



## Cheltenham Rustlers take A1 DBA premiership for the 4<sup>th</sup> year running!

Rustlers go back-to-back-to-back-to-back!



On a strikingly sunny perfect day for baseball out at Clow St, Dandenong, the Cheltenham Rustlers A1 team successfully defended their DBA A1 premiership flag against the Berwick Dodgers; the fourth consecutive A grade flag for the club, and a simply stunning achievement.



Playing the Dodgers in glorious spring weather, **Dave Clarkson's** A1 Rustlers were never headed in their 7-3 win. It was a true team effort, where excellent sustained pitching, smart and disciplined batting, together with some reasonable defence, meant that the Rustlers were able to lead from start to finish. But it wasn't all plain sailing, and the result wasn't sealed until a commanding 9<sup>th</sup> innings 3K pitching performance from **Matt Blackmore**.



On the hill Rustlers starter **Blake Cunningham** was dominant over the first five innings, throwing virtually untouchable stuff to scatter 3 hits for no runs. On the other side of things, the Dodgers starter was throwing equally well, but singles in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to young gun **Brett Curnow** and **Adam Blackley** got things moving on the scoreboard for Chelt with two start-up runs. A sac fly to **Russell Ferguson** in the 5<sup>th</sup> stretched the lead to 3-zip.

But, the Dodgers are a quality outfit, you always knew they were going to produce something and in the 6<sup>th</sup> the game took a more exciting turn for the Berwick crowd. A Chelt fielding error followed by 3 consecutive base hits meant that the Dodgers pegged back 2 runs to cut the lead to 1; with a sweet double play by **Russell Ferguson** at Short limiting the damage – a snagged line drive with a quick-thinking tag on the runner at 2<sup>nd</sup> killing the Berwick rally.

In the Chelt 6<sup>th</sup> a 2-out full-count RBI single by another young Rustler star **Jak Jowett** drilled through the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> gap scored the runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> to give Chelt a little more breathing space at 4-2 heading into the final third stanza of the titanic struggle.

A tiring Cunningham started the 7<sup>th</sup> but after a couple of hits and a run to make it 4-3, coach Clarko felt Blake had served the cause as far as he could



# Rustlers

that day and made the switch to **Matt Blackmore** to take it through to conclusion. Workhorse Blake had a fantastic day on the hill, setting up the win with 6 quality innings, scattering 8 hits for 3 runs. Considering the capability of some of the bats in the Dodgers outfit, he had a cracker.

Matt came in and, in a huge play in the context of the game, intentionally walked a big Dodger bat to load the bases on 2 outs, hoping to force the 3<sup>rd</sup> out. Intentional walks are always a big gamble and in this case huge being a 'Grannie'. Blackmore walked the walk (or pitched the pitch) striking out the next Dodger bat with the go-ahead runners on base in a huge K for the Rustlers.



The crowd could sense the Dodgers had let a big opportunity pass them by, and this ruthless Rustlers outfit will always take advantage if the other team doesn't. And in the 7<sup>th</sup> they did just that.

With the Dodgers starter tiring, the Berwick manager brought in his reliever who was promptly hit hard for a big 2 RBI single to **Anthony Reinke**, making it 6-3. Another highlight of the dig was a smart running bunt to **Brett Curnow** which beat out the defence to further put pressure on a flagging Dodgers outfit.



Sensing blood, Matt Blackmore seemed to get more commanding as he settled to the task on the mound striking out 2 in the 8<sup>th</sup> while giving up one hit for no damage on the scoreboard. Chelt added an insurance run in their 8<sup>th</sup> when **Jak Jowett** in some heads-up baseball (at least for the batting team) took advantage of a run-down play involving Adam Burton, and scored from 3<sup>rd</sup> while the Dodger pitcher was occupied by Adam's base running shenanigans, to make it a deciding 7-3.

Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and with Matt Blackmore deciding the game needed to end in an emphatic fashion, proceeded to strike out the required 3 Dodgers bats to end the game and close out the "Four-peat" victory for the Rustlers with a minimum of nerves for the watching Rustlers fans.





Coach **Dave Clarkson** was, as always, humble in victory, conceding in his post-match address that the beaten Dodgers were getting closer, but it wasn't hard to hear the pride in his voice for his victorious Rustlers!



The win was significant not only for the fact that it was the club's 4<sup>th</sup> A1 pennant in 4 years, but remarkably it is the club's **9<sup>th</sup> A grade premiership in the past 11 seasons!** In what has been a dominant start to the new millennium, the Rustlers have taken a stranglehold on division 1 pennants from 2001 onwards, and if President Dave Stenhouse and club coach Dave "Clarko" Clarkson have their way, and with a crop of Rustlers stars coming through, the trend will keep going on.

## **Congratulations 2011 A1 Rustlers in an A1 performance!**



### **2011 DBA A1 Champions Cheltenham Rustlers "Four-peat"**

**Back:** Trevor Clemens, Matt Carlile, Kane Davidson, Blake Cunningham, Brendan Horne, David Clarkson, Brett Curnow

**In between (right):** Adam Burton

**Front:** Yoshi Campitelli, Anthony Reinke, Matt Blackmore, Jak Jowett, Adam Blackley, Russell Ferguson