

Sport

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Cowboys get a rough ride at Tyalgum

page 30



Contact
Bob Anthony - 5523 6242
Jamie Gallagher - 5523 6241
sports@tweednews.com.au



GRAND final action was the order of the day at Piggabeen Sports Complex on Saturday when the Tweed Byron Junior Rugby League came to a close with finals in the various age groups from under 10s to under 16s. On a day which was a credit to the young players, the future of league in the region was on show. Seagulls' Robbie Cross is caught in a solid tackle by Cudgen's Nathan Davin in their under 10s clash. Full report and photos in Wednesday's Junior Sport section.

Photo: CRAIG SADLER D102731c.

IT'S GAME ON

Rugby league legend switches focus to game's future

By Bob Anthony

GRAHAM Eadie knows all about tackling challenges head on.

Rugby league has long been considered NSW and Queensland's traditional winter sport but in recent years the game has faced increased pressure to maintain its dominance of the sporting landscape.

AFL, rugby union and more recently soccer have emerged as legitimate rivals in the popularity stakes but Eadie, who had his status as one of the game's greats confirmed earlier this year when he was named fullback in Manly's Team of the Century, is determined to see the game flourish.

Eadie and Tweed businessman Mark Russell recently unveiled a ju-

nior development program that has the potential to be the rugby league equivalent of AFL's successful Auskick program.

The Aussie Sports Skills Contest (ASSC) is designed to teach children the game's "building blocks" in a fun environment.



"This program is very much a starting point for kids to get into rugby league," Eadie (pictured) said.

"It provides an ideal stepping stone for young kids just starting to develop the basics and take them into more-advanced training as they get older."

The program allows the progress of participants to be observed as

they learn basic skills, can be easily overseen by junior clubs or schools and is suitable for boys and girls.

"The ASSC can also help coaches or teachers identify areas where some children need to improve their skills to increase their enjoyment of the game," Eadie said.

"The way we have structured the program is such that the kids can measure their own program simply and easily.

"As they improve, this helps develop character and confidence.

"Both Mark and I can see the benefits of this program extending outside of just rugby league."

The ASSC program has already attracted plenty of attention with rugby league great Arthur Beeton among those who have embraced

the concept and its introduction.

However, the program has failed to spark major interest from the code's governing bodies.

"It's frustrating to have such a scheme which could be easily put in place where league is played and not have the ARL or NRL get behind it," Eadie said.

"We actually have worked with ARL development officers at one demonstration day and they could see the potential of it.

"We aren't out to take over but just see the need to have something in place which reaches out to the grassroots.

"There has been a lot of talk about how Aussie Rules is encroaching into league areas and this could be one way of countering that."

Despite the NRL and ARL's reticence, the program has attracted the support of the Tweed Byron Group 18 Junior Rugby League with officials indicating the ASSC may be integrated into the Group's structured training schedule.

Several schools in the region also have trialled the ASSC.

Another supporter is former Australian winger Larry Corowa who, through his Black Flash Sports organisation, arranged for Eadie and Russell to join a number of league legends at Condoblin recently to put the program into practice.

"The response we received out there, in fact wherever we have held a demonstration, has been extremely positive," Eadie said.

Tweed program a winner, page 26.