

2024 PRESIDENT’S REPORT

2024 started off with high hopes of what the VVL season would bring, with the overall strength of our squads improving on the foundations laid in 2023. The year began as usual with our trails, which this season brought about a return of several past players across several teams, along with the influx of new players to the club, we had in excess of 100 players trial or commit to the club. This meant there were plenty of tough selection choices needing to be made for our coaches in selecting squads, which honestly is a positive issue to have. The resulting influx, especially of top end talent, enable the club to enter a 4th men’s team for the 1st time in several years.

While the start of our season were meet with a few challenges off the court, mainly from a scheduling point of view, these issues did not seem to affect the majority of our teams on the court. Throughout the season we saw many of teams build into the season which resulted in 4 of teams qualifying for finals, being our PM1, PW1, PM2 & SLM1. Unfortunately all bar our SLM1 were knocked out in week one of the finals, which was a disappointing result especially for our P1M & W given both their positions during the games and chance that went begging, our SL1M made a deep run in the finals. They would end up losing a tight semifinal, to the eventual champions, in 5 sets the boys railed the following week to end their season on a high collecting a bronze medal, which was a fantastic result for Rhys and his boys.

Beyond this our club would also be successful at the VVL awards, with Kilby Galo (setter) & Paul Sanderson (server) earning all star seven selections in their respective P1 divisions. We also saw Hilary Hannagan collect the rising star award for the Premier 1 division. The clear highlight for the night and the year, was Kilby Galo winning the P1W MVP award, this was a fantastic result for Kilby who started at our club as junior back in 2017. To see her progression from playing as a junior in our division 2/3 sides to progressing through to not only the P1 team, but also the starting setter and now a league MVP is a testament to her committed to not only our club but her personal development as a player.

These team and individual results, especially Kilby’s MVP, on the back similar team result & Sando’s MVP las season, shows the high level of play coming from our club and the respect we are gaining across the league both on and off the court.

The club would also like to acknowledge the work from all our coaches across all 7 teams, their commitment in stepping up into the roles is invaluable and cannot be overstated enough how thankful not only our club and committee but also from every single player and family are for stepping into the roles and enable our club to put teams on the court.

We also would like to acknowledge the roles David Berry & Paul Freckleton have played as our P1 squad coaches, the timeless work they have put in over the past few season moulding the squads has been invaluable and is showing results on the court. The club would like to Frecks for his commitment over the past 2 seasons but unfortunately he has is having to step down in his role as P1 coach, we hope and known he will stay involved in our club where he can.

2024 also saw several millstones occurring during the year, with foundation players Cameron Robinson & Josh Gordon both notch up 150 VVL games, becoming our 2nd & 3rd respectively players to do so. We also saw 2 players play their 100th games for our club with Kate Eason becoming our 3rd woman to do so and Adrian Fox becoming our 13th man to pass the milestone. A fantastic achievement for all 4, which shows the commitment from them to our club. Beyond the club will recognise several players at our presentation night for P1 games played, of note Josh, Cameron & Matt Berry all passing 100 games played and Kate Eason passing 50 games in the women’s program.

Again we saw our social events being well supported during the season at our home rounds starting with the post home round dinner out our major sponsor Red Energy Area to our annual trivia night also in Bendigo which both lead into our annual reverse raffle held post our Ballarat home round. While as mentioned earlier the issues surrounding our fixture left our home rounds up in the air until quite late during the season, the commitment from our members, their families, friends and the wider volleyball community was huge. Our reverse raffle night was our biggest in record, both in attendance on the night but also in tickets sold. These social nights our something our club has also been renowned for, the positive energy coming from those nights from not only our club but from those other clubs that attend the nights is great to see. Special thanks to Tayla, Cam & the whole social committee in their efforts during the season.

I would also like to thank our Committee for the hard work and countless hours they have given to the club behind the scenes. 2024 was from my point a view was again rewarding year both on & off the court, with the tireless work from both the current committee and past committees over the past few years is starting to show results on the court for our teams As it is always the case, we would love to see more people involved off the court, be that on committee or in coaching or manager roles with teams, I couldn’t recommend to our members enough to get involved as it such a highly rewarding role in helping the club grow, I will say it is very easy to question, criticise and shout form the cheap seats on decisions the club make, but unless you are actually willing to be involved in the process then it becomes hard for us a club/committee to take any of it onboard.

Finally, I would like to thank our main sponsor, Bendigo Stadium, for the support they provide the club both financially but also with the facilities @ Red Energy Arena. To all our member Associations, shout out to those have come aboard and become involved to 2025 for once again providing us with resources, players, volunteers and support to enable our club to be successful.  Shout out to WVA, VH, BVA & VB for their assistance in hosting our pre-season trials and our home rounds during the year.

Hopefully the 2025 season will bring the on court success if feel our club deserves, the tireless work and commitment from our players, coaches and volunteers is unrivaled compared to any other club, but while I understand success is not guarantee I feel we are in the position to make something special happen.

Once again thank you everyone for their help in 2024 and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2025.

**Ben Hassell**

**Phantoms Volleyball Club President**