



RUGBY UNIT

Season 2006 saw a changing of the guard from a National Coach and High Performance perspective.

John Connolly began his tenure as Wallaby Coach, supported primarily by Scott Johnson, Michael Foley, John Muggleton, Jason Weber and Martin Raftery. The challenges were clear and whilst there has been some divergent views expressed concerning the 2006 results, there is no disputing there has been improvement in some of the key areas, including scrum and lineout set pieces, average tries per match and offloads. Whilst we did not win the Bledisloe Cup, nor the Tri Nations Trophy, we improved our IRB Ranking from fourth at the end of 2005 to third at the end of 2006. We also demonstrated in two of our performances against the All Blacks in Brisbane and Auckland, that the Wallabies remain a primary contender for Rugby World Cup honours in 2007.

In October, the Rugby Unit was established. The purpose of this was to fully integrate the operations of everything to do with playing the game. The new Rugby Unit covers the professional side of Rugby from the Wallabies through to the National Talent Squad and age representative programs, through to Community Rugby and Rugby Services. As part of the restructure, Phil Thomson assumed the responsibility of Manager, Team Wallaby and Ben Whitaker was elevated to National Teams & Program Manager. Geoff Shaw remains as GM, Community Rugby and Peter Rowles remains as Head of Rugby Services.

After more than 10 years of service, Andy Conway decided to move on to the next phase of his life. Andy has been a dedicated and committed servant to the game and his passion and professionalism is highly regarded in the world of Rugby. We will still see Andy on the odd occasion and we wish him well in the future. Shaun Barry, our Professional Player Liaison Manager, also decided to move on in late 2006 and we thank Shaun for his efforts and commitment over the last four

years as he worked through the myriad of complexities related to the professional player contracting environment. His replacement is Rob Smith, and already Rob has enjoyed the challenge of working with the Super 14 States on the establishment of revised player contracting protocols for 2007.

There were some significant achievements during 2006, and notably they included:

- Wallabies improved world ranking from fourth to third.
- Continuing investment in National Talent Squad program – this program produced 20 of the 26 players who won the IRB Under 19 World Championship.
- Australian U19s win the IRB World Championship in Dubai.
- Australian U21s make the semi finals of IRB World Championship.
- Josh Holmes won IRB Under 19 Player of the Year.
- Peter Marshall acknowledged by the IRB for services to Refereeing.
- Commonwealth Games 7's most highly attended event in Games program.
- Landmark announcement of Australian Rugby Championship to be launched in 2007. This competition will form a critical element in Australian Rugby's elite player development pathway.

On the back of these achievements we need to acknowledge the efforts of the respective Age Representative Coaches in Chris Hickey (Under 21s) and Phil Mooney (Under 19s). Both these gentlemen and their assistant coaches and support staff did an excellent job, and ensured that we receive value for the investment we make in players and programs at this level, not just for now, but for



Pat Wilson, General Manager Rugby Unit

the future success of our Super 14 teams and the Wallabies.

As you read on though this Report, you will gain an appreciation of the commitment, dedication and professionalism involved in keeping all our national teams resourced, funded and supported in order to keep them at the top of the competitive environment within which we operate. My thanks to all the staff in the Rugby Unit for their efforts throughout 2006.

ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Elite Player Development Programs (EPDP) exist to assist in developing players for the highest levels of international Rugby (Super 14 and Wallabies). A great deal of work by all within the HPU and the professional arms of the Super 14 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

This national program is designed to support quality development of young players (14-18 year old schoolboys) for the higher levels of the game. The programs are integrated into the player's school and/or club programs. These

quality programs have also been implemented to challenge other codes in the retention of the best talent to play rugby union. Long term player development programs in skill and physical development have been produced and delivered by EPDP staff to raise the strength and conditioning and skills of our best young players as they move through to the professional ranks. A focus of the program is to eradicate limitations for the future so that Super 14 and Wallabies coaches can attend to high performance rather than remedial coaching. Players will graduate out of the NTS program and into Super 14 contracts or academies.

2006 Achievements:

- 19 of the 26-man Australian Schoolboys squad to tour Fiji and New Zealand were involved in the NTS program, providing a quality skill and physical base commented on by experienced Schools team management.
- Paul Carozza, NTS Coach QLD and former Wallaby was accepted into the Australian Schools Team coaching staff.
- 20 of the 26 players selected for the world champion Australia Under 19s squad came through the ARU NTS program.
- David Pocock – 18 yrs (Force), Caleb Brown – 19 yrs (Reds), Josh Holmes – 19 yrs (Aust A), Saia Faingaa – 19 yrs (Brumbies) become the first NTS graduates to play Super 14 rugby.
- Improved competencies in skill and physical development for all NTS players entering the Super 14 or Academy program environment (eradicating limitations for future years).
- A number of players from other codes (namely rugby league) attracted to rugby through the NTS program and its integration into schools and club programs.

The NTS program is viewed as critical to ensuring Australia remains a world rugby power on an ongoing basis despite

a limited player pool. The NTS program is an initiative of the RWC 2003 legacies.

AIS RUGBY UNION SQUAD PROGRAM

The AIS Rugby Union Squad program provides the best of 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 the Wallabies and Super 14 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 2006, the 21 players offered scholarships attended three performance camps at the AIS. They received expert coaching from HPU and Super 14 coaching staff and high level education and medical support from the AIS staff. The education of these top players in the areas of nutrition, performance enhancing drugs, recovery, skill acquisition and performance psychology by AIS staff ensures best practice models can be followed and potential transition into professional Super 14 environments is effective.

2006 AIS Squad Program achievements include:

- 21 players achieved provincial representation at either National Under 16 or National Schoolboy (Under 18) Championship level.
- 13 players were selected in the Australian Schoolboys team (Under 18).
- Of the players leaving the program (total 16 players), 14 players were selected for Super 14 Academy positions and two players were selected for professional Super 14 contracts straight out of school.
- Five players who are back at school for 2007 have been selected in the ARU's National Talent Squad program.

2006 AIS Squad

Micah Watene (NSW), Ben McCalman (NSW), Daniel Palmer (NSW), Andrew Barrett (NSW), Kurtley Beale (NSW), Quade Cooper (QLD), Albert Anae (QLD), Jared Hargreaves (QLD), Andrew Shaw (QLD), Peter Betham (NSW), Robert Horne (NSW), Rod Davies (QLD), Robert Simmons (QLD), Ben Coridas (NSW), Tetera Faulkner (ACT), Talalelei Gray (VIC), Chris Harkins (ACT), Rowan Kellam (NSW), Rodney Maa (NSW), Afusipa Taumoepeau (NSW), Matt Toumua (QLD).

In 2007 the AIS program will be re-positioned with the Australia Under 19s program ensuring that the best young players in the country playing at international level are serviced by the one of the best sports environments in the world. The school-aged players serviced by the program in 2003-2006 will be developed by professional staff in the NTS program.

AUSTRALIAN UNDER 19S

Full results can be found in the Year in Detail section.

By any measure, the 2006 IRB Under 19 World Championship in Dubai was a resounding success for Australian Rugby. The defeat of New Zealand in the final was not only the result of detailed planning and hard work during assembly, but also a great reward for the quality of work performed by the Provincial Academies and respective National Talent Squads. The 2006 team was the first to include a majority of players from the NTS program and the physical and skill qualities of these players was a major factor in the eventual success of the team.

Along the way, the 2006 Australian team played a great style of rugby and maintained exceptional standards on and off the field. These qualities are reflected in the following statistics and awards:

Games Played:	5
Won:	4
Lost:	1
Points For:	226
Points Against:	63
Position:	1st



- IRB Under 19 World Champions.
- IRB 'Fair Play Award' for on and off field behaviour.
- Overall best attacking and defensive record at the tournament.
- Most number of tries scored by a team (Josh Holmes – equal leading try scorer).
- Only team in Division A or B not to have a single yellow card awarded.
- 20 of the 26 players selected identified through the ARU NTS Program.

The quality of the athletes aside, the Management Team as a whole played a massive role in the eventual success – each performed their role to the highest of standards and they should take great satisfaction in the knowledge that their hard work was rewarded with the winning of the World Championship.

In any tournament, it is important to start well and build momentum. The prospect of having to play five games in 18 days was a daunting one, however the team certainly looked forward to the challenge in the knowledge that the preparation had been thorough.

The first two matches against Scotland and Romania were one sided affairs. The Australian Under 19s were able to play all of the squad in these two games and collected the maximum 10 points on offer. The set piece, continuity and defence functioned well, however we did show some ill discipline on occasion at the tackle contest and conceded

more penalties than perhaps the team would have liked.

The final pool match against New Zealand would determine where the team would finish the pool rounds and ultimately who we would play in the semi finals. It was a match that the team felt we had the better of, however some poor kicking at goal and in general play allowed New Zealand to finish with a 22-17 victory even though both sides scored three tries each. This meant that we were seeded third and drawn to play the second seeds France in our semi final.

The first half performance in this game was perhaps the best of the tournament, enabling us to go to halftime leading 26-6. Our ball control and execution of our patterns in the first half was excellent and the game was effectively over by the break. France resorted to some under handed tactics in the second half which proved a distraction. For the most part though our defence held and we eventually won by 26-16 after conceding two late tries. This set up a rematch against New Zealand in the final.

We started the final well and placed New Zealand under early pressure. The team controlled the first half well and went to half time leading 14-3. Penalties and possession started to go against us in the second half, allowing New Zealand to draw within one point, however a late field goal ensured a 17-13 victory. Our composure and defence was a feature of this performance.

On reflection, our breakdown and continuity play, coupled with our defensive systems were

the major contributors to our success. We were arguably the leading team in these areas of play at the tournament. Our set piece struggled on occasions but this was due more to the fact that other teams were physically bigger rather than obvious technical deficiencies. Mark Bell worked very hard on our set piece and was able to come up with some great variations that provided us with the necessary possession to unleash our varied attacking strengths.

A fantastic result – 2006 iRB U19 World Champions – and a credit to all the hard work behind the scenes, both from within the national Under 19s program to the provincial academies and NTS system.

Dedicated team management and support staff were a critical driving force behind this successful team and included Phil Mooney (Head Coach), Mark Bell (Assistant Coach), Brendan Morris (Manager), Ben Whitaker (EPD Manager), Dr Corey Cunningham (Team Doctor), Cameron Watson (Physiotherapist), Justin Wray (Physiotherapist), Marty Hulme (S&C Coordinator). Congratulations to all staff on an historic campaign for Australian rugby.

AUSTRALIAN UNDER 21S

Full results can be found in the Year in Detail section.

The Australian Under 21 team competed in the 2006 IRB U21 World Championship in Vichy, France during June. With a large contingent of return players, the team had set high standards of winning the tournament after a runners-up placing in 2005. The final fourth placing was disappointing for the squad and team management despite the disadvantage of easily having the youngest squad at the tournament. The squad of 26 comprised of seven Under 19 players and ten Under 20 players – an extremely solid sign that Australian Rugby has some quality young players forging through the development system.

A nerve racking 18-14 win over Scotland in the first pool game used the team's "get out of jail"

card. A try in extra-time ensured the team stayed on track for a semi-final position. A hard fought 43-20 victory against a spirited and physical Fiji in Round 2 set up a crucial Round 3 clash against New Zealand. This was the second year in succession that the round three clash with our neighbours would determine the semi-final seedings. The Australians played tenacious and committed rugby to beat the tournament favourites 21-17 in a match which will be remembered more for the extremely mature showing by the team, lead by two tries from Under 19 halfback Josh Holmes rather than its lack of free flowing rugby.

The team faced world rugby heavy weights France in the semi final – a tough assignment against the home town favourites. In a reversal of last year's semi final it would be the French team that pulled away in the second half, set up by a typically European commitment to forward play, to win 32-17. The Australian team started positively with Force winger Digby loane setting up a couple of fantastic tries for Josh Holmes before Waratahs hooker Tatafu Polota-Nau, ran like a centre for over 30 metres to score in the corner. In the end the youthful enthusiasm and willingness was no match for the mature forward-dominated control of the French. A disappointed Australian team will learn greatly from the experience – a crucial outcome of playing such strong international competition on foreign soil.

The third/fourth play-off game at any World Championship is traditionally a tough mental affair. However, with the opposition being New Zealand, further pride was on the line and a tour finishing with a 2-0 aggregate over the tournament favourites would be reasonable compensation for missing the final. Some enterprising play and individual brilliance had the young Australian team ahead 33-18 in the second half. However, inexperience again proved crucial as the Kiwis came back late in the game to win 39-36. Once again some harsh lessons had been learnt.

Overall, the opportunity to benchmark our best young players against the best in the world is a very worthwhile one. Even squad players with Super 14 experience commented on the toughness and high standard of every game.

Of the 26 players in the squad, 16 are contracted to Super 14 teams for 2007 and beyond. This is a very telling statistic on the progressive nature of the Elite Player Development Programs pathway and the standard of the young players coming through the system. Tatafu Polota-Nau, Digby loane and James Horwill were selected to tour with the Wallabies and Australia 'A' on the end of season Spring Tour.

Once again, an experienced and knowledgeable staff serviced the Under 21 team in 2006 and included Chris Hickey (Head Coach), Nick Scrivener (Assistant Coach), Bill Swain (Manager), Angus Bathgate (Medical Coordinator/Doctor), Ed Hollis (Physiotherapist), Eddie Farah (Physiotherapist), Dirk Spits (S&C Coordinator). All staff were major contributors to an effective 2006 campaign.

AUSTRALIAN SEVENS

Full results can be found in the Year in Detail section.

The Australian Sevens Team in 2005/2006 competed in eight iRB Sevens World Series tournaments and the 2006 Commonwealth Games held in Melbourne. The National Sevens program has been used as an effective program for assisting the development of Australia's next generation of Super 14 and Wallaby talent and providing an opportunity to players from club rugby that may have missed selection in Super 14 and Academy programs.

Highlights of the season included a hard fought semi final appearance against New Zealand at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. The team was comprised of current Australian Sevens players as well as high profile Wallaby and Super 14 players with previous Sevens experience including Lote Tuqiri, Matt Giteau, Chris Latham, Scott Fava, Cameron Shepherd and Tom

McVerry. The ARU and Super 14 Unions worked collaboratively to identify and include high profile players for the Commonwealth Games 7s – a competition that proved to have the highest crowd attendance of any event at the Games. Unfortunately injuries played a role in the team finishing just out of the medals in one of the best competitions of the Games. Another performance of note was an impressive semi final placing at the Paris Sevens tournament in May. Also during the Paris tournament, and the following London Sevens, the Australian team were successful in beating England, the current world number two team.

The team finished in eighth position on the overall iRB Sevens Series standings with a very consistent string of quarter final appearances. However, the development aspect of the program has resulted in two players from the 2005/2006 season being offered professional Super 14 contracts and one player gaining Academy selection for the 2007 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.

The Sevens program was very well serviced by an experienced coaching, medical and management team in 2006. Head Coach and former Wallaby Glen Ella used all his experience and Sevens knowledge to guide a young team through the iRB Sevens Series and fast track a star studded Commonwealth Games team to fourth place. Physiotherapist Alan Davies now easily ranks as one of the most experienced medical staff members on the World Sevens circuit. Angus Bathgate effectively carried out the role of program doctor earning praise for his work with the Commonwealth Games team. Gary Pearse managed the side under Glen Ella during the year and provided valuable international Sevens experience and leadership.

AUSTRALIAN REFEREES

Stuart Dickinson, Scott Young, Matt Goddard, James Leckie, George Ayoub and Sarah Corrigan were all appointed by the IRB Selectors to referee Test matches in 2006. Both James Leckie and Sarah Corrigan made their Test refereeing debut this year.



Scott Young was recognised as our Tooheys New Super 14 Referee of the Year after some outstanding performances throughout the competition. Scott announced his retirement shortly after he refereed the Japan v Italy Test in June. This was Scott's 26th Test match and he will be missed at all levels of the game.

James Leckie and Brett Bowden officiated at various IRB Sevens tournaments throughout the world and performed with distinction. James refereed several finals including the Gold Medal game at the Commonwealth Games Sevens in Melbourne.

Andrew Lindsay and James Leckie also both performed admirably at the IRB Under 21s and Under 19s respectively.

Sarah Corrigan and George Ayoub both officiated at the IRB Women's Rugby World Cup in Canada. Sarah was rewarded for her good form at the tournament

by being appointed to the England v Canada semi final. This makes her the leading female referee in world rugby.

Former international Referee Peter Marshall was recognised at the IRB Awards night with a Distinguished Services to Rugby Award.

Australian Referees Panel: George Ayoub, Brett Bowden, Stuart Dickinson, Matt Goddard, James Leckie, Paul Marks and Scott Young.

Australian Referees Academy: Geoff Acton, Daniel Cheever, Andrew Lindsay, Nathan Pearce, Julian Pritchard, James Scholtens and Bradley Wahl.

Australian Women's Referee Development Group: Roberta Barnett, Sarah Corrigan and Michelle Colgrave.

PLAYER RELATIONS

The year 2006 was very exciting, positive and constructive for professional player relations.

Shaun Barry, the ARU's Professional Player Liaison Manager spent a good part of the year managing the process of contracting players for the 2007 season and beyond. This process proved very successful and late in the year culminated with the re-contracting of Phil Waugh for 2008-2009. Following the Spring Tour the ARU also agreed to release Mat Rogers from the final year of his playing contract for personal reasons.

During the year the ARU-State Union process was placed under some pressure with the Rugby WA/Al Kanaar matter being heard by a Tribunal.

Late in 2006, the ARU and the four Australian Super 14 Unions agreed to a comprehensive review of the player contracting protocols. This process will begin

in early 2007 and demonstrates the ARU's commitment to arrive at the best possible player contracting process for our unique environment.

The Career Training Scheme, ably led by the Committee's Chairman Roger Davis and supported by Yvonne Soper and a network of dedicated career advisors and other support staff, continues to deliver valuable benefits and services to both current and former players.

The Occupational Health & Safety Committee, charged with addressing player welfare issues, continued their very valuable work throughout 2006. Thanks must again go to the Committee's Chairman, Mr Bruce Hodgkinson QC, for his commitment and dedication to this program.

The RUPA Player Agent Accreditation Scheme continues to evolve and at the time of going to print we have 53 accredited

agents working in the interests of their Australian Rugby clients.

The ARU has continued to work closely and constructively with RUPA and we take this opportunity to thank them for their support and work on the OH&S Committee, Career Training Scheme, the Player Agent Accreditation scheme and day-to-day player issues.

Finally, in early November Shaun Barry left the role of Professional Player Liaison Manager after three years in the position. The ARU would like to thank Shaun for his work over this time, particularly his efforts in managing the renegotiation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, managing the process of contracting Australian Rugby's professional players year on year and refining the player contracting protocols, all of which are fundamental to the continuing success of Australian Rugby. Shaun Barry has been replaced by Rob Smith.