

## RANAF A Men's Direction for Future Football Success

Under a revamped structure for Navy Footy, the vision has been reset with several factors considered in order to achieve the mission from 2021 onwards. This brief below has been set out in three stages to help you, our members, understand where it is we came from, and where it is we are striving to get to.

Aspects of this Direction have been driven to key points that have impacted on our development over a series of years, and further aimed at how we can improve in ourselves and as a club from the coaching and playing groups. This will not happen on its own and it will take every one of us to continue to support each other over the journey; this will include after our playing days for as long as we remain in Service and even out of Service; as we see with the continued support of the ex-players and Legends group.

### **MODERN HISTORY:**

*Navy Aust. rules football has evolved over the years since the inception of the modern national Carnival in 1986. Historically, Navy has always been a front-runner as a dominant force with multiple successes on the field and meeting the challenges imposed by Army's desire to be better. The assumption has been fair against Army's arrogance and "win at any cost" attitude by employing reservists to play in earlier days. The new look Services Aust. Football Association was established to apply fairness and remove ambiguity to the applicability of players being eligible to represent their respective Service. This too has not been without scrutiny from Navy and Air Force as Army allegedly continues to manipulate rules to gain advantage when suited to their campaign.*

*Navy won the inaugural Carnival in 1986 and this brought about the unofficial Navy "Legends" who attempted to gain an edge against Army and Air Force in later years. This was ineffective and started a culture that did not hit the target or achieve aims for Navy to be reckoned with on the field. Army took advantage of what may have been perceived as the arrogance and complacency of Navy and set the motion to take the mantle; of which was a long standing success for Army.*

*This culture that was held by Navy for the next 14 years saw a plethora of highly talented players pass through without tasting success; however, held each other in high esteem for their prowess on and off the field. It was the latter that was most celebrated with what appeared to be a greater focus in having a great time away from work with a game of footy thrown in. This attitude needed to change and Navy needed to become more professional if it wanted to improve on the field.*

### **Professionalism and Cultural Reform:**

*During the National Carnival in September/October 2000, a group of the then current players and coaching staff formed an unofficial meeting to discuss moving forward and what needs to be done for Navy to regain their identity as a leading force in Services football. Jon Thiele and Jamie McGinley were pivotal in this movement and had hatched ideas to present to the group and what needs to be done to achieve the mission. Sparing the details, a five year plan was pieced together with roles assigned and benchmarks set and RANAF A was born. This brought about a new look Navy team designed to be professional off the field and allow this to reflect and impact on the on-field performances by the playing group. With an established Ops team, this allowed the playing group to focus more on training and playing without the need to conduct several other duties or*

*worry about ancillary tasks that had previously impacted performances. RANAFa was looking professional from the outset, gaining positive attention from other sporting groups.*

*Under the new look of RANAFa's approach, the desire to introduce cultural changes influenced the direction of coaching staff with great acceptance from the Executive. This included any competitions such as the Father MacDonalD Cup and Kapooka 12s to be used as selection periods for coaches to view all players; known or new. This too saw a change in attitudes with selections not being a given to any "walk-up starts" or name players; everyone had to prove themselves.*

*The cultural shift focused primarily on the off-field behaviours for the Carnival periods to ensure Navy remained professional and were to be seen as exemplars in Service sport. The removal of multiple visits to external social venues was removed and replaced with visits to community centres such as hospitals to engage with patients, mostly children, and families. Additionally, visits to professional sporting venues were also conducted with information sessions provided by athletes or development staff to educate members on everything from nutrition to performance. This did not negate any time for members to be involved in enjoyable leisure and team building activities required to create harmony and a bond within the group; essential for any team.*

*During the five year period in which Navy aimed to achieve success, RANAFa saw a significant increase in professionalism amongst the Executive and playing group and a heightened desire to taste success and ultimately win the Jimmy Smail Cup. Almost to the date, the plan saw actualisation with Navy's first win in 2005 with a solid win against Army at Manuka Oval in the ACT. This was one of the most memorable moments for Navy football with a crowd of nearly 2000 in attendance, majority Army as they thought they would win, and returning Navy back to the top with great admiration. One of the main points that was discussed during this time was "Respect" and this was made relevant in several areas to the playing group and never forgotten. Navy was now a respected group in its display of tenacity and courage for their on-field performance and as a professional team off-field. The page had been turned with a new chapter about to begin.*

*The next two years saw a back-to-back win in 2006 and then narrowly missing a third win in 2007 with each Service claiming a win with Army being announced winner on percentage; with the narrowest of margins being under .5%. This drew speculation as the previous ruling was for the reigning winner to maintain the Cup in the event of a tied carnival.*

*Unfortunately, Navy did not maintain its dominance and saw wins in only two more ensuing carnivals and a fade in what had been established; although RANAFa still existed and was still a professional outfit. What was not maintained was a plan to achieve further success the way it had initially been established; the five year plan. RANAFa did not review this at the end of the 2005 carnival and it could be argued that complacency had made its way back in. Without resetting goals, there was no new direction other than to do the same again and whilst this was ok in light of the second win, it can't be maintained as the game also evolves with new players and game plans. We failed to do this.*

## **MODERNISATION OF STANDARDS:**

The years have passed since then and lessons have been learnt, evolution saw a change in the approach by coaching staff with LCDR Matthew “Donny” Cavedon taking the lead and immersing himself into coaching circles at AFL level with St Kilda and WAFL with Subiaco. Donny was instrumental in developing strategies and a relationship with Carlton FC for player development and training. Whilst this has since waned due to time constraints and travel, it gave insight for coaching staff through education on what can be done to manage the playing group for training, game times and recovery. This also supported earlier developmental stages of coaching staff from previous years who had been introduced to the AFL Coaching Program.

The impact of the education and previous years’ experiences saw a more collective coaching group with the eventual introduction of line coaches and training development programs. The purpose of the line coach was long argued at Service level as being “over the top” or irrelevant; however, evidence stands that due to the evolving game and higher level of the playing group’s collective experiences, it cannot be refuted for its value to achieve success.

With ideals on game day strategies and plans differing between teams at club levels, it is prudent to maintain a simplistic approach to these to avoid confusion within a diverse playing group. Previous years had seen attempts from coaches to condense a season of football planning and game plans into one week of intensive training and leading into the two games to be played. This has proven to be an ineffective approach due to the overlay of information required and the impact on training when setting up plays such as zoning, stoppages and defence structures. As was found during the 2005 Navy camp, returning to playing simple football better gave results. This allowed staff to impart the knowledge and messages to the playing group with clear direction and focus on skills acquisition and craft work required to outplay the opposition. As previously discussed, respect was a continued point of discussion yet it wasn’t the single point. Leadership can be a throw away for many people and can be interpreted in many ways; however, the message for Navy football was highlighted with one meaning for all to understand.

The leadership that derived from the message allowed each member of the team to provide leadership as an individual for others to follow; the adage of ‘a champion team will always beat a team of champions’ rang true though was not mentioned nor used for the motivation. Each member was given the ability to prove their worth during training sessions, which ultimately resulted in every member being a leader on the ground. This gained the trust required in the playing group and every member was valued for their contributions; even if not selected to wear the Navy guernsey on the day.

The coaching group has also been impacted by turmoil with members not attending or arriving late to the training camp. Whilst out of the control of these members, this was highlighted as a major contributor to the disruption of training and the messages to be delivered by the coach or by the coaching group collectively. This also brought about conflicting direction from coaches which accounted for a loss in trust and faith from the playing group.

**With the combination of new leadership, simple plans and clear and cohesive direction from the Senior Coach and the collective of the coaching group, Navy has seen a vast increase in professionalism and player satisfaction to attend future carnivals. This has not been without great support from the Executive and Operations Manager in assisting with player release from units through to transparency in processes throughout the Carnival periods.**

**With established staff in their roles, it is imperative that this is maintained for at least three years for the structures and messages to remain consistent and enduring. The unfortunate situation impacting the 2020 Carnival could not be averted; however, the structure needs to be kept as the base for the next three years under a new five year plan. The coordination and planning that was conducted was essential to what could easily be perceived as the greatest chance Navy has had of taking the title, with every member involved being in sync as a club. This was even more evident in the display of emotions and disappointment in both teams and those in support roles at the cessation of the 2020 Carnival.**

#### **VISION 2021 - 2023:**

*The outcomes to be sought in this direction are simple in nature; however, may be complex in the acquisition. With PO Chris Gamble already well established as the Senior Coach and his passion and desire for Navy football's success, the tempo has been set and cannot be faulted. His collegiate approach and willingness to continue to listen to others is providing the leadership required to motivate others and build trust. Still with some development required, as we all do regardless of experiences, under his reign Navy will remain a highly professional team and example within the club.*

**Professionalism;** *on and off the field behaviours and attitudes still have some room for improvement. With the constant efforts and support of the executive, and it must be said of CAPT Mike Oborn and CPO Adam Bamford, we will continue to do this and the playing group will subconsciously achieve this and it will form a part of their entity.*

**Trust;** *this has been gained from the current list with some doubtful members now wanting to return. This has been gained in the unity of the coaching group and the collaborative approach as a club, with every member being valued across the board.*

**Communication:** *open, clear and transparent communication has aided in gaining the trust noted. Each message delivered is to be delivered to the team, even if through individuals or nominated leaders/leadership groups. This creates loyalty within the club in order to support the mission and aims to achieve the desired results. Staff also need to maintain two-way communication for feedback from the playing group to enhance trust and to ensure any negativity is resolved immediately.*

**Honesty;** *essential within the communication section and for any resolve to issues arising; however, it is not to be left there. Honesty is also within our actions to commit to the club and the team. We need to provide our members with the assurance that honesty will see a higher level of achievement individually and collectively; on and off the field.*

**Respect;** is earned from effective leadership and honest behaviours. With the previous outcomes already mentioned and learning from earlier mistakes, respect will be earned. Yet it is not enough to earn it, it must be afforded to those who display the attributes and qualities we seek of good humans. Those who are willing to put their hand up and speak out already display the courage we seek, as with those who are willing to do the right thing in either an attempt or by achieving it. Any club is not a club without the right people, and a club is only respected because of those people. We must be a respected club.

**On-field;** all on-field performances will be resultant from the above attitudes and behaviours, though not in isolation. The messages need to be of one voice through the mediums of the different messengers; be it line coach or runner. Training needs to establish the parameters of the style of game we want to play and include basic methods of transitions in play. Each zone needs to understand the movement of each other's in order for fluid movement and predictability within the group. We need to ensure we know how the ball will come out of stoppages/centre breaks, out of the backline and into forward 50 etc. If we don't know how the machine works, it won't.

**Player management;** crucial in the care for our people and recovery to keep our players fit and mentally well. We need to provide support to the leadership group who should be placed to assist in this area whilst coaching staff focus on the holistic issues; though not ignoring those that need our attention. The ops staff are also best placed to assist in the support of players in providing arrangements as required for appointments or other services that may be needed.

**Review;** this will be reviewed at the end of each carnival to maintain currency within the five year plan and evolution of the game as we progress. We will see people come and go, yet we do not want to see our entity fade with these natural occurrences. Those we value never leave as we have their legacy that will remain and continue to add layers to the foundations on which we stand and unite. Those that join us will continue to build on those foundations, forging a stronger club and enhancing our respected reputation as professionals within the ADF sporting community and amongst our peers at work.

**Don't always try to be the best, simply be the best you can be always and this will bring better results.**

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