



Young pups wilt late in steamy NT exhibition

JORDAN MCARDLE

A youthful South Fremantle fell short against a star-studded Northern Territory Football League outfit in their first Darwin visit in 25 years.

The Bulldogs blooded a dozen players without league experience for the pre-season clash and after a promising first half, couldn't sustain it in humid conditions.

Ex-Brisbane Lions hard man Mitch Robinson ran amok in the 12.9 (81) to 10.9 (69) result.

But there were still plenty of positives in a side missing first-choice stars like captain Dylan Main, tall forward Jimmy Miller, prolific midfielder Jake Florenca and prized recruit Jordan Gallucci, who gave the NTFL a late scare with back-to-back goals.

Running machine Tom Blechynden looks even fitter and found a lot of the footy, signing Robbie Turnbull, who only met the playing group less than 24 hours before the match, also impressive in the midfield.

Turnbull plays locally for Waratah where he will finish the season before moving to

Perth. Athletic 200cm big man Solomon James led the ruck and competed well against experienced opponent Brock Carter, while fellow uncapped tall Nathan Spooner showed a bit with two goals and Fremantle Next Generation Academy talent Chase Bourne (two goals) was busy and provided good pressure.

"We're really happy," South Fremantle coach Todd Curley said. "We took up a really young group and there's obviously some blokes that we haven't seen a lot of."

"We were able to bounce them around and play them in some different positions and there were some really positive signs going forward."

"There's still a lot of blokes to come back in but there were really exciting signs."

"A couple of their more senior players got on top in that third quarter but I thought we ran out the game out well."

Retired legend Haiden Schloithe had his moments, starting in the midfield and also spent time inside 50 where he kicked his first of two goals as the Bulldogs

turned a nine-point deficit at quarter-time into a three-point lead at the main break.

Some familiar faces were prominent for the hosts including former Fremantle swingman Ryan Nyhuis, who played in two winning grand finals for Peel Thunder and a losing one for Claremont against the Souths.

Nyhuis, the second best player on the ground behind Robinson, marked everything in his way down back and used it well going the other way. Former East Perth forward Jayden Magro was dangerous at the other end, booting a goal in every quarter including the sealer with less than three minutes left to earn the best-afield medal.

Son of a gun Jaren Carr got an opportunity late in the match, replacing Darwin-based Bulldogs great Ashton Hams who played his first game for the club since the 2018 preliminary final.

The match marked the 50th anniversary of South Fremantle's first visit to the NT, one year after late champion Sebastian Rioli blazed a trail as the first Territorian to play for the club.

SCOREBOARD

	NORTHERN TERRITORY	3.2	6.6	10.6	12.9	81	
	SOUTH FREMANTLE	1.5	6.3	6.8	10.9	69	

GOALS – NORTHERN TERRITORY: J Magro 4 J Calder 2 D Hope 2 S Motlop H Bennell R Fejo N Yarran

SOUTH FREMANTLE: N Spooner 2 H Schloithe 2 C Bourne 2 Z Strom 2 T Blechynden C Stephens

BEST – NORTHERN TERRITORY: M Robinson R Nyhuis J Magro D Hope M Taylor D Landt

SOUTH FREMANTLE: T Blechynden R Turnbull S James C Bourne H Schloithe C Stephens R O'Hehir

CROWD: About 2000 at TIO Stadium

Tom Blechynden was South Fremantle's best. Picture: Adam Crane/Salt Diaries

Freo's loss, Suns' gain as Sharp lives up to name

JACKSON BARRETT

He might have been just minutes away from joining Fremantle, but Jeremy Sharp is throwing himself into Gold Coast's pre-season so intently, he's now so fit he could play two games back-to-back.

Fremantle's stalemate with the Western Bulldogs over Rory Lobb's high-profile shift meant the clock ran out on their hopes of bringing in Sharp, an elite runner starved

of opportunities at the Suns. Good friend and fellow Western Australian Wil Powell says he's glad Sharp, pictured, stayed on the east coast and declared he should be playing more games this year.

Powell, who is himself building strongly towards a round one return from a gruesome broken leg, said Sharp was due more game time and a more significant role for the Suns this season, after the 11th-hour trade deal fell flat.

He is out of contract at the end of this year.

"It's a massive decision to make and be going through as a 20-year-old," Powell told The Sunday Times.

"We talked about it a little bit, but we didn't really talk about what was happening and what was going on, it sort of just played out."

"He should be playing more games and the more opportunity he gets, the better for his confidence."

The East Fremantle product has played 23 games across three seasons in Queensland, 12 of those coming in 2022 and mostly in a wing role where he averaged just under 10 disposals.

The Dockers, who also lost breakout wingman Blake Acres to Carlton in the off-season, were eyeing Sharp to bolster their outside midfield stocks, but wouldn't offer any more than a third round pick during the tense negotiations.

"I'm really glad he's still at the Suns and everyone at the Suns is really glad he's here as well," Powell said.

"It's still the same Jeremy. He's still the same character. There's no love lost at all and he's a super talented kid."

"He could run games out, but he could play a game and then play another game. It's quite frightening the running power he possesses."

"He's come back in super nick as well."

