

# Family creates footy history

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FOR the first time in AJAX Football Club's history, three members of one Jewish family – spanning three generations – can say they have played senior footy for the Jackas.

When 17-year-old Bialik College student Toby Sheezel made his VFA men's Premier C debut for the red, white and blacks at Albert Park last Saturday in their 14.17 (101) to 5.15 (45) victory against PEGS, he followed in the footsteps of his dad Glen, and his grandfather Brian.

Glen played 25 games on the wing for AJAX in the early '90s and was Toby's coach at the junior club for seven years, while Brian was a handy fullback who played about 70 games for AJAX in the '60s.

Toby had a good game, involving himself as much as he could, making 21 possessions.

He started with a top mark at half-forward, made a strong tackle when shifted to the wing, and finished in style, kicking the last goal after the siren sounded.

"It was a great honour to be selected to play, and very special for our family, especially for my grandfather," Toby said.

"He presented me with my jersey before the game, and when we were singing the team song after the win, he joined in."

Glen said when he spoke to Brian the next morning about the game, "he told me it was the best day of his life".

"I think playing for AJAX gives you a feeling of belonging – the players here don't just represent a footy club, but a community," Glen said.



From left: Glen, Brian and Toby Sheezel last Saturday, when Toby made his senior debut for the Jackas.

A genuine athlete with speed, the ability to kick well with either foot, and the versatility to play in different positions, Toby has been training at powerhouse junior club the Sandringham Dragons since he was 15.

Serious elbow injuries forced him to miss almost two consecutive seasons, but he trained the house down during the Dragons' 2019 pre-season, and the rewards for that effort are now coming his way.

Toby has played in four matches for Sandringham's U18s in the 2019 NAB League – a competition renowned for producing future AFL stars – and said he is keen to play for AJAX's men's side again if called on by head coach Adam Andrews.

"It was quite physical playing against the men – there were a lot of big bodies out there – but I love being challenged and stepping out of my comfort zone," Toby said.

"I absolutely love the game – I've been playing footy since I could walk," Toby said.

Jack Lew scored five goals, and Nick Cohen two, in the Jackas' big win, which keeps them within a win of fifth-placed Old Mentonians, with five rounds remaining. They take on Old Camberwell in an away game this Saturday at 2pm.

In women's footy, the Jackettes have qualified for the VFA Division 4 finals, after finishing third in the regular season thanks to a gutsy 4.4 (28) to 3.3 (21) victory against Parkdale last Saturday.

Lindi Nankin and Gabrielle Mendelow kicked two goals each, Maddy Smart dominated the rucks, and Amy Sekler and Daniella Abraham tackled hard all game.

The Jackettes will host Parkdale – now a very familiar opponent – in the first elimination final this Saturday from 9.20am at Gary Smorgon Oval, Albert Park.