HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIT HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIT



The implementation of our strategic plan, "Towards 2007" will roll out priority programs that will allow Australian Rugby to dominate and differentiate itself from its major competitors.

> Adam Ashley-Cooper is one of seven 2003/2004 Australian Sevens players offered professional Super 12 contracts for the 2005 season. Getty Images



In 2004, the High Performance Unit began the implementation of its new strategic plan for the next four years, leading into the Rugby World Cup in France – "Towards 2007". The Unit spent much of 2003 developing this plan so that the legacy of RWC 2003 and the momentum of one of Australian Rugby's defining moments would not be lost. The implementation of this strategic plan began in earnest this year with the roll out of the priority programs that would allow Australian Rugby to dominate and differentiate itself from its major competitors.

The significant initiatives of this process completed in 2004 include:

- The signing of a heads of agreement by all Rugby bodies agreeing to critical programs leading into RWC 2007. One significant element of this agreement was the establishment of the Australian Rugby Squad that will undergo 12-month national programs.
- The introduction of an Elite Player Development Program that established a clearly defined pathway for Australian Rugby's elite schoolboys through to our professional programs, including the Wallabies.
- The establishment of a coordinated sports science program, the highlight of which includes a National Testing

Program to track all players' physical development throughout the pathway.

- The expansion of the playing and coaching succession base for the Wallabies through the decision to establish a fourth Super team in Perth in 2006.
- The establishment of the world's best industrial relations framework through the smooth and successful renegotiation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with our professional players.

In addition to these new initiatives, some of the Unit's major achievements include:

- Team Wallaby regaining the Cook Cup by defeating England at Twickenham.
- The re-signing of significant Wallabies leading into RWC 2007 including George Gregan, Stephen Larkham, Lote Tugiri, Phil Waugh, David Lyons, Clyde Rathbone, Jeremy Paul, Mat Rogers and Chris Latham.
- The rollout of a leadership development program for professional players.
- Andrew Cole winning Super 12 Referee of the Year and the establishment of the National Referees Academy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the staff of the High Performance Unit for their tremendous achievements in 2004. I have, on writing this report, decided to pursue a career opportunity outside rugby, but will look back on my time with the ARU and particularly with my staff with the fondest of memories. We are all just custodians of this great game and I believe the staff of the Unit will continue ensuring that Australian Rugby remains of the forefront of the professional game.

The roll out of new initiatives within Elite Player Development through 2004 is seen as an important step to assisting Australia remain a world Rugby power on an ongoing basis into the 2007 and 2011 World Cups. A great deal of work by all within the HPU and the professional arms of the provincial Super 12 unions has resulted in the development of a progressive and integrated program for young players on their way to representation at the highest level. Much work is still to be done and the ever-changing professional and elite player development environment ensures we continue to strive for the most effective programs and pathways to develop our best young players.

National Talent Squad Program

The National Talent Squad (NTS) program kicked off in 2004. The program is a

nationally coordinated and delivered program designed for the best 15-18 year old schoolboys displaying the potential to play at the highest levels. The program has been integrated into both the provincial union and schools landscapes to ensure the best schoolboy players are serviced with long-term development and best practice in mind. The program has enabled players at this level to be serviced appropriately to train them for professional levels of representation.

The program resources include skills coaches and strength and conditioning coaches in the three Super 12 provinces, working face-to-face with the young players. Importantly, the program has the capacity to service players outside of the three Super 12 provinces and throughout 2004 has serviced players in Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The number of players from the non-Super 12

provinces having the potential to be involved in the program will increase over time as Rugby grows further in these areas and talent identification systems are extended.

Player programs are designed by professional staff using National Skill & Physical Development models that have been developed using the expertise and experience of the best coaches at National and Super 12 level. The models ensure that player programming is based on longterm development and uses the Wallabies as the benchmark.

The development of schoolboy players through the NTS program will ensure that players entering the professional environments are well into their "training age" and continued refinement and high performance training can be programmed, rather than remedial and base level work that takes away valuable time within the Super 12 environments.

There were 76 players involved in the 2004 NTS program, ranging in age from 15-17 years. The flow-on effect of the NTS program into Australian Schoolboys, U19 and U21 teams will create important continuity and enhance the effectiveness of these teams, as players make their way through the pathway to Super 12 and

Although the NTS program does not currently involve a team playing matches, many NTS players were involved in the 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games Sevens team that were gold medallists in the U18 version of the senior Commonwealth Games held in Bendigo, Victoria in December. Congratulations must go to all team members, as well as coaching staff Scott Bowen and Manu Sutherland (Elite Player Development program Coach - NSW) and physiotherapist Cameron Watson.



ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS -

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ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS continued...

AIS Rugby Union Squad Program

The AIS Rugby Union Squad program provides the best players in the NTS program with the opportunity to gain non-residential scholarships at the AIS. As an extension to the NTS program, the access to services provided by the AIS ensures that Wallaby and Super 12 players of the future are exposed to world best practice in all areas, both on and off field. The program also involves coaches and staff from within the High Performance Unit covering critical skill and physical development models.

In 2004, the 19 players offered scholarships attended three performance camps at the AIS. The players received expert coaching from HPU and Super 12 coaching staff and high-level education and medical support from the AIS staff. The education of these top players in the areas of nutrition, banned substances, recovery, skill acquisition and performance psychology by AIS staff ensures best practice models can be followed and potential transition into professional Super 12 environments is effective.

The players were presented to by Wallaby and Brumby lock David Giffin on the mental preparation required to play at the highest levels and new Brumbies Head Coach Laurie Fisher on the complexities of the scrum. AIS Squad physiotherapist Kate Anderson ensured the boys were well cared for physically and potential problem areas for development recognised and implemented into programs.

Ten AIS Rugby Union Squad players were selected for the Australian Schools team in 2004. They were Pauliasi Taumoepeau - captain (NSW), Pekahou Cowan (NSW), Richard Stanford (NSW), Leon Bott (NSW), Shaun Foley (NSW), Saia Faingaa (ACT), Anthony Faingaa - vice captain (ACT), Jack Lam (ACT), Alex Tallon (QLD) and Caleb Brown (QLD).

Three squad members were selected for the Australia U19 team that participated in the IRB U19 World Championship in Durban, South Africa. These players were:

Geoff Abram (QLD), Scott Daruda (QLD) and Pekahou Cowan (NSW).

Eighty percent of the 2004 AIS Squad leaving school graduated to Super 12 provincial programs at academy level and two players, Scott Daruda and Caleb Brown were contracted to Super 12 provinces. The 2004 AIS Squad included:

NSW Pekahou Cowan, Shaun Foley,

Daniel Kelly, Richard Stanford, Chris Stratton, Pauliasi Taumoepeau, Leon Bott, David Dennis, Matthew Bell

ACT Anthony Faingaa, Saia Faingaa, Jack Lam

QLD Geoff Abram, Scott Daruda, Ryan Newman, Caleb Brown, Sani Mananu, Langi Setu, Alex Tallon.

Provincial Academy & High Performance Unit Program

The provincial academy programs in the three Super 12 unions are designed to develop professional players to national standards and involve players 18+ years old. Players are selected having the potential to represent at Super 12 level and are coached and trained in line with the HPU models of long-term skill and physical development. Staff within the elite player development programs of the HPU work closely with the provincial academy staff to develop the identified young players.

In 2004, the HPU implemented a program to service the very best academy players with the potential to play at the highest level. The HPU program ensured that players were serviced appropriately, so their development could be fast tracked to national standards. The use of nationally coordinated staff in the NTS program has enabled appropriate coach athlete ratios, to effectively develop selected players physically and in the areas of core and individual skills.

The 2004 HPU program players have not had the benefits of extensive servicing through a 15-18 year program such as the NTS program and therefore, the HPU program has been able to assist these players to 'catch up' in areas of development that in the future will be developed at a much younger age. The long-term plan of elite player development is to ensure that the majority of players pushing through to the highest levels have been part of a long-term, best-practice model from an early age.

The players in the 2004 program were (from QLD) Hugh McMeniman, Richard Brown, Gene Fairbanks, (from ACT) Adam Ashley-Cooper, Tatafu Nau, Daniel Halangahu, (from NSW) Chris Siale, Marty Wilson, Rex Tapuai.

Australian Under 19s

Full results can be found in the Year in Detail section of the Annual Report.

The Australian Under 19 team competed

at the 2004 IRB U19 World Championship in Durban, South Africa in March-April for the first time since 2001. The HPU has recognised the importance of this development age group, as have most of the leading rugby nations in the world. Competing at this level provides a great opportunity for players who have the potential to play at the highest levels, to experience international competition and benchmark themselves against the best in the world in their age group. For most selected players it is their first taste of high-level senior representative rugby post-school.

The sixth placed finish of the 2004 team was disappointing. The need to have a progressive development and selection program has been recognised and acted upon with the implementation of the NTS and HPU programs, as well as enhancing the relationship and involvement of the HPU in the Australian Schools representative program. All staff have been involved in reviewing the 2004 program and previewing a more extensive and effective program for 2005.

A disappointing loss to England (33-23) in the second pool game, after leading 23-0, provided an indication of the immaturity of the team at the highest levels of the game. It also made it difficult to progress through to the final four, with the final pool game against a very strong New Zealand (30-5 loss). No doubt the players learnt greatly from the experience and will be much better footballers as a result. The difference between schoolboy and senior representative rugby is quite significant and we must work hard to develop these players in a very short timeframe before the 2005 U19 World Championship.

The team was very fortunate to have an experienced and skilled staff that included:

- Scott Wisemantel (Head Coach)
 Elite Player Development Head Coach and Wallabies Coaching Assistant for the 2004 Spring Tour;
- Stu Livingstone (Strength & Conditioning Coordinator) - Elite Player Development Strength & Conditioning Co-ordinator and former Australia A and Brumbies Strength & Conditioning Coach;
- Gavin Malouf (Physiotherapist)
 former Brumbies physiotherapist.

Staff less familiar with this level of competition but very effective contributors included:

- Brendan Morris (Manager)
 now ARU Logistics Operation Manager;
- John Ross (Assistant Coach)

 Assistant Coach)
- now Brumbies Academy Head Coach;



Coach Joe Barakat addresses the Australian U21 squad as they prepare for their World Cup campaign. ARU Media Unit

- Tony McGahan (Technical Advisor);
- Joe Conway (Doctor).

All staff should be commended for their efforts over the five-week campaign.

Australian Under 21s

Full results can be found in the Year In Detail section of the Annual Report.

The Australian Under 21 team competed in the 2004 IRB U21 World Championship in Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Borders) through June. The team finished fourth in the championship after a disappointing yet very educational loss to Ireland in the Semi Final and a poor display in the 3rd/4th play off, losing to South Africa. The team had set the goal of taking out the tournament, with nine players returning from the runners-up 2003 U21 team.

A tentative 25-24 last-minute victory over France in the first pool game got the players' minds on the job and the team went on to have comfortable game two and game three victories over Tonga (64-0) and Argentina (41-3) respectively. The pool game wins had the team placed second overall going into the Semi Final stages of the championship.

The predicted wet and heavy conditions prevailed for the Semi Final and Final and it was in these conditions that the players learnt most. Many of the squad could not remember the last time they played in the wet, so the match was always going to be difficult. A 26-13 loss against a smart Ireland in a dour affair in Glasgow relegated the team to the 3rd/4th play off against South Africa. The final 44-10 score in favour of South Africa did not provide a true reflection of the team's collective talent. The northern hemisphere conditions and playing style proved difficult for our players, yet is an aspect of development that cannot be ignored – again highlighting the benefits of such international tournaments for our potentially elite players.

With many of the 2004 squad already being part of the professional environment (13 of the 26-strong squad were on professional contracts with

Super 12 provinces and five players received Super 12 contracts for the 2005 season after their return), the focus is on performance and development at U21 level, whilst the younger U19s age group is focused on identifying and developing players for the professional levels of the game.

Once again, an experienced and knowledgeable staff serviced the U21 team in 2004 and included:

- Laurie Fisher (Head Coach)Brumbies Head Coach;
- Sean Hedger (Assistant Coach)
 Reds College and QLD A Head Coach;
- Chris Webb (Manager)now Wallabies Assistant Manager;
- Graeme Backen (Physiotherapist)
 Brumbies Physiotherapist;
- Damian Marsh (Strength & Conditioning Coordinator) - Brumbies Athletic Performance Coordinator.

Other strong contributors to the campaign were Adam Castricum (Doctor) and Eddie Farah (Junior Physiotherapist).

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ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS continued...

It will be important that the players that move on through the higher levels of representation use this experience to further develop their game and benchmark themselves on the international stage, rather than the national stage.

Australian Sevens

Full results can be found in the Year In Detail section of the Annual Report

The Australian Sevens team in 2003/2004 competed in all eight IRB Sevens tournaments. The National Sevens program has been seen as an effective program for assisting in developing Australia's next generation of Super 12 talent and providing an opportunity to players from club Rugby who may have missed selection in academy programs.

Australia used 35 players through the 2003/2004 season, making it difficult for continuity and high performance at such international tournaments, with the team finishing in eighth position on the overall IRB Sevens Series standings. However, the development aspect of the program has resulted in seven players from the 2003/2004 season being offered professional Super 12 contracts for the 2005 season – a credit to the coaching and management staff and the application of the players to use the Sevens program as a stepping stone to higher opportunities. Importantly, the opportunity to view many young players in the international sevens environment will prove very beneficial come the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, a highlight on the Sevens calendar.

The nature of Sevens on the international stage has the game moving further away from the 15-a-side game. Consequently, reviews have been put in place to ensure Australian Rugby remains competitive, whilst ensuring the program remains a potential pathway to the highest levels of the game. The 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne presents an important target for the program in the 2005 and 2006 seasons and provides a fantastic goal for all players to strive for.

In 2004, Head Coach Bill Millard introduced the National Sevens program awards night, where the major awards of Ricoh National Sevens Player of the Year went to captain Paul Warwick and Rookie of the Year went to Warringah's Peter Owens.

The Sevens program was very well serviced by the coaching, medical and management staff used through the 2003/2004 season, which will serve to further enhance the program for 2004/2005. Physiotherapist Alan Davies again provided top level medical support to the program and players and is a very experienced Sevens campaigner who will contribute greatly in the lead-up to the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Angus Bathgate effectively carried out the role of program Doctor. Brendan Morris and Scott Bowen managed the side during tournaments throughout the year and brought specialist expertise during their time with the team - Scott moving on to be Head Coach of the successful gold medal-winning Commonwealth Youth Games Sevens team (U18).

Australian Referees

The 2004 National Referees Squad, which operates under the tutelage of National Referees Coach Mick Keogh, comprised George Ayoub, Brett Bowden, Andrew Cole, Stuart Dickinson, Matt Goddard, Greg Hinton and Scott Young. The squad undertook more than 141 ARU and IRB appointments as Referees, Touch Judges, Sideline Officials and Television Match Officials, including 11 Test matches as Referees (with Brett Bowden refereeing his first Test match, between New Caledonia and Vanuatu), 24 Super 12 matches and five matches involving other international teams. Brett Bowden and Greg Hinton also performed with distinction at four tournaments on the IRB Sevens circuit.

Andrew Cole's consistent form continued and was rewarded by being named the Tooheys New Super 12 Referee of the Year. In addition, Referee Assessors Ian Scotney, Sandy MacNeill, Brian Kinsey and Mick Keogh all received IRB appointments at the international level.

A significant initiative in 2004 was the introduction of a National Referees Academy. The Academy, ably managed by Terry O'Connor, consisted of seven of the best up-and-coming referees in Australia – Geoff Acton, James Leckie, Andrew Lindsay, Paul Marks, Julian Pritchard, James Scholtens and Bradley Wahl.

The coaching and development of the National Referees Squad and the National Referees Academy was guided by the introduction of an Elite Referees Program, which established a pathway for referees to reach the elite level, while the Elite Referee Coaching Methodology established the tools and strategies for improving the on-field performances of the members of both squads.



ARU Managing Director & CEO, Gary Flowers, and RUPA CEO, Tony Dempsey, sign the game's new Collective Bargaining Agreement. RUPA

PLAYER RELATIONS

For the first time the ARU appointed a full-time Professional Player Liaison Manager, Shaun Barry. It quickly became apparent that the timing of this appointment could not have been better, with several high profile Wallaby team members coming off contract, new policies to introduce, the daily demands of the players' agents and the renegotiation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

In total, 15 Wallaby players were re-signed to Australian Rugby including Chris Whitaker, Phil Waugh, Mat Rogers, Lote Tuqiri, George Gregan, Stephen Larkham, Clyde Rathbone and Radike Samo. The contracting process was under intense scrutiny throughout the year and it is pleasing to note that full support of the process has been granted from all Rugby Boards and the Rugby Union Players' Association (RUPA).

Several new policies were also introduced during the year that will affect the professional players from 2004. Examples of these policies are "The Early Release Policy", where players are recognised for exceptional service to the game and may be released from their contract up to six months early. Another example is the "Tools of Trade" policy, where a player may choose the equipment he uses to improve performance, such as playing boots. Media Guidelines were also introduced so that a player understands the expectations of the Unions.

The continued rising profile of Rugby and Rugby players has meant increased commercial opportunity for some of the more high-profile players. Whilst the ARU is supportive of this activity, vigilance needs to be maintained to make sure these activities do not conflict with the ARU or State Rugby bodies, which may ultimately mean less revenue to the ARU, a share of which goes to all professional players.

Innovative player welfare reforms, the creation of special rookie contracts and the introduction of a compulsory accreditation scheme for player agents are among the features of a new agreement governing the employment of Australia's professional Rugby players.

The Australian Rugby Union (ARU), the State Unions and RUPA announced the signing of a four-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), as Rugby enters its 10th year of professionalism. It is the third such agreement, with previous agreements having being entered into between the parties in 1997 and 2001.

Key features of the Agreement include:

- Rookie contracts for up to five players for each Super 12 Union.
- One week's extra rest and a "regeneration" period (restricted training) for Wallaby players at the end of each season.
- \$2 million spent on career training and professional development for players over four years including compulsory study for a Certificate III in Sport.
- An Occupational Health & Safety Committee to address player safety and welfare.
- · Post retirement medical assistance for players.
- Compulsory accreditation for player managers to be conducted by RUPA.
- A new, simple revenue sharing model to distribute Rugby revenue to all professional players.

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