

Optimism: “hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something.”

The simple question of “are you okay?” – The answer: Well Brooke I am lucky, I am alive, I go to a good school, I have a great family life and great friends, if the only thing that is wrong with me is that I have done my ACL and can't kick a footy for a year, and that's the worst thing that has happened to me then really Brooke I am the lucky one and I am okay. Now I am not often lost for words but this young NAB League player somehow took my words and threw them well and truly out the window!

I mean I am/we are the ones that should be giving the great advice and supporting our players during the tough times, so why are they the ones often giving us advice and teaching us valuable life lessons? I guess the first lesson is that young people can occasionally have ‘great advice’!

The truth is that no matter what age we are, we are all going to be faced with times when we doubt ourselves and our ability, we are going to be knocked down – but how do we get back up? How do we choose to be optimistic in times of doubt?

How do we make lemonade when life gives us lemons?

This week at some point there are going to be many players within our NAB League that are going to be invited into this years National Combine, and with only 79 invites sent out for the boys and 50 invites for the girls. That means there are going to be plenty of players that miss out and start to doubt whether their AFL career is ever going to happen. I have absolutely no doubt that there are going to be NAB League players asking why didn't I get a National Combine invite and further to that thinking their AFL career is done and dusted, all because that letter with an AFL letterhead didn't arrive in the mail. Well...it's time to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and get back out onto that football oval. It's not over until you say it's over! This is just a minor detour and one that should drive you to be more motivated. It's time to choose optimism!

The optimistic ones will continue to tell themselves that their AFL dream is still alive.

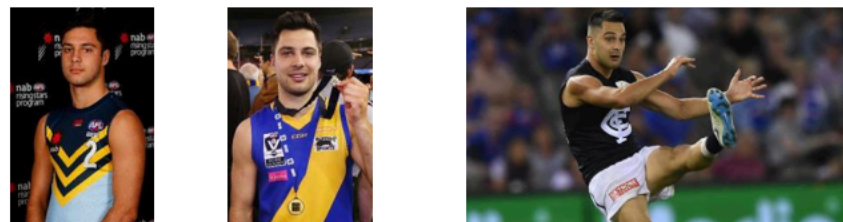
Is an invite to a combine whether it be National, State or Rookie a guaranteed a golden ticket onto an AFL list? Ask Tim Kelly (Geelong FC) who tested in 2012, 2013 and 2017, nominated for the draft 5 times and had to play 93 WAFL games to be noticed, or Brett Bewley who played five full seasons at Williamstown VFL before being drafted at Pick 53 to Fremantle in 2018. Hopefully you know by now what that answer may be!



Flynn Appleby (Collingwood FC) did not attend either national or state combines in the lead up to the draft, however he continued to play good football back at his NAB League club in 2017, whilst also experiencing a VFL game and playing in the Young Guns exhibition games. Every opportunity that was given to Flynn he grabbed with both hands and he didn't let go. He did the extras in the gym, got honest feedback from his coaches and just made sure he was getting the best out of himself both on and off the ground. He was always optimistic that his chance would come along eventually – and it did! Flynn was drafted that year in the Rookie Draft to the Collingwood Football Club.



Always the bridesmaid and never the bride, Michael Gibbons had done almost everything humanly possible to impress AFL scouts, however he was overlooked in six AFL drafts before a new AFL rookie rule implemented in 2019 provided him with an AFL lifeline to the Carlton Football Club. Not one person I am sure would have judged him if he had have just been satisfied with playing VFL or local league football for the remainder of his football career, but instead when life gave him lemons (six years in a row!) – he decided to make lemonade.



Optimistic athletes view the world in a positive light, it doesn't mean that they walk around whistling a tune and they think everything is just hunky-dory. What being an optimistic athlete means is that you see the opportunity in every struggle and tackle life with a positive mindset rather than pull the doona back over your head.

No matter what you do in life or how successful you are the reality is that you are probably going to be put in a lot of situations where you don't have much control over what happens (that's part of life), so the best you can try for is having a say in how you react.

