

## Suban takes first steps in coaches box

JORDAN MCARDLE

Ex-Fremantle tough nut and four-time WAFL premiership player Nick Suban will get his first taste of life in the coaches box in South Fremantle's pre-season clash against the Northern Territory Football League in Darwin on Saturday.

Suban hung up the boots at season's end, 13 years after his WAFL debut for Claremont as a Dockers-aligned player.

The 32-year-old brings a wealth of experience as the Bulldogs' new midfield coach after 156 AFL appearances, including Fremantle's only grand final in 2013, to go with 116 in the WAFL and flags at the Tigers, Bulldogs and Peel.

"So far it's been really exciting and something new," Suban told The West Australian.

"It's kind of an interesting phase for me because I'm still used to playing and when I go to training, I still just want to get out there and play but obviously my body can't do it anymore.

"But it's been super exciting, I really enjoy the teaching component of coaching.

"Having experience at AFL level as well and playing WAFL, I think I've got a reasonable balance between those elite standards that AFL players have and then those elite standards WAFL players have but also knowing the commitment that comes with being a WAFL player with work and what not.

"So far it's been pretty good and I'm looking forward to this weekend and what it looks like in the coaches box."



injury he was grappling with.

Powell watched on with fellow injured Sun Connor Budarick, fresh off his second anterior cruciate ligament injury, as mate Noah Anderson kicked a dramatic after-the-siren winner against Richmond.

"The weekend after Connor Budarick did his second ACL we had Richmond and we won after-the-siren thanks to Nozza's goal," he recalled.

"We were there watching it together and we both just jumped and forgot about our injuries. We both love watching footy so much and watching the boys go to work that we forgot about our injuries and started jumping up and down.

"I try and watch every game, even if it's not the Suns playing, I reckon I watched every single

game from my injury onwards."

The Suns are still yet to play finals in their 12-year history. But after flirting with the top eight last season, Powell admits he has let his mind wander towards playing finals at Metricon and even further to a red-and-gold laced premiership cup.

He declared September footy will happen this year.

"The ambition is obviously to play finals, we are always trying to play finals," Powell said.

"I know that this team will take us to finals, led by two seriously good people in Touk Miller and Jarrod Witts. They have instilled a belief in all the playing group that it's finals and that's all.

"We want to play finals and go deep into September. It's been a dream since I've been four years

old to play finals footy for an AFL club and to win a flag. It's pretty hard not to think about the feeling that you'd feel running out onto Metricon or the MCG in front of a packed house — it would be a pretty special feeling. If you don't think about it, you're crazy."

Powell's close mate Jeremy Sharp and mentor David Swallow have now been joined by Connor Blakely to make four WA-born players at the Queensland club.

"It's really good," the former Churchlands Senior High School student said. "Dave and I have the same manager, so we just go for a coffee and talk — not even about footy — we just talk about life. You just have that little connection as West Aussies which makes it easier, because it's like a different country over there in a way."

## Setback for Dees premiership skipper

Melbourne captain Max Gawn has suffered a hamstring injury at a pre-season training session.

The Demons' 2021 premiership skipper will have weekend scans to determine the extent of his injury after being forced out of training on Friday.

"Max unfortunately had some hamstring awareness towards the end of this morning's training session," Melbourne's general manager of AFL performance Alan Richardson said.

"He will be closely monitored and assessed over the weekend.

"We're hopeful we will have some further clarity early next week."

Melbourne's premiership season begins on March 18 but any lengthy lay-off for Gawn, a six-time All Australian, would be partially offset by the recruitment of former Collingwood ruckman Brodie Grundy late last year.

Essendon's top pick at the 2022 national draft Elijah Tsatas has

also sustained a pre-season injury and will have surgery on a torn meniscus in a knee.

The 18-year-old, who was the fifth pick overall at the draft, copped a knock to his knee in a tackling collision at training this week. Tsatas faces about two months on the sidelines.

"Whilst this setback is disappointing we won't be rushing his return to play," Bombers' general manager of performance Dan McPherson said.

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