

Crows to force 'Danger' deal

JAY CLARK

ADELAIDE is almost certain to become the first AFL club to match a restricted free agency bid – and fight Geelong for the services of superstar onballer Patrick Dangerfield.

It is understood the Crows will forego the free agency compensation pick (No. 14) for Dangerfield and press Geelong for a more appealing suite of picks and/or players.

One list expert said yesterday a fair deal was Geelong's first-round pick from this



MATCHED: Patrick Dangerfield.

year's draft (No.9) and its second-round pick next year.

The creators of the AFL's

free agency system say Adelaide has every right to match Geelong's free agency bid for the blistering midfielder, believed to be worth about \$800,000 a season.

If the Crows match the Cats' bid but the clubs are unable to agree to a trade, Dangerfield, 25, would either be forced to stay at Adelaide or enter the national draft.

AFLPA board member Brad Sewell yesterday urged the Crows to be fair to their former captain.

"I think it is OK for Adel-

aide to do that [match] but keep in mind that over eight years he has given everything for the club," Sewell said.

"And if they went against his wishes it would show a fair amount of disrespect."

While former Geelong president Frank Costa said "matching" would go outside the spirit of free agency — by blocking Dangerfield's attempt to come home to Victoria — two of the men who helped set up the system yesterday backed the Crows' rights to play hard ball.

Sydney chief executive Andrew Ireland and list chief Chris Pelchen, who were on the original free agency working party in 2007, said Adelaide was entitled to make the unprecedented move of matching the Cats' bid.

"The fact is Patrick is a restricted free agent, so therefore it is absolutely reasonable for Adelaide to match the offer if they want," Ireland said.

"Restricted free agency was a compromise from absolute free agency. There had to be a capacity to protect clubs from

losing their most valuable players."

Pelchen, who headed the premiership list builds at Hawthorn and Port Adelaide, said the restricted form of free agency was not a dummy mechanism.

"The matching criteria was established deliberately with the intention that it would be used by someone," he said.

Dangerfield is set to quit Adelaide to join Geelong next week, after the Crows' best and fairest on Saturday night and Monday's Brownlow Medal.

Nuisance leg injury will not stop Fyfe

FREMANTLE midfielder Nat Fyfe is adamant his leg injury will not sideline him for Friday night's preliminary final against Hawthorn, but he admits it will be a challenge to back up for the Grand Final.

Fyfe has battled with inflammation in his left leg for the past month, forcing him to miss the final two rounds of the home-and-away season.

The Brownlow Medal favourite made a standout return in the club's qualifying final win over Sydney a fortnight ago and is looking to put in another strong display against the Hawks.

If Fremantle win that match, the club's medical staff will need to work overtime to ensure Fyfe recovers in time for the Grand Final.

"That's going to pose a bit of a challenge," he said.

"But luckily we've got medical professionals who have considered all options and have me in the best hands.

"And should that [making the Grand Final] happen — and hopefully it does — then we'll be ready to go again.

"It [the leg injury] is a little bit of a nuisance, but it's fine. No one is 100 per cent [fit], but I'll be playing.

"Medically I think it's similar to shin splints. There was always going to be a little bit of a response from playing but I pulled up quite well, so I'm happy."

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NAT FYFE

Fyfe remains a hot favourite to win the Brownlow Medal despite his slow end to the season.

The 24-year-old struggled to produce his best form after copping a heavy cork to his thigh from a Sam Mitchell knee in Round 15.

The cork resulted in a slight change in Fyfe's running style, which led to a groin issue that sidelined him for a fortnight.

Now it's a lower leg injury that is threatening to affect his performances on the biggest stage, but the West Australian isn't holding any grudges.

"You're never going to get through a whole season without a few bumps and bruises along the way," Fyfe said.

"I guess I had such a fruitful start to the year without much injury concern that there was always this possibility lingering.

"But I'm still out and playing, and able to contribute, so it's not the worst case."

AAP



READY: Nat Fyfe is sure he will face the Hawks on Friday night.

Picture: GETTY

PRELIMINARY FINAL



WEST COAST V
NORTH MELBOURNE
DOMAIN STADIUM

SATURDAY 7.45PM

Priddis feathers nest for Simpson

WEST Coast is two wins from becoming the AFL's newest powerhouse and coach Adam Simpson deserves all the credit, according to Brownlow medallist Matt Priddis.

Simpson inherited the Eagles list after a disappointing 2013 campaign in which the club fell to 13th in John Worsfold's last year as coach.

West Coast showed promise in finishing ninth in Simpson's first year in charge, but they were tipped to struggle this season when key defenders Eric Mackenzie and Mitch Brown succumbed to serious injuries.

Instead, West Coast is in the box seat to win the premiership after dismantling Hawthorn in the qualifying final a fortnight ago.

The Eagles will start as hot favourites to defeat North Melbourne in Saturday night's preliminary final in Perth and Priddis paid tribute to the contribution of Simpson, who played 306 games for North Melbourne before spending four years as an assistant coach at Hawthorn.

"I think he deserves all of the credit," he said.

"His first 12 months were all about education. During the last six weeks of last season we really started to see some inroads and it just started to click.

"We had a rocky start this year, but the belief was there and now we're just playing on instinct, and that's come from the amount of work that he has put in with his coaching staff."

Future pick for jet now

COLLINGWOOD will use a pick from next year's draft to seal the deal for Greater Western Sydney midfield jet Adam Treloar.

The Magpies are prepared to hand over a first-round draft pick from this year's draft and, for the first time, part with a second-round selection from next year's lottery to guarantee the agreement.

Treloar's signature is a key plank in Nathan Buckley's plans to lead the Magpies to finals next year after missing

out on September action in the past two seasons.

Collingwood has already held preliminary talks with GWS, with a deal considered a formality, despite interest from Richmond and North Melbourne.

But there remains serious concern over the future of Collingwood speedster Nathan Freeman.

Freeman continues to balk at a new deal, with the parties unable to agree terms.

It is believed the untried

midfielder is seeking more than \$300,000 a season.

He has not played a senior game since he was taken with pick No.10 in the 2013 draft.

The club considered sending Freeman to Germany for radical treatment on his troublesome hamstring, but he has since made a full recovery from tendon surgery.

St Kilda is circling Freeman in a bid to add much-needed leg speed to its engine room, while North Melbourne has also flagged an interest in him.

Worsfold on move

FROM BACK PAGE

Worsfold, who coached the Eagles to the 2006 premiership, ended his coaching tenure at West Coast in 2013 declaring he was burnt out.

He made a return to clubland this year after the tragic death of his former Eagles assistant and Adelaide coach Phil Walsh, taking up a role as coaching director at the Crows.

But he informed Adelaide yesterday that he wouldn't be continuing at the club and ruled himself out of the race to replace Walsh next season.

"John came to the club in the most trying of times following Phil's death and helped provide leadership and a steady influence," Adelaide chief executive Andrew Fagan said. "From the outset there was a clear understanding that it would only be until the end of the season.

"He has explained on a few occasions that personal reasons do not allow him to be based here and we have continued to move forward, working through our list of preferred coaching candidates."