

Bombers inspired by new 'recruit'



See the Bomber fly up: Dons coach Kevin Sheedy likes what he sees as he puts football-mad Ahmed through a training drill at Windy Hill, just like his idols.

Picture: CAMERON L'ESTRANGE

Dons meet their hero

MARY PAPADAKIS

IT WAS a dream come true — the chance to kick a footy with Essendon stars.

Not to mention rub shoulders with veteran coach Kevin Sheedy. And Ahmed, 13, enjoyed every second of it.

He captured the hearts and minds of his idols this week when he attended training at Windy Hill.

Ahmed was given the star treatment after being featured in the *Sunday Herald Sun* last week.

He was born in Iraq without lower arms and hands and with severe deformities in his lower legs — possibly as a result of parental exposure to chemical weapons.

Ahmed lived in a Baghdad orphanage until Melbourne aid worker Moira Kelly and her Children First Foundation brought him to Australia in 2001 for life-changing surgery. His lower legs were amputated and he was introduced to prosthetic limbs.



Last week's report.

Ahmed hasn't looked back since.

He was made to feel like a true hero at Windy Hill and was welcomed into the Essendon ranks.

His smile continued to grow wider as players praised his courage and can-do attitude.

The players labelled him amazing and called him a superstar.

Sheedy — who gave a rapt Ahmed a big hug — also paid special tribute to his bravery and determination.

"He's great, he has marvellous

courage and great character," he said. "It's about energy and positivity. You only have to look at his face."

Sheedy also gave an attentive Ahmed plenty of coaching tips.

Ahmed was overjoyed when players including Jason Johnson, Aaron Henneman, David Hille and Anzac Medal winner Andrew Lovett signed his jumper and played kick-to-kick with him.

Meeting stars James Hird, Adam McPhee and Matthew Lloyd was also a highlight for him.

"I'm over the moon. I can't believe it," Ahmed said.

"It's awesome."

Hird took his hat off to Ahmed, who impressed all the players with his ability to mark and kick the ball.

"It's pretty amazing," he said.

"Just watching what he can do with a footy with the disabilities he has is really incredible."

Ahmed now lives at the Children First farm at Kilmore.

To make donations to the foundation, visit www.childrenfirstfoundation.com.



The boy and the Bombers: Ahmed with Matthew Lloyd (left) and Kevin Sheedy and James Hird (right).

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