

We all knew that kid when we were younger; the kid that was laid back about life, ate whatever he liked, but was still a super athlete and had the ability to just step on the basketball court and dominate, despite not playing Championship basketball. They were the kind of person you wanted desperately on your domestic or school team and wondered 'what if?'

In October 2013, a long and coordinated athlete with an amazing vertical leap, a funky looking but reliable 3 point jumper named Mark Scherf turned up as an unknown bottom age U18 player to the Eltham Junior Championship trials. He made 3 point shots, then dunked on people, blocked shots on transition and suddenly coaches were scrambling to check lists "who is this kid and where did he come from?" It was here that Mark Scherf went from being a local domestic legend on a path to whatever he wanted to be.

Growing up in Hurstbridge in Melbourne's north-east, Mark was placed into the Eltham U18 2nd team that year, where he prepared for selection in his top age for the 18/1 team. This was a team that would see him play alongside fellow NBL1 Wildcat Sam Whelan, AFL footballer Patrick Lipinski, a number of soon to be U20 Victorian state players and a large cohort of the club's Youth Championship U23 Men's team from the most recent years. It was this season where 'Chief' helped lead the Wildcats to the 2015 U18 National Junior Classic title; not a bad achievement for a young man who hadn't played more than domestic 18 months prior.

Since 2016 Mark has taken larger roles in the club's Youth Championship team. Statistically, it was 2018 where he took the league by storm, averaging more than 15ppg and shooting over 40% from the perimeter. It was the back half of that season where Scherf was dominant, the highlight being a 40 point game in just 22 minutes of game time. "That season, I felt I had some freedom to create and score, but defensively I probably didn't work as hard as I realised I needed too and that's where Craig (Head Coach Craig Stratford) really helped my game in 2019."

Whilst statistically, Mark's numbers didn't match that of 2018, as he struggled through some niggling injuries; it was off the ball at both ends where Mark improved his game. "Craig spoke to me about what I needed to do for a transition to NBL1 and where I needed to focus."

Whilst Mark has had a small taste in recent times of the next level; it is 2020 where he officially becomes apart of the Eltham NBL1 team. The Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club prides itself on the opportunities and pathways provided to those within its system and Mark Scherf is the latest example of that.

"Every player has a different path; whilst Mark's story isn't unique, it certainly has a variation from the norm. He came to our club as an amazing talent from his own doing and our people haven't gone about trying to change him, rather guide him toward making his own improvement. Mark is a wonderful example to our young players, that you don't need to be the best U12 player in order to make it to the highest levels in our sport." Eltham Basketball Club CEO Greg Jeffers stated.

"Every club talks and plans for the senior team being a place for the juniors to get too. We've been able to maintain stability across our organisation to ensure that plan stays the course and comes to fruition. With the progression to the Senior team of Sam Whelan (Maffra and Eltham Junior) and Ovie Magbegor (Coburg junior and Eltham Youth) in recent years, Mark is another example for our Men's program and what we've aimed to achieve. My congratulations to Mark on what is a well-deserved reward for his work."