



Inside back

with Ian Butterworth

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OPINION

Movers and shakers

Sometimes change is a good thing

MY colleague Jess Webster painted a picture of NTFL player and coach movements in 2011 on this page last week.

And, while it has been a big year, I was reminded of when the Tiwi Bombers became a fully fledged NTFL member in 2007/08.

The new side was given priority picks of 'home grown' players from other clubs.

St Marys had the strongest historical link with the Islands and cleared great numbers to the Tiwis, and while the Green Team may well have suffered hardest in numbers, I recall Palmerston lost a quality core that has been irreplaceable.

Imagine the Magpies with the likes of Edward Darcy, Bradley Paliuamini, brothers Michaela and Trevor Wilson, Donald Mungatopi and Patrick Heenan in the side.

The transfer debate is not entirely about player quality and quantity, but it is nevertheless an argument that is becoming more relevant as clubs struggle to make the numbers in their lower grades.

The Bombers, for instance, are now recruiting far and wide and not simply relying on home-grown talent, and that's fine by me.

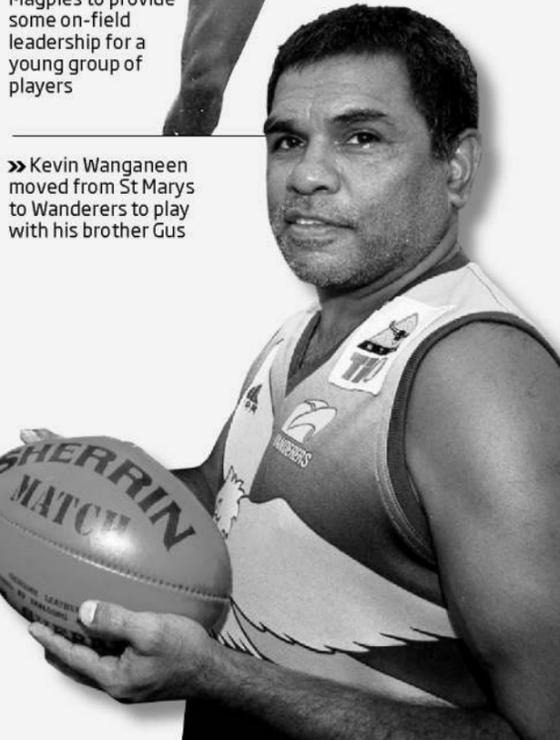
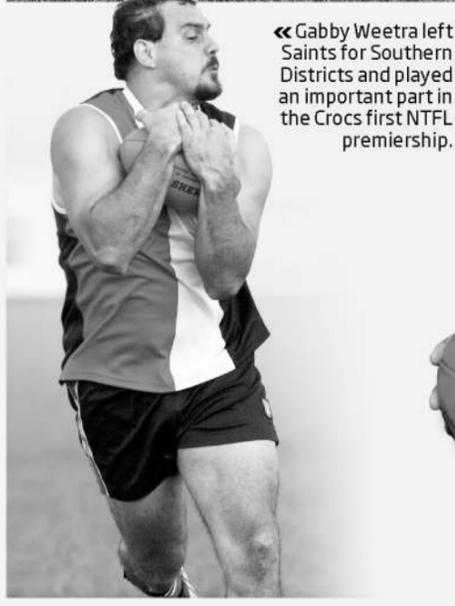
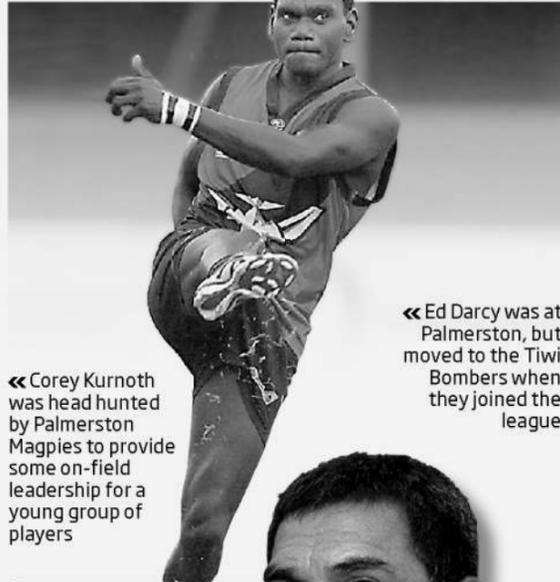
However, it may just be about time for the NTFL to insist they field teams throughout the grades and become more responsible for development and retention of players — a duty undertaken by the other seven Premier League clubs.

Literally hundreds of players moved from club to club (not just at league level) well before the emergence of the Tiwi Bombers into the NTFL, and it's interesting to reflect on which team, if any, has been the greatest beneficiary over the past two or three decades.

Bookends David Parfitt (Darwin) and Gabby Weetra (St Marys) were recruited by Southern Districts and played an important part in the Crocs' first NTFL league premiership, under Mark Motlop in 1997/98.

In similar circumstances, Darwin Buffalo pair Corey Kurnoth and Jonathan McLeod were head-hunted to join a tough and experienced core of minders for an emerging group of exquisitely talented youngsters under the direction of

TRADING PLACES



« Corey Kurnoth was head hunted by Palmerston Magpies to provide some on-field leadership for a young group of players

« Ed Darcy was at Palmerston, but moved to the Tiwi Bombers when they joined the league

« Gabby Weetra left Saints for Southern Districts and played an important part in the Crocs first NTFL premiership.

» Kevin Wanganeen moved from St Marys to Wanderers to play with his brother Gus

HAVE YOUR SAY

What do you think have been the biggest moves in NTFL history?

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Russell Jeffrey at Palmerston. Back-to-back Magpie premierships in 2000/01 and 2001/02 proved the recruitment was astute.

For mine, the one that stands out above all others is St Marys premiership player Kevin Wanganeen

joining brother Gus at Wanderers. Wanganeen played with great distinction in the NTFL and finished on 273 games. He won consecutive flags with Saints in 1977/78 and 1978/79.

Then with Wanderers, he was part of the brace of premierships as a member of the Steve Abalacoached Eagle juggernaut in 1981/82 and 1982/83. His influence as a player and later as a supporter, official and mentor of his adopted club measures up with the best.

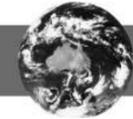
In a twist of fate, Wanganeen had

come to Darwin to play for Wanderers, but the precocious teenager was hijacked and went to Saints.

Of the change, Wanganeen firmly maintains that he enjoyed his five-years at St Marys immensely, but he simply wanted to play footy with his brother.

So no matter what the reason for the large number of NTFL player movements — and we may not have seen the last of the Tiwi-type experience with the AFLNT intent on expanding the NTFL — they have often had redeeming upsides.

WORLD AT LARGE



TEVEZ LOOKS TO ITALY

THE agent for Argentine footballer Carlos Tevez has been in talks with AC Milan over a move from Manchester City. "Football is great in Italy, there are great clubs," his agent said. City manager Roberto Mancini said Tevez's decision to return to Argentina without permission had ended any hope he had of playing for the Premier League side again.

POMS FEEL PRESSURE

ENGLAND cricket captain Andrew Strauss (pictured) has told his team to prepare for its biggest challenge yet after rising to No. 1 in the world Test rankings. England is set to face Pakistan in a three-match series in the UAE in January. "It's a different mindset being the hunted rather than the hunters," Strauss said. "We'll have to retain that desperate desire to improve if we want to stay on top. There are a lot of teams below us who want to knock us off our perch."



WARRIOR COMES HOME

THE NZ Warriors have failed to retain playmaker James Maloney, with the five-eighth confirming he will continue his NRL career in Australia in 2013. Maloney, who has developed into one of the competition's top playmakers since joining the Warriors from Melbourne in 2010, will see out the final year of his contract next season. "The club came up with a great offer, but the big issue has always been the desire to go back home to Australia and be closer to family and friends," Maloney said.

MONEY STILL TALKS

NOVAK Djokovic said the long ATP tennis season had taken its toll after a shock loss to Janko Tipsarevic at the ATP World Tour Finals — but that didn't stop him fronting up at the tournament for a big pay day. The world No. 1 dropped just his sixth match for the year against Tipsarevic. Despite all the of world's top men complaining about the length of the ATP season and the lack of a break before the Australian summer, eight of the top nine players in the world competed at the rich tournament.

HE SAID IT

West Indian RAVI RAMPAL after denying India's SACHIN TENDULKAR a 100th international century

It was just the right ball at the right time

Letters

KEEP TEAMS TOGETHER

MY son plays at Southern Districts. They always say it's about the kids/for the kids. They (SDFC) pick the teams for Div 1, Div 2, Div 3, they play a couple of games.

The kids start bonding and gelling as team. Then they (SDFC) take the good players out of a team to beef up Div 1, leaving lower divs struggling. Yes, I want my son's

team to win, too, but if they don't, so what? As long they have fun and learn about fair competition.

Name and address withheld

DEVELOP LOCALS FIRST

I WISH to voice my growing concerns about local, young AFL players not being able to make it to the top level due to clubs insisting on recruiting interstate

so-called top-position players. After 35 years in Darwin as a player, coach and helper of the game, why is it that clubs start the season with the young talent in their sides, and then wither them out after one to seven games?

The club I am with has this exact mentality. The senior coaches and staff are supposed to be developing these young fellas, not

building their own empires. As far as all the sponsors of the game, ask yourselves, where is your money going?

Sorry, you pay for their airfares! These fly-in, fly-out players won't use your products or services, whereas locals and families would.

It's about time clubs pull their heads in. Develop locals first.
Peed Off Observer, Herbert