

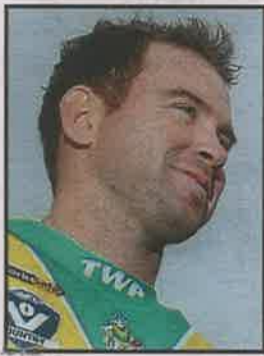
SPORT

TENNIS

Retired international champ serves up volley of wisdom 62



● **NRL** Wests Tigers send star Benji Marshall to bench 61 ● **AFL** Players feel brunt of huge bumps at tribunal 64



● Jason Gram

Border move to get Gram on track

BY JAKE BOURKE

JASON Gram will move to Albury in a bid to help his transition into Ovens and Murray football.

The boom North Albury recruit, who will miss at least three weeks with yet another hamstring strain, has failed to set the competition alight



as most pundits expected he would.

Hoppers' coach Jason Akermanis, who recently relocated to the Border, said the three-

hour commute from Melbourne had played its part in Gram's sluggish and injury-plagued start to the year.

Gram, who has been staying on the Border at weekends, will move to the area full-time in the coming weeks.

And Akermanis expects that to make a huge difference.

"I think you'll find as the

season goes on there will be some big improvements from him," Akermanis said.

"Until now he probably hadn't quite realised that you can't be a part-time footballer in this league, and I mean that commute wise.

"I found that out myself.

"It just doesn't work.

"Once he's up here training

and living full-time, I think we'll see some improvements.

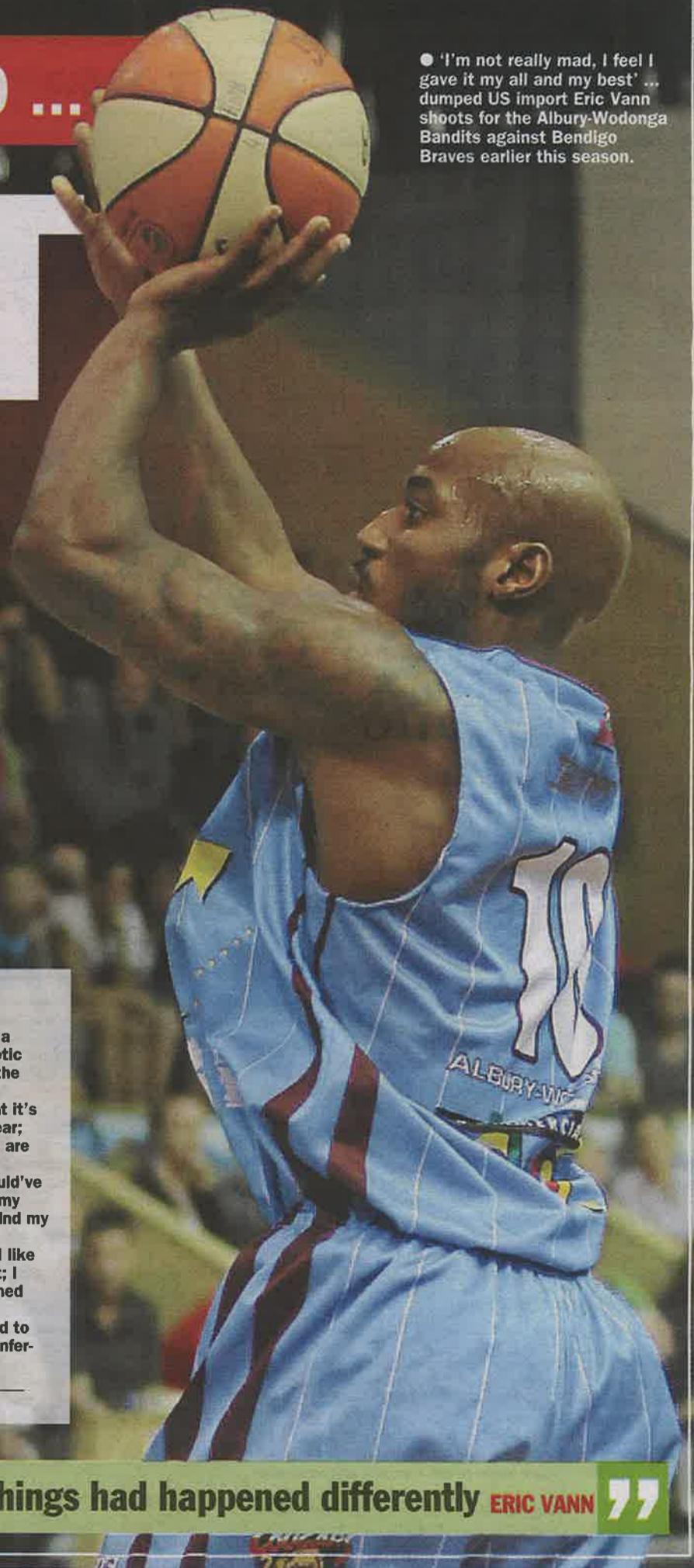
"He's out for three weeks, that's a no-brainer, and now he needs to get it right."

Akermanis said the club wouldn't stop Gram travelling to the US during the interleague break.

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LOW POST IMPRESSIONS SO ...

IMPORT VANN GOES



● 'I'm not really mad, I feel I gave it my all and my best' ... dumped US import Eric Vann shoots for the Albury-Wodonga Bandits against Bendigo Braves earlier this season.

BY STEVE SMITH

THE Albury-Wodonga Bandits' tumultuous SEABL championship defence was thrown into further disarray yesterday, with the Border club dumping underperforming import Eric Vann.

The decision came less than 24 hours after the Bandits unveiled US forward Flenard Whitfield as their replacement for all-star centre Momo Ntumba, who has been ruled out for the rest of the season with a knee injury.

It is understood Vann's replacement will be former Iona University playmaker Jermel Jenkins, who played against the Bandits in a pre-season game at the Lauren Jackson Sports Centre, torching the Border outfit for 41 points, eight assists and six rebounds.



COMMERCIAL CLUB BANDITS

Coincidentally, it was the same game Ntumba suffered his season-ending patella tendon injury.

The quietly spoken Maryland native admitted he was disappointed at being sacked, saying he "could've been utilised better".

"Yeah, I'm disappointed, shocked," Vann said.

"I just feel like me being a certain type of player, athletic and quick, I had to fit into the offence.

"My understanding is that it's the same offence as last year, but me and Jazz (Ferguson) are two different players.

"I feel as though they could've used my talents better, all my shots came from trying to find my niche in the offence.

"I'm not really mad, I feel like I gave it my all and my best; I just wish things had happened differently."

The Bandits have slumped to the bottom of the South Conference with Knox Raiders.

Continued page 67

“Yeah, I’m disappointed, shocked ... I just wish things had happened differently ERIC VANN”



● Eric Vann

Wayward shooting import misses the mark

From back page

The Bandits face a tough road trip to Nunawading and Geelong this weekend.

Vann was averaging 20.7 points, 2.5 rebounds and 2.9 assists a game

but was clearly struggling with his shot, hitting 34.1 per cent of his field goal attempts and just 29.5 per cent of his three-pointers.

Indeed, Vann was leading the league in field goal attempts (232) but was

just 10th in made baskets (79) and scoring average.

He was the league's player of the week in round 2 after a 39-point explosion in the Bandits' come-from-behind win over Geelong but struggled to replicate that.

The Bandits released a statement late yesterday afternoon, saying it had "taken the difficult decision of releasing Eric Vann from his contract with the club".

"Since arriving in Australia Eric has maintained

a very professional, friendly and approachable manner and we have appreciated this greatly," the statement read.

"Personal values and the way players carry themselves off court are important to us and we

will work hard to ensure future players also display these same attributes.

"We sincerely wish Eric all the very best in the future and thank our members and sponsors who have supported Eric during his time with us."