

PREVIOUS NAB AFL RISING STAR MEDALLISTS

2008 NAB AFL Rising Star - RHYS PALMER

FREMANTLE FOOTBALL CLUB



FREMANTLE'S Rhys Palmer has capped off a stellar debut season to become the 16th NAB AFL Rising Star.

Palmer, 19, was awarded the Ron Evans Medal at the annual function at Melbourne's Crown Palladium on Wednesday 3 September 2008. He won with 44 votes from Hawthorn's Cyril Rioli (37) and Richmond's Trent Cotchin (21).

Palmer is the second Fremantle player to win the accolade after Paul Hasleby in 2000, and joins an elite crop of emerging guns including the last three recipients – Joel Selwood (Geelong), Danyle Pearce (Port Adelaide) and Brett Deledio (Richmond).

He played 20 games this year after being drafted by the club with selection No. 7 in the 2007 NAB AFL Draft, having stood out at the NAB AFL Under 18 Championships.

He led Fremantle in disposals, averaging 23 possessions a game, and also demonstrated fearlessness at the contested ball and a high level of endurance. The West Australian was nominated in round three for the 24-touch, four-tackle game he produced against cross-town rival West Coast in just his second match.

2007 NAB AFL Rising Star - JOEL SELWOOD

GEELONG FOOTBALL CLUB



Selwood won the medal with 44 votes from Collingwood's Scott Pendlebury (37) and Melbourne's Nathan Jones (17), becoming the first recipient of the Ron Evans Medal. Port Adelaide's Justin Westhoff (10) was fourth, followed by West Coast's Shannon Hurn (9).

Selwood debuted in round one and quickly found a regular place in the Cats' midfield. His statistics reflect his importance as part of the side. His 83 tackles ranks third at the club; he ranked fourth in clearances with 60, sixth in goal assists with 15, seventh in hard-ball gets with 46 and eighth in marks with 98.

He played 18 matches during the home and away season and averaged 19 possessions a match. Kicking seven goals, he was nominated for the award in round five.

In becoming the 2007 NAB AFL Rising Star, Selwood has capped a stellar junior career. He was a member of the AIS-AFL Academy squad and captained the Under-17 Australian side against Ireland in 2005. Selwood won the Barassi Medal for best player during the tour.

In 2005 he represented Vic Country in the 2005 NAB AFL Under-18 Championships and was named an All-Australian. These credentials guaranteed him certain top 10 selection at the 2006 NAB AFL Draft. He was Geelong's first selection - seventh overall - despite a knee injury restricting him to only three games with the Bendigo Pioneers in the TAC Cup in 2006. Hailing from the Sandhurst Football Club in Bendigo, Selwood is the younger brother of Adam (West Coast) and Troy (Brisbane) and older brother to 17-year-old Scott, who is eligible to be drafted in November this year. Adam and Troy were Rising Star nominees in consecutive weeks in 2005.

2006 NAB AFL Rising Star - DANYLE PEARCE

PORT ADELAIDE FOOTBALL CLUB



Pearce played all 22 games in 2006, averaging more than 19 possessions per game and kicking the most goals (12) of the 22 nominees. The 20-year-old was nominated in Round Three.

Pearce's journey to AFL ranks was one of perseverance. The dynamic midfielder, who hails from Edwardstown in suburban Adelaide, represented South Australia in the NAB AFL Under 18 Championships in 2004. He impressed at the 2004 NAB AFL Draft Camp and despite topping the 20-metre sprint, agility run and running vertical jump tests, he was overlooked in the NAB AFL Draft. Recruiters were wary of his ball skills. Pearce later discovered he is short-sighted, and wearing contact lenses helped turn his game around.

He was Rookie-listed by Port Adelaide in 2005. Consistent performances in Sturt's reserve and senior grades in the SANFL saw him reach AFL level in Round 18, 2005. After two goals on debut he has played every game since.

Pearce took the opportunity, and his form in seven AFL matches last season not only earned him the Power's best first-year player award, but saw him elevated from the Rookie list to Port Adelaide's senior list.

2005 NAB AFL Rising Star - BRETT DELEDIO

RICHMOND FOOTBALL CLUB



The 2005 season proved to be a dream start for Richmond's Brett Deledio. After starting the season as the top NAB AFL Draft pick, Deledio went on to finish the season in style - winning the 2005 NAB AFL Rising Star Award.

Deledio's stunning first season saw him play in each of the Tigers' 22 home-and-away matches, kicking 14 goals and gathering 336 possessions, with an average of 15 possessions per game.

As well as being named the number one pick at the 2004 NAB AFL Draft, Deledio was also named an All-Australian after the 2004 NAB AFL Under-18 Championships. In 2003 he shared the Kevin Sheehan Medal as the best player in division one at the NAB AFL Under-16 Championships.

He was recruited to Richmond from the Murray Bushrangers after having earlier played with the Kyabram Junior Football Club.

2004 NAB AFL Rising Star - JARED RIVERS

MELBOURNE FOOTBALL CLUB



Melbourne's Jared Rivers had his opponents covered throughout season 2004. His dominance continued with the NAB AFL Rising Star Award, which he took with a unanimous nine out of nine first place votes.

The 19 year-old joined Melbourne from SANFL club North Adelaide via the 2002 NAB AFL Draft, taken by the Demons with their third selection (26th overall). Having played in a senior premiership with South Augusta as a 15 year-old, Rivers became one of the youngest debutants in SANFL history in 2001, before representing South Australia at the NAB AFL Under 18 Championships.

Throughout 21 matches in 2004, Rivers showed poise beyond his years at centre half back helping the Demons to the finals, and making him the club's first winner of the NAB AFL Rising Star Award.

2003 NAB AFL Rising Star - SAM MITCHELL
HAWTHORN FOOTBALL CLUB



Despite being told he was too short and too slow for AFL football, Hawthorn's Sam Mitchell confirmed his status as one of the league's brightest prospects upon securing the 2003 NAB AFL Rising Star Award.

Mitchell played his early football with Mooroolbark, progressing through the Eastern Ranges (where he won dual Best and Fairest awards), before participating in the NAB AFL Rising Stars Under 18 Championships as a member of the Victoria Metro side in 2000.

Mitchell, selected with pick 36 at the 2001 NAB AFL Draft following a stellar season with VFL club Box Hill, played 21 games with the Hawks in 2003 in a dynamic in-and-under role in the midfield.

2002 NAB AFL Rising Star - NICK RIEWOLDT

ST KILDA FOOTBALL CLUB



Nick Riewoldt was a decisive victor of the inaugural 2002 NAB AFL Rising Star Award.

In 2002 the blonde flyer took the competition by storm, putting his injury ridden debut season behind him, dominating displays at both ends of the ground and stamping himself as 'the one to watch' for the next decade. He took the most marks (178) of any player in the home and away season, played every game and booted 21 goals. He was also named St Kilda's Best and Fairest player that year.

Riewoldt was selected from Southport on the Gold Coast at the 2000 NAB AFL Draft, making him the first player drafted out of Queensland to win the Award.