

BASEBALL VICTORIA SUMMER LEAGUE

Bombers' deadly strike

ESSENDON WINS FOURTH TITLE IN TENSE FINAL

Tim Michell

ESSENDON became the second team in Baseball Victoria Summer League history to win four consecutive Division 1 titles with a thrilling extra-innings victory over Blackburn on Sunday.

The Bombers had to dig deep to take out the 2014-15 Division 1 title after being pushed to Game 3 by the Orioles.

Blackburn rallied after losing the opening game of the grand final series last week, taking out Game 2 by two runs at Melbourne Ball Park on Saturday.

The result set the scene for a tense decider on Sunday, with runs difficult to come by in the opening stages.

Essendon hit the scoreboard early, but an arm wrestle ensued through the middle innings as both sides struggled to take a foothold in the contest.

The Bombers held their lead until the top of the fifth inning when Blackburn

scored twice, only for Essendon to answer as a Thomas Dicker hit to left field tied the match at 2-2.

Dicker was again the key in the seventh inning as Essendon took a momentary stranglehold on the match.

The Bombers escaped in the next inning despite the Orioles loading the bases, as both sides entered the nail-biting final inning of the match tied at 3-3.

The teams could not be separated after nine innings, but Essendon would land its knockout punch in the bottom of the 10th inning.

With bases loaded and two outs remaining, Sam Moon connected with a drive to right field to spark rapturous scenes among the Bombers' faithful.

"As soon as he hit it we knew we'd won the game," Essendon assistant coach Richard King said.

The club's fourth-straight Division 1 crown matched

the feat achieved by Waverley between 1990-93.

"We're only the second team in the history of the league, which is well over 100 years old, to do that," King said.

"From an accomplishment point of view it doesn't get much bigger than that."

Dicker, whose brother David and father Bruce are involved with Blackburn, was named grand final series MVP.

"Tom's dad is the president of Blackburn and his brother plays for Blackburn," King said.

"It's a bittersweet thing for the Dicker family I guess.

"I have no idea how you can channel your energy when you're playing against people that are so close to you."

The victory signalled the end of head coach Peter Giles and King's tenure, with several of the club's veteran players also considering retirement.



Essendon's Jared Cruz makes a slide during Game 2 of the grand final series on Saturday.
Picture: KRIS REICHL



Essendon celebrates its fourth successive Division 1 triumph.

Picture: TANIA CHALMERS