

CHOPPA CHAT

*We pick up where we left off for Part 2 of **Choppa Chat** with Trent Thomas. We discuss his form this year, his relationship with the coach and his strange living arrangements. Here's our chat;*

TA: So, you've had a pretty good start to this year, kicked a few goals. How motivated were you over the preseason to make amends for last year?

TT: Yeah, I was very motivated over preseason, I was doing all the extras, working hard. It's probably the fittest I've ever been. Easter weekend set me back a bit, still getting over it but I went alright in the first few practice games. Then I was ok round 1, not great against Narre in the wet the following week, got back into a little bit of form against Doveton. But I think there was a bit of pressure on me to keep my spot heading into the Pakenham game, so it was good to kick a couple in the last quarter. A few of the older boys got around me after the game and that gave me a lot of confidence.

TA: Speaking of the older boys has there been anyone since you've been at the club that has been a bit of mentor for you?

TT: Yeah last year I got along well with James Magner. He's pretty similar to me, likes to talk shit and made training a bit more enjoyable. And when he came in, because he's a bit of name, everyone was tip-toeing around him but I made sure he copped shit like everyone else and I think he liked that. We got along really well. There have been times where I have just looked around the change rooms at all the boys and thought "fuck this is a good side". You know the good players in the 1s aren't just rocking up Tuesday and Thursday, they are doing the extras and to be any good at the senior level you have to do that.

TA: Then the next person I wanted to ask you about is the coach, Stu. On the surface you appear to be opposites, but you just teamed up together in the table tennis comp, unfortunately you got rolled. What is your relationship with him like?

TT: Well Stu goes about it a lot like a school teacher, and I'm not sure if you know this but I didn't really get along with many of my teachers. It's not that I was disrespectful but I used to like getting under teachers skin, I'm a bit of a class clown. So I think at first Stu didn't really know how to take me. I didn't feel like we clicked much at first but after I played a couple of good games, he warmed to me a bit I think.

TA: Do you want to explain what happened in the table tennis game. You blew a 7 point lead I believe?

TT: Yeah he let me down. Once we got that lead the plan was to just get it over the net and finish off. We were playing Shardy and Gunny who are a bunch of simps, who couldn't even get it over the net at the start. I think the ego got me to be honest. I tried to play up to the crowd and went for a few big shots. After I missed a few Stu was muttering under his breath "cmon mate" he was really serious but then he missed 3 or 4 shots and I couldn't say anything because I knew he was hurting inside. But you know we'll let gunny and shardy have it since they don't have much else going for them.

TA: Very noble of you haha. I know you have some strong ties at Doveton, were you ever chance of leaving and playing for them?

TT: Well when I was playing 17s I probably thought I was a bit better than I was and thought I deserved a game in the 1s. I'm good mates Kyle Hendy whose whole family play down at Doveton and a lot of our mates play down there. I was mates with the Berwick guys but on the weekend I would hang out with the Doveton guys. I'd be wearing my Berwick hoodie in amongst all the Doveton guys drinking beers. I'd be getting told that the senior coach wanted me and promised me a senior game. So I guess I considered it.

TA: Did you let Roo know your feelings?

TT: Yeah I had a meeting with him in my 2nd year of 19s. I'd done the preseason at Casey, I played a couple of practice games for them. At the end of the preseason I sat down with the coach, Justin

Plapp and he said it wasn't going to happen for me so I headed back to Berwick. I got put straight back into the 19s for a practice match out in the middle of nowhere and I was feeling a bit flat. I went from training 3 nights a week at a really high standard in the VFL and having meetings with Paul Roos back to Traity and the 19s boys who I didn't know that well because I hadn't been there for preseason. So I sat down with Roo and he said that I would train with the seniors each week. So on the first Thursday night I started with the 19s then got called over to the seniors once they started training but that was the only time it happened for the whole year. So I was very disappointed with that. But I stuck it out.

TA: Were you a bit dirty on Roo?

TT: I was just dirty that there wasn't a spot for me. I was well aware that the senior side was a very good side. I look at as, I should have got a game. Probably against a side like Hampton Park or a game that didn't mean too much in regards to ladder position. And this isn't a knock on Roo but I think a few more young guys should have got a game too. Only 6 guys from our 19s side ended up coming through to the senior sides the following year. Guys like Jono Bishop, Steve Cox, Matty Stevens all left. I played in flags with all those guys and you know they weren't the stars of the team but they were the ones who made us a strong team and I think they even deserved a game in the 1s. I think it would have helped retain those players. Because the only guys that stayed were Jarryd Trait, Matty Mclardy, guys whose families were pretty entrenched in Berwick.

TA: I can't speak on behalf of Roo but I guess the argument to that is that you have to earn your spot. You don't just get given a game. It drives me a bit nuts to hear kids from the junior club don't come down to the senior club until they get a phone call. I hate the sense of entitlement but I can see where you are coming from. I know Roo rewarded a couple of older guys such as myself with games against Hampton Park as a bit of reward for loyalty. Which I appreciated but I do see where you are coming from and maybe that game should have gone to you or one of the other young fellas, and if that meant someone would have stuck around, then I'd have given them the game but at the end of the day I believe if you are as good as you think you are, you will stick around and prove it. Which you have done.

TT: Yeah I guess it's just frustrating to have 15-20 blokes that I played with and won premierships with, leave and play elsewhere. I mean I was never in Stingrays but I played a game of school footy and there was a Stingray's scout there. I went alright and ended up getting invited to do a preseason. I broke my elbow that year which was a bit unfortunate so I missed the practice games. I couldn't get a game and the only blokes who would get brought in would be blokes who were playing 1s at their home clubs. I was going to school with a bloke from Devon Meadows who I was a lot better player than but he was getting games for the Stingray's because he was playing 1s at Devon. I ended up asking Stingrays if I was going to get a game and they said probably not, so I ended up leaving.

TA: I completely understand your frustration.

TT: Yeah so in the end I guess it took me 4 years before I got my shot in the 1s. But I always remember my old man saying "it doesn't matter how long it takes to get there, once you're there, stay there." I guess it means when I got there, I was ready.

TA: Good attitude I think. We've spoken a lot about footy, we'll change it up a bit, can you tell us a little bit about your family?

TT: I have older brother who lives in Dingley, so I see him a bit. My mum lives near my work so I drop in there once a week or so for about 15-20 minutes. Its bit like visiting your Nanna she doesn't do too much, just watches T.V. she's a bit older.

TA: So you do you live with then?

TT: I live with my mate, Kyle and his family in Narre. He and I share beds next to each other actually.

TA: What? In the same room? Separate beds?

TT: Yeah same room, separate beds. He's got a girlfriend now too so it can get a bit awkward in the middle of the night at times.

TA: So how long have you lived with him?

TT: It's been a couple of months now. I was living with another mate, but he just had a baby. He was obviously starting his family and instead of going out getting pissed with me he was working in the backyard and stuff. So it was time to move on.

TA: Well I'm impressed mate because there are guys here like Gunny, Shardy and Jammo who are still living at home well into their mid to late 20s. How old were you when you first moved out of home?

TT: I think I was about 18 or 19. I had to learn how to cook something other than 2 minute noodles. I actually rate myself in the kitchen now.

TA: What's your signature dish?

TT: I like steak and mash. It's just what I like. I generally just cook what I like to eat. It's also good to be able to get a few girls around and don't have to sneak them past the parents you have to get them past the house mates.

TA: Yeah well they would keep you accountable.

TT: Yeah they would definitely let me know what is acceptable.

TA: Ah good stuff mate. What do you do for work?

TT: I'm just starting my refrigeration mechanic apprenticeship. I used to do a bit of work for Jeff Bernard over the school holidays when I was 16. When I finished school I did a bit of carpentry which I enjoyed but it wasn't really going anywhere. So Mozza has helped me out and got me an apprenticeship with one of his mates. I'm looking forward to it.

TA: You mentioned Vicki Trait earlier, I believe Russel Trait has had a pretty big influence on you as well.

TT: Yeah Russell was my coach when I first moved across. Even now he'd be the first bloke to tell me when I've had a bad game. I remember after the 19s Grand Final when I had a stinker, I was talking to some girls and showing them my medal and Russ came up and said "you played like shit today mate" in front of the girls which wasn't a great look for me. But on the flip side he also will pump me up. Probably not to my face but he always has my back. The whole family has. He wasn't just my coach, over the years he has got me jobs, if I'm ever struggling with fees or something like that he would get me a sponsor. He also got me a gig serving food in the coterie tent when I was playing in the 19s. I owe them a lot and I look at them as a second family.

TA: Alright last question. Where do you want Berwick to be playing next year?

TT: Well we had a meeting about this a couple of Tuesdays ago. I remember walking past Johnny the assistant coach and asking him if this meeting was compulsory. He said it wasn't so I just quickly snuck off to my car and went home. Because I just think that I'll just play where we get put. These people have really thought about it and put in the research, where I'd just be coming in and it would be a wasted vote because I haven't really looked into it and I'll just play where we get put. I got home and had a hot roast and everyone else had a cold meal when they got home.

TA: That's a great answer mate, I didn't expect that but I love the just play where we get put answer. Anyway thanks very much mate. I've really enjoyed this chat.

TT: Cheers Choppa.

