



# DOWNS RUGBY ROUND-UP

Welcome Downs rugby followers to the current installment of our regular newsletter which covers all the recent activity.

Much has happened, from an administrative perspective, as we madly work behind the scenes to be ready for the start of our respective competitions. We have recently had some great news with the appointment of a new Development Officer – more on that later. The other piece of exciting news is the Highfields initiative to form a partnership with UQ Gatton Club to provide a new A Grade team in the Risdon Cup. It is with open arms that we welcome UQ Gatton back into the competition.

We hope that you find the following information useful.

## COMPETITION UPDATES

### Juniors

Junior Committee meeting to be held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb to discuss all matters relating to the competition for 2011.

New Pathways Laws need to be address within all clubs as changes affect most age groups. All clubs have opportunity to attend an Education morning on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March from 9am – 11am at the Downs Rugby Office to discuss, with Qld Rugby Representatives the changes and how they will impact on coaches and players.

Most clubs have held their sign-ons and player numbers and team nominations are being finalised.

Clubs are keen to host a “Junior through to Senior day” at their clubs where the Juniors play in the morning, followed by Senior clubs in the afternoon. This will be discussed further at the Committee Meeting and will be taken into account with the draw creation.

First round of Junior Competition will be 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2011.

There will be an opportunity for clubs to play some half time games at Suncorp Stadium as well as participate in a Junior March Past in March. Participants in these events will be discussed at the Junior Committee Meeting.

### Teenage

Friday nights is now underway with the first games held on 18 February. These games were basically an opportunity to sort out teams to enable a draw to be finalised. We were overwhelmed with the number of players particularly in the under 13 and under 14/15 age groups.

A draw has now been finalised which will see one game being played at USQ/Saints ground. This will coincide with byes in the associated under 13 and under 17 age groups. This should avoid siblings playing in different locations, unless of course they play for different clubs.

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## Seniors

☺ We are now pleased to announce that Highfields has partnered with UQ Gatton to enable UQ Gatton to field the 10<sup>th</sup> A Grade side in the Risdon Cup competition. By way of background, Downs Rugby made the decision at the end of last season that the Risdon Cup needed to expand to 10 teams to enhance the overall strength of the competition and to facilitate a more stream lined competition. Whilst the initial preference was for Highfields to fill the vacant spot, Highfields weren't completely certain about the timing and as an alternative, and through their own initiative, have now formed a new playing arrangement with UQ Gatton. This will see the re-introduction of the UQ Gatton side (affectionately and respectfully known as "the black pigs") into the Risdon Cup after an absence of three years.

☺ With the introduction of UQ Gatton into the Risdon Cup, we have been able to finalise the Seniors A Grade Draw. The other grades will now fall into place. The proposed Draw has been circulated to each of the Club Presidents for dissemination of information within their respective clubs;

☺ The Competition Rules have also been finalised and have been delivered to all clubs.

☺ With 10 A grade teams, we propose to continue with the 5 team finals series.

☺ Games will start on 2 April 2011 – Grand Final to be held 3 September – all games and finals will be finished prior to the start of the World Cup.

☺ The Risdon Cup competition will continue to play through the season with only one break weekend – Easter.

**THE RISDON CUP** has been repaired and now sports a new solid timber base. Toowoomba Bears are the proud caretakers of the Risdon Cup until the Grand Final Series for 2011.



## DARLING DOWNS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Being the new Development officer of Darling Downs I feel it is my duty to introduce myself to you all, and to give a brief background on who I am and where I come from.

My name is Tom Bower or "Bowzer" as I am affectionately called by most of my rugby mates. I am a 27 year old scrum half who is originally off a Merino Stud farm near Armidale, NSW. I believe I was born to do be a developing officer, as I have been coaching and developing individuals since the age of 12 when I was working for five dollars and hour as a tennis coach.



I come from a family of Rugby Union enthusiasts with my father Tim, coaching St Albert's in Armidale to a premiership two years ago and my brother Dominic being involved in the Australian U20's and Randwick Rugby Club.

After school, I completed a Bachelor of Education at the University of New England, then became the sports co-ordinator at St Joseph's, Uralla. After completing a year in Primary Teaching, I left Australia to pursue my interests in playing Rugby Union in Europe. I completed two seasons in Ireland and another in Germany.

In Ireland I signed up with Boyne RFC in the Leinster competition. The rugby was perfect for forwards and a scrum half. As a profession I was given opportunity to be the Youth Development Officer with Leinster for County Louth. I gained valuable experience... and a pretty nifty accent whilst in this position. I also kept working with senior rugby, coaching

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Boyne Rugby club men's 2nd grade, who finished 3rd in the Leinster competition.

Once I completed my time in Ireland I was given an opportunity to play for Berlin Rugby Club in the Bundesliga National competition. I qualified through my heritage to play for the National team and was invited to train with the German Nation 7's team. Whilst playing for Berlin I also helped coach the Berlin Rugby Youth Academy.

Domestically, I was the head coach at the Northern Inland Academy of Sport until taking this position and have volunteered on numerous occasions to assist with the ARU Development Officers of the New England and North West New South Wales with their High Performance junior trainings.

It has been three weeks now since I moved to Toowoomba and could not be happier. I am excited to be part of both Queensland Rugby and Downs Rugby respectively and look forward to the growth of our game and many lasting friendships here in the Darling Downs.

Yours in Rugby,  
Tom Bower -- Ph: 0409 902 116

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## RUGBY EDUCATION

- Junior Pathway Laws – all new changes – Downs Rugby Office – Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March – 9– 11am – *register attendance direct with Administrator*
- Monday 7/03/11- Coaching Kids - Downs Rugby Office 5pm-8pm
- Monday 21/03/11 - SmartRugby - Downs Rugby Office - 6pm-8pm
- Sunday 17/04/11 - Level 1 (Foundation) - Downs Rugby Office - 8am-4pm
- Sunday 17/04/11 - Refereeing Kid - Downs Rugby Office - 8am-11am

All participants need to register for these courses. Registrations are be made by going to:

<http://www.qru.com.au/GrassrootsRugby>

(Follow the links for Education and Training)

Or drop an email to –  
Lachlan.parkinson@qru.com.au

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## DARLING DOWNS SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE TEAM

Downs' Senior Representative Side's season kicked into action last weekend when they took on Brisbane Premier Grade club side Sunnybank in Brisbane. Following on from the recent defensive session with former Wallaby Pat Howard, Down's fielded a near full strength side against Sunnybank.



*Sonny Power, Condamine, contesting the ball*

Sunnybank's willingness to take on Downs at relatively short notice (following the cancellation of the flood relief, Gala Sports Day in St George) is greatly appreciated and full thanks must go to Sunnybank Director of Rugby Gaven Head.

25 players made the trip to Brisbane, in a team that shows a lack of depth due to injury and unavailability in the second row department. Sonny Power (Condamine), whilst he is a mighty man, he is the sole specialist lock for the match. All other positions have good depth.

Spirits in the squad have been buoyed by the recent selection of Downs halfback, Matthew Howse, into the Australian 7's train on squad. It is hoped that

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7's commitments do not interfere with the Downs representative schedule.

The Sunnybank trial was the perfect springboard for upcoming games against Norths Brisbane (5th March, Toowoomba), last year's Premier Grade grand finalists Sunshine Coast (12th March, Dalby) and Gold Coast (19th March, Nerang).

**This was a great hit out for the team with the Downs being successful on the day. Full time score Downs Rugby 31 def Sunnybank 7. For full match report please see our website.**

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## **PAT HOWARD ASSISTS AT DOWNS PRE-SEASON TRAINING**



*Trent Raymond, Pat Howard, Evan Willis and Max Fairbanks at the Coaching session*

Mike Horan and Evan Willis arranged for former Wallaby Pat Howard to attend the Darling Downs Seniors training session which was held on 12 February.

By way of background, Pat Howard is the former Australian international who played 20 tests for Australia between 1993 and 1997 at either flyhalf or centre. Pat then had a successful coaching career where he coached the prestigious Leicester Club to premierships in the UK before working for the ARU in charge of their high performance unit. Always known for his astute rugby brain, it was exciting to have Pat attend one of our training sessions.

About 25 senior players, with a sprinkling of young up and comers, were appreciative of the opportunity to listen and learn from Pat. It was a high level session where Pat challenged the players with different drills and team plays. All in all, a very worthwhile session for players and on lookers. Thank you Pat, you are welcome back anytime.

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## **DARLING DOWNS UNDER 19 REPRESENTATIVE TEAM**

Preparations for this year's Queensland Country Championship are under way for the Downs Under 19's Representative side, with training starting on the last Friday of January. Whilst numbers at training have been variable due to the boys numerous co-curricular interests, the core skills of the group have proven to be of a high standard. The expectation is that this team will be a good match for the strong Premier Colts sides of the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, and that the Downs should have good representation in the South Queensland Under 19's side to play later on in the year.

With former representative players Giorgio Phillips (Australian Schoolboys 'A' 2010), Brodie Hoopert (Queensland Country U/19's 2010) and Kieran Fitzgibbon (Queensland Country U/17's 2010) combining with standouts from last year's Championship's; James Gough, Ash Warren, Baci Wilson and Alex Griffiths, the Downs have a promising future in representative rugby.

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## **DARLING DOWNS REFEREES ASSOCIATION.**

Well here we are at the start of another busy rugby season and all of the same old issues have started to crop up already. We have had one night of teenage competition and the call has already gone out that there is not enough qualified referees at the games.

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Yes we are short numbers and always have been. At the DDRU AGM last weekend I was invited to attend in my capacity as President of DDRRA. During the course of the meeting each of the various committees that make up the DDRU had their chance to have their two cents worth. During the meeting I was quietly adding up the number of teams that play on the Downs from Juniors, Teenagers, Schools and Opens. When you tally up all of the numbers, on a big weekend on the Downs you need 60+ referees to cover all of the games played.

We don't have close to those numbers. At the moment we have about 20 active referees and we are run off our feet covering what we can. It is not fair on the players or referees if you are asking us to do 2, 3 or more games in a day. You can get away with it a little better in Juniors but not when you get to Teenagers and Opens.

What can we all do about this endless problem? The rugby community needs to start stepping up and be more supportive of the referees and each Club/Age Group needs to start putting a process in place so we encourage more people to become referees. It is hard to have a strong and consistent competition with out good match officials that have a good understanding of the laws of the game and how it is played. There is a referee foundation course (Level 1) on the 17/4/11 this season. If you are interested contact either Kerri or Cameron at Downs Rugby.

The question that I pose to the rugby community is instead of saying "were the hell is the ref" is "how can we fix the problem of not enough refs".

Within Downs Referees we have a structured program of education to get you up to whatever standard you want to achieve from juniors up to A Grade and above. We are



all passionate about the great game of rugby and need to work together on this growing problem.

Peter Buchanan – President (0412 854 211)

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### **DARLING DOWNS v BRISBANE NORTHS**

This weekend we are hosting Brisbane Norths at Gold Park on Saturday.

Games being played will be:-

Darling Downs Under 19 v Brisbane North Under 19s – 3.30pm

Toowoomba Bears A Grade v Brisbane Norths A Grade – 5pm

Darling Downs Open Rep v Brisbane North Premier Grade – 6.30pm.

Come along to Gold Park and witness some exciting rugby at this early stage of our season.

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*Goondiwindi U13 having a pre-game chat with Peter Buchanan who refereed the game at Gold Park on Friday night.*

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## OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS:-

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[www.downsrugby.com](http://www.downsrugby.com)

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