

Schache: I was lucky

CHRIS CAVANAGH

WESTERN Bulldogs forward Josh Schache has admitted he was "pretty lucky" to get a free kick paid against Hawthorn's James Sicily in the final quarter of Sunday's match.

The AFL ticked off the free, ruling the incident was more than 50m from the ball, and backed the umpire's decision that the contact was forceful.

However, Schache said the incident was just "a bit of push and shove" and he was surprised to receive the free kick, awarded as a centre bounce was about to take place.

"I don't know," Schache said when asked if Sicily hit him with a closed fist.

"It was just a bit of push and shove and I guess I was pretty lucky to get a free kick from it."

"But I suppose the AFL is clamping down on a bit of push and shoving behind the ball, so I just played the whistle."

Schache kicked a goal, giving the Bulldogs the lead as they soared to victory after trailing by as much as 30 points at the start of the last quarter.

"The feeling was pretty electric to be down by a fair bit and to come back and kick that goal to hit the front was pretty special," Schache said.

GUNSTON'S CLARITY CALL

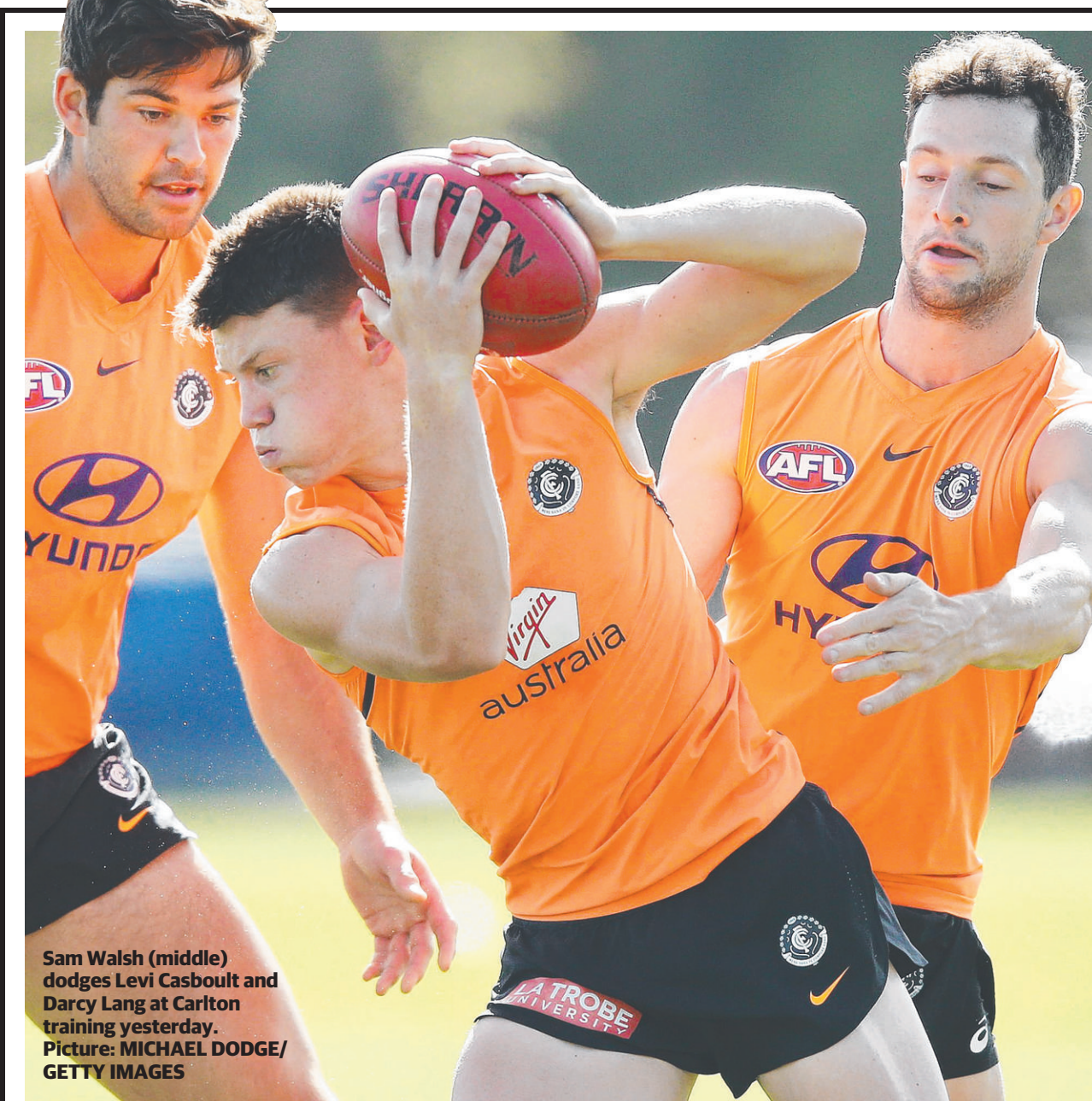
HAWTHORN forward Jack Gunston admits players were "a little bit" confused about what constituted a free kick for off-the-ball incidents.

But he said there should be no confusion after the controversial call to penalise teammate James Sicily for his last-quarter push on Bulldog Josh Schache in front of goal last Sunday.

The Hawks sought AFL clarification on a number of umpiring decisions, including the free kick against Sicily, made during its loss to the Bulldogs.

"The clear vision we've seen, you can't see if he has a closed fist or an open fist," he said. "As a footy club we've asked the questions and we just want to be clear for going forward."

NICK SMART



Sam Walsh (middle) dodges Levi Casboul and Darcy Lang at Carlton training yesterday. Picture: MICHAEL DODGE/GETTY IMAGES

MURPHY OK AFTER KNOCK

JOSEPH ARTHUR

CARLTON is confident a minor head knock won't stop veteran Marc Murphy from facing Sydney on Saturday.

The 31-year-old only walked laps instead of training with the main group yesterday as a precaution.

Murphy suffered the head knock in an incident involving Port Adelaide's Sam Powell-Pepper during Saturday's loss at Adelaide Oval.

However, Murphy passed all concussion tests and played out the game.

The club also gave Murphy an easy week on the track last week after the Round 1 clash against Richmond.

Ruckman Matthew Kreuzer trained with the main group and appears close to a return as he continues to build his match fitness.

Forward Charlie Curnow looks set to miss at least three weeks with bone-bruising in his knee.

Blues recruit Nic Newman said he was "highly motivated" to get a win against his former team at Marvel Stadium.

We can rebound

THEY are the early-season numbers that demonstrate the devastating effect of the loss of Tom Mitchell to Hawthorn's engine room.

After two rounds, Champion Data has the Hawks midfield ranked 17th for disposal differential, 17th for uncontested possession differential, and 14th for contested possessions differential.

It is ranked 18th for clearance differential.

And it now must also contend with the loss of Shaun Burgoyne and Liam Shiels to hamstring injuries.

NICK SMART

It is an early-season conundrum for coach Alastair Clarkson, whose side meets North Melbourne on Sunday.

The midfield has been eroded, but forward Jack Gunston said the Hawks had the depth to cover the losses.

"Dan Howe is up and going again, and we've got David Mirra, who was pretty unlucky to miss on the weekend," Gunston said yesterday.

"Chad (Wingard) is going really well on the track. We've got a lot of guys ready to come

ENGINE GLOOM	
Hawthorn off the boil in 2019	
Rank	
Disposal diff: -82.5	17th
Con poss diff: -11.5	14th
Uncon poss diff: -77.5	17th
Marks diff: -18	15th
Uncon marks diff: -21.5	17th
Clearance diff: -11.5	18th

Source: CHAMPION DATA

in and our philosophy is always lose a soldier, replace one. We have a really strong system here and anyone can step in at any time."

Clarkson threw recruit Tom Scully straight in last week without having played a practice game.

Gunston said he would have no issue if Wingard followed the same route.

"All the signs are that he's training really well," he said.

"It's hard to bring a guy with that talent and not play him when he feels ready."

"He obviously had a setback a few weeks ago with that calf injury, so we've had to delay his debut with the club."

"We'll make sure he's right to go, and if he is ready, then it


is hard to keep a guy like that out."


Hawthorn surrendered a five-goal lead at the final change to lose to the Western Bulldogs by 19 points on Sunday. Gunston said it was a bitter pill to swallow.

"We only played about a quarter and a half of good footy," he said.

"There's a lot of positives in that, but also a lot of negatives in that we let them kick nine goals to one in the last quarter."

"That hasn't happened too many times in my time here." nick.smart@news.com.au





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