



BRISBANE LIONS HYUNDAI HELP FOR KIDS ACADEMY; UPDATE 2021 & BEYOND

In periods of change and challenge, opportunities often present themselves. With uncertainty there is always scope to grow and improve; so it is with our Hyundai Help for Kids Brisbane Lions Academy. Over the past 12 months we have been undertaking a review of our resources, programs, infrastructure and outcomes to address & improve our strengths and attack the areas we may have been deficient in.

Our Brisbane Lions Academy has seen enormous growth in the last few years in the program structure, in athlete acquisition and especially in the girl's space after the successful introduction of our AFLW team. Whilst the increase in numbers has been a great sign for our program, we will not sit idle and just hope that these numbers will continue to increase.

We want to provide an opportunity for all athletes, football and non-football, in a pathway that provides improvement, focuses on an athlete's weapons and creates opportunity at the highest level an athlete wants to aspire to. Fundamentally, our program will also have a clear focus on assisting local clubs and ensuring that when a player returns from our program, they will be better.

Change is inevitable. Through this period of shut down, there were some circumstances that escalated the review of our Academy program. As a result of the pandemic, AFL Queensland reduced its workforce in the talent space and our internal budgets were reviewed, reduced and re-distributed. An alignment in structures between AFL Queensland & the Academy occurred with more responsibility now given to us to coordinate a bigger program.

With this alignment, a change in roles and responsibilities was been made to the management of the Academy. The Academy Manager position was made redundant, and Luke Curran, a long-time servant of the Academy for over 10 years decided to leave the Brisbane Lions Football Club. I would like to acknowledge his massive contribution to this role and the level he has helped the program reach. Football is an engrossing emotional joy and the amount of sacrifice he & his family have made in those 10 years in growing the Academy has been enormous and we thank them.

With our focus now taking more responsibility of talent development and growth, we have added significant resources to the new direction of the Academy.

- *Paul Henriksen will be the new Head of Academy*
- *Zane Littlejohn, the new Development Manager*
- *Bill Renner, the new Administration Officer*
- *Josh Hunt will remain as Head Coach and*
- *Chris Brennan will remain as Strength & Conditioning Coach.*

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Three Regional Manager roles have been created and appointments made,

- *Dayne Frew – Sunshine Coast-Wide Bay (SC-WB)*
- *Steve Wearne – Brisbane South-Darling Downs (BS-DD)*
- *Scott Pyle – Brisbane North (BN)*

The Regional Manager's will operate with more autonomy in their region, being responsible for talent acquisition and growth. These roles will not be coaching roles, rather relationship roles with players, parents, clubs, schools, governments and organisations within their region to make sure our Academy program is at the cutting edge of athlete development.

Another exciting appointment is Lauren Arnell who will be Academy Development Coach for the girls on a part time basis. Lauren will balance this role as well as her teaching position and being a member of our AFLW team.

I would like to welcome all new staff to the Brisbane Lions Academy.

The club has also been working with the new Brisbane South State Secondary College (based at Dutton Park), to run an AFL program within its school curriculum. This is an exciting partnership for the club where we can assist the growth of talent through the school by having a connection through teaching and a link to the Academy.

You will see some significant changes in our program in the coming months, where our staff will spend more time with players and coaches within our regions, decentralising the initial part of our program. Paul, Zane, Josh and Bill will be more mobile and be actively engaged in supporting our regions.

The change will bring with it more challenges, but also opportunities to grow and get better. This is a very exciting shift and the resources we have put in place have expertise in the areas that will focus on growing our athletes, building relationships and looking for continuous improvement.

Exciting Times Ahead.

David Noble
General Manager - Football

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