Junior Gold Program Newsletter

April/May/June 2011 Vol. 1 Issue 3

Current Qantas Wallabies and Reds halfback Will Genia threatens the line against France on last year's Spring Tour.

Will Genia performing one of his most important roles – giving back to the kids and the fans.

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In This Issue:

Will Genia – National Gold Squad Graduate	p1
April-June Events	p2
Halfback Clearing Pass Tips	p2
NT Players Selected for Junior Gold	p3
CHS U16 Junior Gold Training Day	p3
Play the Man or Save?	p4

Will Genia:

National Gold Squad Graduate

At just 23 years of age Will Genia has quickly become an integral member of both the Reds and Qantas Wallabies teams. Last week Will was recognised as Australia's leading player having been awarded the 'Player of the Year' award at the Australian SuperRugby Awards. Will's rise to number one halfback and player in the country has not just happened overnight – a dedicated journey and burning desire to improve has enabled Will to reach impressive heights during his five years in senior rugby.

As a student at Brisbane Boys College, Will demonstrated talent not just as a rugby player but in other sports such as cricket. Will's passion for both sports was obvious and he played in senior teams and at representative levels in his final years at school. It was at this time that Will set himself a journey through an extensive pathway of rugby programs and teams that highlighted not just his potential talent, but his desire and efforts to become the best player he could be.

Will's representative pathway has included:

- Brisbane Boys College
- Junior Reds Squad
- National Gold Squad
- Queensland Schools
- Australia 'A' Schools
- GPSRUC Colts
- Queensland Reds Academy
- GPSRUC 1st Grade
- Queensland Reds
- Wallabies

It isn't the representative teams Will has made that makes this pathway an impressive one. It is the important stages of school into colts and into grade rugby that glue Will's development path together. Too often talented players drive and gauge their development through the representative teams that they make rather than being driven by their own development and what programs at what time will most impact this development. Selection in teams is often out of a player's control – what is controllable is the amount of effort and attention a player directs into their ongoing development and performance. A point made often by Qantas Wallabies Head Coach Robbie Deans.

Alongside the effective playing path taken by Will has been an ongoing commitment to put in the long hours of training

Junior Gold Program Newsletter

April/May/June 2011 Vol. 1 Issue 3

Will Genia - Continued

outside of team training and when the coaches are no longer on the field. Training that is not recorded or promoted to coaches or fellow players. Training that Will knows will continue to drive his development particularly in such a demanding and skill specific position such as halfback.

Today, Will completes one on one sessions with former Brisbane Boys College coach and now mentor Chris Lane (NGS/JGS Coach – QLD) weekly to fine-tune and develop his halfback clearing pass and kicking skills. It is this commitment and outlook that will enable Will to develop into an even better player having already achieved plenty in his relatively short time in senior rugby.

How committed are you to becoming the best player you can be?

Tips for the Halfback Clearing Pass

Clearing Pass from Tackle Contest

A. **Eyes Up** - scan for attacking options on the way to the ball;
B. Direct players to ensure quality ball is produced from the tackle contest;
C. Eyes on the detail of the ball to position your hands correctly on the ball 1st time (avoid reloading);
D. Dig hands into ruck and rip the ball out to your inside hip if the ball is stuck;
E. Keep your **feet alive** and active to position the ball ready to pass.

Non-Negotiables for the Clearing Pass

1. Plant foot close to the ball (to promote sweeping from ground rather than picking up)
2. Point lead foot aimed at receiver
3. Ball swept from ground with hands going right through to target (finish with elbows & hands fully extended to target & palms down)
4. Weight shift through feet (from plant foot to point foot) to generate power.

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PATHWAY TO GOLD

April-June Events

NSWCJRU U16 & U17 Championships - Central Coast
• Saturday 30th April – Sunday 1st May 2011

NSWCJRU U14 & U15 Championships - Bowral
• Saturday 7th – Sunday 8th May 2011

Junior Gold Youth (U18) Sevens Trials - Sydney
• Sunday 12th June 2011

Junior Gold Youth (U18) Sevens Trials - Brisbane
• Wednesday 15th June 2011

Queensland Schoolboy Championships – Brisbane
• Thursday 23rd – Sunday 26th June 2011

NSW Schools U16s Championships – Sydney
• Saturday 25th – Sunday 26th June 2011

Division 2 National Schoolboy Championships – Melbourne
• Friday 24th – Wednesday 29th June 2011

NSWJRU Regional Championships – Blacktown
• Saturday 2nd – Sunday 3rd July 2011

Division 1 National Schoolboy Championships – Brisbane
• Monday 4th – Sunday 10th July 2011

Junior Gold Program Newsletter

April/May/June 2011 Vol. 1 Issue 3

Junior Gold Training Day for CHS U16 Players in Sydney

Over 40 players from NSW Government High Schools aged 15-16 years of age assembled at the training facilities of the NSW Waratahs as part of the Independent Government Schools U16 Team program and the ARU's Junior Gold Training Day program.

The Junior Gold Training Day provided players with a taste of the ARU's initial entry national talent development program (the Junior Gold Squad - JGS) including coaching from High Performance Program coaches Manu Sutherland, Hugh Carpenter and David Boyle and use of the professional training facilities of the NSW Waratahs.
Independent Government Schools U16 Team coaching and management staff, including Head Coach Jason Grier, also provided important team preparation coaching and information throughout the day.

Players were lead through a series of skill development sessions on field (set piece, attack, defence and tackle contest) as well as a gym/strength performance session and recovery session off field.

26 Government High Schools were represented on the day with players from as far as Alstonville (Far North Coast), Hunter and Illawarra travelling in for the day. The invitation to players to attend the Junior Gold Training Day came off the back of an ARU conducted High Performance Discovery Day and the Independent Government Schools U16 Team trials held at Prairiewood High School on Fri 13th May.

A follow up Junior Gold Training Day for all players will be held in August.

ARU High Performance Coach Manu Sutherland instructs the forwards on the important art of scrummaging in Sydney.

A Northern Territory player gets a pass away in last year's National U16 Championships in Sydney

Northern Territory Players Join Junior Gold Program

The Junior Gold Squad Program has now been able to select and include players from every state and territory in the country with two players from Northern Territory invited into the Brisbane training centre for a series of training days and sessions.

Jarrod Rees (U18) and Bryce Condon (U16), both members of the Northern Territory Institute of Sport (NTIS) Rugby Union program, attended Junior Gold Training Days in Brisbane through late February and early March this year. Both boys were accompanied by NTIS Head Coach Paul Healy and stayed on for a couple of days to experience one-on-one sessions with Brisbane based ARU High Performance coaches Chris Lane and Jarrod Presland. Jarrod and Bryce competed impressively with the Queensland based players at U18 and U16 level respectively displaying a range of skills and physical development that should see them have a strong year in 2011.

Jarrod and Bryce were selected due to their high standard development achieved over the past 10 months and outstanding performances throughout the rugby union talent development program conducted out of the NTIS.

The NTIS Ruby Union program is recognised as a Junior Gold Regional Talent Centre and therefore has close links with the national Junior Gold program. A significant link is the inclusion of high achieving players in Junior Gold Training Days in major program centres such as Brisbane and Sydney. The program looks forward to the ongoing development of Jarrod and Bryce as well as including more players from NT and other states of Australia over the next few years.

Junior Gold Program Newsletter

April/May/June 2011 Vol. 1 Issue 3

Tackle Contest Support – Play the Man or Win the Space?

One of the most important elements of the game is the tackle contest. Decisions made in this area by all players greatly impacts the result of matches played every weekend at all levels.

When entering a tackle contest as a support player, either in defence or attack, the decision process is often lead by whether to play the man (ie initiate contact through driving a threatening player away) or to take and win space over and past the ball.

The Junior Gold coaching program, lead by the Junior Gold Man (outlined in the last issue of the newsletter) promotes the targeting and skimming of the ball and winning of space above and beyond the ball as the key drivers in this critical decision making process.

Players should seek to 'skim' the ball – this ensures that the ball is targeted by the supporting player and their line into and through the tackle contest is over the ball; and it should result in a strong/relatively low body position. Combined with 'Eyes Up' players should be able to maintain a strong body shape ready to absorb or initiate contact over and beyond the ball.

Once the ball has been skimmed, the player should be concerned with winning the space above the ball and then beyond it (ie keep moving forward). This approach provides a clear direction to other supporting players entering the tackle contest (ie they know what their teammates are intending to do) and will most effectively ensure the ball is won and, ideally, quickly cleared to continue the play. Although there are times to hold over the ball, too often players hold over the ball despite there being space in front of them – this inhibits clearing the ball to play and indicates poor awareness by the player. Being aware of options and making effective choices should become habit; not consistently performing the same action at the tackle contest, time and time again, irrespective of the situation presented at the tackle contest.

Robbie Deans
Qantas Wallabies Head Coach

"The strength of our talent development program is critical to the on-going success of both the Qantas Wallabies and our other national representative teams. The nationally coordinated nature of our approach, which includes the involvement of high performance coaches at all levels and with all teams – including the Wallabies; ensures that we have an overall development process of the highest possible standard. This development pathway aims to prepare players thoroughly, in all aspects of both preparation and the game itself, and will allow our stars of the future to thrive. I would encourage all players with a desire to fulfil their potential to join our pathway to gold."

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