

Junior footballer on life support after chest knock triggers heart attack

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A junior footballer who suffered a heart attack after being knocked unconscious during a match in Ballarat at the weekend remains on life support, club officials say.

Ballarat Football League CEO Rod Ward told [The Ballarat Courier](#) yesterday that every football club in the league would have access to potentially life-saving defibrillators by next year in the wake of the incident.

Mr Ward said it was a "horrible irony" that 16-year-old Bacchus Marsh footballer Nathan Prince collapsed on Saturday, just a few weeks after the BFL made a commitment to roll out defibrillators to all clubs.



Friends and teammates leave the Eastern Oval after Saturday's incident. Photo: *Ballarat Courier*

"We actually had a club meeting three weeks ago and, at that meeting, we made a stated aim to have a defibrillator at every club by next year," Mr Ward said.

"Our aim is to make sure every club has one (a defibrillator), and we are going to make sure that if an accident like this happens again, there is one available."

Nathan Prince sustained traumatic injuries when he was struck in the chest while jostling for position during the under 16.5 qualifying football final between Bacchus Marsh and North Ballarat City.

Ambulance officers rushed to Eastern Oval just before 4pm, when the Bacchus Marsh player collapsed on the field at the start of the second quarter.

A spokesperson for Ambulance Victoria said the 16-year-old had gone into cardiac arrest on the way to hospital, and ambulance officers were able to revive him.

Bacchus Marsh Football Netball Club president Chris Kearney said doctors had put Prince in a medically-induced coma to stabilise his condition.

"He's on life support, but he is breathing by himself," Mr Kearney said.

"All his vital signs are good, so we expect he will make a full recovery."

To roll out the defibrillators, the Ballarat Football League is working with non-profit group Defib Your Club For Life. The group provides automatic defibrillators to football clubs across the state, at a cost of \$2300 each.

Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance paramedic Andrew White founded the initiative last year in memory of Stephen Buckman, a 19-year-old Rupertswood footballer who collapsed and died while training.

In the past two years, deaths have occurred on football ovals at Gisborne, Silvan, Moulamein, Woorinen, Maryborough and Werribee.

Mr White said it was essential for every football club in the state to have access to a defibrillator.

"Most clubs can't afford them straight away, but my personal view is that if a club can afford to pay players, they can afford to buy a defibrillator," he said.

"A defibrillator is the most important piece of equipment you can have at your club."

Mr White said a person's chance of surviving cardiac arrest without defibrillation was dramatically reduced after just 10 minutes.

Bacchus Marsh Football Club has spent the past fortnight fundraising to cover the cost of purchasing three defibrillators.

Club president Chris Kearney said the club planned to purchase one defibrillator going into the cricket season and at least two others going into next year's football season.

The Victorian Country Football League announced last month it would offer a \$300 subsidy to the cost of a defibrillator purchased through Defib Your Club For Life.

The Ballarat Football League is also assisting local clubs with the cost of the equipment.

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