

Wombat's skills contest



□ TESTING their punt kicking abilities as part of the Aussie Sports Skills Contest program adopted by Seagulls Junior Rugby League Club were under 14s players Fonz Frank, Jayden Johnson, Ben Van Kervoort and Marcus Cridland.

Photo: CRYSTAL SPENCER D120937b

□ Rugby League
By Bob Anthony

Graham Eadie's new skills program tackles schools

HAVING played for Manly, NSW and Australia, Graham Eadie knows a thing or two about rugby league.

As much as the game is about raw talent, it is also about developing the skills needed to enjoy and excel at it.

That is the purpose of a new program which Graham and Aussie Gateways' Mark Russell are looking to introduce to schools on the Tweed and Far North Coast.

The program, known as the Aussie Sports Skills Contest (ASSC), is designed to be easily implemented into school sports curriculums, as well as allow students and children to continue it on their own, utilising a simple but effective means of measuring their own development.

Eadie, named as one of the 100 great players of the past century of rugby league, said the program was designed to work in primary schools, teaching children from kindergarten upwards, not only physical skills needed in the game, but also some of the rich and proud history of league.

"We have identified six basic skills which include sprinting,

punt kicking, grubber kicking, goal kicking, field goal kicking and passing as elements where children can be monitored in their development," Eadie said.

"We also have intended a theory side to the program which teaches children about the game, its history and some of the significant people who have contributed to league over the past 100 years.

"In many ways it is a total package catering for both boys and girls mentally and physically."

ASSC co-ordinator Mark Russell said the beauty of the program was its simplicity and once introduced to the children, could then be "handed over to the individuals" to chart their own progress of the various skills.

"From their first introduction to the different skills, each child participating is measured and then as they return to each skill, they can then measure their own progress against their previous efforts," Russell said.

"This could be times for sprinting, distances kicked or percentag-

es of conversions kicked and accuracy in passing."

Eadie and Russell have already held a demonstration clinic of the program at St John's Primary School, Mullumbimby, with the results impressing both school sports co-ordinators and students.

"We have shown the program to the Tweed Byron Group 18 Junior Rugby League who are pretty enthusiastic about it and have adopted the program for introduction into their member clubs," Russell said. The Tweed Heads Seagulls were one of the first junior clubs to come on board and are starting to see the benefits of the ASSC among their players."

Eadie said because the program had six standard elements which were common to rugby league, he believed it could be used as a basic rugby league development program right across the country.

"The interest we have had from schools in the region has been very strong," Eadie said.

"Because of the appeal of the program for children, some

LEAGUE SKILLS

THE ASSC program has been implemented by the Tweed Heads Seagulls Junior Rugby League Club with the under 14s side among the first to put it to use.

Under 14 coaching director Damien Towell said the program was great in the way it helped players develop skills which they might not use during a game.

"Depending on the position, some boys don't get to develop kicking skills and this program at least gives them that opportunity," Towell said.

"It also provides a break from the normal routine of training. I think the real benefit lies in the fact that it helps to teach core skills which are basic to the game."

schools believe it can be used as a motivational tool, good behaviour being rewarded by doing a session of the skills program."

Both Eadie and Russell believe the Tweed initiative has the potential to become adopted on a national level but until then, they will be happy to see local children become among the best skilled in the game and have fun doing it.

Former Gull stays with Titans

■ From Page 40

The Year and Best and Fairest player in the Q-Cup, Walker has one of the hottest items in the game at the end of last year.

He progress to the NYC has drawn plenty of speculation that he would be getting a starting berth in the senior side but the 19-year-old is still finding his way.

Walker gave a blistering display of his abilities against the Warriors at Skilled Park two weeks ago, scoring two of the five tries he has scored this year - one from a virtual

standing start.

"Shannon is an incredible prospect and is on his way towards representing the club at NRL level in the near future," said Titans managing director Michael Searle.

"His speed, agility and explosiveness needs to be seen to be believed.

"Our head coach John Cartwright has been patient regarding Shannon's elevation into the NRL, which gives him the knowledge the club has a long term view on him."

Walker, a Junior Kangaroo, said he was pleased to settle his future on the Gold Coast just two hours

drive from his family in Kyogle.

"It's pretty exciting," said Walker, who clocked 10.76 seconds for the 100m at age 16.

"I didn't really want to move away from the Gold Coast.

"My fiancée Casie and I are really happy here."

Walker, a regular member of the Titans fulltime training squad, said he was focused on developing his trade to achieve his goal of making his NRL debut.

"I'm not in any rush," he added.



□ Shannon Walker.

Purtell re-signs with Raiders

CANBERRA continued their impressive retention and recruitment drive yesterday with the re-signing of outside back Adrian Purtell. Purtell will remain with the Raiders through to the end of the 2011 season after rejecting advances from reigning premiers Melbourne. The Storm had hoped to attract Purtell to fill the void left by Israel Folau's impending departure, but with a spot in the centres up for grabs at Canberra as well, the 23-year-old decided to remain put. He joins Todd Carney and Bronx Goodwin in re-signing with the club, while Penrith backrower Nathan Smith and Wests Tigers hooker Shane Flanagan will link up with green machine next season.

DeVere joins Bronco ranks

FORMER representative centre Michael De Vere will join Brisbane's coaching ranks next season, adding to incoming coach Ivan Henjak's already impressive support staff. De Vere, one of only two players to score 1,000 points for Brisbane, will link with former teammates Allan Langer, Shane Webcke, Peter Ryan and Paul Green as Henjak's hired help. His appointment as Henjak's fifth specialist assistant coach keeps the "old boys" theme going after greats Langer and Webcke, who played more than 500 NRL games for Brisbane between them, signed on for duty last week.

Mason pleads for support

KANGAROOS forward Willie Mason yesterday launched an impassioned plea with fans to support tomorrow night's Centenary Test before admonishing Sydneysiders as embarrassing should the game not sell out. Despite less than 10,000 tickets being pre-sold, organisers remain hopeful of attracting a crowd of 25,000 to the SCG for the historic game, but Mason said he'd be gutted by anything less than a full house. "I think it would be an embarrassment to Sydney if they didn't fill the stadium up," Mason said. "Even in Melbourne I think they would get 40,000 to something like this. If it was in Brisbane they'd pack Suncorp out - I just think they need to get out and support rugby league."

Kiwi Leuluai arrives in time

NEW Zealand Test halfback Thomas Leuluai declared himself fit and ready to go following his 24-hour trip to Sydney for tomorrow's Centenary Test. A surprisingly fresh-faced Leuluai trained with his Kiwis teammates for the first time yesterday, the Wigan-based No.7 with just two sessions to learn the ropes under new coach Stephen Kearney.

Move backfires for Bowen

NORTH Queensland's gamble to rush Matt Bowen back has backfired with the livewire fullback yesterday ruled out for at least three weeks. The Cowboys have been forced to rest Bowen after he suffered yet another setback with his lingering knee injury.