

In the third of a series of announcements, the Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club shared the news that 17 year old Erin Riley would return to the club where it all began and don the red and black for the NBL1 2020 season. A focal point in the opening announcements has been local people, playing in a local program, moving through the levels and taking advantage of having a program to play at the elite level that is NBL1 in their local area.

Erin began like many of our players her age, on the outdoor courts at Eltham High School in the club's Aussie Hoops program. Each Saturday morning in sessions led by junior coaches, praying it wouldn't be too wet or too hot for the session to go ahead. Thankfully those days are now long gone, and the new players these days get the comfort of the Eltham Leisure Centre!



With older brother Jackson already involved and playing each week, it was only natural that Erin would follow suit and sure enough aged 5, there was Erin suiting up in the country's biggest junior competition; the Eastern District Junior Basketball Association (EDJBA). You could see from an early age that Erin had a passion for competing and knew how to win. Even at U8 level, there was Erin leading the red and black Eltham Wildcats to an U8 A grade premierships! At that age, few would realise 'winning titles' would be the start of something rather normal for Erin.

At that stage, the Eltham Junior Championship Girls program didn't allow double bottom aged girls to play VJBL at the U12 level, but with Jackson already playing Championship and Erin's skills at a high level she was determined to play VJBL. The best path at this point was for her parents Stephen and Ronlyn to take their daughter to Bulleen.

It was here where Erin put herself on the map as a junior talent. Erin amassed titles across all levels including:

- 4 Victorian State Championships
- 6 National Junior Classic gold medals
- 1 Gold and 1 Bronze at U14 National Club Championships
- 3 National U16/U18 Championships representing Vic Metro including 2 as Captain

This kid knows how to win!

Whilst Erin played elsewhere, the Riley family is a well known and popular one in the region. Mother Ronlyn for 6 years was an 'Age Group Convenor' a hard-working voluntary role in the Wildcats domestic program. Her brother Jackson played, coached and refereed for the club, whilst her father Stephen is a highly respected Captain of the Eltham Fire Brigade.

A student of the Box Hill Senior Secondary College basketball program where she will complete Year 12 in 2020, Erin whilst still playing U18's in 2019, was selected to play for Frankston in the NBL1 competition.

Playing there alongside stars such as Steph Reid, Erin more than held her own and let the basketball world know she was ready for the next level when others may have doubted her; just like she did when she was 8 years old!

Erin's 2019 NBL1 season was strong, averaging 6.1 points per game and shooting the '3' at almost 40% placing her in the top 12 in the NBL1 women's competition. It is her ability to play at this level, her family connection to the Eltham Wildcats and a desire to win that made her a logical fit for the 2020 NBL1 Eltham Wildcats team.

Whilst Erin spent time away from the club, 2020 represents the chance for her to return to where it all began. A local Eltham resident, a product of the powerful EDJBA competition, playing for her local club in the premier winter league in Australia and demonstrating once again, the pathways to the top vary for everyone; but for a young lady from north-east of Melbourne, why would you play anywhere else?

The Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club is pleased to welcome Erin back into the club.