

Vine ale and hearty after tour triumph

ADELAIDE

Australian cyclist Jay Vine has won his debut Tour Down Under after finishing second on the last stage.

British rival Simon Yates tried to break him with a late attack, but the UAE Team Emirates leader responded and neutralised the threat.

Yates (Jayco Alula) and Spaniard Pello Bilbao (Bahrain Victorious) trailed Vine by 15 seconds overall going into Sunday's final stage of the tour.

Vine beat Yates by 11 seconds overall, while Bilbao was third at 27 seconds.

The Australian's wife Bre celebrated with him at the finish.

"It was pretty hectic at the start ... we really had to be on our toes all day," Vine said.

"The team is just incredible. They deserve this (leader's) jersey as much as I do."

Vine, a renowned fan of espresso martinis and Kilkenny ale, said he might enjoy a drink at the team's Sunday night celebration dinner.

"If there's Kilkenny at the restaurant we go to, absolutely," he said.

Yates attacked inside the last 2km of the climb to the finish, with Australian Tour de France star Ben O'Connor (Ag2r) joining him and Vine quickly responding.

O'Connor led them out at the finish, but Vine and Yates came over the top of him and the British rider took out their two-up sprint. Vine won two stages of last year's Vuelta a Espana and triumphed at the national time trial championship earlier this month for the first time.

He secured a WorldTour contract during COVID-19 in 2020 after winning the academy program on the popular Zwift online cycling platform.

Mt Lofty made its debut as a stage finish in the tour on Sunday, one of several key changes new race director Stuart O'Grady made to the course.

The Old Willunga Hill climb south of Adelaide had been the defining feature of the race for many years, but that was left off Saturday's stage in that area.

Instead the 112.5km last stage included four laps of a 25.9km loop in the Adelaide Hills.

A group of 13, featuring Yates' Australian teammate Michael Hepburn, was caught well before the finish.

Tiwi move rekindles Harley's AFL dream

JORDAN MCARDLE

Harley Bennell has revealed he's heading to Melbourne for "one more crack" at his AFL dream in the winter after a life-changing move to the Tiwi Islands.

The controversial former Fremantle, Gold Coast and Melbourne midfielder has called Melville Island, 60km north of Darwin, home since before the start of the Northern Territory Football League season.

Bennell has been working at Tiwi College for the last five months and playing for the Tiwi Bombers as well

as providing mentorship for the younger players on the islands.

The 30-year-old, who played 88 AFL games across 10 seasons marred with soft-tissue injuries and off-field dramas, looks in excellent physical condition and appears to have got things back on track after what he described as one of the best moves of his life.

"I'm absolutely loving it, it's probably one of the best moves I've ever done," Bennell

told The West Australian after the NTFL's thrilling win over South Fremantle in Darwin on Saturday night

"I've met some great people along the way, they've been outstanding for me and the support I've had up there has been amazing.

"I'm helping the young juniors in life, not just with footy. Myself and a couple of others at the club have had that AFL experience so whatever I've learnt along the way, I want to pass on to those boys and hopefully they can grow off me as well as me growing off them.

"The talent over there is unbelievable." While he remained tight-tipped about which VFL team, Bennell confirmed he's in talks with one about playing there in the winter in a bid to put

himself back on the AFL radar.

Essendon would be the logical option give their long-time link with the Tiwi Bombers.

The Peel Thunder product, originally drafted by the Suns with pick two in the 2010 national draft, last played in the AFL for the Demons in 2020 when he was sent home from his team's Queensland hub after a breach of COVID protocols.

He was all set to earn a contract extension for the controversy, which saw him fined \$50,000, suspended for four matches and eventually delisted.

Tim Noakes and Harley Bennell compete in the South West Football League.

Picture: Justin Fris



Young Bulldogs give big yelp in Top End fight-back

JORDAN MCARDLE

South Fremantle coach Todd Curley was pleased with his young side's fight after going down to an experienced Northern Territory outfit by 12 points at Darwin's TIO Stadium on Saturday night.

The Bulldogs fought back from conceding five third-quarter goals in the Top End heat with a strong last quarter to give the NTFL a scare in the 12.9 (81) to 10.9 (69) loss.

Among the uncapped players to catch the eye were 200cm ruck

Solomon James, who put his hand up to fill North Melbourne draftee Hamish Free's shoes, key forward Nathan Spooner, hard-running midfielder Roan O'Hehir, defenders Mitch Sinnott and Jack Hilder and small forwards Chase Bourne and Caleb Stephens.

"Nathan has been around the program for two or three years and Solly is the same so it's good to be able to give them an opportunity," Curley, pictured, told The West Australian.

"I'm really pleased with how they all cracked in.

"It's all really positive." Curley confirmed man mountain ruck Brock Higgins would return to the club in a coaching role with the hope of getting on the park as well.

The 33-year-old, who retired after the 2021 grand final loss to Subiaco, brings a wealth of experience as ruck coach after 162 senior appearances for the Bulldogs and East Perth.

Higgins will also train at the club in the hope of pulling on the boots and cover for the loss of first-choice big man Free, who was drafted to the Roos, and help

out developing tall James and Luke Rockley.

"He'll be the ruck coach," Curley said. "He's training at the moment and we'll just see how he goes as to whether he plays or doesn't play."

Curley said the group took a lot out of their first NT trip in 25 years, on and off the field.

"I think the exciting thing is, you can talk about the history but to come up here and live it," he said. "It's been such a strong relationship between our footy club and the Northern Territory for such a long time."

