1994	11	69	3	9	Dentron Metals
5		FLEMING, Dale	30	1994	11	135	4	49	Joe Tripodi Earthmovers
6		McLEAN, Andrew	28	2001	16	25	3	8	Envelope Specialists
7		MORTON, Denny	26	2001	13	58	17	65	Lane Print Group
8		BORLACE, Scott	20	1998	19	59	29	67	Bath Hotel
9		*COTTON, Jarrod	25	1999	17	133	14	145	Chariot Internet
10		NEILL, Robert	27	1998	14	70	30	123	The Gold Shop
11		JAMES, Brett	28	1990	19	126	2	54	Fennel Allen & Co
12		CROUCH, Adam	21	1998	13	55	2	5	Hamood Ostrich Barmara
13		DAWES, Matthew	21	1999	18	44	1	4	Mile End Office Furniture
14		NELSON, Cameron	23						Caddie Crash
15		CUNNINGHAM, John	27	1996	14	96	10	100	Hillross Financial Services
16		ROBRAN, Matthew	30	1999	2	53	2	58	
17		BARTEMUCCI, Matthew	20	2000	10	13	6	6	Climat Air
18		BOWN, Stuart	23	1999	13	45	11	36	
19		HARVEY, Anthony	28	1995	8	109	2	91	Cooper's
20		PASCOE, Andrew	30	1988	3	116	7	188	Cottage Foods
21		CLEMENTS, Troy	26	1995	19	123	12	40	Abics
22		McLEAN, Kane	19	2000	6	10	3	8	
23		HEWITT, Evan	23	2001	7	7	15	15	
24		WOITE, Ryan	21	2001	7	7	-	-	Becke-Buys
25		CARSLAKE, Scott	25	1997	7	28	3	6	Knowles Pest Control
26		BASSETT, Scott	23	1996	15	69	21	47	
27		ROLFE, Dana	20	2000	1	3	-	-	John Richards Furniture
28		ECCLES, Andrew	22	1997	5	19	6	16	
29		TAMLIN, Hamish	21	1999	5	7	1	1	Payneham Plant Wholesalers
30		JAMES, Paul	20	2001	17	17	3	3	Panas International
31		GALLAGHER, James	21	1999	10	41	5	15	
32		GALLAGHER, James	21	1999	1	1	1	1	McNamara & Basham
33		CALABRESE, Carlo	20	2000	1	1	1	1	Wolf Blass Wines
34		MARSH, Jason	29	1999	6	13	9	28	Ian Foggo Furniture & Decor
35		BLAKE, Leo	18	2001	2	2	-	-	Quantum Stone
36		HOBBS, Michael	21	2001	6	6	-	-	T-Shirt Wholesalers
37		YERBURY, Jonathan	24	1997	19	83	1	3	Beiersdorf Ausat
38		*SANDFORD, Glenn	30	1999	12	94	2	47	ED Oates
39		VIDIC, Mathew	19	2001	10	10	7	7	Stars Catering
40		VERCO, George	16	2001	1	1	-	-	Spencer Motor Trimmers
41		JOLLY, Matthew	21	2001	6	6	-	-	Southern Cross Newsagency
42		STANSBOROUGH, Mark	19						

\* J. Cotton played 77 games for Centrals and kicked 110 goals  
 \* A. McLean played 9 games for Glenelg and kicked 5 goals  
 \* D. Morton played 48 games for North Adelaide and kicked 48 goals  
 \* G. Sandford played 60 games for North Adelaide and kicked 29 goals

www.go-redlegs.com 29

Photo – Redlegs Review, September 2001



2002



In 2002, Blake was experiencing extreme lethargy and he was struggling to keep up with the training regime.

Friend, team mate and house mate Chad Evans said

*"During the Christmas break from training, Blakey and I would run long distances together. The only times that I ever ran 10,000m in under 50 minutes, were when we ran together. Blakey would always beat me with a bit still up his sleeve, while I had always given 100% and had nothing left in the tank at all. I remember that at times Blakey would feel a bit tired, like he had a bit of a cold. Those feelings came and went and we never really thought much about it. By the time we started pre season for 2002 after the Christmas break, it had become a regular feeling for Blakey. "*

Blake told his (new) league coach, Norwood Hall of Fame legend Garry McIntosh, about what he was experiencing. McIntosh insisted that Blake undergo blood tests to see if a cause could be identified. Sadly, the blood tests found that Blake had Leukemia and with it, a 50/50 chance of survival.

McIntosh said

*"I clearly remember telling Blakey that he should go and get some blood tests because he was tired all the time. I just thought he might have had an iron deficiency or something. Then I got a call from (Dr) Geoff Verall who told me the results and I was shocked. I couldn't believe it."*

Blake was immediately admitted to the Flinders Medical Centre, where he commenced chemotherapy. Throughout that season he made regular visits to training and expressed a genuine love for the Norwood Football Club, along with a steely determination to return to the football field in the red and blue guernsey.

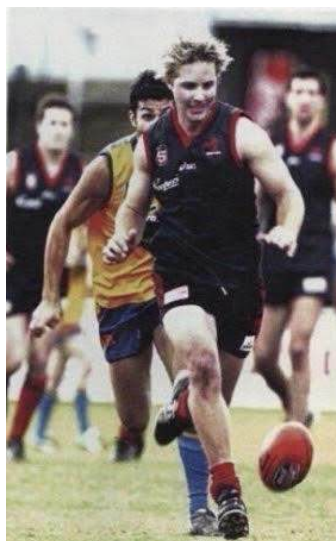


Chad Evans said

*“If there was one thing that Blakey couldn’t defeat, it was me on the tennis court. It used to really piss him off and I would just laugh. Blakey moved in with me in Mt Barker in 2002, when he was first fighting his Leukemia diagnosis. We had some really fun times, even with what he was dealing with. I was convinced he would beat Leukemia because he had real swagger.”*



Lee Blake with friend and team mate, Luke Nitschke.



(Photo courtesy of Chad Evans)





2003

By late 2003, Blake was again playing reserves football after a modified training program at Norwood and the nearby Payneham Norwood Union (Amateur) Football Club, and time spent playing at the Mypolonga Football Club in the River Murray League.



Lee Blake playing for Mypolonga in the River Murray Football League. **Photo** courtesy of Chad Evans.

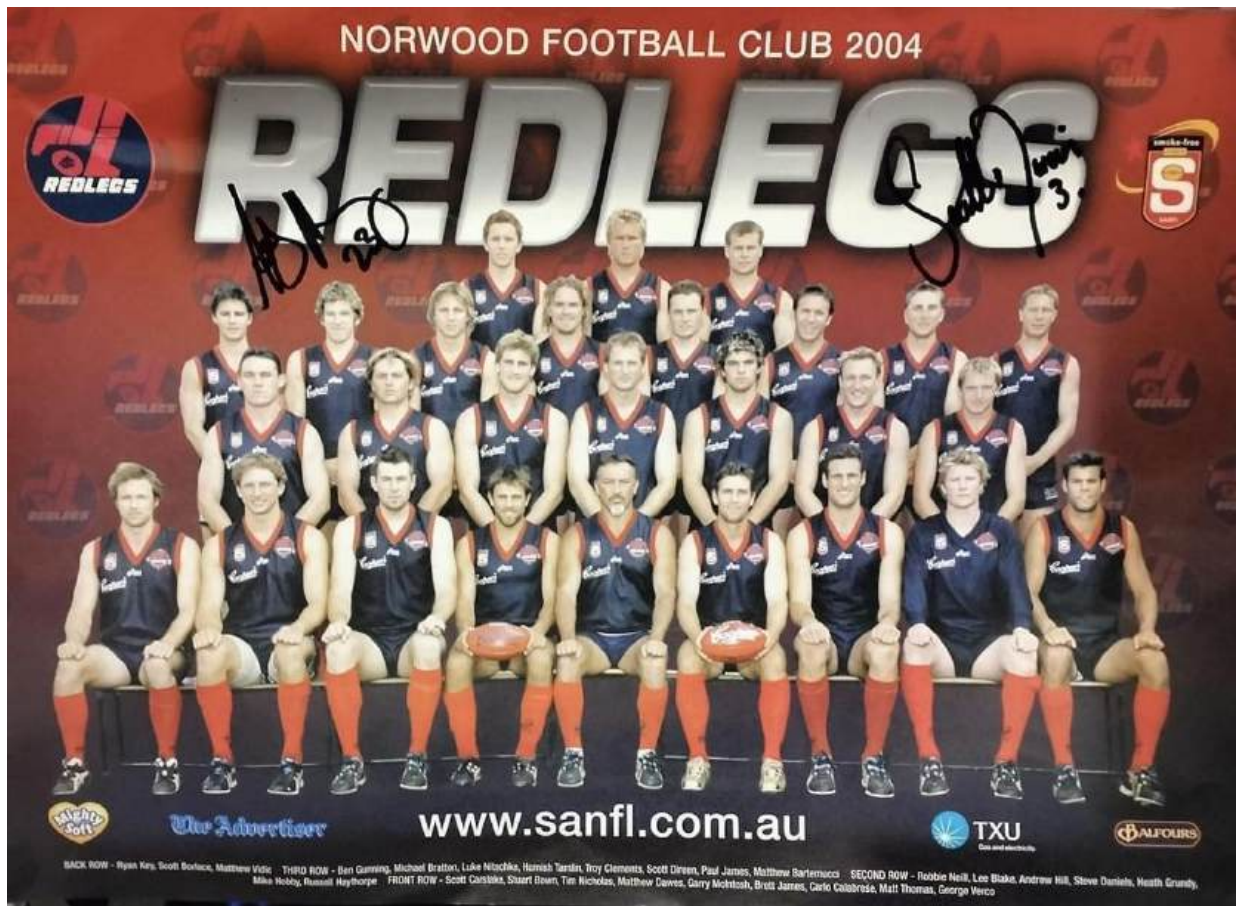
In an interview with Doug Robertson of *The Advertiser* at the time (republished in the *Redlegs Review* in September 2003), Blake said

*"I didn't know what Leukemia was. I thought I'd be out for a week but it could have taken my life. There were times I was at the bottom of the toilet all week and I couldn't talk because I'd been throwing up so much. Chemo wasn't my best friend. (But) everybody has a bad phase in their life, it's just that mine came early. The thing is you can't look twenty years forward and make plans.*



*Through it all, the players have been great. It was just amazing how many people were shocked and cared when I thought I hadn't done much to warrant it. From the first reserves game (back) I realized why I was trying so hard to get back. I love the club and the players. They certainly helped when I was down".*

2004



Lee Blake is in the second row, second in from the left.

**Photo** supplied by Mark Window.



Blake played his third league game on 31 July against Sturt at Unley Oval.



By now, Blake had played three league games in total, and three losses. After a bye the next week, Blake held his spot and played what was to be his final league game against Port Adelaide at the Parade, on 13 August 2004. This time, the team had a win (10.8.68 to 6.15.51) and Blake finally had his first win as a League player. What was particularly special was that his first league win came against Norwood's old arch rivals from across town.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Even though General Manager David Wark keeps fit by running at least 3 times a week, he is feeling demoralised and feeling his age at the moment. On several occasions when running past attractive looking females on early morning runs with current young league players George Verco and Lee Blake in particular, he was only given a cursory glance by these attractive ladies whilst the topless, tanned, athletic appearances of George and Lee left females gob-smacked and star struck when their eyes fell upon their taut muscular bodies racing past them. Warky has been seen regularly working out in the gym ever since and dosing up on Big Kev's instant muscle builder. Sad really.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Redlegs Review, December 2004



## PLAYER STATISTICS

Name	DOB	Jumper Number	Home Club.	Previous Club	Height(cm)	Weight(kg)	Games
Robert AHMAT	9.7.77	9	Sydney Swans/Collingwood		178	84	13
Matthew BARTEMUCCI	3.6.80	18	Hope Valley		177	74	52
Lee BLAKE	30.7.83	41	East Perth		183	89	
Scott BODEN	12.9.82	46	Rostrevor/N.F.C Underage		176	77	
Scott BORLACE	25.4.81	8	Pedara/N.F.C. Underage		176	78	100
Stuart BOWN	24.8.78	22	Broken Hill		192	95	76
Michael BRATTON	15.3.84	7	Lobethal		178	73	10
Carlo CALABRESE	25.4.81	39	N.F.C. Underage		197	102	20
Bryce CAMPBELL	7.9.84	6	Turvey Park (Wagga)		181	79	
Scott CARSLAKE	9.12.75	30	Woodville West Torrens		178	78	70
Troy CLEMENTS	27.10.74	25	Kimba Eagles		180	80	169
Luke CROUCH	12.8.83	40	N.F.C. Underage		181	77	
Stephen DANIELS	3.9.76	4	N.F.C. Underage		193	88	111
Matthew DAWES	30.12.79	13	Rostrevor/N.F.C. Underage		174	77	82
Scott DIREEN	20.10.72	3	Sydney Swans, New Norfolk (Tas)		178	85	107
Nick DUIGAN	7.9.84	29	Pembroke/Walkerville		185	84	
James GALLAGHER	17.11.79	38	Sacred Heart/Underage		176	70	68
Heath GRUNDY	2.6.86	27	N.F.C. Underage		193	80	2
Ben GUNNING	14.10.83	45	P.A.C/ underage		175	72	4
Anthony HARVEY	25.5.73	23	Seaford/St Kilda		174	75	
Russell HAYTHORPE	3.8.77	42	North Adelaide		191	93	
Andrew HILL	11.6.80	16	North Launceston		193	93	
Adam JAGO	15.7.81	28	North Launceston		192	99	
Brett JAMES	15.12.72	11	N.F.C. Underage/A.F.C.		178	77	174
Paul JAMES	15.5.81	12	N.F.C. Underage/North Adelaide		178	78	
Ryan KEY	26.7.83	36	N.F.C. Underage		174	77	5
Robert NEILL	5.1.74	10	St Kilda		184	93	97
Tim NICHOLAS	16.1.82	5	N.F.C. Underage		197	98	14
Luke NITSCHKE	12.3.85	19	Lobethal		179	77	6
Joel PATFULL	7.12.84	24	Morialta/N.F.C. Underage		189	86	14
Jonathon ROBRAN	21.10.72	15	Walkerville/Hawthorn/Essendon		195	96	87
Mark STANSBOROUGH	16.6.82	33	N.F.C Underage		178	80	
Matthew THOMAS	21.1.79	52	Uraidia		193	93	11
George VERCO	25.4.83	48	N.F.C. Underage		189	87	7
Mark VETESSE	30.3.85	32	North Adelaide		179	74	
Mathew VIDIC	6.7.82	14	Greenacres		170	77	25
Jonathan YERBURY	6.1.77	43	St Peters/ N.F.C.Underage		193	95	89



2005





“Blakey”, the likeable larrikin, knew the odds were mounting up against him. But he was determined to play one more time for Norwood, and he literally dragged himself out of his sick bed to play in a reserves game at Woodville Oval on 30 July 2005 (his third reserves game for the season).

Owing to the medication he was on, Steve Fendt (Head Trainer at the Norwood Football Club), sought and obtained special approval from ASADA for him to be able to play. The chemotherapy drugs were not necessarily performance enhancing but if drug testing results showed the presence of a cocktail of drugs in a fit athlete, then questions might be asked. However, to their credit ASADA applied a common sense approach in the circumstances and provided a verbal waiver, enabling Blake to play one final (reserves) game for Norwood with his mates.

Chad Evans remembers when Blake rang him before that reserves games.

*“I answered the phone, and he just said two words. It’s back”.*

(Thanks to Kyle Smith), the SA Football Budget listed the team squads as follows.

<b>Norwood</b>	<b>Woodville - West Torrens</b>
1 Adam COCKSHELL	12 Jarrod SHATTOCK
14 Matthew VIDIC	13 Jon COOMBE
15 Brad DE VRIES	16 Daniel ROBERTS
16 Andrew HILL	22 Brent FREWEN
19 Luke NITSCHKE	24 Matthew JACKMAN
21 Angus BERRY	25 Ashley MANUEL
27 Ryan LEWIS	28 Ty MAIDMENT
28 Chad GIBSON	29 Josh KING
29 Nicholas DUGAN	32 Nick SALTER
32 Mark VETESSE	33 Brett HAINS
36 Ryan KEY	35 Adam SPENCER
37 Marc COX	42 Peter HRYHOREC
41 Ed LOWER	45 Ryan POTTER
42 Gavin HUGHES	46 Brad MOORE
43 Cleve HUGHES	47 Brad COLES
44 Nicholas LOWER	50 Alex STEARNE
45 Nathan ROMEO	52 Brendan BAILEY
46 Scott BODEN	53 John JACKSON
47 Matthew BRUNOLI	54 Ross CHRISTIE
48 Adam WILLIAMS	59 Jake PAVLICH
53 Jesse AISH	60 Ryan KELLY
55 Gareth DAVIS	
56 Tom BIRCH	
57 Will HACKETT	
58 Alex LUNN	
59 Robert YOUNG	



One way or another, Lee Blake got to wear his number 41 guernsey in his final game. For the Eagles, Bernie Vince (later an Adelaide and Melbourne AFL footballer) had been named in the League team but played reserves that day. (He may have replaced Brendan Bailey in the reserves team as both players shared number 52).

At the sounding of the final siren, the ball was in the hands of Blake. He had a shot on goal and the ball hit the post. David Wark recalls that it seemed such a metaphor for Blake's life – always doing his best but somehow 'hitting the post' of life. Fittingly, Blake was chaired off the ground by his team mates and in touching scenes, supporters and officials formed a guard of honour, resplendent with the red and blue colours, to give Blake his deserved accolades and to pay their utmost respects to him and his team mates. It was an emotional exit from the arena for all players, officials and supporters.





**REDLEGS MUSEUM**  
HISTORY OF THE NORWOOD FOOTBALL CLUB



(Photos courtesy of Simon Laurie and Chad Evans)





The *Sunday Mail* newspaper match report was as follows:

**Norwood** 4.3 6.7 9.12 10.17.77

**WWTFC** 1.1 4.3 6.4 8.4.52

Best Players:

Norwood: Nitschke, G. Hughes, E. Lower, Lewis, Young, **Blake**

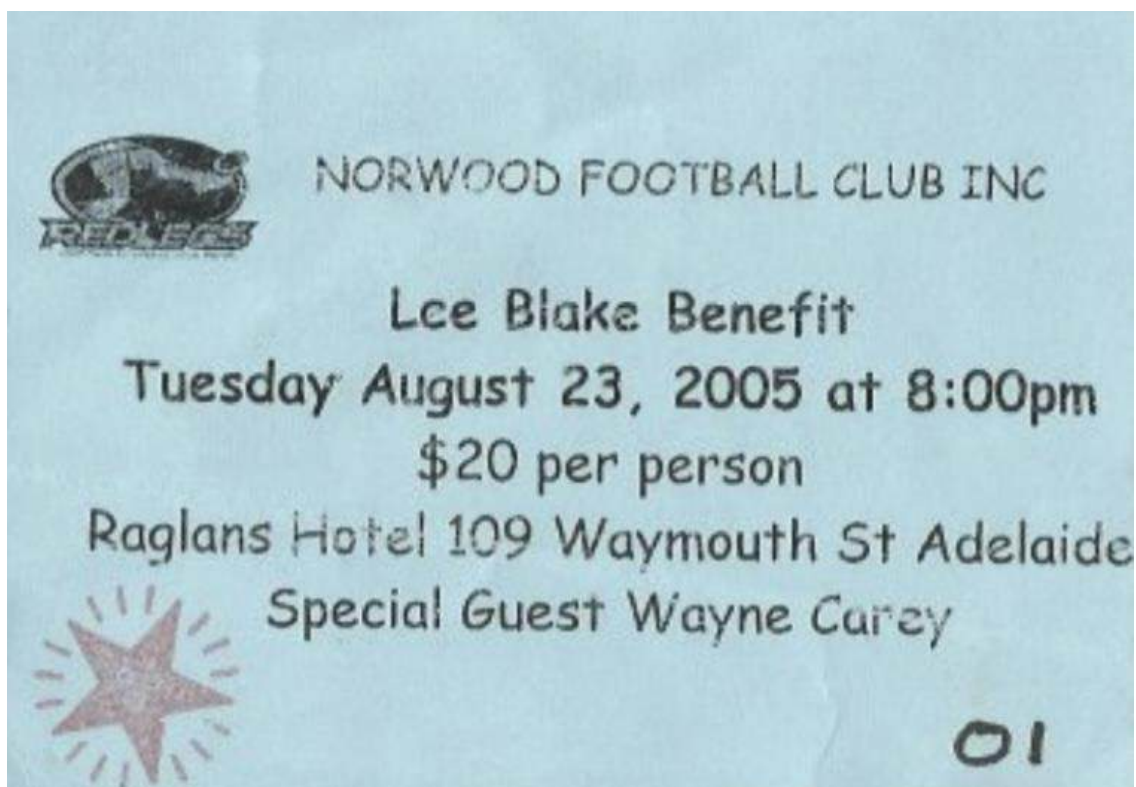
WWTFC: Frewen, Vince, Salter, Hryhorec, J. Shattock, Jackson, Potter.

Goals:

Norwood: G. Hughes (3), **Blake (2)**, Hill (2), Berry (1), Vettese (1), Williams (1)

WWTFC: Jackson (2), Salter (2), Christie (1), Potter (1), King (1), J. Shattock (1).

A benefit night was held by the Norwood Football Club three weeks later with Wayne Carey the guest speaker, as the fight got harder and harder. Coach Garry McIntosh donated his 1987 Australian guernsey for auction, from when he had played for Australia vs Ireland,.



(Photo – Norwood Football Club Archival Collection)



2007

Blake played his last two games of football for Mypolonga. He didn't disclose that he had sustained another relapse of Leukemia, and yet in those final two games, he kicked 14 goals.

2008

On 9 May, confined at the Mary Potter Hospice, the phone calls had begun earlier in the day to say that Lee Blake was very close to the end of his life.

Blake's final league game had been played and won against arch rivals Port Adelaide, in mid-2004.

That evening, for the SANFL's Rivalry Round, Norwood defeated Port Adelaide by 22 points at Norwood Oval in front of a crowd of 7,564. For this game, the club painted "#41" on the grass in the south east pocket of Norwood Oval below Coopers Hill – an area known to some as "Blakey's pocket."



**Photo** – Barry Solomon, Norwood Oval Curator.



Norwood had won its battle on the field, but the players, officials and supporters knew there another battle playing out.

As the players left the field and entered the changerooms, former club General Manager David Wark gave his mobile phone to club Captain Anthony Harvey. He had rung Head Trainer Steve Fendt, who was at Blake's bedside in the Mary Potter Hospice. Harvey kept the phone line open and Fendt put his own phone on speaker. But Blake was not conscious. The victorious players then sang the club song loud and proud, and it echoed down the phone line.

Miraculously, Fendt describes the moment when he says

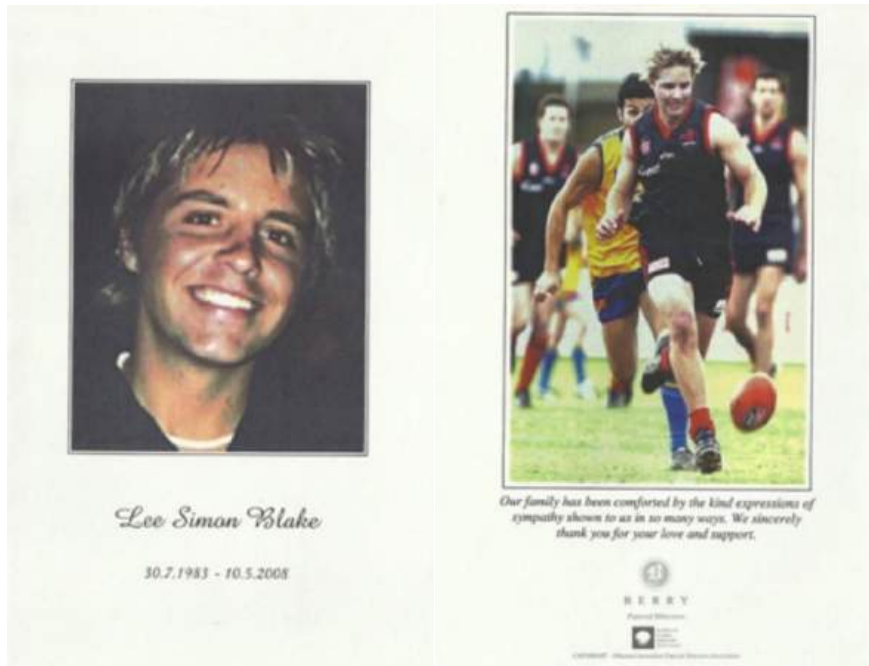
*“Blakey’s eyes opened! He lifted his head, and smiled. And then he drifted away again. It was the last thing Blakey was aware of in his life”.*

Lee Blake passed away peacefully just hours later, at about 4.40am on Saturday 10 May, 2008. As well as his family, a number of Norwood staff, players and officials were also present.



## Funeral

Lee Blake's funeral was held at the Norwood Oval on Thursday 15 May, 2008. The ceremony was conducted from the hallowed turf with a marquee of close family and friends on the boundary line. Behind them, in the long western stand that runs along the wing adjacent to Woods Street, a large crowd of mourners assembled to pay their respects.



Above – funeral brochure for Lee Blake and below, a candle. (Candle photo courtesy of Kathy Blake).





The historic scoreboard at Norwood Oval, in the north eastern pocket, paid a special tribute.



Photo: Barry Solomon, Curator at Norwood Oval



**HEARTFELT:** Above, mourners in the Coopers Stadium Stand yesterday; left, a special message on the scoreboard and, inset, club legend Garry McIntosh pays his respects to the memory of Lee Blake, below.

Main pictures:  
CALUM ROBERTSON




## Tributes for larrikin 'Blakey'

**CANDICE KELLER**

THE South Australian football community farewelled a favoured son yesterday when Norwood player Lee Blake was laid to rest.

Several hundred Norwood SANFL officials, players, Myponga Football Club representatives and supporters united at Coopers Stadium for a commemorative service at 11am, where family and friends honoured "Blakey" - the likeable larrikin - and his life. Blake, 24, died early on Saturday morning after a long battle with leukemia.

Family and friends, including former Norwood general manager David Wark, paid tribute to Blake, outlining their memories of the dedicated footballer and loyal friend.

Wark said "every time I see No. 41 (Blake's guernsey number), for the rest of my life, that'll be him" and that the world was a better place for having had Blake in it.

Blake's wife Sheree relayed heartfelt thoughts through her sister Katrina, who said she hoped she had "even an ounce of the strength you had" because she would need it.

"The thing I feared most in the world was losing you, so there's nothing that can frighten me now." Team-mates and close friends Nick Duigan and Luke Nitschke spoke about the larrikin they held in such high regard, paying homage to his cheeky nature, love of Aussie football and the respect he held for his mates.

"He will be forever missed for his ability to light up a room with his smile," Duigan said.

After the official ceremony, past and present players and football club members formed a guard of honour around the oval to say their final farewell.



## Postscripts

Neville Roberts said

*“Lee Blake had a lot of intestinal fortitude to play with chemo drugs in his veins, along with all the mental and emotional challenges he was dealing with. Football was a crutch he needed to fight his battle with Leukemia.”*

Former Norwood friend and team mate (and former Carlton Vice Captain) Nick Duigan said

*“As a footballer, Lee Blake was a very smooth mover. When he had the ball in hand it felt like he had so much time that the rest of the game was in slow motion while he was in possession. And you always felt that he could be trusted when he was in possession, to hit a target and to often find a target that wasn’t obvious but was in fact a better option.*

*As a club man, he was selfless. He was always pumping other people up. We were always trying to get around him and support him with his huge battle but he was always deflecting attention away from himself. He was more worried about others than he was about himself.*

*His battle with Leukemia was very hard to witness. He was in a hospital which was near my university and I would pop in a number of times a week and sit with him. The physical impact of Leukemia and his treatment, and watching him deteriorate with the hair loss and all the other physical changes, was very confronting. The changes to his appearance meant his appearance became a complete contrast to the physical presence he showed on field as a footballer.*

*As a friend, his kindness stood out most of all. He was always wanting to bring other people around him, up. He really got a kick out of seeing other people perform and achieve.”*

Garry McIntosh said

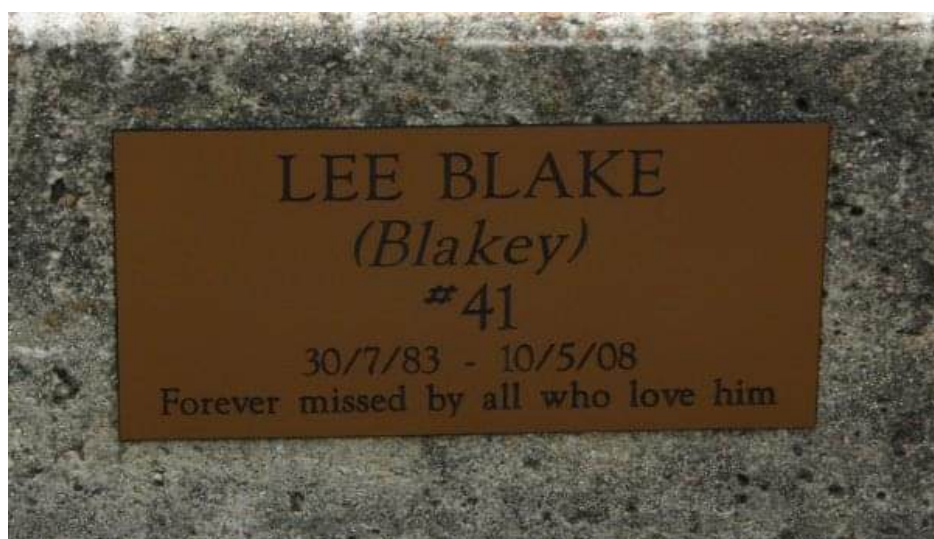
*“Blakey was a beautifully skilled player. He had great balance and had a ‘full kit’ of skills. He was a very good player and I think he would have played 100 plus league games for Norwood (in different circumstances). However, he was never able to get himself super fit (because of the Leukemia).*

*On the personal side, everybody liked Blakey. He was happy go lucky; very friendly; had a great manner and was always respectful and never brash. He was very friendly and he loved a laugh. He was a great kid.”*



## Plaque on Coopers Hill

Shortly after Blake passed away, his family and close Norwood friends wanted to perpetuate his memory at Norwood Oval. (Rare) permission was obtained to erect a small plaque on Coopers Hill in the south east pocket, which his friends affectionately called “Blackey’s pocket”. The first plaque disappeared and was quickly replaced, and remains there to this day.



Mum Kathy and brother Shaun, with the plaque on Coopers Hill at Norwood Oval.

**Photos** – Kathy Blake.





### Cricket Trophy – Current vs Past Players matches

Lee Blake’s memory has also been preserved through the “Lee Blake Memorial Trophy”. This is presented to the winner of the periodic T20 cricket match between past and present players of the Norwood Football Club.



Above (L-R) - Garry McIntosh, Shaun Blake, Kathy Blake and Tim Webber

Below – past and present players and supporters after a match.

**Photos** – Steve Fendt.





Lee Simon Blake was a young man who loved his football and loved living life. He was always being thrown challenges and at the same time, he was always chasing after his own chosen challenges. In his short life, he absolutely lived life. Some fifteen years after he passed away, his impact on those he lived his life in and amongst is still evident by virtue of the lasting memories people retain of “Blakey”, and their willingness to share them.

Lee Blake.

His “Heart beat True”, and not just for the red and the blue.....

**Chris Brown**

**Norwood Football Club History Committee**

**January 2025**