



ST KILDA FOOTBALL CLUB EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Dear members,

This note is to provide you with a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations of the Review of our Football Program, initiated in late July, to ensure that we were indeed building the foundations for long-term football success.

In short, the Review found that we had much to do, and needed significant change to build these foundations. You will see from the staffing appointments already announced that we are moving aggressively to implement the Review's findings.

The Board and Management now have a very clear shared view of what needs to be done to ensure success and a firm resolve to deliver on it. I am now more optimistic than ever about the future of our Club.

We need your continued support as we work to ensure that our future is far more successful than our past.

Please find attached the Executive Summary of the Review, including findings, recommendations and a Report Card on implementation.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Bassat

President, St Kilda Football Club



ST KILDA FOOTBALL CLUB

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1. THE REVIEW – METHODOLOGY

I initiated the Review to examine if our overall Football Program was suitable to make us a genuine contender on a sustainable basis and, if not, to recommend changes in which we could have conviction.

I led the process along with a Committee comprising fellow Board members Russell Caplan, Jason Blake and Dean Anderson, as well as CEO Simon Lethlean and the experienced and respected football administrator David Noble.

Through the Review, I spoke with over 100 people including current coaches, players, other football and non-football staff and external football people associated with the Club and otherwise. David Noble also conducted independent interviews with key players, coaches, other staff and stakeholders.

An independent assessment of our current playing list and list management performance was conducted by an external expert (Glenn Luff) and presented to the Committee. This included assessments of the playing list and its development from 2018 onwards, comparison of our list against the rest of the competition and our recent trading and drafting performance.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 High-level findings

The Review found that we did not have the platform needed to support a sustainable winning culture and that significant change was needed in the Football Department, and more broadly in the Club, to address concerns with the processes and fundamentals of our Football Program.

2.2 Club context

We have made good progress off-field over the past decade:

- + We are back at RSEA Park in first class facilities, including the Danny Frawley Centre for Health & Wellbeing.
- + Membership and sponsorship are at record levels and we are rapidly repaying our debt.
- + Professionalism has improved and we have strong people across football, non-football and the Board working cohesively towards a common goal.

In our Football Program, we had seen encouraging signs of improvement through 2020, an injury-cruelled 2021 season and the first half of the 2022 season.

But our performances post the bye this year made it much harder to make the case that we were making sufficient progress in our football journey.



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2.3 Raising the bar

In 2016, we were bottom quartile in the competition in a number of key areas (including facilities, revenue, list and other aspects of our Football Program) and top quartile in nothing.

Since then, we have lifted ourselves to second and third quartiles in most key areas. That is not good enough if we are serious about ultimate success.

Moving forward, we must strive to be amongst the best, if not the best, in the competition across all key areas.

We have a strong resolve to do this and the recent changes to personnel hopefully demonstrate this commitment.

2.4 Shifting our focus to the long-term fundamentals

The Review found that in some areas the Club was focussing impatiently on short-term outputs, and that was detracting from a more productive focus on getting the fundamentals right. Perhaps understandable for a Club starved of success for so long, however this needs to change.

Moving forward, we are determined to focus much more on building the team, gameplan and culture to contend over time, even if this does make the short-term more difficult for us. To do this, we agreed that we needed to ensure that we had the right personnel in key roles.

2.5 We need to set stronger expectations and have clarity about what we stand for

The Review found that we need to be much clearer and stronger about what we stand for as a Club on and off the field, with clearly understood expectations, standards and non-negotiables. We intend to fix this quickly.

2.6 We need a culture that encourages debate and offers vigorous feedback

One of the hallmarks of any successful organisation, sporting or otherwise, is open and honest feedback loops throughout the organisation and strong robust debate leading to sound decision making.

If we make the expectations and non-negotiables clear, we must match this with a safe environment in which to speak up, provide feedback and be open to vigorous debate.

The Review found significant concerns in these areas and we are resolved to improve this as quickly as possible.



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2.7 Improvements to Football Program

The Review found that with the transition of the Head of Football to the CEO's position, there was a gap in leadership in the Football Program.

Given the size of the challenge in front of the Club to implement the findings of the Review, it was seen as critical to have a single point of accountability and an experienced operator for our Head of Football.

The Review also identified significant issues in relation to our Coaching Program, which explained in part the inconsistency seen on-field over the past two seasons. These issues were more pronounced in the second half of the season, but certainly not confined to that period.

The Committee debated the style and leadership capacity required to take the Club forward and understanding the broader context was critical to the Committee's decision. Ultimately, the Review recognised that the Club needed to see significant change in our coaching voice and leadership in order to drive the Football Program forward in the manner required.

The decision of the Board that followed, to part ways with Brett Ratten as Senior Coach, was a heartbreaking one for the Board given his character and commitment to our Club. But, at the end of the day, our duty was clear and we needed to put the interests of the Club ahead of that of the individual.

2.8 List management

A detailed external assessment of our list was commissioned, providing independent validation of our internal assessment. The external review highlighted similar strengths and weaknesses already identified. The age profile is a strong positive, with many of our key players not yet in their prime and none on the wrong side of 30 years of age, but we do need to improve our stock of top-end talent.

The review reinforced the need to continue to invest in the development of our players, in particular the first-to-fourth-year players. The appointment of Damian Carroll this time last year to head up this area is showing benefits.

The Review concluded that the list management strategy outlined five years ago – to drive greater competitiveness initially through trades and then to rely primarily on free agency and draft to move to the next level – is still appropriate in hindsight. However, the Review did identify some deficiencies and a need for an updated strategy and execution plan.



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2.9 Relationship between football and the rest of Club.

The Review highlighted that we should continue to sharpen our focus on football, minimise distractions to the Football Program and maximise support. In particular, we have decided not to sell a home game in 2023 and to apply a strong football lens to any cause games we consider undertaking.

2.10 Governance

Every level of our Club must be open to review.

Overall, we have a strong Board, working hard and putting the needs of the Club first.

The Review found that:

- + The Board and President could do more at times to challenge and question the direction of the Football Department, as is the role of the governing body.
- + The Management team could do more at times to ensure a better flow of information and greater openness to debate.

The Review process has been a very positive template for the way forward, with robust discussion that has ended in strong alignment between the Board and Management.

STRATEGY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

At a high level, the strategy arising from the Review includes the following elements:

- + We recognised that we needed more revolutionary change than originally intended, to ensure that we are building towards a culture of sustained success.
- + We need to consistently raise the bar across the entire Club to push into the top quartile of all key areas.
- + The first step is to elevate our Football and Coaching Program with a view to becoming one of the best in competition.
- + This will help ensure we get the most possible out of our current list and also give us a clearer view by the end of next season as to where our list stands.

To achieve this, the Review Committee put forward three substantial recommendations:

1. Identify and recruit an experienced Head of Football.
2. Improve the leadership and capacity of the Coaching group.
3. Make further investment in the leadership and development programs for our players.



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The further recommendations of the Review go to improving list management processes and execution, creating a culture of excellence in everything that we do, continuing to enforce and demand higher standards and clearer non-negotiables, improving the quality of information flow across the Club through feedback loops and being more open to challenge and debate.

The implementation of these recommendations will be the responsibility of the new leadership in the Football Department, overseen by the CEO, reporting to the Board.

The template of the Review – open, transparent and accountable – sets the standard for our governance going forward.

REPORT CARD

Football Department Changes

We are delighted at the team that we are putting together in line with the findings and strategy from the Review. Additions to the Club include:

- + Executive General Manager Football - Geoff Walsh;
- + Senior Coach - Ross Lyon;
- + Assistant Coaches - Robert Harvey and Lenny Hayes;
- + Development Coach - Brendon Goddard; and
- + Experienced high-performance expert David Misson.

Along with Corey Enright, Damian Carroll and Jake Batchelor, we now have a very strong Coaching Group and Football Department, who will be pivotal in shaping the future of our Football Program.

While these appointments are an important step forward, we must also commit ourselves, across all levels of the Club, to hard work and hold ourselves to uncompromising standards if we are to see through the vision outlined in this Review.

The opportunity exists for the Club to be sustainably successful on and off the field. With the support of our wonderful members and sponsors, we can become a Club that is respected and feared.