

WITH A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION THAT CAPITALISES ON OUR PAST SUCCESS, THE HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIT KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

BRETT ROBINSON, GENERAL MANAGER, HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIT

The High Performance Unit (HPU) have in 2003 endeavoured to build upon the work undertaken since the Unit was established three years ago whilst undertaking a significant review of its strategic direction.

This review was to ensure that we were well positioned to deliver on the overarching goals of the ARU and more specifically, those of the HPU itself heading into the quadrennium post RWC 2003.

The review established a number of guiding principles for the Unit, which has been integrated into the Five Year Plan for the ARU. This process has allowed the Unit to identify and prioritise the factors of competition that will allow us to dominate and differentiate, relative to our competitors, leading into RWC 2007 in France.

The programs to support these strategies were in some cases initiated in 2003, whilst others will be rolled out in the short to medium term.

There have been a number of significant achievements this year including:

- Team Wallabies RWC performance and achieving its goal of maintaining its position as a top three Rugby nation;
- the performance of our National U21s (Runners up at World Cup in Oxford UK);
- the establishment of clearly defined Elite Player Development Pathway for Australian Rugby and the development of a National Testing Program for this Pathway;
- the selection of all four of our professional referees and one assessor at RWC 2003;
- an increase in the number of our professional players pursuing undergraduate and/or trade qualifications.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the staff within the HPU for their commitment to Australian Rugby and to thank you for your support and assistance in my first year as General Manager of the Unit. I would like to thank and wish all the best to Russell Trotter who departed the Unit this year after over 10 years of tremendous service to Australian Rugby.

2003 HIGHLIGHTS

WALLABIES WORLD CUP PERFORMANCE

AUSTRALIAN UNDER 21S WORLD CUP PERFORMANCE

ALL FOUR PROFESSIONAL REFEREES CHOSEN FOR RUGBY WORLD CUP 2003

CLEARLY DEFINED PATHWAY FOR ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

INCREASE IN PLAYERS UNDERTAKING TERTIARY STUDIES

ARU/AIS RUGBY UNION SQUAD

ARU's relationship with the AIS was modified in 2003 so that the program provided non-residential scholarships to Australia's best 15-18 year old talent. Previous AIS programs have focussed on players outside of the school age group.

The access to services provided by the AIS ensures that the Wallabies 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 HPU covering critical skill and physical development models. Developing programs for this age group is seen as a major objective for the HPU moving into the 2007 and 2011 World Cups.

In 2003, the 27 players offered scholarships attended two performance camps at the AIS and on the Gold Coast. The players received expert coaching from Wallabies assistant coach Glen Ella and provincial academy coaches, as well as being addressed by John Eales.

Ten AIS Rugby Union Squad players were selected for the Australian Schools Team in 2003. The Australian Schools Team selection came at the conclusion of the Novotel Australian Schools Championships held in Brisbane over six days from 8-13 July.

AIS Squad members selected in the Australian Schools Team were:

Geoff Abram (QLD), Digby Ioane (QLD), Tajohn Malaita (QLD), Ryan Newman (QLD), Pekahou Cowan (NSW), David Dennis (NSW),



Richard Stanford (NSW), Laurie Weeks (NSW), Saia Faingaa (ACT), Julian Salvi (ACT).

Both Julian Salvi (ACT) and Digby Ioane (QLD) were in their second year representing the National Schools Team. Salvi, playing No 8 for the ACT was a standout performer during the championships, displaying an impressive all-round game that included the goal kicking responsibilities.

Saia Faingaa (ACT) was the youngest player selected in the Schools Team at 16 years and five months making him still eligible for U16 representation. Even more impressive is that he was the form hooker at the championships relishing the uncompromising physical nature of the position and such a high level of Rugby.

Faingaa's twin brother Anthony, also an AIS Rugby Union scholar, played at centre for the ACT team and was selected in the National Schools Development Squad comprised of players with another year at school remaining. Fellow AIS scholar Shaun Foley from NSW was also selected in the Development Squad.

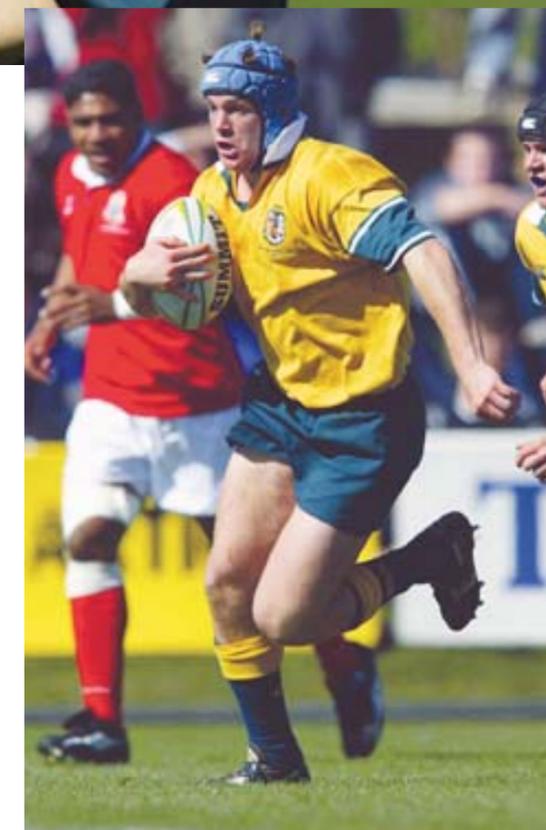
2002/2003 ARU/AIS Rugby Union Scholarship Squad:

NSW Matthew Bell, Pekahou Cowan, David Dennis, Shaun Foley, Leroy Houston, Luke Irwin, Daniel Kelly, Michael Kline, Richard Stanford, Chris Stratton, Pauliasi Taumoepeau, Laurie Weeks

ACT Anthony Faingaa, Saia Faingaa, James Maher, Julian Salvi

QLD Geoff Abram, Misipati Asoava, Berrick Barnes, Scott Daruda, Cameron Gillam, Digby Ioane, Tajohn Malaita, Edward Nanai, Ryan Newman

VIC John Ulugia



Digby Ioane (top) and Julian Salvi (above) were two standouts for the Australian Schoolboys team.



ELITE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Australia A

The 2003 Australia A program took on extra significance as the Wallabies prepared for the Rugby World Cup 2003. Similar systems and patterns to the Wallabies were introduced in the program to ensure all players in line for World Cup selection were familiar with critical aspects of play.

The 2003 Australia A program involved a two match program touring Japan – the second match containing many of the players that would eventually be selected in the Japanese World Cup squad. The experience of touring and playing under different conditions proved advantageous in taking players and management out of their comfort zone and extending their skills and application.

The management team of Head Coach, Adrian Thompson, Assistant Coach, Gary Ella and Manager, Dave Gibson were in their second year in charge of the A team and quickly disseminated the required information in time for their two match tour.

Australia A took out the first game in Osaka 63-5 after leading 35-3 at halftime. The committed Japanese Selection side contained a number of overseas players now based in Japan and the Australia A team needed to work hard to maintain their scoring through the second half.

The second fixture in Tokyo had much importance placed on it by the Japanese XV.

Australia A played committed Rugby to run away with the game through the second half, winning 66-15. An impressive victory by Australia A against a near strength national team on home soil at Prince Chichibu Stadium; the successful tour setting up the international season leading into the Rugby World Cup 2003 in October.

Australian Under 21 Team

The Australian U21 team left for the IRB U21 World Cup in England well prepared after an eight-day camp in Sydney putting away in the memory bank much of the team information required to be successful at such international Tournaments. The 24 day Tournament in Oxfordshire was an opportunity for the Australian team members to benchmark themselves against the best in the world at the U21 age level.

The long travel time had no ill effect as the U21 team ran away convincing winners in their first pool game of the Tournament. An impressively mature display saw Australia to a convincing 52-22 win over hosts England in their opening match of the IRB U21 World Cup. The first round pool game at Iffley Rd, Oxford was played in front of a packed crowd, most of which went home disappointed as England were exposed to a side who did the basics very well and ultimately proved too good.

The Australian team did not have it all their own way in their second pool match against Italy. A number of yellow cards and in patient play saw the Australian team eventually get away with the

game 24-5. The Italians defended strongly to push the U21 team all the way to cross over for their fourth try earning them a very important bonus point.

The final pool match against New Zealand was greatly anticipated by the teams and Tournament officials alike. New Zealand leapt to a 24-0 lead after only 20 minutes, but the Australian team showed tremendous resolve after half time to close the gap and hit the lead with 10 minutes remaining. The final score of 37-37 was a fitting end to a free flowing encounter.

Argentina proved a worthy opponent in the Semi Final with the Australian team taking until the final quarter of the game to run out 48-25 victors.

The Final against New Zealand was a bruising affair with the strong New Zealand team taking the Australian team on in the forwards and dominating territory. Yellow cards to No 9 Josh Valentine and captain Lachlan McKay made it tough for the U21s after only 20 minutes of the final. The Australian U21 team fought hard but were not accurate when it counted and finished runners-up 21-10 to the talented New Zealand team.

The foundation for the team's strong performance was laid by the leadership and knowledge of the management team lead by Head Coach, Laurie Fisher and Manager, Chris Webb.

Australian Sevens

Full results for the year can be found in the results section of this Annual Report.

The Australian Sevens Team in 2002/2003 competed in seven IRB Sevens Tournaments through out the world – the limited number of Tournaments affected by the cancellation of four Tournaments due to various world-related events.

The National Sevens team started the series well moving through to the Semi Final stages of the first two Tournaments in Dubai and George, South Africa. As the series progressed, the heavy rotation of players though injury and form meant that aspects of continuity were lost and the early solid form plateaued. The ever improving top five nations in the Sevens Series also proved tough to beat and the national squad finished the 2002/2003 IRB Sevens Series in fifth position behind New Zealand, England, Fiji and South Africa.

An end of season review of the Sevens program and its role within elite player development, will see constructive modifications to the program and selections. The program will involve national models of skill and physical development to ensure all players representing Australia at this level have the best opportunity to seek further professional and representative honours. The National Sevens program is seen as a very effective program for developing Australia's next generation of Super 12 and Wallaby talent and the program to achieve such goals is currently being developed.

Sevens Coach, Bill Millard, had to overcome some set backs through the season, but performed an excellent job in providing a truly professional and high standard program that will see the progression of future talent into all aspects of Australian Rugby.



The captains of all the nations competing at the Brisbane leg of the IRB Sevens Series gather for a photo opportunity.

Bill was assisted by physiotherapist Alan Davies, again providing the level of high standard service fitting of a national team. The staff and squad look forward to improving in all aspects for the 2003/2004 series.

Referees

It was another big year for Australian referees, culminating in the selection of four referees and one assessor to officiate at the RWC. The four referees selected were Andrew Cole, Stuart Dickinson, Peter Marshall and Scott Young. Ian Scotney was selected as an assessor. Unfortunately, Scott Young was injured prior to the commencement of the Cup and had to withdraw. The Australian Officials performed very well during the Tournament.

Greg Hinton, Stuart Dickinson and Matt Goddard all were selected for various IRB Sevens Tournaments throughout the world and performed with distinction.

The appointment of Mick Keogh as a full-time referee coach in 2003, has seen the standard of refereeing throughout Australia rise dramatically. Mick has introduced a number of techniques that have enabled referee coaches and referees to improve their performances.

In 2003 Andrew Lees was appointed as the first Australian Sports Commission Scholarship holder to the ARU. The appointment has been very successful and rewarding to both Andrew and the ARU.

Peter Marshall was recognised as our Vodafone Super 12 Referee of the Year and refereed the Super 12 Semi Final and he continued his good form in the Tri Nations Test between New Zealand and South Africa.

Andrew Cole had another very good season refereeing Scotland vs Ireland in the Six Nations Championship as well as a number



The Australian Under 21 side showed that we have a bright future ahead with a second place finish at the IRB Under 21s World Championship.

of other top class Test matches such as Argentina vs France in Argentina.

Stuart Dickinson and Scott Young both officiated at a number of Test matches overseas throughout the year in a lead-up to RWC.

Chairman of Selectors, Ian Scotney, and fellow Selectors, Brian Kinsey and Sandy MacNeill, all had a very busy year with selection, coaching and assessment duties of Super 12, Sevens, IRB Tests as well as Premier Rugby. The three Australian Selectors and the National Referee Coach are all on the IRB Assessors Panel and were all selected to assess referees in international matches throughout the year.

Long serving National Referees Manager, Russell Trotter, resigned during the year. Russell has been one of the leaders in refereeing development throughout the world. Russell has overseen the establishment of professional refereeing and has continued to have an active involvement in the development of match officials to ensure a highly successful succession plan is in place to maintain the high standing of Australian officials in world Rugby. Russell worked tirelessly for Australian and international referees and was rewarded by having the largest contingent of referees on the International Panel over the last seven years. He has left the Australian Referees Department in a very good position.

Peter Marshall took charge of his last match during the RWC, after 32 Test matches, 32 Vodafone Super 12 matches and four NSW Premiership Grand Finals. Marshall will take over as National Referees Manger.

Brett Bowden was selected for the Australian Referees Panel for the first time, after some very good performances throughout 2002. Brett was selected to officiate at the International Rugby Board U19s Championship in France and performed very well.

Watch Squad referees continued to show good progress throughout the year and many are on the verge of forcing their way onto the Australian National Referees Panel.

Nathan Pearce refereed the Final of the Australian Rugby Shield between Perth and Queensland Country in Perth and received plenty of praise for his refereeing performance.

The Australian match program continues to grow each year allowing our promising referees the opportunity to gain experience refereeing at a higher level.

2003 was a successful year for Australian referees and the years ahead look even brighter.

Australian Panel:

George Ayoub, Brett Bowden, Andrew Cole, Stuart Dickinson, James Dickson, Matt Goddard, Greg Hinton and Scott Young.

