

SPORT

ROBBO
THE MAKING OF
CAPTAIN COTCHIN

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AFLW
VOTE
FARCE

'Ballot must be replaced'

THE ringleaders behind the AFL Women's brawl broke their silence yesterday as the players' collective bargaining dispute descended into "farce".

The AFL Players' Association was forced to hold last night's 5pm voting deadline open into the weekend after it emerged a number of players had not received a voting link.

The union confirmed some links had been sent to junk mail or to out-of-date contact details. A lawyer acting on behalf of the group last night called for the ballot to be replaced.

"This is a farce. A clear, accountable voting mechanism is fundamental to the integrity of the vote result," Maurice Blackburn senior associate Jacinta Lewin told the *Herald Sun*.

"Some players have told us that they have not received voting links. This lack of process and clarity has done nothing but generate more uncertainty for AFLW players.

"The AFLPA needs to act quickly to replace this ballot with one that is legitimate. Players cannot contact the AFLPA to sort this out without undermining their confidentiality.

"This is the AFLPA's issue to address and fix promptly".

Under the online voting system, the association has no way of knowing whether players had chosen not to vote or had not received the link.

It said that to be fair to all players, any AFLW player that had not received the voting link could request it this weekend to have their say.

Carlton star Darcy Vescio — who was among players who did not receive the link — and All-Australian Geelong defender Meg McDonald confirmed they are among a group

LAUREN WOOD AND
MICHAEL WARNER

who had engaged the law firm in their dispute with the AFLPA and said they were fighting for the rights of all current and future female footballers.

Vescio said the dissatisfaction had stemmed from what the group believed to be an unfair and non-transparent AFLPA process.

"Things aren't black and white, we're exploring the grey," Vescio said.

The player vote — which is not compulsory — on the three-year agreement was set to close at 5pm yesterday, hours after the group wrote to union boss Paul Marsh demanding an independent review of the CBA poll.

Hours before closure, player representatives wrote to Marsh asking scrutineers to finalise and communicate results of the vote immediately, and called upon the association to provide assurances surrounding the confidentiality of the player responses.

McDonald, 28, rejected claims that the aggrieved players were part of a rogue group. "A large number of players have raised real concerns about the AFLPA, they understand they don't have a clear deal on the table," she said. "I know that a number of other teams have been encouraged to reject the deal."

The deal presented to players this week offered eight games plus three weeks of finals in 2020, nine games plus finals in 2021 and 10 games plus finals in 2022. It needed 75 per cent of players to vote yes to pass. Results were expected in coming days as votes from a range of methods — including text messages — were tallied.

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Jay Rantall leads Finn Maginness as they both break the previous AFL draft combine 2km time-trial record yesterday. Picture: MICHAEL KLEIN

RANTALL DUNKS
TIME-TRIAL RECORD

SOUTH Warrnambool product Jay Rantall made a statement to recruiters by smashing the 2km time-trial record at the final day of the AFL draft combine yesterday.

The former basketballer turned heads after proving his elite endurance by blitzing the field at the Holden Centre.

Rantall completed the test in 5min 50sec, which was 14sec faster than Jacob Kennerley's 2018 record mark.

Hawthorn father-son prospect Finn Maginness, the son of two-time premiership player Scott, finished one second behind Rantall.

South Australian Dylan Stephens — a projected first-round pick — also beat the previous record in 6min 15sec.

Rantall also shared the top honours in Thursday's yo-yo test. The midfielder was formerly a member of the Australian Institute of Sport's under-18 basketball team.

NICK SMART

Papley has the blues with life in Harbour City

TOM Papley was so unhappy in Sydney last season he questioned whether he wanted to keep playing the game.

Papley's desperation to orchestrate a trade to a Melbourne club is underpinned by a desire to get out of Australia's biggest city and be closer to his Gippsland family.

The *Herald Sun* can reveal Papley's sizzling form masked a turbulent off-field life.

SAM EDMUND

Papley, 23, has a family health concern understood to be serious, wants to be closer to his younger brother and has a Melbourne-based girlfriend he wants to return to.

But the electric small forward was also unhappy with his living arrangements in Sydney and felt isolated at times.

It's understood the novelty

of moving from small-town Bunyip to big city Sydney has long since worn off for Papley, who for a while could find solace only on game day.

Papley, it must be said, has no issue with the Sydney Swans. He has great respect for John Longmire and is now holidaying with his teammates in Europe.

Yet he has made it clear he wants a trade back to Victoria,

where Carlton has convinced him it is the best home for him on a deal worth close to \$600,000 a season.

Papley has remained close to former teammate and now-Carlton defender Nic Newman, while another ex-Swan, Alex Johnson, played for VFL affiliate, Northern Blues.

Carlton is desperate to add ground-ball strength to its forward line, with Jack Martin,

Eddie Betts and Dan Butler sounded out about next season and beyond.

But the Swans are resolute from the top down in their determination to retain Papley, who triggered a contract extension in 2018 that tied him to the club until the end of 2023.

Officials have vowed to solve Papley's off-field concerns and ensure he feels more

comfortable in the Harbour City.

It remains unclear what effect, if any, Joe Daniher's anticipated move to Sydney would have on Papley's future or its willingness to trade him.

Papley was Sydney's leading goalkicker this year with 37.28. He has kicked 120 goals in 82 games since being taken with pick 14 at the 2016 rookie draft.