

# Waverley Leader



## SPORT

### Little League but Wildcats have big hearts

Chris Vernuccio

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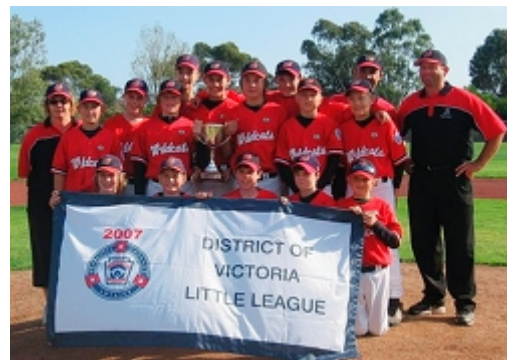
WAVERLEY Wildcats need only to look within their own ranks to form an all-star team.

In April, the Wildcats clinched the Victorian Little League Championship, competing against sides made-up of players from up to five clubs.

The reward was a spot in last month's National Little League Championships in Queensland and, once more, the Wildcats were pitted against representative teams.

But, the under-12 side, again, excelled and was undefeated in the qualifying rounds only to be thwarted at the semi-final stage by one run, missing out on the opportunity to qualify for the Asia Pacific Little League Championships in Hong Kong.

After claiming the Victorian Little League championship in April, the Waverley Wildcats fell just short of the national crown.



But, coach Richard Mason said the team should be thrilled with its efforts.

"Apart from the parents, I was probably the proudest bloke walking around of their achievements," Mason said.

Mason said the squad had the talent to go all the way to the title but faced an unwanted distraction before the tournament commenced.

"I assumed that we were going to Hong Kong being that we went into this tournament the red-hot favourites," he said.

"To be told 10 minutes before the opening game that our bats were ineligible because they were a different size to the other states' was a little confidence kick in the guts for the kids.

"But, they held their heads up high and just got on with what they had to do."

The squad, which was selected after three weeks of trials in February and March, trained 15 hours-a-week from April to June.

The players also received specialist coaching from former VIS head coach Matthew Sheldon-Collins, Baseball Victoria development manager and Waverley senior catcher Grant Karlsen and Australian national team pitching coach Phil Dale.