

MATCH REPORT



HBE UNDER 14 vs Western Sydney Alliance
ROUND 15 – 11/8/2024
The Home of Football – Rofe Park

It had been yet another enjoyable season of Aussie Rules football and the final game of 2024 was upon us. As usual, our time at Hornsby-Berowra had gone lightning quick and it was hard to believe that things were winding up again for our favourite team.

Conditions at the home of football were again very good. A warm day had turned into a coldish, overcast afternoon and the surface of the ground was slightly soft after just a sprinkle of overnight rain. Our opponents today were the Western Alliance - a team that we didn't have a great formline against. Unfortunately for me, this would be the third time this year I've had the unpleasant task of writing about them. I was hoping that they weren't using all the 'bank' jokes I'd made up about their name in the last two reports as motivation. They certainly didn't need anything more to play for on top of their gigantic size and brutal manner.

It was going to be a tough gig for sure but we are an ever improving side and some results that the Alliance had come up with in recent times against other teams suggested we were a chance. For the Eagles, a few missing stars and events at other matches beyond our control had left us somewhat deflated, but coach Tim was having none of that as he fired up his troops for one last effort.

It was finally time for the bounce and we were underway for our last fixture of the year. The visitors had the better of the early stages but already I was noticing some determined efforts from our boys. Callum, Lucas, Jack R and Ethan were amongst it early and Emmett and Tyler also featured, taking a stunning mark each. A free to Lucas gave us our first real attacking chance. The ball found Tyler who did well to launch it nicely in the direction of our forwards. Josh T, making a guest appearance in the frontline, grabbed possession and booted a massive goal from a distance! What a start! Unfortunately, the Alliance hit back soon after when Jack R was left stranded alone in defence. They followed with another and another but Ollie did a super job defusing another likely opposition 6 with a precise tackle. Following this, the Eagles had a decent attacking period with Archie, Jack A, Tyler, Luke and Zac all featuring.

Onto the 2nd and an early onslaught from the Alliance added to their score. Tyler and Archie, however, refused to relent despite the constant barrage from our more sizeable opponents. They combined well to give us a rare attacking chance. Not long after, Tyler was at it again but this time in defence as he and Ethan completed superb tackles to keep us in the fight. Ethan doubled up with another ripper which brought cheers from the Eagles crowd. It had been a tough quarter but I had been impressed with quite a few players who refused to give up in the very trying conditions.

Ethan continued his supreme effort in the 3rd, winning possession again from yet another tackle. He was rewarded with a shot at goal but it fell just short. Things were starting to become very tough for our boys out on the field. It was all one-way traffic to the Alliance but

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it's worth mentioning that Callum did get a late shot at goal. Overall though, our lack of personnel was starting to catch up with us. We had Josh W, who was clearly sick as a dog, bravely battling away, Lucas carrying on with his troublesome calf as well as Callum, Archie and probably others affected by injury too. To make matters worse Lucas had to come off the ground after a head knock, Hamish joined him soon after as he had copped a savage hit from an Alliance behemoth. To make matters worse, just in front of me trainer Rich almost took out coach Nick with a stray swinging bottle! Geez Rich, I think we have enough injuries already. Yes, it was true, we were seriously in the wars but as the team gathered themselves at the break there was a focus from all for a decent finish in what was going to be the final term of the season.

Ronin started things off well with a fine defensive mark, as usual his effort at the back was outstanding. Luke kept up the fight too in the middle and Callum won a free from an impressive tackle. From his ensuing kick he found Josh W who just fell short with his set shot. Never mind, not long after Josh T again found himself with the ball in an attacking position. With support from Alastair, Josh was able to nail our second major of the afternoon giving the Eagles faithful a chance to give their courageous lads a cheer. In the dying stages, Jack R took an impressive defensive mark, as did Emmett. We also managed to get a 50 metre penalty, a rare thing for us, but unfortunately we couldn't convert the chance into more points. It had certainly been a torrid game for the Eagles and there was a bit of sense of relief when the final siren blew. That being said, we had finished quite well and the 4th quarter had been our best overall.

Coach Tim gathered his battered bunch for the after match speech. As usual, he spoke well and proudly mentioned the improvements and goals we had achieved as a group. He mentioned the relationships and friendships that had been formed which of course, is much more important than any win on the field. We all know that we have a special bunch on our hands here. I'm not saying that it's going to end, but when it does it warms me to know that these boys are all close and when they run into each other in later life, they will all be joined by that tight, special bond. As a keen follower of the team, I've seen them improve an awful lot in their footy and their listening and concentration this year. It's a perfect team atmosphere and environment and I know that they can build on this further in 2025.

Our coaching and management team are clearly the best you could ask for. Tim, Nick, Rich and Clare not only do a great job coaching and organising the team, they also excel in promoting positivity, inclusivity and encouragement. Not only are they improving our boys at footy but they're also doing their bit to produce a group of fine young men and that of course is invaluable. Special mention to the other member of the report-writing tag team, Neal, who has produced a large volume of quality work this season and kept me on my toes! Thank you guys, it's an absolute pleasure each week.

The Hornsby Berowra Eagles... where else would you want to be each winter? Long may it last... See you all next year.

Callum Mills Award - Emmett Salke
Player Of The Match - Ronin Austeria
Words - Greg Allan