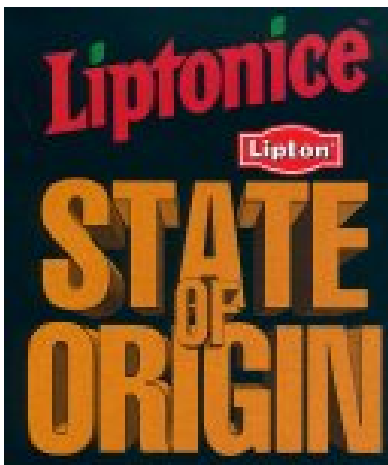


1996

Rest for Open Divisions

The National Championships take a rest for open players as only senior divisions were contested



'Revenge at the Resort'

The music pumped and the crowds flocked. This was Liptonice State of Origin 1996, and a carnival atmosphere reigned at Port Macquarie Stadium.

'Anyone who's been involved in Touch for a while would never have dreamed this would happen,' exclaimed an enthusiastic Mark Boland, NSW Captain. 'It's fantastic ... unbelievable.'

And Mother Nature did her bit. It was a perfect night for the 6,000 spectators for the entertainment provided by the Touch administrators. The helicopter that soared above the red and blue smoke screen was almost symbolic of the sport's meteoric rise.

In just a few short years Touch had come from the park to the big time, with the new annual Liptonice State of Origin encounter its pinnacle.

A spray of green laser stripes stretched across the field, telling the story of the battle that would ensure ... state against state, mate against mate.

History of Australian Touch Football Association

The lights painted cockroaches and cane toads and a picture of rivalry as intense as it is traditional. Then followed the dancers and more fanfare.

Meanwhile, the real stars of the show, Touch's elite players, were in their dressing rooms preparing for battle. 'This is the be-all and end-all,' winced Queensland's Men's captain, Scott Notley. 'To represent your state is what everyone plays for.'



NSW captain, Katrina Maher, launches another NSW raid, with Jodie Collins in close support.

The Men's Events Were Fiery Affairs.

Defending their Origin crown, the Maroons had the first of the three-game series in the afternoon, downing NSW 5-3. So far Port Macquarie was proving to be no holiday for the Blues!

The event on the New South Wales north coast had been billed 'Revenge at the Resort' and the Blues would have to win both night games to avenge last year's series loss and regain their battered pride.

'We're confident we can do that,' said Boland. 'We were pretty upset with our game this afternoon. The little things let us down.' The teams marched into formation for the national anthem, then in true Origin tradition, the clash started with fireworks off and on the field.

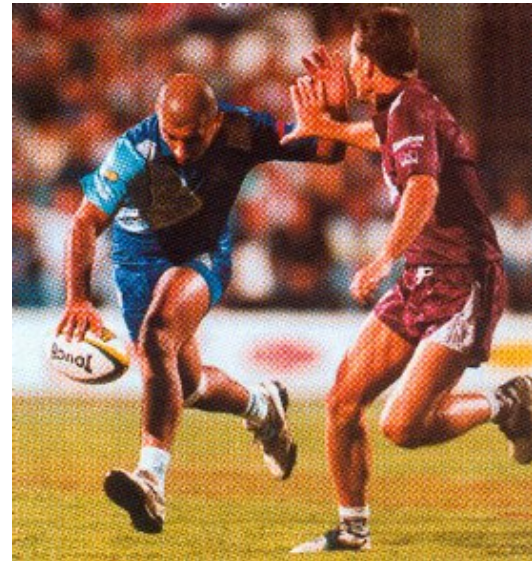
It had probably been brewing since the afternoon game: too many touches had been too hard. The opening night game was equally physical from the start but after just a couple of minutes Touch quickly turned to punch when an ugly all-in

brawl erupted delaying play for almost ten minutes. If anyone had doubts as to how serious these players take their game then they only had to see the fight.

Both teams have developed an intense rivalry in recent years and on this occasion it seemed that they took things just a little bit too seriously.

Thankfully, the remainder of the night was incident free, both teams reverting to what they do best: playing Touch with speed and skills that thrilled the crowd. More than any time in the sport's history, the after-match handshakes were essential. Thankfully, the majority of players appeared embarrassed by the fight, and they shook hands in good spirits.

Once again Origin night would belong to the men from Queensland. The Maroons wrapped up the series, winning the fiery second game 5-4. They were also victorious in the third game, winning convincingly 4-2.



Paul Sfeir and Scott give one another the high five!



Queensland's skipper, Scott Notley, scores yet again in a match-winning Origin performance.

Queensland's Captain, Scott Notley, proved why he had long been regarded the best player in the land, with a superb series.

Everything he touched turned to gold, scoring six touchdowns and leading his team superbly throughout. At the ripe age of 33 the Australian captain was playing the best Touch of his career, and he was clearly a step ahead of the pack.

The Cockroaches Dominate the Women's Events.

It was a different story for the women, NSW confirming that they were the queens of Australian Touch, retaining their crown with a clean sweep of the series.

The spectacle that the women turned on was matched only by their stunning body suits, which wowed television audiences last year, and did so again when the series was screened on the Nine Network, Sportsvision, Sky, WIN and NBN throughout the summer of 1996. The series also received international coverage by being screened in New Zealand.

Each of the Women's games was a thriller, and all three games were decided by drop-offs. The Blues wrapped up the series in the afternoon session winning both games, 5-4 and 1-0, NSW pocket dynamo, Giselle Tirado, scoring both the winning touchdowns in extra time.

The overall Origin title again went to Queensland, their two teams scoring 18 touchdowns to the Blues, 15 during a six-game series. When the trophies had been distributed, the television cameras packed away and the lights sent to their next venue, the post-mortems began..

Origin architects, Bill Ker, Ken Crawford and their colleagues, quietly reflected on what had been and what would be next year. Touch

players returning to the hotel from their various celebrations stopped to shake their hands and pat them on the back.

The Liptonice State of Origin cost a little over \$300,000 to stage, funded in part by the recently announced million-dollar Liptonice sponsorship deal. 'No money goes directly back to players,' explained Crawford. 'It's all put in to the production of the event, covering things like purchase of the uniforms, entertainment, stadium construction, hiring the lights and televising the games.'

1996 State of Origin Results

Men's

Queensland 5 NSW 3

MVP: Scott Notley (Queensland)

Queensland 5 NSW 4

MVP: Bob Brindell (Queensland)

Queensland 4 NSW 2

MVP: Craig Madders (Queensland)

Women's

NSW 5 Queensland 4

MVP: Jodie English (NSW)

NSW 1 Queensland 0

MVP: Sharyn Williams (Queensland)

NSW 2 Queensland 1

MVP: Giselle Tirado (NSW)

1996 All-stars of Touch

Margie Allen (Qld), Scott Notley (Qld), Judy Malcolm (NSW), Gary Simons (NSW), Rob Pratt (Qld), Kieran Gavin (NSW), Maurice Stewart (NSW), Kerry Norman (Qld), Donna O'Connor (NSW), Craig Madders (Qld), Giselle Tirado (NSW), Jody English (NSW), Neil Ward (Qld), Robert Brindell (Qld)

Coach of the Year: Colin Jenkinson (Qld)

Manager of the Year: Karama Doreset (WA)

Referee of the Year: Gary Mournehis (NSW)

Official of the Year: Dr Paul Webb (ATA Life Member)

1996 National Results

Mixed Juniors

Queensland d NSW

Mens 30

NSW d Queensland

Womens 30

NSW drew Queensland

Mens 35's

Queensland d NSW

Womens 35's

NSW d Queensland

Mens 40's

NSW drew Queensland

Men 45's

NSW d Queensland

Southern Cross National Open Championships

The inaugural Southern Cross Championships were held at Thebaton Oval, Torrensville in South Australia on 8-10 June. The championships were designed by the ATA to give the emerging states and territories a tournament of their own, away from the representative powers of New South Wales and Queensland.

The three-day tournament played host to teams from Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania, South Australia and the Defence Force. Nineteen teams competed in three open age divisions that included Men's, Women's and Mixed.

While the game continued to spread across Australia, the sport still retained a traditional base in the eastern states. Collectively, New South Wales and Queensland consumed over half a million players, and the other states, while improving all the time, did not have the armory or experience to compete competitively on level terms.



The Northern Territory side on the attack in the Men's Bronze final.

One of the essential reasons why the National Championships were removed from the year's representative calendar was to create new

tournaments where teams could compete on more equal terms.

Final Results

Women's Plate Final:

Victoria 4 ADF 1

Men's Plate Final:

Tasmania 3 Vic 1

Women's Bronze Final:

Sth. Australia 3 ACT Sth. 2

Men's Bronze Final:

Northern Territory 2 SA 1

Mixed Final:

ACT Sth. 4 WA 3

Women's Final:

Northern Territory 5 WA 4

Men's Final:

ACT Sth. 5 ADF 1

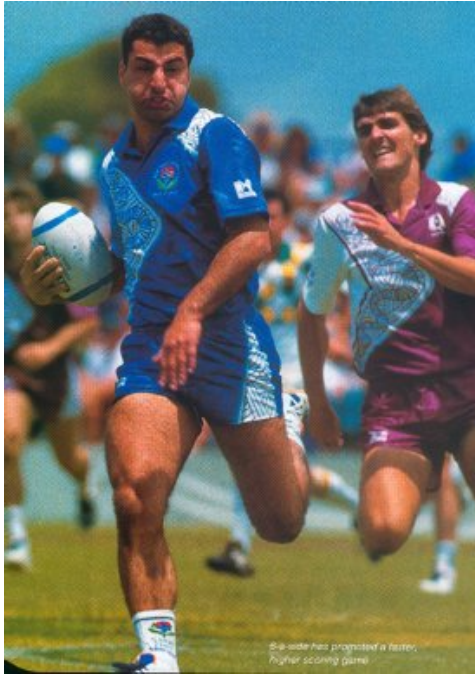
Six-a-side: you can run ... but you can't hide!

Assessment and Analysis: the revolutionary six-a-side rule was recently placed under the microscope during this year's State of Origin Television Series; but was it just a novelty, or is it here to stay?

The Origin's six-a-side format proved an outstanding success. Feedback from both within and without the sport was highly complementary. What essentially began as an experiment designed purely for television broadcast now looked like becoming a permanent fixture within the Australian representative scene. After some initial reluctance it seemed the Australian Touch

community has now firmly embraced the six-a-side concept with competitions now springing up all over the country.

For many Touch traditionalists the sudden departure from the seven-a-side game came as quite a surprise and certainly was not without its critics.



Six-a-side has proved a faster, higher scoring game: Jim Marinos (NSW) and Corey Foster (Qld).

The view of the administrators

‘Yes it really did come about very quickly,’ explained leading six-a-side advocate and head of the NSW T A, Ken Crawford. ‘I’m not surprised everyone was not happy with the move. The Touch community hasn’t always been comfortable with change, but I think in this case we really didn’t have much choice. The push came from the TV networks, which simply weren’t happy with our existing product and wanted to see a more attacking game. Six-a-side was seen as the logical solution and I think the results vindicated the decision.’

There was no doubt that representative Touch has become increasingly bogged down in recent times as representative players had mastered monotonous dumping techniques. Rather than spreading the ball around, many teams were taking the safe option of settling up the middle. It was very reliable, very predictable, highly

effective and yet, very boring! The worse thing was the tactic was so effective most of the teams had been compelled to follow suit. And who could blame them! After all, at the end of the day it was not how you play the game, but who wins the game that counts. If the sport was to encourage a more attractive game then this contagious disease needed to be checked. With the advent of television coverage, suddenly players were now being asked not only to win games but to look good too!

The men especially had been most at fault. Their continual obsession for the dumping game had been in stark contrast to the more free flowing women’s game. However, the women were beginning to show signs of following suit. Obviously, to sell Touch in its most favourable light cosmetic improvements were essential for television. Among a number of positive solutions six-a-side was now seen as the simplest and yet most effective antidote.

In recent years Touch had been desperate to move out of the media wilderness, and television coverage was seen as the answer. But to make a successful transition the sport was forced to implement rule changes already under review. Touch Australia was faced with the difficult task of transforming a participants game into an entertaining spectators’ game.

Typically, the networks had criticised the defensive nature of the game. Television demanded attack at all costs, and to that effect six-a-side was seen as a logical alternative. It certainly created more room for the players, encouraged more ball movement and made for a faster, higher scoring game. At the end of the day it simply made for a more entertaining product. ‘In hindsight, the outside influences bought by television have really come as a blessing for the sport,’ Crawford explained. ‘I think if it wasn’t forced upon us the sport would still be arguing the pros and cons of six-a-side today and nothing would have eventuated. We really had no choice. Touch either had to change and adapt, or risk being passed up by a very unforgiving media. And in the end, the sport just couldn’t afford to pass up the opportunity of a life-time.’

‘Six-a-side’, continued Crawford, ‘proved as popular with the players as it had with the spectators. Like the administrators, many of them were very wary of the six-man game prior to the State Of Origin Series. While fielding one

less player may not have seemed like such a big change, to most of the players, the girls especially, it meant a world of difference.'

The view of the State captains.

'We had to go right back to the drawing board and figure out all new moves based around a six-man concept,' said New South Wales Women's Captain, Katrina Maher. 'Over a 50-metre wide field one less player makes a huge difference. There's so much extra room to be exploited and the speed of the game is increased dramatically. While it's certainly more demanding, I think it's great.'

'I've got to say before the Origin Series we were all a little concerned about the change, 'confessed Queensland Men's Open Captain, Scott Notley. 'I don't think most people can appreciate just what a difference it makes. All of our moves have been structured around seven-a-side, and it changed the whole character of our game. We were unfamiliar with the game and just didn't know what to expect. By the end of the series everyone in the Queensland side was totally sold on the concept.'

Television was the final decider.

'I think six-a-side is the future for elite Touch,' predicted Bill Ker, Chief Executive Director of the ATA. 'We really needed to place our elite players into an environment that could really test them. The players like it. The spectators like it, and it translates well to television.'

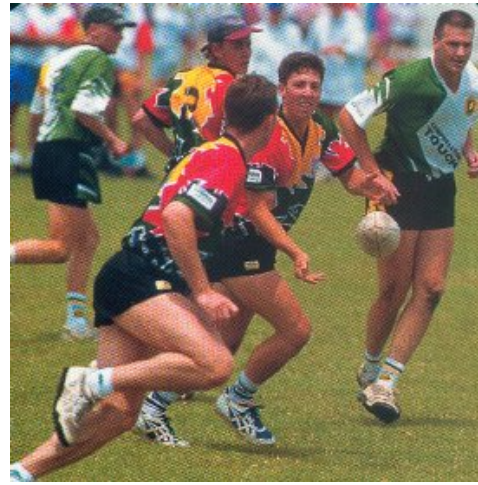
If six-a-side was designed to open up the game and create more scoring opportunities then it clearly worked. The four-game, two hour State Of Origin spectacle resulted in 23 touchdowns which equated to a touchdown almost every five minutes.

Spreading the six-a-side concept to the wider Touch community

The success of Origin Touch under the six-a-side format was now having ramifications for the entire sport.

The NSWTA, for example, was so taken by the idea that it introduced six-a-side to most of its leading representative tournaments for 1996, including the Country Touch League, State League and State Cup. The rule only applied to open and under age divisions, and after further review with some thought of it extending to

include more tournaments and divisions for the following year.



Six-a-side was been enthusiastically embraced by the wider Touch community.

Where as six-a-side appeared equally popular between men and women it was certainly a more favoured option with the younger age groups where speed and stamina were in abundant supply.

Six-a-side and mixed Touch

Six-a-side was also having a dramatic affect on the make-up of mixed Touch. The traditional four-man, three-women game was now being replaced with a more even spread of three men and three women. The change certainly placed more emphasis on the female role within the team. Not surprisingly, the mixed teams had differing feelings about the change, but in 1996 it was probably too early to draw any final conclusions.

Six-a-side and the drop-off.

Six-a-side was also making the drop-off that much more demanding with teams being reduced from six to five in a matter of minutes.

If seven-a-side was a great leveller, then six-a-side was surely the great settler. It could expose the weakness of a team far more easily. A weaker, slower team could sometimes stay in touch with a stronger team, however under the six-person game they were finding it far more difficult. The stronger teams were far more likely to win by substantial margins, better fitness and greater skill levels.

Six-a-side and the referees.

Six-a-side was also placing more pressure on the referees who had to adjust to the extra speed and ball movement. Play tended to move from end to end far quicker and the referees really needed to be in shape to keep up with play.

Analysis at the State and International levels.

While the six-a-side concept was considered a relatively new phenomenon, the NSWTA, in fact, had been experimenting with similar changes over the last few years. Their Touch 2000 trials placed a number of radical rules under the microscope. Their trials went a long way towards proving five-a-side was not as favourable as six-a-side.

The QTA took the six-a-side experiment a step further last year when it formally introduced the rule to their 1995 State Cup. 'It was obvious from the very beginning that six-a-side really opened up the game,' explained the QTA Marketing Officer, Rebecca Chesterton.

It seemed that North Queensland had been the real pioneers, having successfully introduced the six-person game to their Open Super League competition over two years ago.

While six-a-side was taking Australia by storm it seemed our neighbours across the Tasman were not so convinced. The next big step for the game would be television matches between Australia and New Zealand. For the television series to go ahead, six-a-side was a must and Australian Touch officials recognising this had been tempting the Kiwis to follow suit.

But the Kiwis were not so sure and generally did not like being dictated to by their Tasman neighbours. There was no doubt six-a-side would certainly suit the New Zealanders far more than the Australians. The Kiwi Men's Open team, for example, relied far more on speed. It was generally agreed that the extra room would play right into their hands.



After some initial trepidation the origin girls soon found six-a-side to their liking: Sharyn Williams (Queensland) and Giselle Tirado (NSW).

Indigenous Touch: Aboriginal Touch comes to the fore

Mary Anne Dibbs ran an insightful story in *In Touch* on a Touch phenomenon that was blatantly obvious to anyone for at least a century who had been watching Aborigines play any form of ball team sport.

When Australian Touch guru, Mark 'Bus' Boland arrived at a tournament his first move was tracking down a draw. Then he checked it for Aboriginal opponents. 'Bus' was not racist. He was a realist. 'Aborigines worry you more than most players, he explained. 'They're freaks. They can do anything. All the Aborigines I've seen are definitely elite players. So if you draw against them you know you could be in a bit of trouble.'

Touch State of Origin commentator and League and Union great, Russell Fairfax, agreed with Bus. 'Aborigines are the most naturally balanced athletes I've ever seen,' he contended. 'I guess that's part of their proud ancestry. They're just incredibly balanced. Once you know you can stay on your feet, you can push your body more. Confidence breeds confidence, and I guess that's why they're often the stand-out players.'

There were 37 Aborigines in Australia's State representative teams during 1996, a figure that belied not only their talent but also their numbers in the sport. The freedom of Touch is what attracts Aborigines, according to NSW Men's Open player, Shane Frederiksen, who boasts ancestry in the Jarwin Gudjemara people and boxer Lionel Rose as a great uncle.

'Aborigines are good with their hands and quick on their feet,' he confidently explained. 'They like fast sports. That's the reason I played Touch. It's faster and more skilled than Rugby League. Look at the Under 20s Moree side. They're fair dinkum guys who have just chucked a side together and they're freaks. They play nothing like normal Touch because they play by instinct and reflex.'

Frederiksen made his name with the classy Parramatta outfit, playing alongside Mark Boland. 'Shane could be anything,' said Boland.

'He's anything now, really. He's just that quick, just so naturally gifted, he can read a game so well. He just has an instinct.'

Frederiksen, who was also a top junior player in both Aussie Rules and tennis, had left Parramatta to be captain-coach of Sydney club, Canley Vale. He would be playing with his childhood mates, but says he would miss his Parramatta mentors.

Frederiksen admitted going walkabout was part of his makeup. 'Funnily enough, I like moving from place to place,' he said. 'It's not so much that I disappear, it's just things happen, like I'll go to Queensland for a couple of weeks.' Perhaps, that attitude explains why there are not more Aborigines at the rep. level. 'We take a more carefree approach to training and we're probably not as committed, but on the field we like a challenge and we want to be the standout players.'



Moree's U20s team stopped everyone in their path on their way to a historic 1995 State Cup win.

More often than not, they are. 'Aborigines tend to be quick with their reflexes and creative when they play,' said ex-Wallaby, Gary Ella.

On the Rugby field none have played with more flair than the famous Ella brothers, Mark, Glen and Gary, who were bred on Touch. 'As kids that's all we did, Gary explained. 'Playing Touch was how we developed our skills, that's ... well ... what made us. We used to play on the mission at La Perouse every afternoon. There would be about 50 or 60 guys, mostly Aborigines. Go to any country town and see an informal Touch game, and I'll guarantee that

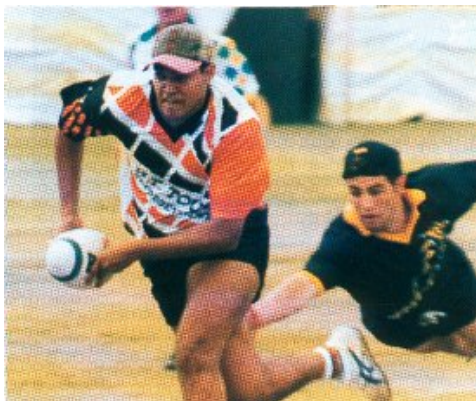
most of the players are Aborigines. It's just a game they have always enjoyed.'

Gary's work with various Aboriginal authorities had taken him around the country. 'I remember working in Bourke,' he said. 'The population was only about two and a half thousand, but there was a 20-team Touch competition, and 80 per cent of the players were Aborigines. It's the biggest sport out there.'

Touch is perhaps the most easily accessible game on the planet. 'You don't even have to buy boots,' Ella contended. 'You can play in anything and there's no real class system. Not everyone can play Rugby to start with. League's a little easier, but everyone can play Touch.'

The Aboriginal notion of family is another reason why so many are attracted to Touch. 'Talk to Aborigines, and you talk extended family, insisted Ella. 'We don't talk about third cousins or great uncles. If you're related, no matter how far, you're family.'

Free of age and sex barriers, it is clear to any observer, that Touch is the ideal family sport, and that closeness often translates into the winning edge.



For Aboriginal players, attack is the name of the game.

Also increasing during the 1990s were the number of Touch competitions organised by Aborigines for Aborigines. 'They're basically modern-day corroborees,' explained Greg Sainsbury, Coordinator of Aboriginal Programs for the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation. 'As well as competing, it's a chance to catch up on the news, they are sporting events, but also much more in so many ways; they're a way of keeping Aborigines in touch with their culture.'

Through the 1990s it was clear that Aboriginal representation in Touch was growing all around Australia. Aborigines were excelling, not only as individual players and as teams, but also in administration, coaching and refereeing. Queensland's Michael Viti, for example, as a level 6 referee was one of the country's very best. By 1996 Touch was one of the most popular Aboriginal sports in Australia. The growth and development of their game was a credit to their community and a great advertisement for the sport as a whole.

Women's Touch: Leading the Way

Through the mid-1990s the ATA pushed the inclusive nature of their sport. Participant numbers were soaring, and we have already seen the degree of mileage that the ATA were able to draw from the massive and exciting Indigenous participation in the sport. Now it was time to throw the spotlight onto the value of women's participation in Touch. Not surprisingly, women's Touch was featured in a 1996 lead article in "In Touch".

'I've spoken to a number of people who've seen the television coverage and they were more impressed with the girls than the guys as entertainment,' Russell Fairfax explained. 'And that's not just because of the body suits! Sure they look good but I think what people have appreciated is turning on a spectacle in a guys' sport.'

For a long time in so many sports the men and the women have been fairly divided, but the gap is really closing in Touch.'

Indeed, the feedback from Wide World Of Sports producers suggests that it is the women's game that most people wanted to see and that the men's game will soon be playing second fiddle to the women.

The women are the first to admit they do not have the skills of the men, but according to Fairfax that was part of the appeal. 'I wouldn't like to see them become as good as the men and competing because inevitably there'd be comparisons,' he explained.

'I like it the way it is. The women have created their own little niche and it's exciting. They can go a long way on their own. I was very impressed with the girl's level of fitness Their level of skill is good, but compare it to the top



Despite a dramatic rise in playing standards the women's game had kept its feminine touch.

men's Touch and they lag. You have to take it in context of entertainment. The game the girls play entertain the crowd, and it's fantastic.'

Queensland Captain, Catherine Barr, believes the woman's game will always stand on its own. 'It will always be different so it will never be compared to the men's game,' she contended. 'The men's and women's games could be classed as two different sports anyway, but there's an element that makes the women's different but I just can't put it into words.'

Barr agrees with Fairfax that a few mistakes in the women's game create a more entertaining spectacle. 'The women's game is more unpredictable,' she argued. 'The top men are almost perfect at the game, whereas the women may not be and that brings a touch of unpredictability. I think it makes the crowd a

little more on edge wondering what will happen next. There's a spark there. I think women's Touch can advance so much further. It appeals to women because they like to see other women competing at a high level and it appeals to the men because it's attractive.'

NSW and Australian Captain, Katrina Maher, received similar feedback. 'A lot of people say the women's game is attractive to watch because there's lots of ball being thrown around, it tends to be more open,' she said. 'The styles are also quite different. The girls seem to be more aggressive in defence; the men tend to keep a rolling line of defence. Also the men's game is faster.'

'The reason for that is very simple. Boys grew up on football; girls had a different staple diet. Men have the jump in the football: awareness stakes. They're quicker than the women, but the women are faster than ever before. That's the main change I've noticed in the game, Maher continued. 'The skill level of the girls has improved heaps, particularly the athleticism, the ability to dive. Now it's common. Everyone just dives.'

Australian Coach, Peter McNeven, guarantees the women have earned the respect of every player in the men's open team. 'Sure, we're proud of them, he agreed. 'But it wasn't always that way. Initially women's Touch was a joke,' he added. 'The guys used to play and the girls would go and watch. They just got sick of sitting on the sidelines. The first thing I noticed when they started playing was they'd stop when they caught the ball. They were like netball players. Often Aussie Rules and American Football players have the same problem; they can't laterally pass because they've never had to do it. But now the women's skills are unbelievable. Their ball control, flick passes, their switching are all sensational.'

McNeven believed that high coaching standards and Mixed Touch both played a part in advancing the women's game, but agreed they should not be compared with the men. By the mid-1990s almost 70,000, or one third of the senior players were women, with the percentage much higher at the school level. 'Touch is actually more popular with the girls than the boys at the school level,' pointed out Dean Russell, Promotions Manager for the NSW Touch Association. 'There are unlimited sports



Plenty of ball movement and an air of unpredictability makes women's Touch an attractive spectacle.

for girls, and Touch is one of the few sports the NSW Department of School Education has identified as ideal. The NSW primary schools, for example, are running a state-wide competition for girls under thirteen, and 103 schools have already entered.

The girl's game is just booming. Indeed, it's getting to the point whereby it's seriously beginning to undermine Netball.'

By the mid-1990s the dramatic improvement in women's Touch at the highest level was having a marked effect on the game at the grass-roots level. The standard of women's Touch right across the board had come on in leaps and bounds during the early 1990s. Many astute observers predicted that it would only continue to rise as women continued to gain more respect within the sport.

And, of course, another reason for the fantastic rise in popularity for the female form of the game can be attributed to increased leisure hours for females, and a general drive for independence from a hitherto male-dominated access to football sports.

During the 1990s women's Touch attained new levels of excellence.

The 'astute observers' were correct! Almost a decade down the track, the hard work put in by the coaches, such as Peter McNeven, during the 1990s and through the role models of the brilliant 1990s female stars such as Gabby and Katherine Maher, made the 1990 statements made about women's Touch almost anachronistic.



Action from the Sydney Championships

1997

On 16 March Australia hosted the Federation of International Touch World Masters Cup and the World Master Club Championship at the Gold Coast Touch Centre. The week-long competition hosted 30 teams from eight nations and some 29 club teams.



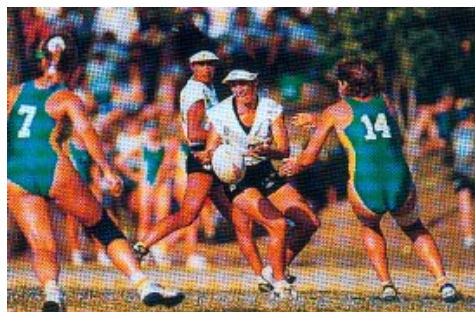
Australia showed why it is recognised as the most powerful Touch playing nation by winning every division including the Men's 30s, Men's 35s, Men's 40s, Women's 30s and Mixed 30s.

This was the first FIT Masters Competition since it separated from the Open divisions. The FIT Masters and FIT Open World Cups now became separate events.

The 1997 World Masters was run concurrently with the World Club Masters Touch event, which was open to both club and regional teams. This concept proved very successful and allowed a larger number of Masters Participants to compete together for one event.

The World Cup games were scheduled to coincide with the evening matches of the club/regional section to attract spectators and

highlight the game at the elite level in the Masters divisions.



New Zealand on the attack against Australia in the final of the Women's 30s.

1997 World Masters Results

Men's 30

Australia 5 New Zealand 1

Women's 30

Australia 1 New Zealand 0

Mixed 30

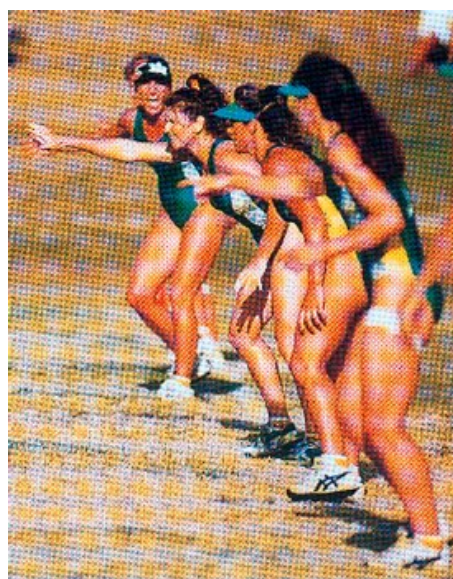
Australia 3 New Zealand 2

Men's 35

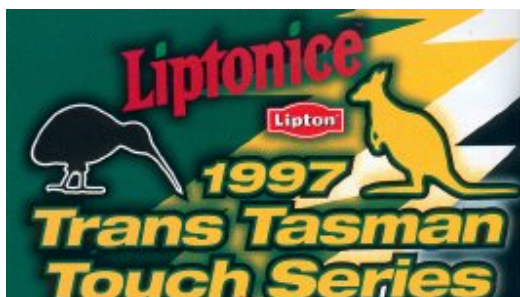
Australia 9 Western Samoa 1

Men's 40

Australia 10 New Zealand 0



The Australian Women's team form an impregnable defence.



Trans-Tasman Triumph!

Thanks to the generous support of the sport's national sponsor, Liptonice, the Australian Touch Association broke new ground with the 1997 Trans-Tasman Test Series, being broadcast to a world-wide television audience of almost 15 million viewers.

The Liptonice Trans-Tasman Series was held at Perry Park in Brisbane on 21 June, and was billed as the most significant event in the history of the game, and it certainly lived up to all expectations!

The Trans-Tasman was not only a triumph for the Australian teams, but more importantly a triumph for the promotion of Australian and International Touch.

The Australian and New Zealand teams competed in a three-match series featuring the Men's, Women's and Mixed open divisions, with a total of nine games played over two sessions. The Men's and Women's series were packaged into a six-game international television series and aired throughout Australia, New Zealand and overseas.

In an absorbing contest between the two super powers of international Touch, Australia narrowly defeated the defending Trans-Tasman champions, New Zealand, two divisions to one. Australia won the Men's series 2-1, the Women's series 3-0, and lost the Mixed division 1-2.

'It was a great success, and one of the best promotions Touch has ever had,' explained ATA, Chief Executive Officer, Bill Ker.



1997 Liptonice Trans-Tasman Touch Series Australian Men's Team

Front: Craig Madders, Craig Pierce, Mark Boland, Scott Notley (Capt.), Bob Brindle, Shane Rigby. Middle: Ian Stanley (Assistant Coach), Trent McDonald, David Raper, Corey Foster, Darren Currie, Jason Zabielo, Peter McNeven (Coach). Back: Ian Rodgers (Manager), Neil Ward, Brenton O'Shanesy, Steve Murphy, Tim Brown (Physio).

'The Liptonice Trans-Tasman has given our sport a tremendous boost. We've followed on from the success of State of Origin and taken the next step to an international series. Australia and New Zealand are the two strongest nations, and what better games to showcase our sport to the rest of Australia and the world. I cannot thank Liptonice enough for their valued support to the game.'

The Trans-Tasman gave the sport unprecedented media exposure, with the series being seen by almost 3 million Australians via Optus Vision, WIN, NBN, Sky Channel and Nine's Wide World of Sports. It was also viewed nationally in New Zealand via TVNZ and Sky NZ and overseas into a further 15 countries.

The traditional home of Queensland Soccer, Perry Park, was temporarily transferred into a Touch stadium and it proved to be an ideal location. Despite the wet conditions the night games drew a full house with just on 5000 spectators braving the cold, a remarkable achievement for a mid winters game.

The sheer fact that so many people turned up on such a wet night proved that the Trans-Tasman can work as a stand alone event,' said Ker. 'It's very encouraging for the sport.'

'A few years ago you would have been lucky to see 300 people here,' Trans-Tasman Tournament Director, Dean Russell explained. 'It's amazing how far we've come. The response to this tournament has been fantastic. There is no doubt that Touch has really developed into a viable spectator sport. People are now coming to games not just to play but to watch and they're walking away very impressed with what they see.'

For the first time Australia and New Zealand competed in a six-a-side, televised series and the teams responded with a day and night of world-class Touch.

'I think the Australian teams performed especially well considering they hadn't played together since the 1995 World Cup,' explained Ker. 'Each of the teams improved with each game.'



1997 Liptonice Trans-Tasman Touch Series Australian Mixed Team

*Front: Natalie Wilkinson, Karina Castle, Rebecca Chesterton, Alison Kay, Melinda Guthrie, Alison Hall, Katie Curtis.
Middle: Greg Maynard (Assistant Coach), Andrew Galea, Darren Shelley (Capt.) Lee Thompson (Coach), Gavin Shuker,
Shane Frederiksen, Karamea Dorset (Manager). Back: Matt Sawyer, Michael McGovern, Jason Chaffey.*

I also thought the performance and behaviour of the New Zealand sides on and off the field was impeccable, and they certainly did their country proud.'

While there were individual titles on offer for each of the three divisions, most interest centred on the magnificent greenstone Trans-Tasman Trophy itself. Made in New Zealand, the trophy was awarded on the overall team results.

Following an engrossing day of test match Touch all attention moved towards the climatic night session. This was preceded with some lively entertainment, including great music, 40 cheer girls, precision parachutists and fireworks.

The finale was to be a promoters' dream. New Zealand won the Mixed division, and Australia the Women's, and with the Men's standing at one game each, the whole series came down to the final game.

In many ways the Trans-Tasman was as important to New Zealand Touch as it was to Australia. 'The Trans Tasman coverage couldn't have come at a better time for New Zealand,' explained Anne Hindson, Executive Director of the New Zealand Touch Association. 'The series has generated tremendous interest, and it's been a great promotion for our game.'



The introduction of the Liptonice National Touch League in October was another milestone in the development of Touch in Australia. Touch now joined the ranks of other high profile Australian sports with the introduction of a truly national competition.

The National Touch League was created to replace the old National Championships where the smaller states and territories found themselves totally engulfed by the more powerful states of NSW and Queensland. Rather than concentrate Australia's representative talent into two powerhouse teams, the NTL was designed to divide the 240,000 strong Australian market into 12 competitive sides and in the process establish a strong national club structure.

'The NTL was a move away from the past and another exciting step forward in the future development of Touch in Australia,' explained Australian Touch Association President, Russell Mowles.

'Each of the 12 permit holders represents an equal number of registered players which makes for a much fairer, more competitive tournament. The playing talent is spread far more evenly and it gives more participants an opportunity to impress for higher representative honours.

The NTL also provides the players, referees and selectors with an important stepping stone

1997 Sixth Liptonice Trans-Tasman Touch Series Results	
Men	
New Zealand 3	Australia 2
Australia 3	New Zealand 2
Australia 3	New Zealand 2
Women	
Australia 3	New Zealand 0
Australia 3	New Zealand 2
Australia 7	New Zealand 1
Mixed	
Australia 5	New Zealand 2
New Zealand 5	Australia 4
New Zealand 7	Australia 5

Australia won the overall Liptonice Trans-Tasman Series two divisions to New Zealand's one.

between local and state teams.’ The inaugural NTL was played at the superb Coffs Harbour International Sports Complex from 17-19 October. Most of the 12 permit holders fielded a Men’s, Women’s and Mixed team.

The tournament finals were broadcast on WIN, NBN and Optusvision, while NBN the host broadcaster, and also ran 50 television commercials to promote the event. The Brisbane City Cobras were the strongest NTL club with all three teams reaching the finals.

The Men’s Open Final was a nail biter. With the Sydney Scorpions seemingly cruising with a 3-1 lead, suddenly they had two players sin-bined, allowing the Brisbane Cobras to level the game at 3 all.

The deadlock was broken when Scorpion’s star, Shane Frederiksen, beat his player with a brilliant step before diving low for the winning touchdown. Frederiksen, had an outstanding game with his elusive dance work causing the Cobras problems all day, and he was a worthy Player of the Finals. Gavin McDonald was judged Player of the Series.

The Women’s Open Final was a tale of two halves. In the first half the Sydney Mets dominated the Brisbane Cobras and were unlucky not to be more than 1-nil ahead at the break.

However, the Cobras picked up the pace in the second stanza, scoring two quick touchdowns to dominate a tiring Sydney team and take out an unexpected 2-1 victory. As always, Cobras’ captain, Catherine Barr, led from the front and was awarded the Player of the final. The Gold Coast’s Sharyn Williams was voted Player of the series.

The Mixed Open Final was a high-scoring match between the Sydney Rebels and the Brisbane Cobras. The teams went touchdown for touchdown until the 5-5 deadlock was broken by two quick touchdowns by the Rebel’s playmaker, Darren Shelley.

The Rebels then managed to hold out a fast finishing Cobras side to take out a solid 7-5 win.

Player of the final went to the Rebels, Darren Shelley, and Player of the Series went to Dione

Williams from the Brisbane City Cobras. ‘As a marketing tool the NTL is vital to the long-term

1997 Liptonice National Touch League Results

Men’s
Scorpions 4 Cobras 3

Women’s
Cobras 2 Mets 1

Mixed
Rebels 3 Cobras 5



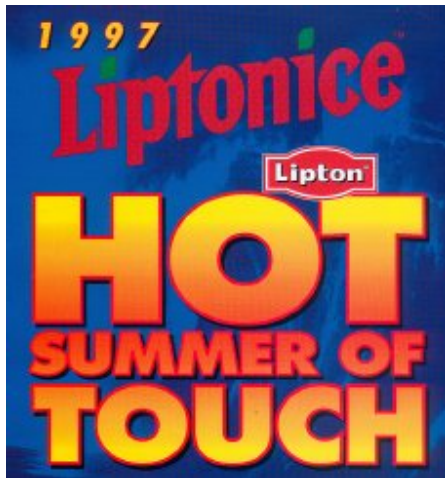
wellbeing of the sport,' explained Bill Ker, ATA Chief Executive Officer. 'A strong national club structure provides the players with a stronger regional identity and is seen as fundamental to the grassroots development of the sport.'

These 12 permit holders will directly influence the course of grass roots development.' 'While

it's still early days, I think you'll see the NTL grow increasingly important in years to come. The 20s have already been included, and the Masters divisions are also looking to come on board.'



Defence's, Chris Bradley, looks for support as he breaks into the clear.



With its fast and furious action, Beach Touch was set to take the Australian summer beach scene by storm.

Beach Touch had its origins back in 1984 when Queensland pioneer, Greg Norman, staged a series of small competitions on the Gold Coast. A few years later NSW took the initiative with trials conducted by Gary Blackett and Dean Russell. Finally, it was Cary Thompson, President of the Federation of International Touch, who took the game a step further to establish today's set of rules.

These pioneers wrote and rewrote the rules in an effort to create an attractive beach alternative, and in doing so created the foundation for a new beach phenomenon with potentially huge growth potential.

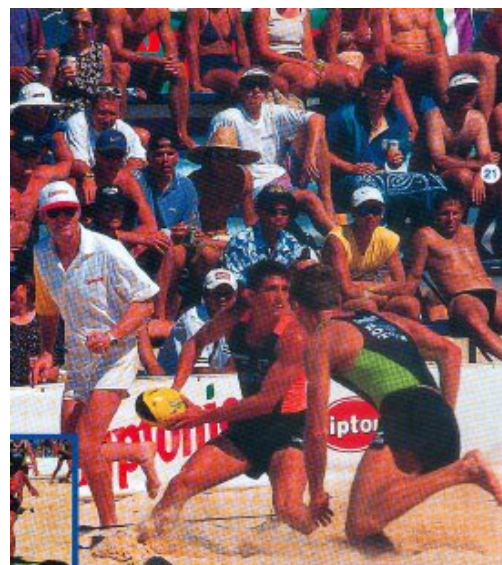
The sand makes the going tough, but rather than increasing numbers for crowd entertainment team sizes were reduced. They conceived a game where three attackers would break the line of two defenders. They also introduced an abbreviated 15-minute game to encourage a faster, more explosive contest.

Beach Touch seemed to have been around forever, but until this year, except for a strong Newcastle competition, the sport as a whole had never really taken off. Following the outstanding success of the Liptonice Hot Summer of Touch competition, held on 8 February at Sydney's Maroubra Beach, Beach Touch was now set to become a permanent fixture on the Australian beach scene.

Competitors were lured to the Liptonice competition via an advertising campaign on Radio 2MMM and 60 teams responded to the call making it the largest beach competition ever held. The sand of Sydney's Maroubra Beach was carved into six fields, each 30 metres long and 15 metres wide, with competitions running all day in Mixed, Men's and Women's divisions. A 300 seat stadium was also erected on the main field.

The majority of competitors were representative players, but several park players also entered teams. The Muppets, captained by Australian Touch legend, Mark 'Bus' Boland, won the Men's competition, defeating the Untouchables 11-8. NSW State Star and Australian Mixed Player, Melinda Guthrie, led both her Women's and Mixed teams to victory. The Guthers beat the Torpedoes 10-9 to claim the Women's crown, while Melinda's Runaways defeated the Petticoats' 9-8 in the Mixed Final.

'I think Beach Touch is great,' enthused Guthrie. 'You use a lot of skills, but I also love it because I love Touch and I grew up on the beach. It combines both! Obviously with less players it's harder to defend, but that means more touchdowns are scored and it's more entertaining.' 'In the mixed competition the girls need to be more skilled because in most cases the guys are faster and have better ball skills than the girls.'



The three-on-two situation created plenty of attacking opportunities: Chris Jonson (ball) and Garry Toohey (Green)

Mark Boland stated that some of the games speedsters got bogged down in the sand. 'The funny thing about it is that the guys who are normally quick are not as quick on the sand, he explained. 'It's definitely more physically demanding because if you push off on the grass you can go a couple of metres either way, but in the sand you can't step, you have to beat people with the ball rather than stepping them. Both captains agreed that the greatest thing going for Beach Touch was the lack of pressure.



Karen Hall races across the burning sand, with Renee Murphy (Clark) in defense.

'It's just great fun,' said Guthrie. 'For me its like a break because we play so much competitive Touch and you don't have to take the Beach Touch as seriously. 'It's not as intense as a normal competition,' Boland agreed. 'You still want to win, but you don't have to win. It's a lot more fun at the beach. You can have a swim, watch the other games and it's also more personal with only five in the team instead of 14. Beach Touch is less passionate, but it's still great to win!'

Beach Touch had proven to be a very popular beach alternative to Australia's favourite grass sport game, and the success of the Liptonice Beach Touch competition had pioneered the way for bigger and better tournaments throughout the summer. Already there was talk of developing a series of high profile Beach Touch events down the East Coast of Australia.

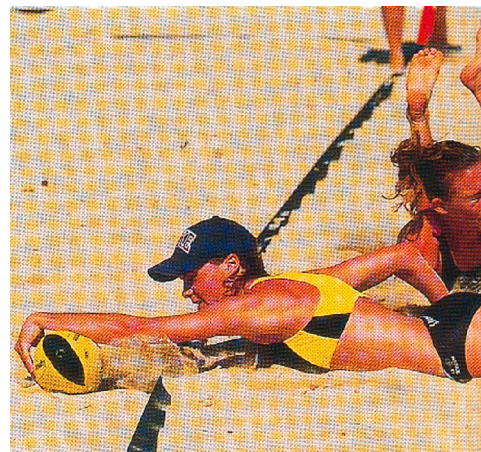
Beach Touch had huge marketing potential, with the ability to draw a whole new breed of players from outside the representative scene. 'It had the potential to open up a whole new dimension to

the game,' said Bill Ker, ATA CEO. 'Beach Touch offers high visual awareness. It's a great way to promote our game to the public and also offers our players an opportunity to play an exciting beach alternative to the traditional game on the grass.'

'The good thing about Beach Touch is that anybody can play and the good guys like the Australian representative players can get beaten by anyone who can pass a ball and run,' continued Boland. 'It's a real leveller.'

Beach Touch was seen as an ideal way of promoting the sport to the non-Touch fraternity. Like the pioneers who conceived the game all those years ago, many believe it s potential was as yet untapped. 'A lot of players want to see new concepts and Beach Touch is great,' said Guthrie. 'But I think we need to play it more, do more advertising and attract more people. I don't think we've played enough of it yet, but I believe we should definitely be working towards a representative competition among sides.'

The sentiments of the players are echoed by the Establishment. Australian Touch Association saw a big role for Beach Touch in the future and was committed to ensuring the beach fun continues to expand. The NSWTA had already fielded inquiries from country areas about the logistics of importing sand inland. 'Just because there is no beach out there doesn't mean you can't play Beach Touch,' explained Dean Russell, NSW Development Officer. 'You don't need a beach ... our idea is to dump sand in pub and Club car parks!'



Amanda Judd beats some determined defense from Kara Hall to make the line.

The Drop-Off: fast and furious action!

Assessment and Analysis: with its marked influence with television audiences, the revolutionary drop-off rule added a fantastic aspect to the sport. What were its advantages and disadvantages?

Touch took a novel approach to extra-time, and the results were anything but sudden death! By the late 1990s, when asked, “what was the most exciting thing in Touch today”, many of the players will argue that it was the drop-off.

Touch had discovered the perfect solution to a tied game: simply eliminate players one by one until someone scores, or at least until the other team collapses! What ever way one looks at it Touch’s exhausting version of sudden death football, it was claimed that it had been a huge success story. Certainly, it was one of the more popular rules to grace the sport.

Basically, the rule was used to eliminate players after full time to settle a tied game. The innovative rule was designed to determine a game in a fast and fair manner. At the completion of full-time both teams return to the field; every two minutes a player was then dropped off each side. The teams were reduced to a minimum of three on three players.

The drop-off was sudden death, with the first team to score winning the game. However, each team had to get one turn of possession before a team could be declared a winner. Players were reduced from seven, to six-on-six, five-on-five, then four-on-four, and finally to three-on-three.

The drop-off had proven to be a very popular way to settle a result, and so much fairer than simply relying on the toss of a coin.

As it should, the drop-off placed the destiny of the game in the hands of the players. Added to this it was also a very exciting way to determine a result and brought the game to a climactic end.

The drop-off was unique to Touch, and some other sports should take note. Soccer, for example settled a tied result with a cumbersome

penalty shoot out with the goalie. For many, the shoot out was unjust, and hardly reflected on a team’s performance. Some contended that soccer could take a feather out of Touch’s hat and consider the drop-off scenario.

‘The drop-off finds its origins in New Zealand,’ explained Bill Ker, Chief Executive Director of the ATA. ‘It was one of the best things to come out of New Zealand. In 1990 Gwynne Ker and Allen Satchell sat down and reworked the rules.

We basically took what the Kiwis had developed, making some minor modifications, like introducing substitutes.

Our Coaching Director, Cary Thompson, then refined the rule and implemented it nationally. It’s gone onto to become a great success, and certainly very popular within the sport.’

‘Anyone who thinks Touch can be a boring spectacle only has to watch a good drop-off,’ contended Australian Captain, Scott Notley. ‘You only have to look at the crowd reaction at any tournament where players hug the field to watch. It’s a great rule, great for the players and the crowd. Spectators are always in expectation of something special.’



With less players, the drop-off created much more open space: Courtney Collings of Sydney Rebels.



*The drop-off: no place for the faint hearted!
Photographed here is Andrew Wise from the Southern
Suns.*

The drop-off was designed to achieve a relatively quick result. With fewer players on deck it created more room, increasing the scoring opportunities. In most cases, the drop-off was determined in under five minutes, however, some games had been known to go beyond 15 minutes, with the record said to have extended up to an agonising 22 minutes.

The drop-off placed a huge emphasis on speed and fitness, and it was not always for the faint hearted. A testing 50 minute contest, followed by an extra 15 minutes could be a real test of stamina for any team.

Some of the sport's most epic games had been fought between two teams down to three players, battling a war of attrition. What ever way one look at it the drop-off, generally, it delivered fast and furious, if not exhausting action!

'It's really a high pressure situation,' explained Notley. 'It's very physically demanding and it's a time for the really good players to stand out. It can also be very heartbreaking. The difference between winning and losing is so small, one little mistake and the game was over. With every player reduced, the game gets faster and faster.'

As the number of players are reduced, the speed players really came into their own. Three-on-three was the ultimate challenge, there's just so much field to cover.'

Many players who competed in social competitions may not have had the opportunity to play in a drop-off. Generally, only competition finalists, or representative teams, competed in them. However, by the late 1990s with so many representative games being played, the drop-off was playing an increasing important role in popularising the sport.

By the late 1990s leading coaches were developing specific techniques to counter drop-off situations. 'Yes, there are definite tactics employed,' confessed NSW Men's Open Coach, Tony Tradd. 'It's not all speed, we have set plays and it's a very tactical battle.'

I think it's a great rule. While it places extra demands on the players, they're always jumping out of their skin to get out there. Regular substitution is critical. Because the drop-off is unique to the sport, it also gives Touch an identity from the Rugby codes.'



A drop-off certainly promotes plenty of tension, as is shown here with Courtney Collings and Elise Anthony from the Sydney Rebels.

1998

Trans-Tasman

Having held the Trans Tasman Cup from 1993 in a boil over win at Tempe, until 1997, when a last minute touchdown by Shane-Lee Frederiksen gave the title back to Australia, the New Zealander's preparation for this series was nothing short of strenuous and resolute.

The Australians were arriving in April, so in March the New Zealand Touch in cooperation with the Federation of International Touch staged a South Pacific Nations Tournament at Waitakere City Stadium in Auckland. Teams from Samoa, Niue and the NZ Maori participated in a round robin tournament where New Zealand honed their skill and played elite level competition in preparation for the Aussie Assault.

The series was played at the famous Ericsson Stadium in Auckland and the first round of

games proved disastrous for Australia. The New Zealand Mixed team was the current Trans-Tasman Mixed Champions and was not going to allow the Australians to take that title away from them. On the Friday evening they stormed home to thrash Australia 7-2 in the opening game of the series. Players like George Albert-Janke, Kopae Irihei, Sharelene Bannister and Michael Day simply tore the Australian defence apart despite having players in the sin bin on two occasions.

Australia retaliated in the second game with the women soundly defeating New Zealand 7-3, with Sharyn Williams, Giselle Tirado and Tanya Sewter being the stand-outs for the winners. The third game of the evening was the most exciting with the Mens scoreline changing very two to three minutes. One team would take the lead only to surrender it five minutes later. In the end the New Zealand side triumphed to the tune of 8-6 much to the despair of the whole Australian contingent.

The Australian Camp was in turmoil, while the New Zealand teams were jubilant. Much soul searching was done especially by the Mixed team into the wee hours of the morning. The coaching staff and senior players huddled together to come up with a strategy to stem the tide of touchdowns by their counterparts. A new



Australia in attack: Barry Channel dumping for Garry Sonda.

defensive pattern was devised and although only in theory the coaches and players were sure the previous effort would not be repeated. Such drastic action was necessary as New Zealand only had to win the opening match on Saturday and they would secure one of the two rubbers needed to win the series and thus regain the title they held for four years. Tour officials were also anxious as any win in the Men's division by New Zealand would see the title stay in that country.

Ten o'clock in the morning and spectators, players and officials anxiously awaited the referee's whistle to commence the second Mixed game. Australia had rested Barry Chenhall in the first game so the opposition had no idea of his skills until he began to cut them to ribbons. They then realised they had a game on their hands and had to do more to win the series then just wait for full time. In a game that reached such high standards both in skill and excitement Australia prevailed to keep the series alive by

winning 7-6. The pressure on the rest of the Australian teams dissipated like the fog lifting in the morning and every member of the touring party knew that this win was the turning point of the whole series.

This was confirmed when the Women kept their unbeaten International record in tact by taking their second game in an exciting hard fought battle 8-7. The young New Zealanders like Nicola Kidd showed what a force they will be with more experience at this level. The win gave the Women's title to Australia and gave them a 1-0 lead in the series. A disappointed New Zealand Men's team capitulated to a highly charged Australian outfit by going down 2-6 in their second game. With the Men's title ready to be grabbed back from the Aussies New Zealand could not match the skill and pace of the opponents. Coach, Peter McNeven, knew the previous night's win was not going to be repeated again.



1998 Australian Mixed Open Team:

Back: Bill Ker (Tour Manager), Greg English, Gavin Shuker, Wayne Bambury, Michael (Bones) McGovern, Barry Chenhall, Garry Sonda.

Middle: Cary Thompson (Coaching Director), Garvin (Magoo) Francis (Medical), Kathy O'Brien (Manager), Tim Brown (Medical) Angela Stephens (Medical), Lee Thompson (Coach), Dean Russell (Assitant Coach)

Front: Natalie Wilkinson, Debbie Knapp, Rebecca Chesterton,, Darren Shelley (Captain), Alison Kay (Vice Captain, Justine Smith, Nadine Teskera, Leanne Gray.

The euphoria of the Friday evenings wins came crashing down on the New Zealand squad and they went away to re-group for the third game as two titles were still available and the series well and truly still alive. The tone of the rest of the tournament was to be set with the third Mixed games.

Australia had shown in the Mixed that their change in defensive style was a winner and their secret weapon in attack had come though with flying colours. Barry Channel again proved elusive, as did Greg English's speed and with Gary Sonda's aggression matching that of New Zealand the game was far more defence oriented than the previous two. Both sides attacked from within their own half but in the end Australia proved too strong and ran out winners 4-2 thus retaining the Mixed title and giving Australia an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

The women made a clean sweep of their division by defeating New Zealand 5-2 while the men battled against a determined host to also hold onto their title by winning their game 6-5. The sportsmanship displayed by all the participants

was of the highest standards and New Zealand although beaten, went down fighting.

1998 Seventh Trans-Tasman Series Results

Mixed

New Zealand 7	Australia 2
Australia 7	New Zealand 6
Australia 4	New Zealand 2

Women

Australia 7	New Zealand 3
Australia 8	New Zealand 7
Australia 5	New Zealand 2

Men

New Zealand 8	Australia 6
Australia 6	New Zealand 2
Australia 6	New Zealand 5



*Tour Officials: Back: Bill Ker (Tour Manager), Tim Brown (Medical Director), Bruce Begnell (Tour Manager)
Front: Cary Thompson (Coaching Director), Angela Stephens (Medical), Garvin Francis (Medical).*

Youth Tour to New Zealand

Coaches and managers are everything with youth teams. They must be mentors, role models, while at the same time offering parental advice. School teachers are well suited for the role.

Typically, the officials provided by the Australian Touch Association, was of the highest order. Team Coach, Paul Beeby, was a school teacher at Gosford High and had been involved in Touch for many years. He had represented at numerous levels as a player, and more recently had concentrated on coaching and the development of juniors both at school and at his local New South Wales Central Coast association, Erina.

Team Assistant Coach, Jon Pratt, was employed by the NSW Touch Association as a development Officer, and like Paul has been

involved in the sport of Touch for many years. As part of his duties as a NSWTA development officer John covered southern New South Wales and surrounding areas, and was already known to a number of the players.

Team Manager, Kane Weeks, worked as a supervisor with the Muswellbrook Branch of the National Australia Bank and had been involved in the Touch for five years. He had been a NSWTA team manager for the previous three years and was also involved in the coaching and development of juniors in his local and regional associations.

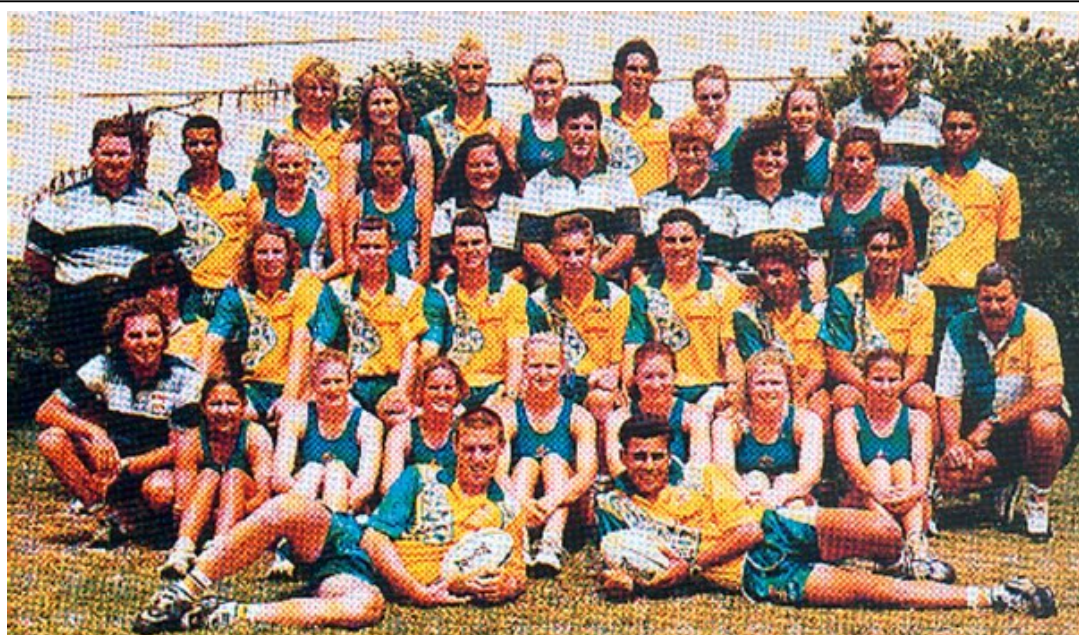
1998 Youth Test Series Results

18 Boys

New Zealand 6 Australia 4
New Zealand 6 Australia 3

18 Girls

Australia 8 New Zealand 0
Australia 3 New Zealand 1



Australian Under-18 Teams: Trans-Tasman Youth Series New Zealand Tour, January 1998

Back row: Toby Ryston-Pratt, Stacey Lapham, Nathan Mills, Tina Reid, Chris Flannery, Katherine Fitzgerald, Louise Winchester, Jon Pratt (Men's Assistant Coach). Third row: Kane Weeks (Men's Manager) Alan Widden, Kelly Woods, Rose Morgan, JoDaRosa, (Physio), Phil Evans (Women's Coach), Judi Miller (Women's Manager), Mary Petrie (Women's Assistant Coach), Nicole Suey, Chris Swan. Second row: Bev Roberts (Tour Manager), Simon Nelson, Warren Lorger, Daniel Rushworth, Brent Madders, PJ Marsh, Thomas Awai, Aaron Cowan, Bernie Lowther (Tour Manager). Front row: Paul Beeby (Men's Coach) Belinda Dawney, Cara Webb, Bianca Tsakissiris, Joanne Nelson, Renee Henderson, Erin Turner, Cristie McTaggart. In Front: Jade Barnes, Damon Viellaris

Liptonice State of Origin
Several grudge matches at
Brisbane's Perry Stadium, the
home of the Brisbane Strikers
Soccer team.

Jon Pratt contends that it was generally agreed that with its long grandstand, this was an excellent Touch venue, with abundant crowd participation. Liptonice, the event's major sponsor was well presented by the field surrounds.

In February 1998 some 2,000 people attended what had now become one of the jewels in the ATA calander. With the crowd largely coming from the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast the partisan spectators were not disappointed in the intensity of the matches. Brisbane's *Courier Mail* gave excellent coverage



Shane-Lee Fredericksen, one of the Blue's sensations of the series.

of the events, and there was good local television coverage. This publicity seemed to only serve to intensify the crowd's very vocal desire for multiple Queensland victories.

Jon Pratt remembers that most matches were severe grudge matches, and none more so than the Women's Open. The NSW team was



With grit and determination Natalie Wilkinsons runs it out for the Queensland Open Women's team.

coached by Dean Russell, with Kerry Norman coaching the Queensland opposite number. Kerry Norman's team was hammered, with Debbie Knapp being a standout for the Blues. This was the first year that New South Wales won the series, and much to the humiliation of Queensland this was achieved on their own turf.

1998 State of Origin Results

Men's

NSW 4 Queensland 3
MVP: Shane Fredericksen,(NSW)
Queensland 4 NSW 2
MVP: Craig Pierce (Queensland)
Queensland 2 NSW 1
MVP: Neil Ward (Queensland)

Women's

NSW 4 Queensland 2
MVP: Giselle Tirado (NSW)
NSW 5 Queensland 3
MVP: Amanda Judd (NSW)
Queensland 2 NSW 1
MVP: Sharyn Williams (Queensland)

Sydney teams sweep the National Touch League



The 1998 National Touch League carried forward from last year's initial success with another outstanding tournament. Still in its infancy the revolutionary concept received widespread support from the Touch community and beyond and continued to gain momentum.

The tournament was staged in Coffs Harbour from 10- 17 October. It separated Australia's

vast pool of representative talent into 12 regional sides.

The event was expanded to include a number of senior divisions, including the Men's 030s, 035s, 040s, 045s and Women's 030s and 035s. In all the six-day tournament played host to 116 teams and over 2500 players and officials.

Tournament Director, Jon Pratt, commented on the improvement in the standard of play. 'It's good to see the level of improvement from one year to the next. The NTL is giving many teams the competition that they wouldn't ordinarily participate in. They get to play against the big boys, and it's doing wonders for their experience and confidence,' Pratt explained.

'I think that the NTL is a great concept for the teams, and it'll only get stronger. There's just a wonderful feeling amongst the players who really seem to enjoy the standard of competition.

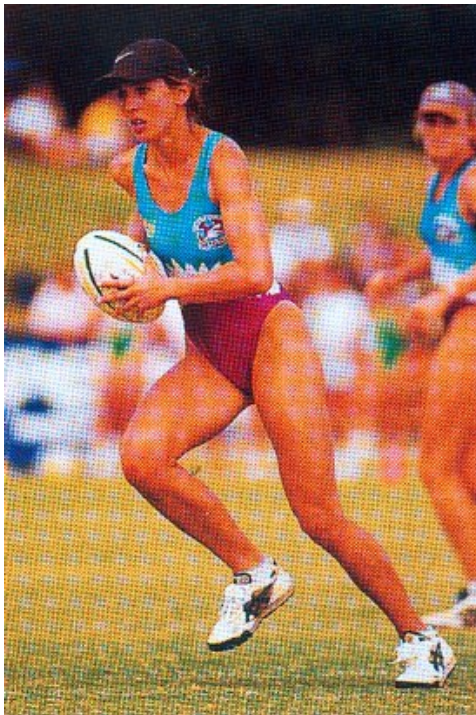
Indeed, the local Coffs Harbour Council had been similarly impressed with the tournament and its economic benefits, and they pitched for a long-term association.



A vastly improved Crusaders side pushed the eventual winners, the Sydney Scorpions, to the limit in a narrow pool loss.

'It's very encouraging to see the level of support we are receiving from the local business and tourism sectors,' contended Bill Ker, Chief Executive Officer of the ATA. 'Coffs Harbour recognises the benefits that this tournament brings to the local community.'

Much in the same way that the NSW State Cup had found a home in Port Macquarie, the NTL had found a home in Coffs Harbour. With the spectacular beaches, hotels, scenery and superb playing facilities, Coffs Harbour has plenty to offer.



Catch me if you can: Fiona Clarke (nee Murray) from the Sharks

'It's a great location and a really good tournament for the players,' commented Sydney Scorpions player, Mark Boland. 'The players have definitely accepted the concept and I think it'll continue to grow. I really enjoy playing here.'

Apart from NBN, WIN and Optus coverage, this year's NTL Finals were also broadcast nationally on the ABC, which was another huge coup for the tournament and the sport of Touch.

An interesting NTL trend was the large number of Queensland versus NSW permit holders final match-ups, and this was a critical factor in bringing the best out of the players.

Mixed Finals

The Sydney Scorpions always had the measure of the Gold Coast Sharks in the Mixed Final, despite a one-point win. The Scorpions carried on from their 4-2 half time lead to win 6-5 in an entertaining, high scoring game.

Scorpion's player, Dean Murphy, had an excellent game and was always a handful, scoring two touchdowns in his Most Valuable Player performance.

Women's Final

The Gold Coast Sharks came into the Women's Final unbeaten after six games and were confident of a win. On the other hand, the Sydney Mets lost one game to the Sydney Rebels and had a nerve-racking one-point win over last year's winners, the Brisbane Cobras in the semi-final.

After a tentative start, before a 3000 strong crowd, the Mets took a solid 2 -1 lead to the break after touchdowns to Sloane Whiteman and Nadina Bambury. A quick dump and pass early in the second half by Giselle Tirado saw the Mets stretch the lead to 3-1, which was enough to get them home.



Last year's runners-up, the Sydney Mets, go one better with a strong win over the Gold Coast Sharks to take the Women's Open title.

Men's Final

The Men's final featured another NSW versus Queensland clash, with the Sydney Scorpions up against the Sunwest Razorbacks. In one of the best games of the tournament the Scorpions just got up in the semi-final, beating the Brisbane Cobras 4-3 in a classic encounter.

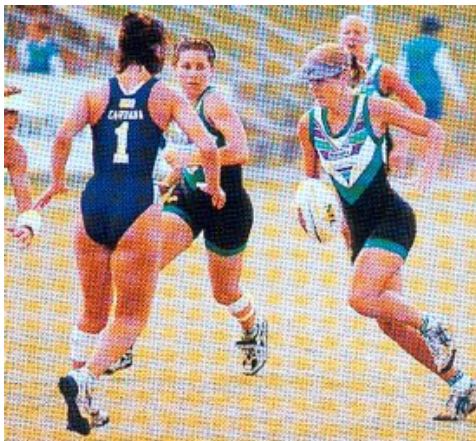
The Razorbacks came into the final with some indifferent form. After an 11-4 loss to the Cobras in the last round, few gave them a chance of taking the title. However, they returned to form

with a solid 8-4 win over a much-improved Crusaders side in the semi-final. Both teams started the final at full throttle. Six-a-side at this level was played at an incredible pace and the transitions from the bench were fast and furious. The Scorpions soon began to dominate territory with better ball control and movement. It was not long before Robert Smith scored after a clever switch with Jason Zabielo close to the line.



Sydney Scorpions celebrate back-to-back Men's Open NTL titles.

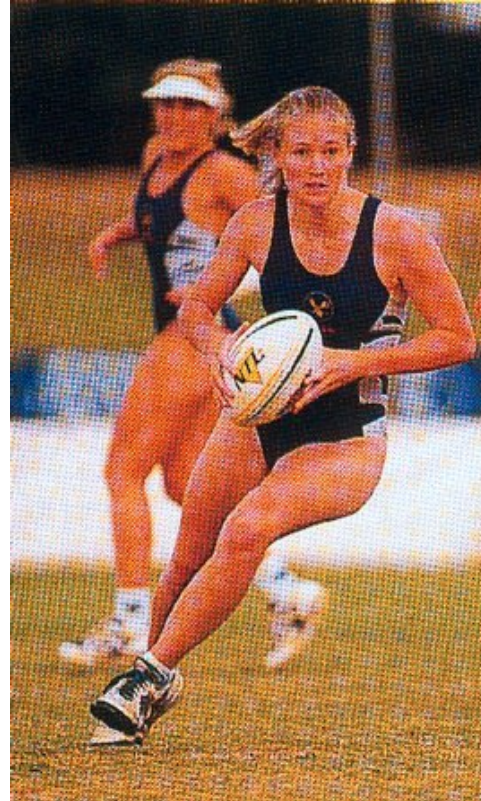
It was Jason Zabielo again who set up the second touchdown after a brilliant step to put Adam Fahim over in the corner taking the score to 2-0. It was only a signature score by Scott Notley late in the half that kept the Razorbacks in the game. While the Razorbacks were still smarting over what looked to be a very dubious touchdown, the Scorpions were in again with Adam Lollback advancing the score to 3 -1 just minutes before the break.



Despite a young team, the Hunter Hornets had a successful NTL campaign. Photographed here is Karen Sawyer with the ball, and Kim Mayle in support, with Lorraine Carura in defense.

Six minutes into the second half the Razorbacks, Neil Ward, took a brilliant reflex intercept against the run of play to narrow the scores to 3-

2. Then it was another piece of individual brilliance by Gavin McDonald who dummed his way over to level the scores at 3 each. Suddenly,



NSW representative, Melissa Pifield, was always dangerous in attack.

the Razorbacks were back in the game with momentum and territory swinging their way. The teams slugged it out to full-time, finishing all square at 3 a piece. The teams immediately returned with five players.

The Scorpions were favoured by a mountain of possession and the Razorbacks were forced to desperately defend their line. Finally, it was down to a four-on-four situation when the veteran, Scott Notley, was matched up with the fresh legs of Shane Frederiksen. Frederiksen seized the opportunity, getting on Notley's outside before throwing a wide ball to winger, Glen Fitzgerald, who dived for the corner to score.

In the end it was a sheer weight of possession that got the Scorpions home. The Scorpions successfully defended their title, with an exhausted yet delighted Mark Boland collecting the Most Valuable Player award.



Senior players were invited to participate in the NTL for the first time and the players enjoyed the opportunity to showcase their wares to some of the younger aspirants

1998 NTL Results

Men's Open:

Scorpions 4 Razorbacks 3

Women's Open:

Mets 3 Sharks 1

Mixed Open:

Scorpions 6 Sharks 5

Men's 20s:

Cobras 3 Cyclones 2

Women's 20s:

Sharks 4 Mets 2

Men's 30s:

Sharks 4 Cobras 2

Women's 30s:

Razorbacks 2 Sharks 0

Men's 35s:

Crusaders 3 Hornets 1

Women's 35s:

Scorpions 3 Eagles 0

Men's 40s:

Suns 4 Razorbacks 1

Men's 45s:

Eagles 2 Hornets 1

Australian Under-18 Championships

The Australian Under-18 Touch Championships again proved to be the breeding ground for national stars in the various football codes, as well as a vital experience for players of both sexes as future Touch elite players.

The Australian Under-18 Championships were held at Coffs Harbour in September 1998. Queensland showed their strength in the junior ranks with both their Boy's and Girl's teams completing the tournament undefeated after seven rounds of competition.

The NSW Combined High School Boy's team won six of their round games, only drawing with the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges team. The best performed non-school based team was the Southern Suns Boys, who won the Bronze play-off against the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges.

Jarod Tump from the Queensland Boys team had an outstanding tournament and was rewarded with the Player of the Series while Nathan Russo was named Player of the Final. Six of the 14 players named in the Australian Under-18 National Squad were from the Queensland Team.

Six Queensland girls were also included in the Australian Under-18 Girl's National Squad. Queensland's Renee Henderson was a clear choice as the Player of the Series, while NSW Combined High School Player, Belinda Dawney, received the Player of the Final.



Marc Laird from Queensland's Southern Suns, one of the many talented young Queenslanders who made their mark on the tournament.

1998 Australian Under-18 Championship Results

Girl's Bronze

NSWCCC 5 Mets 4

Girl's Grand Final

QSST 4 NSWCHS 2

Boy's Bronze

Southern Suns 3 NSWCCC 2

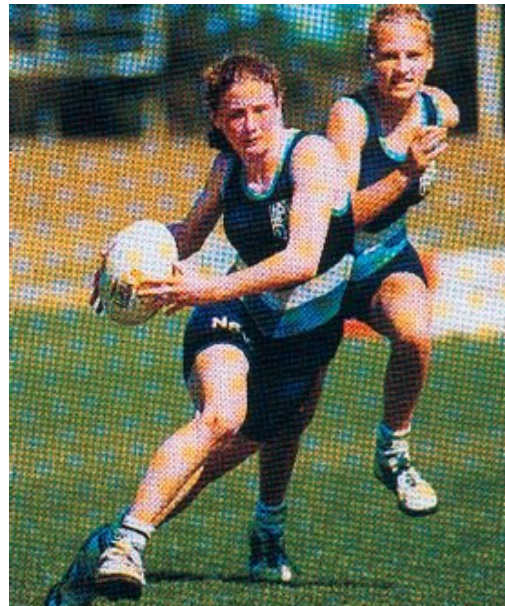
Boy's Grand Final

QSST 6 NSWCHS 1

School Competitions: the Grass-roots and Breeding Ground of Australian Touch

The little suburb of Kincumber on the New South Wales Central Coast was certainly winning its share of New South Wales State School Knockouts. Starting with Kincumber Primary School Boys defeating Briar Road Public School 7-2 in the PSSA knockout at which 179 schools attended. The girls who won it two years ago made the final eight this year, with 209 schools participating.

Then up the road Kincumber High School Girl's Open team defeated Narrabeen Sports High School 6-2 in the final of the NSWCHS State Knockout. Over 300 schools entered the knockout.



The brilliant Cara Webb, New South Wales Combined High Schools. Jo Nelson is in support.

The Kincumber High School Boy's Open made the final 16 before going down to Narrabeen SP, which went on to win it. Again over 300 schools entered this knockout. The New South Wales All Schools 15 years tournament, with over 200 teams entered, was won by Kincumber Boys defeating Benowa State High School (QLD) 5-4 and the Girls were runners up defeated by Endeavour Sport High School, 6-4

This would have been one of the highest achievements in school Touch ever by a town or suburb in Australia, especially considering the number of teams that competed.



With the advent of the National Touch League, many of the game's administrators claimed that Touch had come of age in this country. Few people would argue, as players from grass roots level to the new showpiece of the sport voted with their feet and flocked to such elite events as the NSW State Cup and the NTL tournament. Clearly, by the late 1990s Touch was carving its own niche in the Australian sporting calendar as 240,000 registered players competed nationally, and more than 500,000 kids participated in the sport at schools across Australia.

But while State Touch Associations report a steady increase in player registrations, it would appear it was mixed Touch that was attracting all the attention. Jon Pratt from the Australian Touch Association experienced the player influx first-hand, during a five-year stint as a development officer for the New South Wales

Touch Association. Pratt explained that the popularity of mixed Touch was due to its appeal to the family and people of all ages and ability.



The NSW Mixed Open 2001 NTL champions. 'The boom in Mixed Touch was far from over according to ATA administrators.' The 1998 prediction by the ATA administrators was dead on target.

'A lot of competitions who play Mixed are very family oriented. You've got mums and dads wanting to play with their children and it's one of the beauties of the sport in that it allows all age groups to mix together,' Pratt observed.

He believed many other sports do not offer participants the same involvement as Touch at both social and elite level.

'Some hockey competitions do, as does netball. But the beauty of Touch is that it is a non-contact sport that people can continue to play at a world-class level right through to their early 40s, some say 50s, and still be competitive in their own age category.'

Pratt also believed the Mixed game could be just as exciting as other versions of the code, particularly when played at representative level.

'The social aspect is a great crowd pleaser, but in saying that the purists feel that the only real game is either the male or female game.'

ACT Touch Managing Director, Garry Lawless, estimates a 15 to 30 per cent growth rate in the mixed division in the nation's capital, despite stiff competition from other sports or physical activities.

'We've got one of the highest participation rates in sport or physical activities, so every sport competes against each other. People will go and try Touch, indoor netball, cricket or any recreational sporting activity.'

If you can access it, you are going to go and try it, which means you are not going to play something else, Lawless explained.

But while sports like netball and indoor cricket continued to be a threat, Lawless believed that, along with the social atmosphere, it is the simplicity of Touch that was attracting the interest of new players to the code. 'It's easy to play.'

Really all you need is a paddock, a couple of bags in the corner to mark the scorelines and a footy to throw around. That's the good part about it. It's also skills-based so there is a challenge to it.'

Touch, however, was clearly fulfilling other social and sporting needs. Lawless continued: 'What we are also finding is that males and females working in a bank environment, a law firm or a bunch of solicitors are all suddenly going out to try a recreational or sporting interest together.'

That's the biggest plus about mixed Touch.' Lawless suggested that success in Mixed Touch would come to those who were able to accommodate male and female players.



Mixed Touch has proven itself to be an outstanding success on the domestic as well as the international scene. Photographed here in a Trans-Tasman series are Australian, Dave McIntyre and Annd Drinkwater.

'If you are good at the game, then you are good at the game. That means not only the ability to catch and pass and run fast, but also your ability to work in a team environment.'

If the team involves males and females, well you've got to be able to work with those players.'

Meanwhile, in New South Wales and the rest of the country the story is much the same. General Manager of the NSW Touch Association, Ian Harkness, contended that Touch was appealing to more people because it catered for those who play for fun and those who treat it more seriously.

Although not able to put a figure on it, Harkness believed participation in Mixed Touch in NSW had increased significantly in the last few years. Unfortunately, that growth has not been without casualties. 'Some affiliates are reporting a reduction in women's teams and some women's competitions have even fallen by the wayside, which is a concern,' Harkness confessed.

The NSWTA has been swift to address the decline, particularly at representative level, replacing the U20 women's with U23s in the hope of boosting the Women's division. Mixed Touch representative players from Kiama on the NSW South Coast, Kevin and Megan Hastings, adopted a typical approach to the mixed game.

Kevin, a former Sydney first grade Rugby League player with Eastern Suburbs, started playing Touch competitively five years ago. After a distinguished career, which saw him collect numerous awards including the Rothmans Medal as League's Best and fairest Player, Hastings looked around for a sport that would provide fitness benefits, but also challenge his competitive nature.

'I think it is so popular because it's a game you can play at the highest level, where you can be as competitive as you like or just have a run around the park with your mates. It's also a game that the whole family can play.'

Hastings continued. Megan, too, had noticed the increase in popularity, and like many females in the sport, enjoyed mixing it with the men. 'You'll find women enjoy playing against the men. There's a lot of skilful women players, and we're always competitive, she added.

The boom in Mixed Touch was far from over according to ATA administrators. The association believed that Mixed Touch would receive a further boost if the proposed single registration fee materialised. It was contended that this would enable a lot more people to play a lot more competitions, and especially Mixed.



Every lunch hour across the nation tens of thousands of university students, lawyers, accountants. Stockbrokers and people from a raft of other vocations, trade day clothes for shorts, and computers for a football. In the 1980s business people 'did lunch', but in the 1990s they 'played Touch'!

During the 1990s, Sydney's Touch at Lunch competition was the strongest in the country. Run by the NSW Touch Association, during 1998 it attracted 105 teams in winter and 165 teams in summer. The competition ran every weekday between noon and 2 pm at Sydney's Domain, with various divisions for Men's and mixed Touch.

'We don't have a Women's competition any more,' explained NSWTA Tournament Officer, Elaine Foster. 'It just wasn't a great call. Numbers dropped off because most women would rather play Mixed, she added. NSWTA used the Domain parkland, supplied referees and charges each team \$470.00 to play in the 12-round competitions. The winter season was July to November, while summer Touch ran from January to May. The winning teams recouped their \$470.00, the runner-up prize was \$200.00; but money was not the strongest motivation.

'It's mainly the exercise,' said Elaine. 'People just like to get out and do something. It's a bit of recreation instead of sitting around on your butt!' The NSWTA started the competition two decades ago, with a 'life be in it' theme. It was originally run only in summer, but demand soon necessitated the need for a winter competition as well. 'Touch at lunch' had become a part of Sydney fitness folklore, and by 1998 there was a waiting list for teams looking to join the competition. The teams represent some of the Nation's top business houses and banking

institutions. The players are power brokers who believe 'moving and shaking' should be as much a part of lunch as business.

'But a whole range of different people play, said Elaine. 'Players come from the stock exchange, the police force, the law courts, everywhere. Everyone plays, from the general manager down. 'There are some very powerful people playing Touch at lunch,' contended one player who works in the money market. 'I remember once even lining up against the former Governor of the Reserve Bank, Bernie Fraser. He controlled Australian monetary policy. We used to hang on his every word ... and there he was playing Touch.'

Many business people incorporated Touch at lunch in their daily fitness routine. 'Most of them jog to and from the office,' continued Elaine. 'It's a real fitness thing for them, and they return to work invigorated.' That's the main attraction, Touch really does provide a 'break' from the rigours of work.'

'A lot of the people who play are in high-stress jobs,' said Mark Wylie, a bonds dealer with Westpac. 'Touch helps relieve a bit of that stress. They play the game the same way they do business. It can be very, very competitive. Even though it doesn't have the tackle it's an aggressive game, and at times it does get a bit tense and there's a lot of sledging, but the 'Touch at Lunch' crowd play to win ... at work and Touch.

'Of course you don't go out there to lose,' he said. 'Touch at lunch is like any other game except you play it at lunchtime. You're still there to win, a lot of the guys are ex-footballers. They know how to play and they know how to put their opponents off their game.' Another player described Touch as the perfect lunch. 'It's like a fitness gourmet sandwich,' she said. 'It's got everything fitness, stress relief, competition and on top of all that it's heaps of fun and a great way to meet people.' Life member of the Australian Taxation Office Touch team, Cary Thompson, stated that 'When teams win against us, they enjoy bragging that they have beaten the Tax Office!' Of course, the Touch scene at Sydney's Domain is replicated across hundreds of other centres across Australia. For example, now university campuses across during the lunch break are transformed into huge Touch arenas as hundreds upon hundreds of students put their

books to one side and play in some form of Touch game. The change that has occurred is nothing short of being a small miracle.

NSW Sports Academies: Investing in our competitive youth

The Illawarra Academy of Sport recently became the fourth region in New South Wales to introduce Touch as part of their elite sports program. Sports academies are important factors in the development of elite Touch players.

The first New South Wales sports academy to introduce Touch into their sports program was the Northern Inland Academy at Armidale, which was then followed by the Hunter and Western Regions. Overall, the academies have been a huge boost to the competitive development of Touch in the state and have been an important nursery for the State's leading young players.

Dr Paul Webb, then the ATA's National Technical Director, who was responsible for the submissions to the Illawarra Academy, stated, 'The importance of Touch being introduced into sports academies cannot be underestimated. Touch had previously been recognised primarily as a participant sport. It now signals recognition by the authorities that Touch also has an elite aspect, and that this should be nurtured.'

'The establishment of so many Academy programs is not only a great endorsement for the sport but it's also created a great training ground for our aspiring youth.' explained NSWTA, General Manager, Ian Harkness. 'The academies give our talented young athletes something to strive for and expose players to a higher quality of coaching and development.' Twenty male and female Touch players, ranging in age from fifteen to seventeen, have been selected from the best young players in the Illawarra region to participate in the inaugural program. The Illawarra Academy of Sport was formed in 1985. It played a major role in providing the

opportunity and encouragement for nearly 2000 talented junior sports people to achieve excellence in sports such as Cricket, Swimming, Cycling, Hockey, Netball, Soccer, Rugby Union and Rugby League.

The Academy's Touch program aims to improve each player's skill level and provide sport science support to ensure the region's talented youngsters have every chance of making it to the top. Coaching and training sessions form the major part of the scholarship program, concentrating on the strengths and weaknesses of athletes. To be eligible for a scholarship, an athlete must display definite potential, the right attitude, be dedicated to improving their performance and possess the physical abilities and skills in their selected sport. Executive Director of the Academy, Cheryl Battaerd, described the academy's ingredients for success. 'Success comes from getting the process right. In the case of the academy, our program enhances what the athlete receives at club and regional level. It's a blend of expert coaching, sport science, medical support, personal development and a high level of competition.'

Battaerd said the academy was fortunate to have access to consultants in the fields of physiology, nutrition, psychology and strength and fitness, all playing a vital role in education and optimising the performance of academy athletes. Players were put through the rigours of intensive training days, personalised fitness programs, medical screenings, athlete education, skills testing and fitness assessments before graduating from the 18-month program. 'Of the 20 squad members, 15 already play for the NTL Southern Suns, or equivalent in various age groups,' explained Academy Coach, Allyson Fisher.

New South Wales now had four academies running (Illawarra, Western, NIAS and Hunter), with 85, 15-18 year-old male and females attending training weekends. They were now showing the benefits of these squads and in years to come these elite juniors will hopefully be the open players at the NTL for Suns, Hornets and Eagles. The Hunter academy this year had three girls (Bianca Barnier, Erin Hardies and Morgan Arndell) who were going to New Zealand in December 1998 with the Australian U-16 team. From the last Hunter Squad eight members made State or Australian teams, which was a great achievement.

1999 Fourth World Cup



The Fourth World Cup was played in Sydney at Kingsford at the University of New South

Wales fields between 19 and 26th April. Both Masters and Open series were played. But if you were one of the 250,000 registered Touch players in Australia you would have been bitterly disappointed with the media coverage if you went looking for results and coverage's of the



The 1999 Australian Men's Team:

Front: Andrew Galea, Craig Madders, Mark Boland (Vice-Captain), Scott Notley (Captain), Bob Brindell, Craig Pierce
Middle: Frank O'Malley, Jason Zabielo, Neil Ward, Trent McDonald, Shane Frederiksen, Ian Rodgers (Manager)
Back: Ian Stanley (Ass/Coach), Gavin McDonald, Steve Murphy, Brenton O'Shanessy, Darren Currie, Peter McNeven (Coach)

event. There simply were not any, and that must have been a dreadful disappointment to the organisers. Cary Thompson had devoted his life to international Touch, and with this series on his home pad, and him being the principal face of Touch at this tournament, we can turn to him for the story.

For Cary Thompson the lack of response from the media was a punishing disappointment: Despite spending dollars on media releases and general promptings we got none. The only media person to turn up was the ABC sports commentator, David Lord, who attended the opening ceremony.



Excitement a-plenty in the Men's Open: Craig Madders dumping to Darren Currie Mark Ah Loo, number 10 for New Zealand covers.

David did give us several plugs on ABC radio and was really impressed with the show that was put on for the opening ceremony. We just could not get any newspaper or television publicity in Sydney at all.

And this was disappointing when you looked at the Sydney newspapers during the period that the World Cup was on. For example, when netball and surfing events were well covered by

the press we expected Touch to score some attention. We even had to compete with a damn devastating hailstorm!

Major World Cup events had been scheduled for David Phillips Sports Grounds, Banks Road, Daceyville from the 21st April to the 24th April 1999.

As it turned out the elements had something to say about that. On the 21st the hail came as never before and smashed flood lights that were not fixed in time for our first night games..

These games had to be re-scheduled the next day as did other scheduled night games, because the rain and hail on the night of the 23rd caused the main fields to be unplayable. Consequently, they had to be moved to the more 'open' field without the benefit of a grandstand.

It was a disaster but we got through it. Despite the hailstorms and lack of media coverage, it was a huge success from all points of view: because of the first time appearance of England, Lebanon, Italy, Scotland, Singapore, Solomon Islands and Wales.

For New Zealand, especially, the series was a huge success. The Kiwis went onto win the Mixed division and Mixed Senior division. One of the stand-out players was Peter Walters who captained/coached the Over 30s New Zealand Mixed team which defeated Australia 10-4 in the final. Maria Sonda was the stand-out female player and the standout Australia player in a beaten team.



1999 World Cup Over 30s Mixed Division Most Valuable Players:

Saia Turua (Cook Islands), Blinda Paterson (Samoa), Atsunori Hara (Japan), Maria Sonda (Australia), Peter Walters (New Zealand) and FIT Treasurer Trevor Richards

Mahuta Teika from Samoa was the leading scorer (12) in the Men's Open and was named player of the series. In the Women's Open Australia's Gabriel Maher (now Gabby Rose) scored 22 touchdowns, and her team mate Giselle Tirado was named player of the series. Giselle scored a record 9 touchdown in the one game.

In the Mixed division New Zealand's Chris Woods scored a massive 22 touchdowns for the tournament, and managed 6 in one game to lead that division. Four years later in Kymagaya Japan Chris went on to be named the Men's Open player of the series at the 2003 World Cup.



With his customary speed and balance, Ashley Heineger brings it out for Men's 30s.

New Zealand's Mixed captain, Kopoe Irihei, was named male player of the series while the female player was Australia's Erin Turner.

The premier event at the World Cup is the Men's Open division and the perennial combatant Australia and New Zealand were expected to dominate the event. Samoa, Cook Island and

Samoa all acquitted themselves very well, demonstrating their skill and determination and sounding a warning for future World Cups.

Australia and New Zealand went through the preliminary rounds undefeated with Australia meeting Samoa in the Semis. The half time score of 4-1 in favour of Samoa had the crowd cheering wildly for the underdogs.

Coach, Peter McNeven, rallied the troops with instruction to go out for the second half and do the simple thing well. This they did running out winners 6-4. Bob Brindell was the best for the Australians and only two points behind Mahuta Teika from Samoa who was named Player of the Series. Bob was player of the Series at the 1988 and 1991 World Cup and runner up in 1995 and 1999, a record that will be hard to beat.

Leading scorer was Mahuta Teika from Samoa with 12 while Scott Notley and Jason Zabiello led the Australians with 9 touchdowns each.

In the Women's division Australia were out to retain their unbeaten International record. New Zealand had other ideas and had bought with them an experienced young team who had learnt from the mistakes they made in the 1988 Trans-Tasman series. Their coach, Graham Christian, had traveled to Australia to obtain both his Level 1 and Level 2 coaching accreditation and used video footage of Kitty Maher to demonstrate to his team how they needed to play, if they were going to defeat Australia.

In muddy conditions Australia and New Zealand drew 5 all in the preliminary rounds with Amanda Judd starring for Australia and Nicola Kidd showing her speed for New Zealand. Both teams had comfortable semis wins but slugged it out in the finals with Gabriel Maher, Angela Barr, Karina Castle and Jody English scoring Australia's four touchdowns. Tamaku Paul, Jenny-May Coffin and Jodie Rangitaawa all scored for New Zealand in one of the closest fought Womens games ever played.

As mentioned earlier, Gabriel Maher top scored for the Australians with 22 touchdowns (joint tournament record with Chris Wood's from New Zealand) and again as mentioned before Giselle Tirado's 9 touchdowns in one game was a tournament record. Giselle was also named Player of the Series in the Women's division.



With the proliferation of Masters Games held at a City, Regional, National and International level such events have eaten into the opportunities for single focused sports to cater for their own participants. The chance to compete in multi sports as opposed to a single event has many attractions, thus the Second Masters Touch World Cup was an event that situated itself around other such Masters Games quite successfully.

The tournament was surrounded with controversy, firstly because of the hail storm that smacked the Sydney suburbs where the games were to be played. The gale smashed lights and damaged the playing field extensively and secondly the disqualification of two Mens over 30s teams for fielding ineligible players.

The Mens 30s was the premier attraction at the tournament but was dogged with headaches for the administrators. New Zealand went through the preliminary rounds in Pool B undefeated winning five game and score 73 touchdowns for with only three against and average of 14.6 touchdowns per game.

After the last game of the preliminary rounds and as night was approaching a protest was lodged over the eligibility of one of the New Zealand players, based on the fact he had not been cleared from the country he last played with.

It was impossible to contact the New Zealand contingent so late in the evening and as a previous protest had already been dismissed the Administrators faced the problem of hearing the appeal just prior to the semi finals in that division the next morning.

Teams were all on standby as if the appeal was upheld the semis series would be re-drawn. Such was the case with Australia playing Tokelau (winning 16-2) and Lebanon playing Samoa (also winning by 7-2).

Australia went on to defeat Lebanon in the finals by 6-1. Star of the final was Paul Dart who scored three touchdowns. Player of the series

was Peter Kavanagh while Glen Anthony top scored with 14 touchdowns and held the record of most in one game being five touchdowns.

The Women's 30s appeared to be a struggle for the Australians when they were taken to the wire in their second game of the tournament against New Zealand just winning 3-2.

However this was just a mere hiccup as they defeated them in round two 16-0 and in the final 8-3. They scored 128 touchdowns for an average of 12.8 per game and only had 7 scored against them.



With her well-known grit and determination, Sheralee Langridge looks for support during the Women's 30s.

Gai Taylor top scored with 22 touchdowns and scoring 4 in the one game on two occasions but was just being piped by Sharyn Pratley from New Zealand who scored five in the one game. Janelle Thornburn who scored 12 touchdowns was named player of the series.

In the Mixed division the tables were reversed with a close fought game against New Zealand

going their way 3-2. In the second round New Zealand dominated to win 6-3 and then showed their superiority by winning the final 10-4. The obvious stand out player of this division was Peter Walters from New Zealand who captained coached their team. He top scored with 25 touchdowns and five in the one game.

The best player for Australia throughout the tournament and eventually being named female player of the series was Maria Sonda. Coach Kathy O'Brien said she played better than most of the Australian men and was an inspiration to the team in the final even though they were losing.

Top scorer for the team was Rob Kildare with 11 touchdowns and with four in the one game. The Mens 35s started out determined not to allow New Zealand any victory in their division. An easy 6-1 victory seemed to have the team on track to win the title but they quickly realised New Zealand were not going down without a fight.

The second round game went all the way to a close fought 3-3 draw. As they would meet again in the final the Aussies needed a re-think of their strategy. Coach, Mark Edwards, sat with senior players and plotted the game plan for the finals. It worked and the score 5-2 did flatters Australia as the New Zealanders were in the hunt until the final whistle.

Best player for Australian and Player for the Series was Garry Lawless. Top scorer for the Aussies was Steve Hughes with 12 touchdowns. In the Mens 40s division Australia went through undefeated winning 6-3 in round one against New Zealand but being pushed to the limits in round two just winning 7-6. The final was a struggle with Australian dominating in a 3-0 win.

Trevor McPhillips top scored for the divisions with 17 touchdowns with Evan Fletcher scoring five in the one game. Trevor was named Player of the Series.

The Australians were declared World Champions attaining 24 points. Counting the five divisions they played there were 45 games played. They won 41, lost 3 and drew 1. They scored 553 Touchdowns and had only 60 scored against them.

New Zealand came second on 17 points and from all their divisions they played 43 games, winning 34, losing 8 and drawing 1. They scored 485 touchdowns and had 82 scored against them. In an impressive performance Cook Island and Niue on 7 points finished equal third.

Results			
1999 World Cup			
Men's Open			
Australia	7	New Zealand	2
Women's Open			
Australia	4	New Zealand	3
Mixed Open			
New Zealand	6	Australia	4
Results			
1999 Masters World Cup			
Men's 30			
Australia	6	Lebanon	1
Women's 30			
Australia	8	New Zealand	3
Mixed 30			
New Zealand	10	Australia	4
Men's 35			
Australia	5	New Zealand	2
Men's 40			
Australia	3	New Zealand	0

Liptonice State of Origin
State of Origin involves only Men and Women divisions but because of the depth and playing skill of the two major states, New South Wales and Queensland, an Interstate Challenge was organised to run in conjunction with the 1999 series. The games

were played at the newly named Paul Eggers Touch Fields in Southport. Cary Thompson takes up the story:

New South Wales were defending their title on hostile turf and the Women who had traditionally won their series were expected to repeat that success.

Queensland, however, had other ideas and in the first game a dour struggle saw Queensland run out winner 2-1 with Shelley Matcham and Angela Barr scoring for the winners. The second game was a do or die effort for the cockroaches with Louise Winchester opening the scoring for New South Wales.

Queensland retaliated with scores by Angela Barr and Sharyn Williams taking the second game 2-1 and the title for the first time in the Womens division. New South Wales had pride on the line for the third game and if rubbers are tied then touchdowns count towards the overall champions.

The girls went out with a mission and secured the third game 4-1 for the two blues. Gabriel Maher, Debbie Knapp, Kristy Judd and Nicole McLaughlan scored for New South Wales while the lone Queensland score was by Kelly Woods. Player of the Series was Catherine Barr from Queensland.

With the loss in the Women's first game the Men from New South Wales had to dig deep in their first match against a team they had only beaten once in five years. In a game that sea-sawed throughout, Queensland run out winner 7-6 despite Jason Stanton's three touchdown effort for the losers.

It appeared the retirement of legend players Scott Notley and Bob Brindell had not affected the smooth flowing Queensland machine from dominating New South Wales – or so some people thought.

In the second game New South Wales needed to win to keep the series alive as Queensland had already won the Womens rubber. A blistering first half saw New South Wales comfortably in front finally extending their lead at full time to 6-4 with Paul Forester scoring another double to

match his two in the first game. It was a do or die third Men's game as the series hinged on who won and by how much in the case of New South Wales.

They did not disappoint their fans although many of the local spectators were dismayed at the ease by which they won the last game 6-2. Andrew Galea scored two but the game was orchestrated by the Player of the Series, Jason Stanton. The win gave the 1999 State of Origin Series to New South Wales.

Retired coach Peter McNeven and Legend Scott Notley watched the game together with former Australian and Queensland player Adrian Lam. All appeared disappointed with the home state's effort but when asked to re-think their retirement plans simply gave a wry smile and politely said 'No thanks!'



The old war-horse in full stride: Mark Boland

The 1999 Liptonic Interstate challenge Series

This was the first time since 1994 that Queensland and New South Wales had met in interstate games in Mixed and Over Aged divisions. It was an extension of the State of Origin Series and provided elite competition for

the players from both states who were not involved on the Origin games.

The Mixed division was won by New South Wales 2-1 winning their first game 4-3 then losing 3-4 in the second before dominating the third 5-3. The Men's 30's was a clean sweep for Queensland, winning 4-3, 4-3 and 5-4, with New South Wales not able to match that extra score with the Maroons.

Queensland followed up the Men's 30's win



Warwick Wright from the Blues Mens 20s looks for support.

with a 2-1 win in the Womens 20's. Winning the first game 2-1 they capitulated 4-2 in the second giving New South Wales a sniff of victory. The third game was an extremely hard fought encounter with the host team victorious 4-3.

In the Mens 35's division New South Wales dominated their rivals winning 6-3, 5-0 and 3-0 while the Women's 35's went to the wire after Queensland lost the first game 1-3. They rallied in game two and three showing their superiority winning both games 4-0.

The Mens 40's and 45's spoils were split with Queensland in the 40's being by far the better team winning 6-2, 4-3 and 7-2. New South Wales won the 45's after losing the first game 2-5 they rallied to win the other games 5-4 and 2-0.

In the 20's Men Queensland won 7-2, 3-2 and 8-7 and the Womens 20's showed Queensland's dominance in the Youth divisions by winning 4-2, 3-1 and 8-4. Queensland simply dominated the Interstate series winning six divisions to three and using the home ground advantage to its full extent.

1999 State of Origin Series Results

Women's Division

Queensland 2 NSW 1
 Queensland 1 NSW 1
 NSW 4 Queensland 1

Men's Division

Queensland 7 NSW 6
 NSW 6 Queensland 4
 NSW 6 Queensland 2

1999 Interstate Challenge Results

Mixed

NSW 2 Queensland 1

Men's 30s

Queensland 2 NSW 0

Women's 30s

Queensland 2 NSW 1

Men's 35s

NSW 3 Queensland 0

Women's 35s

Queensland 2 NSW 1

Men's 40s

Queensland 3 NSW 0

Men's 45s

NSW 2 Queensland 0

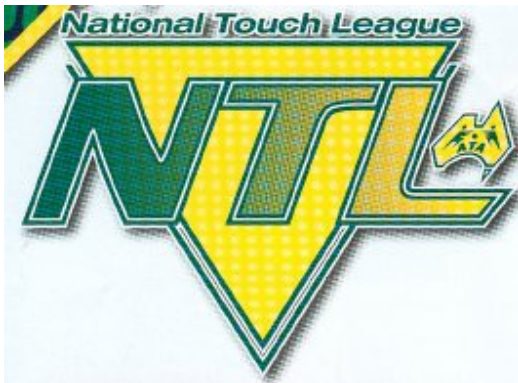
Men's 20s

Queensland 3 NSW 0

Women's 20s

Queensland NSW 0

National Touch League



Scorpions Sting Again! Three in row for the Sydneysiders. The 1999 NTL was held from 14 - 20 March. The ATA moved the competition from late in the year to the first major tournament on the Touch Calendar.

The timing of the 1999 NTL resulted in many of the World Cup stars making themselves unavailable with the SunWest Razorbacks and North Queensland Cyclones pulling out all together. Despite this the tournament once again proved successful.

The mighty Sydney Scorpions once again dominated the Opens division's with their Men's and Mixed Open taking their respective titles. The Brisbane City Cobras were winners in the Women's. Nick Walshaw from the *Coffs Harbour Advocate* reported on the event:

It seems the only thing more successful than the Sydney Scorpions Men's Touch side is the game they represent.

The Scorpions won their third consecutive National Touch League Men's Open title at Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium on Saturday.

Despite being without their national players, who opted to miss the tournament and prepare for next month's World Cup in Sydney, the young Scorpions again dominated the competition and finished with a 3-2 victory over the Brisbane City Cobras in the final.

The men's Open match was just one of several exciting games played on the final day of the competition, now regarded as the best in the world. Australian Touch Association marketing director, Richard Scotts, said the outstanding performances of the players at the Coffs Harbour tournament represented the strength and growth of Australian Touch.



Maree Curran from the Crusaders puts on the big step.

'Touch as a spin-off sport played by rugby league players, but it has become so big it's got its own rules, balls and uniforms ... Touch is its own entity,' Scotts said.

The sport has grown so rapidly over the past decade that the association now has 240,000 registered players, 10 full-time development officers, paid referees and a million dollar sponsorship in Liptonice. The sport has also discarded its 'men only' tag with women making up 55 per cent of the junior ranks.

Touch is undermining netball at the moment it's so popular,' Scotts said.' It's unbelievable when you consider it was a male sport only 15 years ago.' And now Touch is making its mark on the global scene [with next month's World Cup in Sydney].

'Touch is a homegrown sport that is now played in 60 countries around the world,' Scotts said. 'Not many games designed purely by Australians have gone on to become a worldwide sport.'

Top Touch Senior Players Hit Town at Coffs Harbour.

The *Coffs Harbour Advocate* reported: *Australia's best senior Touch footballers will have barely finished partying this morning when play gets underway in the nation's premier Touch competition.*

More than 700 of Australia's elite Touch players will compete in the National Touch league Open, Under-20s and Mixed competitions beginning today at the Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium.



Michelle Garnett from the Scorpions

And if the action is anything like yesterday's fast-paced Australian Senior Championships finals, players and spectators are in for an exciting four days of Touch. Tournament Director, Jon Pratt, said the National Touch League was not only Australia's premier Touch event, but the best of its kind in the world.

'It is without doubt the world's number one competition for Touch players ... there is no equal,' Pratt said. 'That's why countries like England come here, just for the experience of the competition in the world's number one tournament.'



Trent McDonald from the Cobras

'Players have got to go through an extensive qualifying process just to get to this tournament. 'For instance, the Southern Suns sides have two tournaments before they select a side to come here.'

1999 NTL Final Results

Men's

Scorpions 3 Cobras 2

Women's

Cobras 4 Sharks 3

Mixed

Scorpions 5 Rebels 4

Australian Under-18 Championships

**Held on 16 to 20 September at the
Coffs Harbour International
Sports Stadium, the event
showcased some marvelous talent.**

Sixteen Boy's teams and seventeen Girl's team descended upon Coffs Harbour in September to contest the 1999 under 18's Touch Championships.

For the second time in as many years both the Southern Suns and South Queensland and Border Districts featured in the semi final of the Boys division.



Looking stunning in attack, Trish Macarthy from the NSWCCC.

In an awesome display of speed and precision the South Queensland and Border Districts team simply demoralized the tournament favourites Queensland State Secondary Schools in their semi final clash 4-0. The other semi was just as brutal with NSW Combined High Schools spanking Southern Suns 7-0

The final was a speed-fest with both sides taking the ball the length of the field with each set of six. NSW CHS prevailed and eventually ran out winner 4-3 in a tightly fought contest.

Clint Greenshields starred for the New South Wales team by scoring 14 touchdowns, which was the tournament record. However, the most valuable player for the team was Mark Thompson while Brad David also from NSW CHS was named Player of the Final with Marc Laird from the Southern Sun named as Player of the Series.

Marcus Ewing from the Northern Territory scored 5 touchdowns in one game to hold that record for the tournament. The girls divisions were also keenly contested but Queensland State Secondary Schools just outclassed every other team as they had for the past five years. They lost one game in 1996.

The first semi-finals saw New South Wales Combined High Schools run out comfortable winners 7-2 against New South Wales Combined Catholic Colleges. In the second semi Queensland outclassed Hunter Hornets 8-3 and they continued that form in the finals defeating New South Wales Combined High Schools 7-2.

1999 Under 18's Championships Leading Touchdown Scorers

Central Qld	Wendy Williamson (9)
Brisbane Cobra	Brett Hughes (12)
Northern Eagles	Nathan Jones (7)
Hunter Hornets	Michelle Doherty (8)
NT	Marcus Ewin (8)
NSWCCC	Sarah Costello (11)
NSWCHS	Clint Greenshields (14)
NSWCIS	Daniel Clydesale (5)
QSST	Mathew Bowen (12)
Sydney Mets	Ben Martin (7)
Sydney Rebels	Six Scorers (3)
Scorpions	Rebecca Garrod (3)
South Australia	Claire Burke (5)
SQBD	Kate Shaw (11)
Sth West Qld	Sarita Lawler (4)
Southern Suns	John Adams (8)
Sunshine Coast	Ben Roberts (6)

**1999 Under 18's Championships
Boys Most Valuable Players**

Central Qld	Matthew Baker
Brisbane Cobra	Brett Hughest
Northern Eagles	Jade Porter
Hunter Hornets	Chris Rushton
NT	Lindsey Knight
NSWCCC	Stephen Roberts
NSWCHS	Mark Thompson
NSWCIS	Ashley Beech
QSST	Ashley Farrow
Sydney Mets	Craig Lippett
Sydney Rebels	Trent Featherston
Scorpions	Potatau Berryman
South Australia	Jeremy Smith
SQBD	Jeb Hipperton
Southern Suns	Marc Laird
Sunshine Coast	Matt Roberts
<i>Player of Finals</i>	<i>Brad Davids</i>
<i>Player of Series</i>	<i>Marc Laird</i>

**1999 Under 18's Championships
Girls Most Valuable Players**

Central Qld	Wendy Williamson
Brisbane Cobra	Sally Croft
Northern Eagles	Sharyn Cassell
Hunter Hornets	Kelly Evans
NT	Bo De La Cruz
NSWCCC	Sarah Costello
NSWCHS	Vanessa Johnson
NSWCIS	Marnie Roberts
QSST	Missy Shaw
Sydney Mets	Kristy Tinnion
Sydney Rebels	Melissa McCall
Scorpions	Jade Asmus
South Australia	Paige Johnston
SQBD	Shayn Maclead
Sth West Qld	Melissa Forde
Southern Suns	Erin Brandy
Sunshine Coast	Cathy Dunk
<i>Player of Finals</i>	<i>Shan Corcoran</i>
<i>Player of Series</i>	<i>Bo De La Cruz</i>



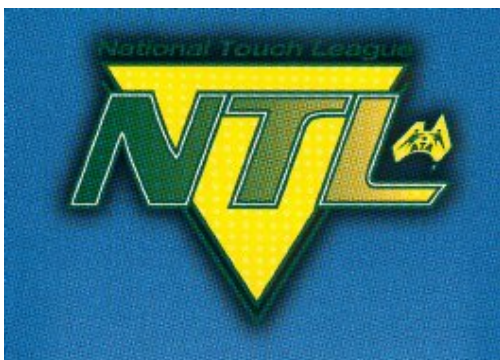
One of the great standouts: Northern Territory's star, Bo De la Cruz, showing the ball.

**199 Under 18's Championships
Most Touchdown Scored
In one game**

Central Qld	Chantae Zunker (4)
Brisbane Cobra	Hughes & Mollier (3)
Northern Eagles	Nathan Jones (3)
Hunter Hornets	Hayley Bond (3)
NT	Marcus Ewin (5)
NSWCCC	Four Scorers (3)
NSWCHS	Three Scorers (4)
NSWCIS	Kelly Davis (2)
QSST	David Zanetti (4)
Sydney Mets	Ben Martin (4)
Sydney Rebels	Ryan Smith (3)
Scorpions	Rebecca Garrod (2)
South Australia	Six Scoers (2)
SQBD	Kate Shaw (4)
Sth West Qld	Sarita Lawler (4)
Southern Suns	John Adams (3)
Sunshine Coast	Eight Scorers (2)

2000

'Australia's best in Touch at Coffs Harbour!'



The nation's best Touch players converged on Coffs Harbour in March to contest the Australian Touch Association 2000 National Touch League.

The tournament is the pinnacle of domestic competition in Australia and was created from a need identified for elite competition for Australia's best Touch players. The tournament provided an opportunity for players to identify with a regional area and thus gain more support from the local Touch playing community. '

'Ownership is the key in this tournament, with an increased number of players being catered for, the competition tends to be more even than the previous national championships, and this makes a far more enjoyable tournament', explained Bill Ker, Chief Executive of the Australian Touch Association.

'Touch is one of Australia's largest participant-based sports and this tournament offers players the opportunity to participate against their peers', Ker enthusiastically continued.

The Opens and 20 years tournament ran over four days from Friday 10 March, this was

History of Australian Touch Football Association

immediately followed by the Senior divisions commencing Wednesday 15 March. The Senior tournament caters for players in age divisions from 30 years to 50 years for men and women.

The traditionally strong Touch states of Queensland and New South Wales were represented by teams from various geographic areas, whilst developing states are represented by the Crusaders which combine the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Tasmania and the Barbarians consisting of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

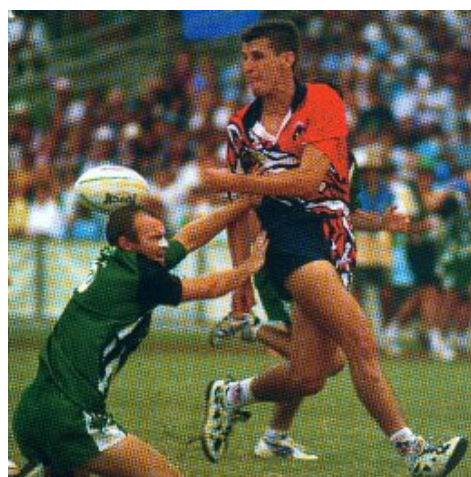
Three time Men's champions the Sydney Scorpions returned to defend their title. Whilst the Women's title holder, Brisbane Cobras, were also keen to retain the title.

Eagles soar at Coffs

The *Coffs Harbour Advocate* reported that:

The 2000 Senior National Touch League came to an exciting conclusion on Saturday at the Coffs Harbour International Stadium with four of the seven finals being decided in extra time drop-offs.

Coffs Harbour was well represented in the Northern NSW Eagles, which completed a double at the tournament having tasted success in the Men's 45 years and the Women's 35 years divisions.



Shane Duell (Brisbane Cobras) get a pass away before being touched by Lars Hanson (Sydney Scorpions)

The teams came to the event with great expectations. The Men were here to defend the title that they have won for the last two years,

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and the women were here to avenge defeats in the previous two years. Final success came to local teams after strong performances in the round games, both teams being undefeated.

The Men's team won its final convincingly 7-0 against Sydney Mets. The Women's had a more difficult time, winning 4-3 in an extra-time drop-off against the Sydney Scorpions.



In the hot Coffs Harbour sun there was plenty of demand for this stuff! TID Director, Cathy Gray, and Australian Womens Open Coach Peter Bell, stand guard

The teams had further reason to celebrate when Peter Vincent was named Player of the Series, Final, and leading touchdown scorer, with 13 for the Men's 45s division.

Coffs Harbour player, Cate Vincent, was named player of the Final in the Women's 35s division.

In the Men's 30s division the two undefeated teams played an entertaining game, which was won convincingly by the Gold Coast Sharks, 7-3 over the Sydney Scorpions.

Player of the Series was Adrian Harrington, from the Sharks. He was also player of the Finals, and leading touchdown scorer, with 14 for the tournament, and with three in the finals.

The Women's 30s division also went to a drop-off, with the Hunter Western NSW Hornets defeating last year's winners, the Southern NSW Suns 4-3 in an extra-time drop-off. Player of the Finals was Serelee Langbridge

The Men's 35s was won by the Gold Coast Sharks, again in a drop-off. The team came from third place to defeat the Sydney Scorpions, 5-4. Player of the Series was Dave Cheong from the Scorpions. He was also leading touchdown scorer. Whilst Player of the Final was Wayne Moore from the Gold Coast Sharks.

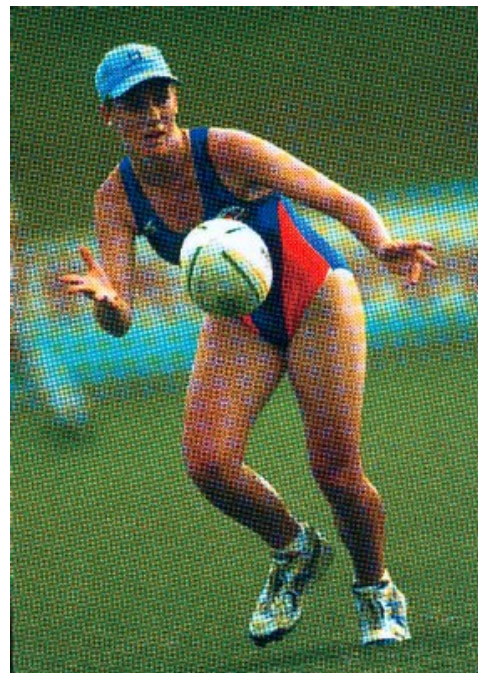
The Men's 40s division saw the Sydney Mets, in an extra-time drop-off, defeat last year's winners, Suns West Razorbacks. Player of the Finals and Player of the Series was Victor Tagliafero from Mets.

Scorpions sting Rivals in the Men's Open and Peter Topp explains what the NTL competition means for Australian Touch.

Sydney Scorpion again proved themselves as Australia's best bunch of male Touch players, storming home to win their fourth straight National Touch League title this week.

Coached by high profile Rugby League player manager, Sam Ayuob, the Scorpions Open Men's team beat Brisbane City Cobras 6-4 in Monday's final.

The win was a fitting end to the National Touch League Open and 30 years championships held at the Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium over the weekend.



Hayley Rogerson for the Razorbacks.

The tournament organiser, Peter Topp, said the competition was the nation's premier Touch event, and had helped Australia to become the world's champion in the Men's and Women's Open divisions.

'The standard of Touch has improved because of this tournament, Topp explained.

The competition is getting tougher and tougher, and the players are getting better and better.

This is the fourth year the National Touch League has held the event in Coffs Harbour.

With 54 teams in the opens and 20 years divisions, joined this week by another 57 senior teams, the tournament attracts about 2500 players and staff to the Harbour city and generates an estimated five million dollars in the Coffs Harbour economy.

Topp praised Coffs Harbour as a location for the event and described the international stadium as the best Touch stadium in the world. 'Proximity and quality was what counted for in this sort of event,' Topp concluded.

2000 NTL Final Results

Men's Open

Scorpions 6 Cobras 4

Women's Open

Cobras 6 Mets 5

Mixed Open

Cobras 4 Rebels 3

Men's 20

Mets 4 Scorpions 3

Women's 20

Sharks 4 Mets 3



The tournament organiser, Peter Topp, said the competition was the nation's premier Touch event, and had helped Australia to become the world's champion in the Men's and Women's Open divisions.

Trans-Tasman Youth Touch Series

Peter Topp, Tour Manager, reported the tour a fantastic success, with many firsts, and several new stars, both in Touch and Rugby League being identified

The Australian 18 years Boys and Girls teams toured the New Zealand North Island in January 2000 with the tour starting in Wellington and culminating with a three test series in Auckland against the New Zealand 18s teams. This tour was headed by Gary Madders and Peter Topp as Tour Managers, with coaching staff Adam Collins, Boys Coach, his Assistant Peter Robinson and Manager Andrew Spencer. Whilst the girls team was coached by Kerry Norman and her Assistant was Kathy O'Brien and Tamara Kavney was the Manager.

The tour commenced in Wellington and the city certainly lived up to the infamous 'windy city' title. In conditions that would suit penguins the Australians played as any team coming to together for the first time would...as individuals. Whilst coaching is a difficult task, getting a group of individuals together and asking them to play against a high quality team in New Zealand, was a challenge. However, with a high caliber of player and the standards set by the coaches the teams performed and the tour started successfully.

The next day was the long haul to Rotorua, stopping on the way at Taupo, to play games against the Bay of Plenty youth teams. With the weather improving and the Australian teams doing likewise the tour matches offered plenty for all to see the skill of the Australians. The day after saw the Australians travel to Auckland to play the strong Auckland Youth teams. Whilst preparation was limited the Australians were always improving. The games against the Auckland teams showed the strong Kiwi style of



2000 Trans-Tasman Youth Touch Series: Australian Women's Team: Auckland.

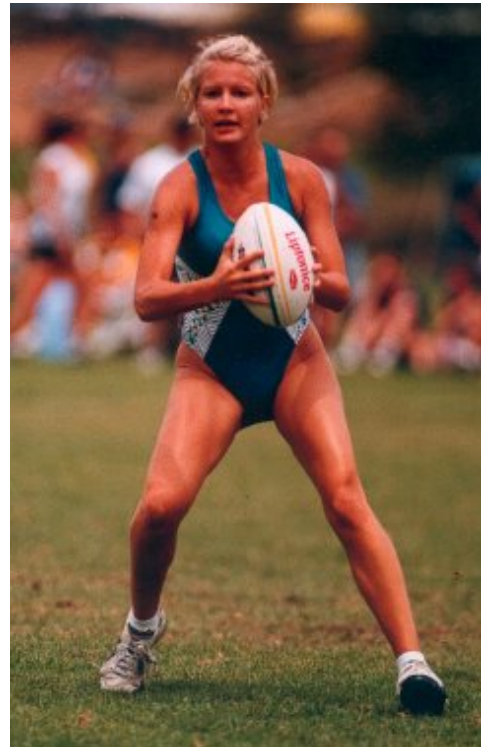
*Back: Candace Winder, Alita McPhee, Meagan Mannix, Michelle Garnett, Shan Corcoran, Symone Reynolds, Jasmine Silk.
Middle: Peter Topp (Tour Manager), Kathy O'Brien (Asst. Coach), Kerry Norman (Coach), Louise Eddy (Physio.), Tamara Kaveny (Manager), Gary Madders (Tour Manager). Front: Amanda Henderson, Missy Shaw, Bo De La Cruz, Stacy Lapham, Elise Anthony, Sarah Hillier, Morgan Arndell.*

play would take a special effort from the Australians to win the series.

The 2000 Australian Youth teams had many future champions amongst them with players who would later play for the Australian open teams at the World Cup in Japan in 2003, players such as Bo de la Cruz (Womens 2003 World Cup player of the series), Stacey Lapham (Mixed World Cup 2003) and Troy Malcolm (Mens World Cup 2003).

Whilst some have progressed to the national open teams, others are members of the National Training Squads. Some have moved on from Touch, Matt Bowen had been identified by Rugby League scouts and was contracted to play for the Queensland Cowboys in the National Rugby League competition and Queensland in the State of Origin series in 2003 and 2004.

The tour also saw a number of parents accompany their siblings for the entire time, the parents provided terrific support the young adults on tour. The ATA also identified the need to develop referees and on this tour a number of talented referees showed they were up to the challenge of international competition.



Jasmin Silk shows her style and perfect balance.



2000 Trans-Tasman Youth Touch Series: Australian Men's Team: Auckland.

Back: Beau-Dene Currie, Anthony Avery, Dave Zanette, Marc Laird, Brett Kirby, Matthew Bowen, Jeb Hipperson. Middle: Peter Topp (Tour Manager), Andrew Spencer (Manager), Peter Robinson (Asst. Coach) Adam Collins (Coach), Louise Eddy (Physio.), Gary Madders (Tour Manager). Front: Andrew Wise, Graham O'Shansey, Troy Malcolm, Nathan Russo, Jye Malcolm, Brad Davids, Clayton Sellings.

Greg Myers (NSW), Kerry Disney (Vic) and Glen Richardson (Qld) were part of the tour from start to finish and were included in all activities and game preparations. Greg Myers progressed from this tour to become one of Australia's highly ranked game official.

, Kerry Disney would be named as the number 1 referee at the Australian Youth Championships and like many others Glen Richardson would move to Ruby League.

Results 2000 Trans Tasman Youth Tests

Girls

Australia	5	New Zealand	2
Australia	4	New Zealand	2
Australia	7	New Zealand	3

Boys

New Zealand	8	Australia	6
Australia	8	New Zealand	7
New Zealand	7	Australia	6

The Australian teams retained the Youth Trans-Tasman Trophy, by virtue of the Australian Girls winning their series 3 matches to nil and the Boys winning 1 of their 3 matches.

The tour was enormously successful for the sport as it provided a critical focus for youth players and demonstrated that there was a complete pathway through the youth championships.

The young Australians were fine ambassadors for their chosen sport, and tours such as this enhanced not only the skill and ability levels of these players, but also the local communities and local players in the countries which they visited.

Many of these players have gone on to represent their provinces and country in open divisions.



A happy group of young Australian sightseers.

Girls Player of the Series

Bo Del la Cruz (Aust.)
NZ player won the Boys



Stacey Lapham as flag bearer: every junior Australian Touch player's dream: the march-past in the green and gold.

Touch Receives Royal Attention



Gabby Maher was delighted when, along with six of her fellow Touch players, she was asked to attend a lunch at Olympic Park to meet Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth II.

The event was organised by the New South Wales Government, and provided the opportunity for young sports people to receive some national recognition for the various sports.

This was unmistakably, a highlight of Gabby's brilliant sporting career. During her brief discussion with Her Royal Highness, Gabby and her fellow Touchies fielded a variety of questions about her sport. The Queen was fascinated to learn how girls came to be playing a game of football at an international level.

Her Royal Highness was surprised to learn of the mass appeal that Touch had throughout Australian society.



Shaking the hands with Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth II is Giselle Tirado, and left to right, is Shane Frederickson, Mark Boland (obscured), Jye Malcolm, then Kitty and Gabby Maher, Nadina Bambury.

Touch and Community Building

With its Touch association affiliated since 1998, Singleton is a burgeoning community of some 25,000 people located in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. The town has always had its fair share of international sports people, and sport has always been an integral aspect of the community. Today, in Singleton, as in other communities throughout Australia, Touch plays a vital role in community building.

In a feature article during mid-October 2002, the *Singleton Argus* featured the following story:

Warren Taggart couldn't wipe the smile from his face for an entire day when he heard he was among the referees to officiate at the New South Wales versus Queensland Touch Titles in Tamworth next week.

The news came after a harrowing day of assessment for his Level 3 referee qualification. He had already passed the theory component, a four-and-a-half hour written examination, and had spent the day at the NSW Touch Country Championships with examiners closely watching his every call.

Extremely satisfied with the pass at the end of the day, Warren was just about to go home when he heard the announcement that four of the people who had received their new qualification had also been selected to officiate at the interstate titles, and he was one of them.

'I was pretty happy with myself, I couldn't wipe the smile from my face for the rest of the day,' Warren said. From when he first picked up a whistle some 20 years ago, Warren said he never dreamt of the opportunities it would provide. Warren has been officiating at games in

Muswellbrook to help him prepare for next week's interstate titles, which he expects to be very fast and furious.

'At these types of competitions games are given three refs, one on the game and two sideline refs, and they interchange because the games are just so fast,' Warren said. 'Locally, you might only have one or two players that you know will take off with the ball, but with these representative sides you can have four or five,' Warren said.



Touch and the community: Whistle blower: Warren Taggart, received his Level 3 refereeing qualification from NSW Touch, which opened up a whole range of unexpected opportunities. (Photograph courtesy of the Singleton Argus.)

'I love it, especially now with these opportunities,' he said. Warren is also in demand in the regional inter-town competition, which includes representative sides from throughout the Hunter and Gosford.

Warren said there were six levels referees could study. Level 1 was an introduction and the following levels increasingly harder. He said he didn't know if he would extend his qualifications any further and that it really came down to being invited to qualify for a Level 4

'If they think you're good enough they will ask,' he said. He added that he was only human, and was capable of making mistakes. 'You make a decision and you stick to it, that's what I tell the kids learning to ref,' Warren said.

His daughter, Nicky, is following in her father's footsteps and is accompanying her dad to the games in Muswellbrook and from all accounts, is

doing a mighty fine job. Warren and Nicky are both familiar faces at the Singleton Junior Touch which begins on October 30 at Civic Park. This year 59 teams will take part in the competition to be played over four rounds from 4.30pm to 6.45pm. A level 1 refs course will held on November 21 at the York Street RSC and a Level coaching course will be held on Sunday, November 24.

Of course, there are enthusiastic volunteers such as Warren Taggart who make Touch competitions possible in many hundreds of communities across Australia.

Warren knows all about the power of Touch and community building. He is a proud descendent of the Wonaruah people from the Broke district, and in 1997 headed up a Touch team, the Dream team, in the Singleton Touch Association's seniors competition in order to pay homage to his deceased father, Stan (Tommy) Taggard.

Warren is proud to be one of the few Level 3 referees with an Indigenous heritage, a fact that reflects positively on the inclusive culture that exists throughout Australian Touch.

Warren reckons that the Singleton Touch Association has advanced leaps and bounds since it affiliated with NSW Touch back in 1997. 'But it's hard to teach old dogs new tricks,' he contends as he reflected on the progress of Touch in the Singleton district during his vast experience in the sport.

'Many of the adults have found it hard to break from the old rules, and prefer the kick-off to start a match, and have an unfettered instinct to drop a shoulder or to ankle tap.'

There are about forty teams competing in the senior Singleton Touch Association competition, but for Warren, the great future for the sport in the district is with its youth. When he was interviewed for this book he had just finished refereeing a local Under-16 girls' match, and he was beaming with enthusiasm for the wonderful positive spirit in which the girls played the game. 'It was a fair cracker of a game,' he enthused.

'It won't be long before these girls are playing seniors, and then the whole complexion of the sport will pick up a gear in this district.'



Touch and Community Building: Sportpower, Singleton Touch Association's A-grade Mixed 2002 Premiers. Back: Brendan Baker, Trent Patterson, Riley Brown, Brad Cooper. Front: Kellie Spinks, Cassandra Brown, Corey Lowry, Rachel Oldknow, Nicholas Kisis (absent).

Touch Legends and Heroes of the 80s and 90s Life Members

Phil Smith (deceased)

The late Phil Smith became the ATA's first Life Member when he was awarded Life Membership of the Australian Touch Association at the presentation ceremony at the end of the 1986 Nationals in Glenelg.

Barrie Keenahan remembers: *We went away on a Touch weekend, and little did I know that nobody ever booked in with Phil in the same room. We booked in, naturally in different beds and separate rooms, but guess what? I finished up pulling my bed into the foyer because of Phil's snoring! And he was in the room next door. It was apparently legendary, but nobody told me.*

One night he fell asleep on the lounge when we were relaxing as a group. To the sheer amazement of those present his raucous snoring actually shook an empty wine glass on a table top with his snoring. Phil was a terrific guy, as large as a mountain, but very kind and easy to talk to: a really nice guy, nothing was too much trouble for him if you were involved in sport.

Barrie is extremely proud to have his own name on the same Life Membership board as Phil.

Cary Thompson recalls that Phil's greatest disappointment was that he was not supported by the ATA for the inaugural presidency of the Federation of International Touch (FIT). In 1985, due to Phil's efforts, a meeting of overseas delegates in Melbourne decided to hold a meeting to form an international body for Touch.. It was decided that a meeting would take place in Adelaide in 1986 in conjunction with the ATA's National Championships. Due to his efforts, Phil felt that he would be supported for the presidency of the new body. It was at these championships that Phil was awarded the honour of being named the Australian Touch

Association's first Life Member. Cary recalls that Phil after accepting the award sat down next to him and confessed that this was a pay-off for not being elected to the position of president of FIT. Undoubtedly, Phil was a visionary. His foresight into the expansion of the sport internationally has materialised and it is patently unfortunate that he is no longer with us to witness this remarkable expansion of the sport.

Phil was acutely aware of the financial burden placed on amateur sports people, and certainly Touch players were not excluded from this responsibility. In his position of General Manager of New South Wales Touch he devised a scheme whereby all registered players would be charged an annual fee of one dollar to go into a special trust account to fund representative players' expenses.

Phil's detailed budget of this program showed all travel, accommodation, clothing expenses would be more than covered from this fund. Unfortunately, such future planning was not always in accord with many of the volunteer administrators of the day. Phil was such a visionary that one night he arrived home and informed his wife that he had mortgaged their house to fund NSW Touch's operations for the next twelve months. Such courage is the reason NSWTA is in such a powerful and sound financial position today. Teams today still struggle to fund their players to representative tournaments. Sadly, Phil's foresight and expertise has been lost forever to the Touch community.



Vale, Phil Smith 'a mountain of a man': fondly remembered by all in the Australian and international Touch fraternity. ATA President 1980-82. Vice-President 1978, 1979, 1983-84.

Dick Fairbairn

Dick Fairbairn became the ATA's second Life Member when he was awarded Life Membership of the Australian Touch Association in the Board Room of the Australian Touch Association in 1992. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the plaque naming the Board Room as the Fairbairn Room. Cary Thompson recalls his pioneering contribution to Touch

Dick was Financial Director of the ATA from 1983-1992 and during that period his financial expertise and guidance paved the way for the purchase of land in Canberra and the subsequent building of Mungga-Iri House in 1992.

Both Dick and the then president of ATA Ken Wells saw the opportunity for the future stability of the National organisation by investing in land in Napier Street Deakin and subsequently building a complex which is now owned by the ATA.

Securing funds for the project was not an easy task as the ATA's only asset was the land and small cash reserve. The ATA, however, had the ability to repay any loan.

To ensure the success of the building project Dick Fairbairn personally guaranteed the loan, a gesture that showed his great love and passion for the sport. Cary Thompson recalls this gesture saying *"I remember when NSW Touch was struggling in the early eighties and were going to the wall, Phil Smith put up his house to secure a loan to get them out of trouble. Dick and Phil are just people you are glad to have are on your side."*

Dick's first involvement in Touch was alongside Hess Hession in assisting with running of the Sutherland Juniors Touch Competition at Waratah Oval beside the Princess Highway in Sutherland in Sydney's south back in the early eighties. As a local accountant in the region, Dick saw the value of an investment in the development of the youth in the local community.

Dick was the Treasurer and Referees' Director for Sutherland Juniors as well as the referees' boss at the separately run Sutherland Womens' competition which was played along The Grand Parade at Sutherland Oval. Throughout the eighties Dick was also involved as the President and Treasurer of the Sutherland Juniors Touch Referee's Association as well as Referee's Director for both organisations.

It was from his involvement in the Touch that his expertise in financial planning was first identified by Peter Rooney who at this time was the President of New South Wales Touch. In 1982 Dick became Treasurer of the NSW Touch Association a position he held until he retired in 1987.

It was during this period that both NSW Touch and the ATA experienced rapid growth and financial stability in both Associations and all this was mainly due to Dick's skill in his role as Treasurer. Of course, the rapid growth counted for nothing, without a strong financial base, and that base has by now stood the test of decades. Hundreds of thousands of Australian Touchies have been the beneficiaries to Dick's foresight and financial wizardry.



Dick Fairbairn: a financial wizard with a massive foresight.

Cary Thompson

Awarded his Life Membership with the ATA in 1996, Cary has been called 'Mr. Touch Admin.', and few would argue that he well deserves the title. He has been involved in Touch almost from day one. He has left his mark on the sport by his contribution to the writing of the rules. Following the demise of In Touch, his newsletter, Touchies Voice, has been read by thousand of Touch enthusiasts. Arguably, his greatest contribution has come in the area of International Touch.

Born in 1947, and now a retired Public Servant from the Special Investigation Branch of the Australian Taxation Office, Cary has lived all his life in Sydney. Cary's first involvement with Touch was with the Manly Warringah Touch Association way back in the 1970s. He was responsible for drawing up that association's constitution.

Cary's vast array of life memberships of Touch associations reflects his outstanding contribution to the sport. In 1982 he was awarded life membership to the NSW Public Service Touch Football Association, and the following year he was awarded a similar award with the Australian Taxation Office Touch Football Association. In 1985 he received a life membership award for the hard yards that he had put in with the Manly Warringah Touch Association, and two years later came life membership with the NSW Public Service Touch Referees Association. In 1988 he received a life membership with the North Shore Business Houses Touch Association, and the following year came a similar award with the Manly Warringah Touch Referees Association. In 1991 Cary was awarded life membership with the North Shore Business Houses Touch Referee Association, and in the same year with the NSW Touch Association.

Cary's other awards equal his life memberships. In 1988 he was awarded the Australian Sports Commission's Excellence in Touch award, and in the same year he received the NSW Touch Association's Award for Contribution to the Sport. Ten years later he was awarded the prestigious Australian Coaching Council's

Eunice Gill Coach Education Award for his outstanding contribution to coach education in Australia. In 2001 he was awarded the Australian Government's Sports Australia Award. Cary also has attained a Level 2 Sports Administrators accreditation with the Australian Society of Sports Administrators, a Level 2 Rugby and a Level 1 Rugby League Coach accreditation.

Cary's accreditations in the various arms of the technical field are too numerous to list. Many of these accreditations are at the highest level that can be attained. He has held a multitude of honorary positions with the ATA, and has at his fingertips an amazing knowledge of the history of the sport. Other than teaming with Dr Paul Webb in the writing of a raft of coaching, sports administration documents, Cary also has written constitutions for many regional and international Touch associations.

But, arguably his most significant contributions have come with international Touch. He was President of the Federation of International Touch from 1991 to 2007 and Secondary general in 2008 before his retirement. He coached the American team for the 1988 World Cup, and the Japanese team for the 1991 World Cup. He has headed development tours to Japan (1991), South Africa (1996), England (1996) and Scotland (2000).



Cary Thompson, he played a major role in placing Touch on the international scene.

Dr Paul Webb

He was once described as ‘the coaches’ coach’ by the Illawarra Mercury’s Mike Gandon. Paul, along with his old mate, Cary Thompson, has written many technical publications and has done many conference presentations related to Touch. He is known to thousands of Australian Touch players, coaches and officials. A quiet, unassuming gentleman, he well deserved his 1996 Life Membership with the ATA.

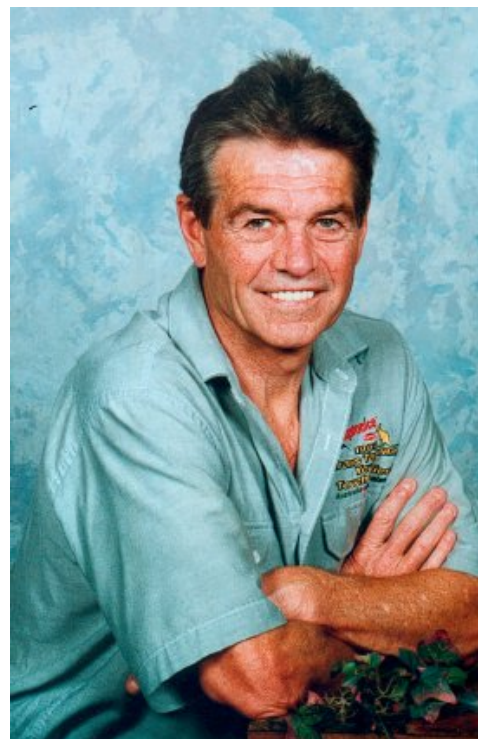
Dr Paul Webb was born in South Africa, and went to school in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he played first-grade Rugby Union, cricket and hockey, and came to Tasmania with his parents in the mid-1960s. After graduating as a Physical Education teacher at the University of Tasmania he worked as a teacher until 1975 in his chosen discipline with the Tasmanian Department of Education. During these years he played Rugby Union with the University of Tasmania club and represented the State.

He has been involved with Touch since 1983 after returning from the United States where he completed his PhD at the University of Oregon. He was appointed to his position as Lecturer in Physical and Health Education at the University of Wollongong, where at the time of the writing of this book he was Director of Physical and Health Education. He has held numerous administrative positions in Touch at State and National levels. During the years 1984-87 he was Assistant Coaching Director with the NSWTA. During 1987 he was National Coaching Director. From 1987 to the time of the writing of this book he was National Technical Director, and also had been on the ATA Board of Management for six years.

Along with Cary Thompson, Paul has been responsible for many of the technical publications in the sport of Touch, including such popular publications as *Catch and Pass Drills and Skills* and *Sub-unit Skills and Drills*. With Cary, he has upgraded coaching manuals, designed coaching courses, and written and reviewed many of Touch’s technical publications. Paul has delivered a raft of presentations in Touch-related subjects at

numerous conferences, such as the Australian Sports Commission Sport Education conferences and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation conferences. Here his papers, such as *Game Sense: best practice in sport*, have provided erudite insights for a host of national and international sports administrators and coaches. Not surprisingly, Paul was recognised by the Australian Coaching Council. He was awarded the Eunice Gill Coach Education Merit Award in 1994 for his outstanding contribution to coach education in Australia. This prestigious award was followed up in 1998 with the Confederation of Australian Sport Distinction Award for outstanding contribution to Australian sport. In 2000 he was awarded an Australian Sports Medal.

In a 2002 interview Paul was asked to reflect on the development of Touch in Australia. ‘Touch has been a very progressive sport over the last 20 years,’ he observed. ‘From a technical point of view we have been at the forefront, which has been reflected by the high level Australian Sports Commission funding. The sport has been fortunate in having many dedicated volunteers with skills and competencies, which have contributed to an outstanding technical arm.’



Dr Paul Webb: a master at coaching Touch coaches through coach education. He brought a high level of science to the sport of Touch.

Barrie Keenahan

Barrie Keenahan has made his name synonymous with refereeing excellence. He has been a dedicated himself at local, regional, state, national and international levels to the sport.

Born on the 20 July 1942, Barrie was the New South Wales Country Director of Referees and Executive Member in 1983, and when New South Wales Touch went to regions, splitting up the city and country areas, he became the New South Wales Director of Referees. He held that position from 1983 to 1986. He was the first referee from Wollongong to be graded Level 4, 5 and 6.

An ex-Rugby League referee, he was there from the beginning of the Touch phenomenon. In 1978 he started a Touch competition in Wollongong, and in that year was elected President of the Referees' Association and Director of Referees. The following year he was graded as a New South Wales referee. By 1980 he had been selected for the Nationals, finishing up number two referee in Australia that year. In 1982 Barrie was appointed to the National Referees' Coaching Panel. In the same year he also was appointed as the New South Wales Country Director of Referees and Executive on New South Wales Country Touch.

From 1983 to 1986 he was a National Referees' Panel Member. From 1978 to 1992 he held the position of President and Director of Referees' Wollongong Touch Association. Barrie has also done his fair share of coaching. In 1989 he formed the University of Wollongong Touch Club and was elected President. He remained in the position until 1992. During that time he coached the Women's Open to win the Eastern New South Wales University Games, with seven of the girls selected in the New South Wales University team. The club won the Australian Universities Women's Open and Men's Open Titles during his time with that club. From 1987 to the present day Barrie has been National Director of Referees, except for one year when he remained on the National Referees' Panel, with Jim Stackpoole taking over as the Referees' Director for 18 months.

From 1987 to present day he has been a member of the National Technical Panel as an Executive

Member. Barrie has also contributed internationally to touch refereeing. He toured Canada and the United States as a Touring Manager and Referee Director. He also toured New Zealand for the World Cup as a member of the Federation of Touch Referees', and is currently a member of that panel.

No surprise then that Barrie has collected a raft of awards and life memberships! He was awarded a five-year service award from NSWTA, a Service Award by the Australian Touch Association. He is a Life Member of the Wollongong Touch Referees' Association; Life Member of the Wollongong Touch Association; Life Member of the NSW Touch Referees' Association; Life Member of the Australian Touch Association. On top of all that he was awarded the 2000 Australian Sports Medal. Who was the best Touch referee he had ever worked with? 'No hesitation! Rick Borg.' How long does he intend going on for? 'Until my coaching is no longer effective!' Most respected person in Touch? 'Bill Ker.' Whom does he owe his time in the sport to? 'My wife, Angie! She knows that I love the sport and never pressures me to leave'.



Barrie Keenahan: Decades upon decades of dedication to Touch refereeing and administration.

Inductees to the Hall of Fame

Terry Jacks

Arguably one of the greatest of them all, the first man to receive the honour, in 1988 the ATA inducted Terry Jacks from Queensland into the Hall of Fame at the presentation function at Queensland's Sea World.

Terry commenced representative Touch in 1977 and has had a distinguished career from that time. His contribution to Touch as a player is second to none. His achievements are as follows:

- represented Australia in 1980, '81, '83, '84, '85, '86, and '87, and '88.
- captained the inaugural Test match vs. NZ in 1985, and again in 1986.

Terry met his future wife, Donna while representing Queensland in Canberra in 1982, and both captained Australia in their respective teams against Auckland on the same day on the 1986 tour.

Karley Banks writes:

'Terry was a member of every Queensland Men's Open team that was selected up until 1988 and is a life member of Eagles Touch Club and the Brisbane Metro Touch Association.

His contribution to the sport in Queensland as a player, the example he has set as a dedicated player and leader has earned him the respect of all! Involved in Touch.

He is widely acknowledged as the greatest player in the history of our sport and a lot of the skills, drills, and sub-units, patterns, and plays many of us use, have come in as add ons from what Terry developed in the early years.

Terry's cousin, and fellow ATA Hall of Fame member, Peter Bell, explains Terry's contribution to the sport:

'Terry was the first player to have a profile in our sport, because of the way he played, trained, and thought about the sport - he took people's idea that Touch was a backyard sport, and turned

around that thinking by being clinical in his approach - he realized the necessity to train and be fit for the game - he elicited a commitment out of others and that helped the sport evolved.' Terry was 'the money man', 'the go to guy', whatever you want to call him - he was the piston that drove the engine and he did it like no one before him did and no one since him has.

Terry began playing Touch in 1975 with Brisbane club side Dairy Cows as an 18 year old and after playing A grade Rugby Union with Brisbane Brothers, Terry settled on Touch, and at the age of 23 made his debut for Queensland at the National championships in 1980.

He played for Eagles from 1979 where he stayed, coached and played for a decade, and captained a team that would win four BMTA Premierships and produce a host of representative players.

Terry rounded out his career by Captain/Coaching HK Sharks in the BMTA from 1989 -1993. His great knowledge of ball skills and the art of attacking football, led him to be appointed John Lang's Skills Coach at Eastern Suburbs Rugby League Club in the early 90s.



Terry Jacks, photographed here in his 1986 Australian uniform for the Trans-Tasman series.

Karen Smith

The first woman to receive the honour, in 1988 the ATA inducted Karen Smith from New South Wales, was into the Hall of Fame at the presentation function at Queensland's Sea World.

Intelligent and skilful, extremely fit and with exceptional vision, she was a standout, very much ahead of her time. Karen has been involved in representative Touch since 1980 and has the following impressive record:

- 1980 Queensland: • Captain of New South Wales; • Captain of New South Wales Women's Open team - Australian Champions
- 1981 Canberra: Captain of New South Wales;
- 1983 Hobart: Captain of New South Wales; Player of the Final; Australian Team.
- 1984 Sydney: Captain of New South Wales; Player of the Final; Australian Team.
- 1985 Melbourne: Captain of New South Wales; Captain of Australian team versus The Rest
- 1986 Adelaide: Captain of New South Wales; Player of the Series; Captain of Australian Team on New Zealand Tour; Players Player of the Tour Award.
- 1987 Perth: Captain of New South Wales; Captain of Australian Team on Canada Tour; Player of the Series.
- 1988 Gold Coast: Captain of New South Wales; Captain of the Australian Women's Open Team in the Inaugural World Cup.
- 1991 Canberra: • Captain New South Wales Women's Open team - Australian Champions. • Selected Captain of Australian Women's Team for Second World Cup in New Zealand
- 1992 Hobart: Coach New South Wales Women's Open Team - Australian Champions
- 1993 Sydney: Coach New South Wales Women's Open Team - Sydney - Runners Up
- 1994 Gold Coast: Member of New South Wales Women's Over 30s Team - Australian Champions.

For Karen, who were her most respected opponents? 'Queensland Touch really started to develop after 1986, and going on tour really showed you people's strengths and weaknesses. Kerrie Norman was exceptionally fast and you didn't want her to see daylight; Sharon Mitchell-Cowan was a tough competitor as was Donna Jacks in the early days. More recently, Maria McWhirter, Erin Vickery both had a great step, and you had to be on your toes in defence. More

often than not you were more conscious of the team play rather than individual.' Who were her most respected team members? 'That's easier! Lisa Neal and Maria Arthur were legends. They could win the game by themselves. Debbie Ginman was very tough. I was glad she was on my side. Cheryl McCormack could have been anything but was also involved with the Australian Netball team. I was fortunate to see Katrina Maher develop from a 16 year old to the mature player she became. Debbie Egan could also create something out of nothing. Jenny Inskip, Tracey Faull, Paula Vassallo, and Meg Salisbury - these players were part of our very strong Sutherland Menai team which won nine State Championships. They all played with me for New South Wales. I would not have been the player I was without them. They made me look good!' What were Karen's most memorable matches? 'The New South Wales victories in the 1990 and 1991 series were very special to me. We were written off after 1988 losing to Queensland. To come back and have very comprehensive victories was fabulous. Personally, I was very satisfied as being one of the older players people were forever calling out for me to be dropped.'



Karen Smith, photographed here in her 1986 New South Wales Open Women's uniform as she accepts the Championship trophy.

Lisa Neal

Lisa Neal was inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame in Darwin in 1990. She was highly respected amongst her peers, and for good reason. Her playing history for New South Wales and Australia includes:

- 1980 Nationals: Player of the Finals
- 1981 Nationals: Australian Merit Team
- 1983 Nationals: Australian Team
- 1984 Nationals: Vice Captain, Player of the Series; Australian Team
- 1985 Nationals Vice Captain, Australian Team v The Rest
- 1986 Nationals Vice Captain, Australian Tour of New Zealand, Player of the Test
- 1987 Nationals Vice Captain, Australian Team, Vice Captain Tour of Canada and the United States
- 1988 Nationals, Vice Captain, Australian Team in the Inaugural World Cup
- 1992 Nationals, Captain of Over 27s, Elected captain of Tour of New Zealand (did not tour)

What were Lisa's most memorable matches? 'There are many memorable matches. But, of course, you could say that everyone against the Maroons was a memorable match, and, of course, every time that I pulled on the green and gold was terrific.' 'But some that really stand out included a round match in the 1983 Nationals in Hobart. As a team effort, it was a near-faultless display.'

Every move (and believe me Coach, Bob White had a few!) worked just the way that we had trained for: over-the-head passes between Debbie Ginman and I never looked like hitting the turf. I think that the score was 7-0. I'll always remember the tears of delight in Bob's eyes.' 'The 1987 Nationals in Perth were special, too. Queensland had been getting closer to us year by year, and following a nil-all draw in the round game, the final promised to be a thriller. Here there was some wonderful innovative attack, and in-the-face defence, with our team taking a half-time lead of 2-0, after tries to Vicki Williams and myself.'

The second half started off with the same vigour, when I made a break, but tore my quadriceps muscle. But the girls dug deep, with Gai Taylor, Tracy Faull and Debbie Ginman really showing

true New South Wales spirit in covering the link positions, with one player down to hold our half-time lead for a memorable victory.' Lisa's most respected opponents included Kerry Norman, who possessed lightning speed, and was a fine finisher. She was also a great person off the field 'as long as you didn't have to room with her and her mess!' As opponents Karyn Coombs and Maria Arthur also demanded great respect.

Amongst her team mates, Lisa places a special respect with Karen Smith, Debbie 'No Guts' Coleman (Ginman), one of the toughest and fittest players ever to play the game, and Vicki 'Willo' Packer (Williamson). And, of course, there was Jenny 'Buddah' Woodley (Park). For Lisa a big part of the New South Wales success during those early years can be attributed to the intense mateship that existed amongst the players. This has stood the test of time. Today Lisa and her team mates and opponents still enjoy a high level of real friendship. Of course, this is what makes team sport so endearing.



1986: Australian tour to New Zealand: Lisa Neal runs on in her beloved green and gold.

Ray Lawrence

Ray 'Bullet' Lawrence was inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame in Darwin in 1990. As a senior player, his Touch national representative career is most impressive, yet it is different in a very special way.

- 1987 Men's 35 Merit Team
- 1987 Masters Team Canada-USA
- 1988 World Touch Championships
- 1991 40s Team
- 1998 40 Team

This was in addition to a massive amount of State representative duties:

- 1983 NSW Men's Seniors
- 1984 NSW Men's Seniors
- 1985 NSW Men's Seniors
- 1986 NSW Men's O35
- 1987 NSW Men's O35
- 1998 NSW Men's O40
- 1990 NSW Men's O40
- 1992 NSW Men's O40
- 1993 NT O40

Indeed, 'Bullet' Ray Lawrence was the only senior inductee in the Touch Hall of Fame. His Touch career did not start until relatively late in life. Born in July 1946, he is still actively involved in Touch three times a week. He continues to play in the Taren Point over 50s representative team in the Sydney Inter-district competition, and can still run a 100m in less than 13 seconds.

'Thank goodness I have always been fast off the mark, an ideal attribute for Touch both on and of the field,' he proudly announced.

Bullet originally came to know of Touch at the age of 32. This came from a social game with dual international, Rex Mossop. This was at Graham's Reserve at Manly in 1979. He was recruited into the local Touch competition, and first played in a local side known as the North Manly Mongrels at the tender age of 33. Two years later, however, he was representing the Manly District in the New South Wales Region Competition along side ex-League star, Ken Irvine.

By 1983 he won selection in the New South Wales State Men's Senior team in the Nationals in Hobart. Bullet's brilliant representative career

was underway. Who was the most respected person Bullet had encountered in Touch? 'It would have to be a tireless worker in the sport, Les Bouvang.' Les was Bullet's administrator when he was the Regional Director of the Rebels, from the National Touch League. 'Les is a tireless worker for the game, particularly at the junior level, and never complained, no matter what was asked of him. The type of person the game cannot succeed without.'

What was Bullet's most memorable moment in the sport? Although he did not consider it funny at the time, it was when he was sin binned in a exhibition match at Auckland's Ericson Stadium in front of a crowd in excess of 5000 people. Bullet explains what happened: 'I took an intercept while defending our own line, and took of the Aussie touch line ! A Kiwi player stepped off the field near where I took the ball, and another Kiwi player stepped on to the field at about the half way mark. Knowing this was an illegal ploy (as interchanges were restricted to the half way box) I ran straight into the b... Kiwi player rather than try to avoid him. For this I was sin -binned.'

'Later video evidence proved I was correct, and an apology was forthcoming from the Australian referee officiating at the time. This was too late to get it correct, but as justice would have it, we went on to win that game by one touchdown.'



The cap says it all: Ray 'Bullet' Lawrence in a photo taken as he left the field at the Australian Titles in Darwin in 1990. This photo formed part of the presentation later that week.

Kerry Norman

Kerry Norman had done it all! She had represented Queensland and Australia. She was also a referee, a highly successful Australian coach, the Australian Touch Association's Director of Junior Development, President of the Queensland Primary Schools Touch, and also she was inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame in Darwin in 1990.

Kerry first started playing Touch in 1981 when she went to watch her husband, Greg, play. The team on the next field was a bit short so she went to play for them. And was been hooked on Touch ever since. From then on the sport truly had become a huge part of her life.

Like so many other Touch legends, her sport was very much a family affair. With her husband playing, and her young son, Peter inducted into the sport very early in his life, Touch for the Normans was very much a family affair. In fact, Greg was a very seasoned player, having played in the Queensland and Australian Men's Open sides and he was in 1997 President of the Gold Coast Touch Association.

In an interview with *In Touch*, Kerry was asked why Touch was so popular with school children in Queensland where it was especially booming. Kerry agreed that it was very popular: 'It's a sport played by both male and female, and it's just a fun game to play. Everyone can play. It's a game without too many rules and it's pretty easy to adapt to the concept of Touch. The social aspect of the game is also important. It's a sport that brings the girls and boys together.'

For Kerry, there were also other reasons why the sport was so popular with Queensland children: 'I think you have to look at the parents also who are finding the game very attractive for their kids. If you are married it is easy; you can just take your kids with you and you can all run around.'

Asked why in her opinion Touch was so popular with girls, Kerry explained that she thought a lot of girls wanted to throw a football around in a sport that was not too masculine. Especially with the body suits that the girls are wearing, Touch

was portrayed as a very feminine sport and the girls just love playing it. Kerry was well qualified to respond to these questions. She was a Physical Education teacher. She insisted: 'Touch would be one of the most popular sports at our school, and in most schools for that matter.'

Basketball is a popular sport especially with the boys, taking the place of cricket, and I think that is due to the publicity. Touch is only just beginning to receive publicity. It's really important for the kids to identify with a sport.' At the time of the *In Touch* interview with Kerry, she was the President of the Queensland Primary Schools' Touch Association, an organisation that had been instrumental in setting up.

What did this job entail for Kerry? 'I'm in my third year now and I head the committee of Queensland Schools' Touch. Touch has entered the primary schools system in Queensland for girls and we now have a Girls' State Championships. However, our main aim is to get the boys involved; it is just that there are so many sports at primary schools level.' At the end of her representative career Kerry and her husband, Greg, takes much enjoyment in watching her son, Peter represent Queensland primary schools.



Kerry Norman: after a wonderful playing career continues to put much back into the sport.

Glenys Woolcock

Queensland sport administrator, Glenys Woolcock, was the 1991 entry in the National Touch Hall of Fame. She has had an impressive record in Touch.

This includes:

- Queensland Women's Open: 1981 -1987 and 1989
- Australian Women's Open: 1983-1987
- Toured New Zealand 1986
- Toured Canada and USA 1987
- Queensland Women's 27s - Gold Coast 1988
- Queensland Women's 27s - Gold Coast 1991
- Australian Women's 27s - Darwin 1988
- Level I referee's course co-ordinator
- Level 3 Touch coach
- Level 2 Touch selector
- Level 6 Touch referee
- Level 4 Selector's course co-ordinator
- Level 4 Coaching course co-ordinator.

How did Glenys get started in Touch? For Glenys, David Coe is the person to blame for getting her started and it was back in 1980 in Mount Isa. As she recalls it David put in a lot of ground work trying to convince her to play what he assured was a great game. But on the other hand, she was sure it would be too rough. She finally conceded to his argument that it would keep her fit for squash. But after her very first game, playing down the local park, three on three, she was hooked. It reminded her of playing footy in the back yard with my brothers when they were kids. 'Yep, I quickly sank into the depths of Touch addiction'! She joyfully declares.

'The thing about the sport of Touch that hasn't changed in all these years is there are more people playing the game than those available to referee, coach and organize it; so when I started playing it wasn't long before I was roped into these extra activities.' 'As a Touch addict, I found it difficult to control my Touch habit,' she gleefully remembers. In 1986, Touch also became Glenys' paid job when she took on the new role of administrator of North Queensland.

And as testimony to the rapid growth of the sport of Touch here, ten years on when she left to work with Queensland Touch, North Queensland had grown to a staff of five full-time paid people. Who were some of the more memorable people that Glenys had met in the sport? 'In 20

years I've met a lot of people from all over Australia, but I guess with most of those years spent in North Queensland, it's the characters there that stand out most in my memory. The most memorable coach would have to be Graham Hughes, whose uncanny ability to get the absolute "best" out of his players was remarkable. The one thing that everyone in North Queensland knew was that it didn't matter whether Graham had a talented team or not; because if it was Graham's team, you just knew they were going to be tough.'

'The most memorable referee would be Rod Bathe, who was always the "perfect gentleman referee" and one of the most unflappable people I've ever met. Thanks to Rod, I aspired to be this type of referee myself: calm and composed. Of course, I failed often, but that nevertheless remains my goal. 'Easily the most memorable player is Maria Arthur. Anyone who was on the national Touch scene in the early '80s would remember Maria, a striking player for New South Wales who moved to North Queensland and became a striking player for her new state.'



*Glenys Woolcock makes the ball do all the work:
Queensland versus New South Wales in the Women's 27 at
the Gold Coast in 1988.*

Ron Wall

Inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame in 1993, Ron Wall had been playing representative Touch almost from the beginning, and by the 1990s had accumulated impressive curriculum vitae.

- 1981: NSW Country
- 1982-84: NSW Open Men's
- 1982, 1983: Men's Open Merit Team
- 1985, '86, '88: NSW Men's O30s
- 1985: Trans-Tasman
- 1986: Trans-Tasman O30s 1986 (Player of the Tour)
- 1988: World Cup: Men's Open (Gold Coast)
- 1990-93: NSW Men's O35s
- 1991: World Cup: Mens 30s (Captain) (New Zealand)
- 1995-96: NSW Men's O40s
- 1995: World Cup: Mens 35s (Captain) (Gold Coast)
- 1997: World Cup: Mens 40s (Captain) (Sydney)
- 2001: NSW Men's O45s

As with so many others at the time, as a Rugby League player Ron played a form of touch football each week at training and enjoyed it immensely until a touch competition eventually started in Wollongong. He and his mates entered the competition, and it all started there!

Representing Wollongong/Illawarra at Country Championships led to him being selected in the NSW Country side. Then to State honours. Ron played in the Sydney championships with Cronulla. 'I could not think of a greater family club to be involved with. We won many titles, including State Cups, with some wonderful players, including Ian Forest, Lindsay Rudd, Ron Chilby and Steve Clements.' He captained his State team on many occasions.

So, what were the highlights of Ron's career? 'There were numerous highlights including the following (in no particular order):

- Flag bearer for Australia at the World Cup in New Zealand;
- representing Australia at Open Level in the inaugural Test Series against New Zealand and in the following World Cup;
- anytime I play for NSW against Queensland;

- winning the NSW State Cup with mates from Thirroul in 1997;
- winning the NTL with Southern Suns in 1998.

For Ron, who were most respected people he had met in the sport? 'Again there are numerous people, including Mick McCall, Mark Boland, Kieran Gavin, Kevin Feldman and Joe Wilson.

What was his most memorable humorous moment in the sport? 'At the world Cup in New Zealand we played against Japan and one of their players was over 50 and could hardly run. 'We' organised to get him to tap off, and when he ran at us the defence split to let him through. Then the whole team proceeded to chase, making dives just missing him to allow him to score, but just as he was approaching the touchdown he threw the ball over his head. Both teams had a laugh and proceeded to set him up again in which he eventually scored. The look on his face was after he scored was worth all the effort and I don't think he stopped smiling for the rest of the tournament.'

Ron is still playing touch at Club level at Wollongong and Thirroul.



Ron Wall: Brian Rooney (right) presents the master with the Over 40s trophy at the Fourth World Cup held in Sydney in 1999.

Bob Brindell

Bob Brindell was inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame in 2003. He had accumulated a most impressive record in the sport.

He had played in the Australian Men's Open from 1988 to 1992, and then again from 1994 to 1999. During this epoch his team had won all World Cups and Trans-sasman series. Moreover, he was one of two players to attend four World Cups at the Men's open level. Add to this the following:

- 1988 - World Cup, Player of the Series
- 1991 - World Cup, Player of the Series
- 1995 - World Cup, Players' Player
- 1999 - World Cup, Most Valuable Player

Bob's achievements with the Queensland Men's Open team were equally impressive. He played here from 1988 to 1991, and from 1994 to 1998. It is history now that the Queensland Men's Open won the title from 1988 to 1990, and from 1995 to 1998. In 1994 he was named Player of the Series.

In the NTL Bob played with the Gold Coast Sharks 1996 from 1999. Who was Bob's most respected fellow players? Easy! My brother, Laurie, who used to do my rucking and my defence; Corey Foster for his attacking skills; Paul Dart for his never-say-die attitude; Patrick Grehan for his laugh-a-minute; Gary Wakefield (coach) for his ability to get players over their egos; Peter McNeven (coach) for his discipline; Scott Notley, Mark Boland and Craig Pierce for their attacking ability, and the former two for their leadership, which in Bob's opinion, never saw a 'them-verse-us' attitude while ever they were leading an Australian side.

Who were Bob's most respected opponents? You guessed it! Scotty Notley and Mark Boland came up to the mark here. 'Mark playing for NSW and Scott playing against me at club level or regional level were always highlights.'

What were Bob's most Memorable moments in the sport? 'First, picking up the awards at the World Cup, Origin matches and State Champs, but these really only happen because of your mates.'

Then there were the friendships! 'I still go to a Touch match today and still talk about the good

old days. And I still tell the story of Craig Pierce when sick at the Hawaii 1995 World Cup, he dragged himself out of bed to play in the semi-final against New Zealand. We were beaten 6-4, but it wasn't really a true indication of the game; we were flogged, just, not on the score board. New Zealand scored length of the field touchdowns. To see Craig running around gave us a lift and we beat New Zealand in the final 5-1 after being down 1-nil at halftime.

What are Bob's most memorable humorous moments in the sport? 'The first would have to be the 1995 World Cup, when after the semi-final against New Zealand, 'Bus' Boland remarked numerous times, that New Zealand cannot beat a good team three times, (more a question than a statement, I think). The first loss was to New Zealand in the round (3-2). The second loss was in the semi (6-4). And lucky for us Bus was right! Australia won the final 5-1.

And there was one other moment! 'As the team grommet for the 1988 Australian team, I was chosen to run the sprint, and along side me (or just behind) was 'Bus' Boland running into third. We both were behind the Kiwi guy who smashed the rest of us by metres, going across the line with his hand in the air. Next was me, smashing "Bus" by inches



Bobby Brindell in his beloved green and gold, playing in the 1991 World Cup at Auckland.

Katrina ‘Kit’ Toohey (nee Maher)

During the 1990s on the Touch field, Katrina Maher was a true Jeckle and Hyde, but in the nicest possible way. Off the field she was an extremely polite, quietly spoken, unassuming young lady. Yet, on the field she was a respected tenacious fighter who would never give up. The ultimate team player, she had a burning desire to succeed.

By the mid-1990s, it seemed as if Kit had been around the Touch arena longer than her age suggested. In fact, at 25 she was really a veteran.

Kit started playing when she was ten-years old down at the local competition at Cronulla. Her netball team had decided to put their team in the summer junior competition to keep fit for the netball season.

Like many Touch champions, however, Kit gained her greatest early support from her family. The Maher family was all very involved in Touch.

Kit explained to Dean Russell in a 1994 player profile in *In Touch* that ‘basically, it just seemed to evolve that way. The first team I played in was short, so they asked my sister, Fiona, if she wanted to play. Plus, my brothers were playing Rugby League, so it was a natural progression for them. With the success we were having, my little sisters also wanted to start playing and we all received great support from Mum and Dad.’

Kit’s mother was certainly a keen student of the game and many contended that she would have had, possibly, at the time the largest Touch video library known to humankind.

Russell asked Kit whether this was an aid to her development, being able to watch your game and the way in which others played?

Kit replied that ‘We used to watch them a little bit, not so much now, although our coaches view them a lot. For myself now they were great to look back on and watch people I know grow up’.

In fact the Maher family even had a tape of when Kit played against Bradley Clyde in U-16 Mixed Nationals.

For Kit, her greatest challenge was assisting in getting her local team to its full potential. In her 1994 interview she explained that ‘The Cronulla Women’s Open have been threatening to do something really big for a while now, but seem to keep faltering at the last hurdle.’

Kit was philosophical about the challenge: ‘We’ve won a State Cup and been runners up in quite a few competitions, and that’s probably as good as most teams can expect at the moment due to the closeness of the Women’s standard.’

No one team is dominating anyone. A lot of the time we seemed to have played probably too well during the rounds and expected something to happen in the semis or finals, where other teams seemed to save something special for the final.’

Following her brilliant playing career, Kitty has settled into her business career as a chartered accountant, while she enjoys motherhood.



Katrina Toohey, photographed her in one of her many Australian tracksuits.

Scott Notley

By 1997 it seemed as though Scott Notley had been around forever!

Following two major knee reconstructions the then Queensland and Australian Captain had returned to vintage form scoring six touchdowns in the 1996 Origin Series. At 33 years of age he was playing the best Touch of his career and had moved into a class of his own. He was inducted into the Touch Hall of Fame at the 2003 NTL.

The ATA Chief Executive, Bill Ker, described Scott Notley as a great ambassador for your sport, and from his performances on and off the field during the 1990s few would disagree with Ker who had few peers as a judge of the sport.

When interviewed by *In Touch* back in 1997 Scott was asked how long he had been playing Touch? Scott explained that he started in the sport back in 1982. 'I was playing Rugby at the time,' he explained, 'I was probably a little bit smaller in those days and Touch just suited me better.'

For Scott, the biggest change that he had seen in the game during his long career was quite clearly the pace of the sport. Scott explained that when he first started the game it was much slower. 'Nowadays it's so fast. It's increased dramatically over the last 10 years.' During the 1990s who was Scott's most respected opponent? 'Probably, Bobby Brindall in Queensland or Mark Boland in New South Wales. They're just standout players who can make it happen. If either of them don't play well neither does their team.'

What was Scott's one game that really stood out for him? 'Definitely the World Cup against New Zealand in Hawaii. We had lost the two round games to New Zealand and we were down 1-nil at half time in the final. We came back to beat them 5 -1 in the second half. It was an amazing turn around and something I won't forget.'

Scott was also very clear minded about the reasons behind the Maroons dominance over the Blues. What was Queensland's trick over New South Wales? The later had won the last seven games straight against a team that once

dominated Queensland. For Scott, probably the difference was that Queensland had a few youngsters that had added a real variety to their team. New South Wales did not seem to have them. Queensland had three or four, 21-year olds that were incredibly good for their age. New South Wales did not have that luxury during the late 1990s.

With retirement from playing, Scott has turned his knowledge and skills to coaching. He was coach of the Razorbacks Men's Open at the 2004 NTL. Now he is able to reflect on his brilliant Touch career. When asked how many times he captained Queensland, he answered that he could not remember. 'But I would say at least 50 times.'

How many times did he captain Australia? Even then he was not sure: 'I believe 36 times at Men's Open and nine times at O30s between 1991 and 1999.' What was Scott's most memorable humorous moment in the sport? 'I can't recall anything specific, but I do have very fond memories of some of the skit nights held at National Titles, where each Queensland team was required to do an act to entertain the others. The efforts of some of the teams were outstanding and since the demise of the old National Championships, this little bit of entertainment has disappeared.'



Scott Notley: one of the truly great Australian Touch players.

Mark Boland

The old war-horse who has given the sport so much was by 1999 finally on his last legs or so that was what everybody was led to believe! Just when everyone thought Mark Boland was ready to give the game away he was picked to play in his fourth World Cup.

As he approached the twilight of a remarkable career, *In Touch* caught up with the representative legend to gain an insight into his illustrious career. The first question put to him was to discover how he got involved in Touch.

Mark was playing Rugby League and got some back trouble when he was 12 or 13 years of age. He was not supposed to do anything but swim. He was not allowed to play any contact sport.

When he was 17 years old he started to playing Touch down at Parramatta Park. It did not seem to trouble him too much, and he had been playing ever since.

Mark had been a part of the mighty Parramatta Club for years, and a part of an incredible winning dynasty. What was so special about the club?

Mark was definite in his reply: 'It's been a powerful club for a long time now. While I think we've had a number of good players, I think there's just a really close-knit group of guys. We're all great mates. We've certainly got a strong local competition, which really helps, and I think the Parramatta area itself, which is quite large seems to produce a lot of good players.'

How many New State Wales State Cups had the Parramatta team won? Mark's first State Cup was in 1982 and he had played in everyone through until 1999.

'I just played my seventeenth State Cup in 1999, and we've won it twelve times. We won twelve of the first fourteen, however, we seem to have dropped off a bit.'

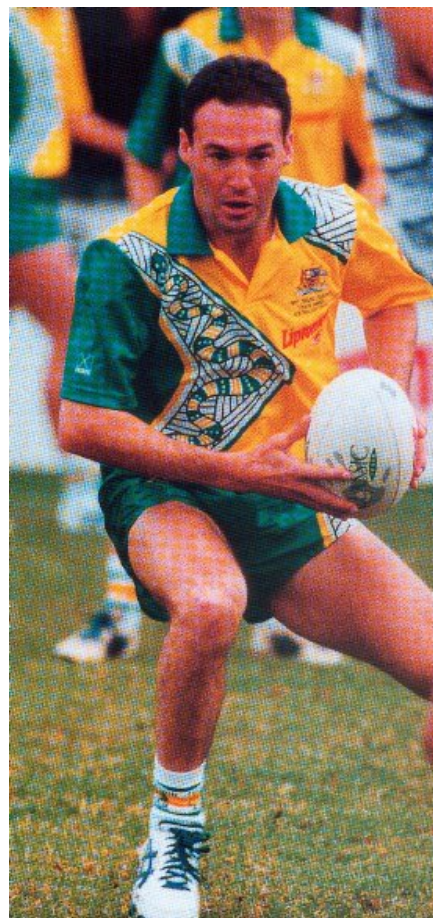
We couldn't maintain that record forever and after a few teams had seen us lose they realised we weren't invincible. It's given the other teams a lot more confidence.'

Just when everyone had given up on Mark, he once again made the World Cup team. Mark explained that he was delighted to have been selected: 'Scott Notley, Bob Brindell and I played in the first World Cup some thirteen years ago and to play in the fourth one is just great. Both Scott and I decided after the Trans-Tasman this year they we might give it away.'

We both felt we may have been holding back a spot for some of the younger players, and we felt it was the right time.

But we both played well in the National League and Peter McNeven, the Australian Coach, told us we weren't wanted ... but we were needed. And now I suppose we're playing as good as anyone else, so why not!'

Mark tallied 25 World Cup caps between 1988 and 1999 and twelve Test cap between 1986 and 1988, a total of 37 appearances for Australia.



Mark Boland: Quick in mind, hand and feet, the essence of a true champion.

Craig Pierce (deceased)

Inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2003, Craig will be remembered as a character of Australian Touch Football and will be held close to the heart of many in the years to come.

The Australian Touch Community lost a special person on Saturday 19 October 2003, saddened by the news that former Australian representative Craig Pierce, who passed away at the age of 33 after a long battle with illness.

The ATA offered its deep condolences to Craig's wife, Jodie and their three children, Sam, Lachlan and Georgia..

The funeral service was held on Thursday 23 October at St Anthony's Church, Toowoomba.

Written by Karley Banks, a close family friend, what follows is an edited account of the memorial service and a testimony to Craig's life and his achievements in Touch:

St Anthony's Church, Toowoomba was full to overflowing yesterday as family and friends gathered to afford a right and proper send-off to Craig Pierce, one of the true champions of Touch.

The heartfelt outpouring of emotion for the little zip-zip man in the number 7 spoke volumes for the high esteem in which Piercey is held.

In any walk of life, to be universally liked and respected is a tough task, but Craig always did it easily.

It was testimony to his standing in hearts and minds that mourners gathered in Toowoomba from all parts of the country to attend what was essentially, a celebration of an exceptional life.

The funeral service was beautifully done, with all of Piercey's favourite songs included. Family and friends then gave moving tributes and shared cherished memories of Craig's life, and amongst the many tears, there were a lot of laughs, as the crowd listened intently and reflected on their own special times spent with the little maestro.



Photographed here in 1998, Craig Pierce receives a cheque from donations from Touchies for cancer research. Also pictured are Mark Boland, the NSW Captain and Scott Notley, Mark's counterpart from Queensland. By 2003 Craig was inducted in the Australian Touch Association Hall of Fame, and in that same year lost his unyielding fight against cancer.

A video tribute featuring some of Piercey's greatest moments in Touch and Rugby League reminded all present of the pure genius that existed inside of him.

Watching reel after reel of Piercey magic brought wide grins to tear stained faces, and after one typically audacious 'length of the field ... beat the whole team on your own' efforts, the big crowd inside the church could not contain itself and clapped and cheered the little bloke over the try line

The courage and dignity Craig displayed throughout this traumatic time was typical of the man. His will to prevail, his determination to fight, his indomitable spirit, his love of life and his passion for the family and friends he loved was always clearly on show- even through the most difficult and heart wrenching times in his life. His strength and depth of character humbles, but inspires at the same time.

Jodie blessed Craig's coffin with Holy water, bidding him a safe journey to the big Footy field in the sky, where I'm sure he'll be rustling up a game of 'two on one' before too long, just like the old days in the Pierce's backyard with Scoot and Rowie. To the strains of Summer of 69 (I can still see him as a 16 year-old playing air guitar and singing that song) some of his best mates, many of whom had had the pleasure of being carried across the line in games and in life by the little fella, had their chance to repay the favour and carried him out of the church towards his new destination.

After gathering at Craig's graveside at the Garden of Remembrance, and saying final farewells, most people adjourned to the nearby Valleys Rugby League Club, where Piercey had spent many hours playing and training for the Roosters as a kid. Everywhere you looked were people who had been touched by him in some way.

Family and friends, his work colleagues at the University of Southern Queensland, his many mates from Rugby League, his friends from school and the local community, and of course, the Touch fraternity who came in droves to honour this amazing player and friend.

Craig was a one club man in all that he did, and it brought back great memories and touched his family to see many of the original players and

supporters from his beloved Drayton Sharks Touch Club, South African Running Ducks, and Toowoomba Touch teams present.

Mates from South West Qld Razorbacks and Barbarians teams, Queensland, New South Wales, and Australian team mates also made great efforts to be present and the efforts made by all these people was not lost on the Pierce/Luck family, who were uplifted by the response to Craig's passing. Officials from the ATA, QTA, Razorbacks, SWQ, Barbarians, TTA and their respective clubs, and representatives from touch clubs and teams across the country attended to pay their respects.

Coaches, Referees, selectors and spectators from the game came along to thank the little guy for making this sport, and our lives so much richer. Reminiscing, sharing stories about his legendary skills, abilities, pranks, jokes, his courage, his loyalty, his friendship.

Towards the end of the evening, the kids who were present did what kids do, and led by Craig's sons Sam and Lachie, started playing Touch. A little while later the adults joined the fun. Off came the ties and the high heels. Seeing Sam do the aeroplane and high-five spectators after scoring a great solo try, brought back more than a few memories of the young Craig.

I stood there laughing and crying - tears streaming down my face, thinking how fantastic is this? In my mind's eye I could see Piercey out there carving up, taking on anyone who wanted a game, for hours on end, like the old days in the Pierce backyard.

The Zip-zip man from his vantage point in heaven must have sent down the word to Scoot, as Scooter put an ankle tap on a try-bound Amanda Bliss which sent Bliss sprawling along the ground.

That is perhaps the greatest gift Piercey has given us, his love and passion for a good time no matter what the circumstance, he always found value in everything. Always enjoyed himself, and helped you to enjoy the moment.

Craig Pierce: a champion with exceptional qualities on the field, but where it really mattered most, in the game of life.

Rest in Peace our dear friend.

Legends: Officials, Coaches, Referees and Teams

Peter McNeven

Peter McNeven had been involved in Touch for over 25 years now and was recognised as one of the country's foremost authorities on the game. By 1996, he had coached the Australian Men's Open team for seven years and at the time there seemed to be no end to his rein as Australia's premier coach.

Peter had taken South West Queensland, Queensland and the Australian Men's Open Team to numerous victories over the years. He had won regional, origin, national and international world cup titles spanning a decade and was unsurpassed as Australia's super coach.

Touch at the highest level is a difficult game to coach. Unlike many of the physical codes, Touch players do not have the luxury of simply out muscling their opposition. It is an intricate game, relying more on skill, finesse and strategy. 'If anyone doesn't think this game is demanding they're kidding themselves,' confessed QTAs Alan Satchell. 'Touch has developed into a fast,



A relaxed Peter McNeven.

complex game that requires very clever coaching and I think Macca sets the standard in Australia.'

McNeven recalled that coaching in the early days was not quite as formalised as it is today. 'Coaches in the true sense of the word really didn't exist. It's nothing like today. Nobody took the game too seriously and the only really important job the coach had was to buy the beers. When I look back then I realise just how far the game has come today. When I was playing you had to be over 23 to play in a competition. Look at it now, you can't be young enough it seems.'

Regional success eventually led to an appointment with the Queensland Men's Open Team in 1988, a position he held onto for six years up until 1993. Throughout his rein as Queensland coach he had many fierce battles with rivals, New South Wales and saw his state close the gap. 'The New South Wales clashes were always a highlight for me. When I started New South Wales was the big power, and I'd like to think we've since arrested that situation. I was over the moon when we beat them in 1988 and then again in 1990.'

His greatest honour came in 1989 when he was made coach of the Australian Men's Open National Team, the highest post in the land. He has since won two World Cups, first in 1991 and then again in 1995, and by 1996 he held a virtual mortgage on the country's top coaching position.

One of the real strengths of Touch is its strong technical base. Like the referees, coaches are also evaluated through a grading system. Recent changes required coaches to reach certain qualifications to be eligible for higher coaching positions.

McNeven looked to the 1995 Men's Open World Cup final as his most satisfying result. 'Even though we were up against an exceptionally talented New Zealand team and down 1-nil at half time, I was still confident we could win. To come back from 1-nil down and win 5-1 was just unreal, and something I will never forget; even now it's hard to believe we won so easily.'

Apart from the Origin Series, McNeven saw the development of the women's game as the most remarkable thing he had seen in a long career.

Peter Bell

A cousin to the great Terry Jacks, Peter Bell has the pedigree and professionalism to excel in any sport, but after a successful career in cricket he has been passionate in Touch. In 2000 he was awarded the Commonwealth Sport Australia medal for services to the sport of Touch.

Peter has made an enormous contribution to the sport. His curriculum vitae includes; Coaching Level 3; Coaching Course Presenter Level 4; Referee Level 1 and Selector Level 2

A school Health and Physical Education teacher, Peter is the epitome of the new breed of Touch coaches. He holds a Graduate Diploma in Elite Sports Coaching, only one of two Touch coaches to possess this qualification.

Peter was first introduced to Touch by his cousin, Terry Jacks. With a country teaching appointment, in 1983, he became more involved with the sport in Central Queensland, representing that region's Mens Open team in 1983 and 1984. After completing a Level One



Peter Bell makes a point with Women's Open player, Sharyn Martin, at the 2003 World Cup in Kumagaya,

Coaching certificate in 1984 he became a Touch coach.

After Peters' knee reconstruction and his representative Touch career behind him, Peter got serious about coaching, but at the same time continuing to administer the sport in Queensland secondary schools. In 1988 he was on the committee to establish the Australian Secondary Schools Touch Association, and was elected the first National Secretary.

He held this position for six years, and was nominated as a Life Member of this body in 1997. A highlight of his time in this position was to organize in 1991 the Inaugural Test series between Australian and New Zealand secondary schools.

Peter coached the Australian Girl's team in an undefeated tour and Test series. On that tour were two future Australian captains: Sharyn Williams and Neil Ward. His next major coaching appointment was the Queensland Women's Open team in 1992 and then again in 1993.

The team was narrowly beaten in 1992, but turned the tables for an historic win over the Blues in 1993. He was appointed the National Women's Open Coach at the end of 1994 and participated in three World Cups and four Trans-Tasman Series over 10 years of coaching the National team, participating in 48 Internationals, for the one loss.

What were the highlights of his coaching career? This came in 2002: the second test of the Trans-Tasman Series, the best ever game performance by any of his teams. Their 9-2 thrashing of the Kiwis in Coffs Harbour was the best display of attacking Women's touch he had witnessed.

But maybe it was in 2003: watching the birth of his first baby boy, Kaelan Jack, two weeks before the World Cup in Japan.

The best player he ever coached? He cannot split Amanda Judd and Sharyn Williams. As competitors they cannot be matched. Their skill levels rival the men, and their big-match temperaments won many a big game. Their defence was also good, unlike many other great attacking players. They were great team players and certainly knew how to celebrate their hard-earned wins.

Rick Borg

Barrie Keenahan, Director of Referees, had been fortunate enough to have been around long enough to see three or four referees become number one in the sport, but he reckons that none of them can stand up to Rick Borg.

For Barrie, Rick's greatest attribute is his fitness, speed and ability to read and anticipate moves. If Barrie were asked who to compare him with in another sport it would be Bill Harrigan, the legendary Rugby League referee.

Barrie goes on to contend that Rick takes a lot of pride in his position at the top, and he doubts whether another referee will ever again achieve what Rick Borg has done.

Rick has been number one Touch referee in Australia now for over ten years, and a similar amount of time as the number one international referee. His reputation has never been under question. Barrie argues that on or off the field, he is the perfect example of what all young referees should try to achieve.



Rick Borg: the master whistle blower.

Barrie would never ask another referee to try to do what Rick does in regards to his position close to the ball. They just could not achieve it.

If Barrie were asked if Rick had a weakness, he would say that there are a very few referees that have one strength just slightly above Ricks. For Barrie, that area is his verbal contribution during a match. However, Rick now has that area well and truly covered.

It is not as though he was not good in that area, it was just that some referees did that a little bit better than Rick did. But Barrie goes on to observe that other referees could not get anywhere near him in positional play and reading a game.

‘As a team leader he is very hard to beat. His input into the development of young referees is excellent. The examples he sets is himself, and the proof of that is in what he does.’

‘He accepts his position as the number one referee in Australia and internationally in a quiet, respectful way. I have never ever heard Rick brag about anything.’

For Barrie, Rick is probably the best ambassador we have in our aspect of the sport. With a gleeful smile, Barrie admits that he had some influence in Rick's development. ‘And that is something that I'm proud of.’

Barrie points out that when Rick got to the top he did not rest on his laurels. ‘He asked for feedback, and worked hard on his strengths to make them better. From that position, he slowly eliminated his few remaining weaknesses.’

‘Even when he is relaxed and in the party mode nobody can point a finger at him. He takes a pride in himself and is a proud man. And, of course, that is the foundation for his success with the whistle.’

Barrie doubts that anybody will ever achieve what Rick has achieved as a touch referee. Barrie has been his Director from the start of his career. ‘He is the ultimate referee, and one we will miss when he finally decides to retire.’ ‘It's people like Rick Borg that makes my work with Touch so rewarding,’ Barrie smiles with deep satisfaction.

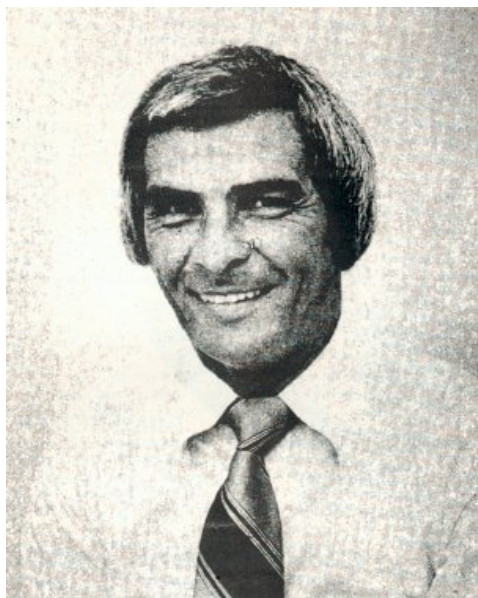
Personalities in Their Own Right

Ken Irvine (deceased)

Before we begin to document Ken's contribution to Touch, we need to first remind ourselves of the general sporting career of this memorable sportsman, and for this we need to turn to Whiticker and Hudson's Encyclopedia of Rugby League Players.

Ken Irvine played 180 games with North Sydney Rugby League from 1958 to 1970, scoring 171 tries, and kicking 69 goals and one field goal, amassing an amazing 633 points. He moved to Manly Warringah for the 1971-73 seasons, playing 58 games with the maroon and whites, scoring 41 tries, kicking 11 goals, and amassing a further 145 points.

Ken Irvine's career records and achievements place him at the top of Australia's list of champion Rugby League wingers. He was a brilliant runner; a sprint champion with a gift for finishing off a try.



The late and great, Ken Irvine, President of the Manly-Warringah Touch Football Association, during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In a career spanning 16 seasons he scored more tries than any other player in the history of the code: 212 in 236 games for Norths and Manly. In 31 Tests, including three Kangaroo tours (1959, 1963 and 1967), he scored 121 points (33 tries and 11 goals). In 23 matches for NSW, he headed the try-scoring tally with 28.

A student of Mosman Marist Brothers, the young Irvine had very little League experience, preferring athletics and baseball. He was a member of the NSW Colts side, along with Reg Gasnier. Moreover, in athletics and could have pressed for selection for the 1960 Olympics but he chose to pursue a career in League.

In early 1968, North's chief Harry McKinnon signed Irvine after spotting the 17-year-old in a trial. In 1969, he was the season's leading try-scorer with 19 tries and playing for NSW, was chosen to tour with the Kangaroos, making his Test debut against France.

Not only was he a prolific try-scorer, Irvine was also a fine goal-kicker. In the Third Test against Great Britain in 1962, Australia was facing a series whitewash until Irvine converted a late try (with guidance from referee Darcy Lawler who told him to re-align the kick) for an 18-17 win.

In the early 1960s, he held the world professional 100 yards record (9.3 seconds) and on one celebrated occasion he even took on a racehorse, 'Gili' in a match race. The horse won.

Irvine scored two tries in Australia's 50-12 Second Test win at Swinton to take the Ashes but was not to fare as well on his next tour in 1967. He broke his leg in France and despite missing most of the 1968 season, returned to be the season's leading try-scorer in 1969, with 17 tries.

It was while he was at Manly that he became involved in the burgeoning new sport of Touch Football. He was a tireless advocate for the new sport, as well as being a highly efficient administrator, player and ambassador for a sport.

Cary Thompson, who was with the Manly Warringah Touch Football club at the time fondly remembers him as being an inspiration for all. Sadly, Ken lost a private battle against leukemia in 1991, at the age of 50, and Touch lost one of its great administrators and players.

Phil Hawthorn (deceased)

A dual internationalist, Phil Hawthorn was one of the greats of Australian Rugby Union and Rugby League, and during his later life his commitment to Touch did much to enhance the profile of the sport.

Phil Hawthorn was born in Newcastle on 24 October 1943. He was the son of Frank 'Hank' Hawthorne, a former New South Wales representative Rugby League player, and Doris Hawthorne.

Educated at Hamilton South Primary from which he represented Newcastle in Rugby League and cricket, he went on to Newcastle Boys' High School, winning the coveted Rugby League trophy, the University Shield, as full back in 1959 and as five-eighth in 1960.

On Frank's suggestion, after completing high school, Phil joined the Wanderers Rugby Union Club in 1961. After two reserve grade games he was promoted to first grade and just weeks later he played for Newcastle against the touring Fijians.

In 1962 Phil went from playing for NSW Country, and in the same year went on to



As he will always be remembered: Phil Hawthorne, as champion Rugby Union five-eighth, here in a 1963 test against South Africa.

selected in the Australian Rugby Union team to tour New Zealand, and all this while still at the age of 18 years. It was not hard to predict a great future for such a talented sportsman. As coach and commentator, Alan Jones had remarked that he was the type of player who could do something with his hands and something with his legs at the same time, and such a player is very rare.

Phil's reputation grew; from 1963 to 1967 he was selected in 22 consecutive Rugby Union Tests and on only one occasion was he forced to miss a Test due to injury.

In 1969 Phil accepted an offer to play Rugby League for St George and he remained with that club until the end of the 1971 season. During those years he not only captained the club side but he also went on to captain Australia in the 1970 Tests against Great Britain.

In 1972 he played a season with Eastern Suburbs and in that year Easts were defeated by Manly in the grand final.

In 1973 Phil moved to Coffs Harbour to Captain Coach the local rugby league club and after two successful seasons he retired from serious sport. Phil then turned his talents to Touch Football, becoming a prominent Touch administrator and a member of the National Technical Panel of the Australian Touch Association.

He went on to represent NSW at the National Championships in Adelaide in 1986 in the Mens 35's and receiving advice from great aged athletes in the Mens 40's like Brian "Chicka" Moore (Ex-Newtown) and Mal McMartin (Ex-Cronulla).

He lived and worked in Coffs Harbour until mid-1991 when he accepted a position with a local Real Estate Agent to return to Newcastle. While back in Newcastle, Phil took up the position of Club Coach with his beloved Wanderers Rugby Club and once again he was in his element of being able to pass on his sporting skills to others.

For the last three years of his life Phil fought leukemia with the same grit and courage he showed on the football field. He has been an inspiration to many, not the least to Sue Burey, his constant companion and supporter and to his children Melissa, Mark, Adam and Scott. Phil is sadly missed by all who knew him.

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