

# Warlpiri Wizard casting spells in AFL



Photos courtesy of Slattery Media Group.

Former Yuendumu premiership player Liam Jurrah continues to create national headlines through his achievements in the Australian Football League.

Jurrah made his debut for Melbourne against Essendon in round 12 this season and his eye-catching performances since then have included a Rising Star nomination in round 15.

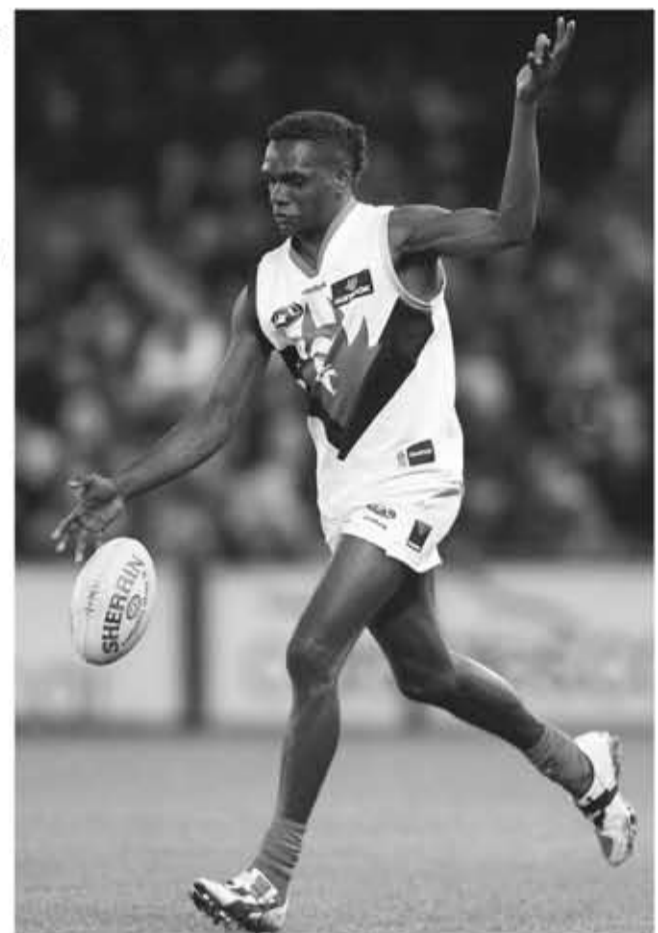
A promising young player is nominated for the rising star award after each round of the AFL. The overall winner at the end of the season receives a personal investment folio and a dedicated personal banker provided by the National Australia Bank.

Jurrah was recruited by the Demons with the first selection in the 2009 AFL preseason draft.

The 20-year-old has been dubbed the "Warlpiri Wizard" by his Melbourne teammates and the media for his spectacular marks and goals and for his cultural background as a Warlpiri man from Yuendumu in the Tanami Desert north-west of Alice Springs.

He was a key player in Yuendumu's win in last year's AFL Central Australia grand final in Alice Springs. That performance helped attract the interest of the Demons in the lead up to the draft.

His success has aroused more interest from AFL scouts in what other talented players might be playing the game in the remote Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory.



(Above left and above) Liam Jurrah from Yuendumu in Central Australia has been a hit in the AFL this season.

## AFLNT dumps 'Dreamtime at the G' community match

The AFL has said it's disappointed its equivalent governing body in the Northern Territory has decided it won't send a community football side to play in a curtain raiser to its "Dreamtime at the G" match on the MCG next season.

In recent seasons the winning Northern Territory community side at the Darwin Umpires' Carnival has played a Victorian Aboriginal community as a curtain raiser to the Essendon versus Richmond Dreamtime at the G match.

The match is part of the AFL's Indigenous round honouring the contribution Indigenous players have made throughout the history of the game and promoting reconciliation.

Imalu from the Tiwi Islands and Ltyentye Apurte from Santa Teresa south-east of Alice Springs have both participated in the game.

However, the AFLNT has said that it's too expensive to send a community side to Melbourne to take part in the game and instead, two community teams will be invited to play at Darwin's Marrara Stadium as a curtain raiser to an AFL game next season.

The AFL's Indigenous Programs Manager Jason Mifsud said it's unlikely any footballer could ask for a bigger thrill than playing on the MCG.

"It's probably as big a highlight as any community team could get," he said. "That's probably the A grade opportunity.

"We think the curtain raiser is a great showcase for community footy.

"It's unfortunate the NT won't be taking up the opportunity. We'll continue to provide that opportunity for community teams."

Mr Mifsud said the AFL had held a brief discussion with the AFLNT about the cost of taking a community side to Melbourne for the game, but believes it already provides plenty of financial support to the Territory in administration and operational support.

"It's above and beyond what it would cost to bring the side to Melbourne," he said.

Mr Mifsud said the AFL was disappointed that the AFLNT won't be taking up the opportunity that it's been given, but that chance will now be offered to a community side from another state.

"It's probably as big a highlight as any community team could get."

## Bush sides win through to AFLCA football finals

Two Central Australian teams from Aboriginal communities have won places in the AFL Central Australia finals.

After Yuendumu won the first premiership of the AFL Central Australian league that combined the town and country competitions last year, MacDonnell Districts and Anmatjere are through to the finals this year.

Federal finished on top of the ladder, with Pioneers second, but MacDonnell Districts strong form in the second half of the season that included a win over Federal pushed it up to third place. Wests was fourth and Anmatjere just beat Ltyentye Apurte into fifth place.

MacDonnell Districts includes players from Papunya and other regions further west including Kintore. Anmatjere includes players from regions around Ti Tree and Mt Allan.

Unfortunately for Anmatjere, the Cowboys were eliminated in the first week of the finals.