

Reds not settled on key backline berths

Chris Garry
RUGBY UNION

QUEENSLAND Reds coach Ewen McKenzie says several positions in his team are still up for grabs despite naming a near full-strength side for the club's final trial.

The Reds face the Western Force tomorrow night in Perth, only nine days out from their first Super Rugby match of the 2012 season.

The starting XV includes Wallabies James Horwill, Will Genia, Digby Ioane, Ben Tapuai, Radike Samo and Anthony Faingaa.

New Zealand import Mike Harris starts in Quade Cooper's No.10 jersey while Luke Morahan starts in the coveted fullback spot.

But McKenzie said Harris and Morahan's run-on gigs did not mean they were pencilled in for the Reds' round 1 match against NSW Waratahs.

"We have Wallabies players on the bench which shows how much competition there is for spots here," McKenzie said.

"In Luke's case, there's Jono Lance and Ben Lucas on the interchange, who both played fullback for us last year and are still in contention for that spot.

"Luke has a good opportunity in this game though."

Faingaa's return from injury is a major boost for the Reds because it was feared he may miss round 1 through a lack of match practice.

But Rod Davies' minor hamstring injury has cost him a spot and it's a blow to his chances for the opening game.

"We're not long away from playing New South Wales, so it's pleasing to see Ant make an earlier-than-expected return from injury which will give him some solid match practice before round one," McKenzie said yesterday.

The Reds will field a young backrow with Jake Schatz at No.8 combining with Eddie Quirk and Liam Gill at blind-side and onside flanker respectively. On the Reds bench are two exciting teenage pros-



MODIFIED GAME: Queensland players Saia Faingaa, James Horwill, Digby Ioane, Will Genia and some young Reds fans help launch the Rookies 2 Reds training scheme at Ballymore.

Picture: Adam Smith



pects in halfback Nick Frisby and winger Chris Sautia.

Frisby made a sublime break that led to Sautia's maiden Reds try in the team's win over ACT Brumbies in Cairns last Saturday night.

McKenzie has again given

A BOLD Queensland Rugby Union is taking the fight to AFL's Auskick program, launching its own modified game to win the hearts and minds of generation next.

The QRU hopes its Rookies 2 Reds program will "future proof" their game against a cashed-up AFL which spent millions ensuring Auskick was an institution on school sporting ovals.

Rookies 2 Reds will be launched in primary schools and rugby clubs across the state next week and will directly target the same five to 10 age demographic that has

proved so fruitful for the AFL.

Like Auskick, kids receive a goodies pack that will feature a water bottle, backpack and Reds height chart.

David Hanham, QRU general manager of community rugby, said the program was a critical piece of the code's long-term fight for support.

"Professional sport is a very competitive market place in Queensland and the research shows if you can capture a person's allegiance from an early age they are far more likely to become lifelong supporters," Hanham said.

Chris Garry

Fast Lane

CRICKET

Finn-ished off

PACEMAN Steven Finn took a career-best 4-34 and Alastair Cook hit his highest score to help England to a 130-run win over Pakistan in the first day-night international in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Finn, reduced to serving the drinks during England's 3-0 defeat in the Test series, destroyed Pakistan's batting with four early wickets off 29 balls to dismiss them for 130 in 35 overs after Cook's 137 helped his team to 7-260.

RUGBY UNION

McCaw running

ALL Blacks captain Richie McCaw has started running again but doesn't expect to play for Canterbury until at least round 5 of this year's Super Rugby competition. McCaw has spent the summer recovering from surgery on the right foot which gave him pain as he led the All Blacks to the Rugby World Cup.

BASEBALL

Ace for Giants

MELBOURNE Aces pitcher Travis Blackley has signed a contract with Major League Baseball club San Francisco Giants. The left-hander, who missed out on the Australian Baseball League title after the Aces lost 2-1 in the finals series against Perth, had been hoping to forge a career in the US.

FOOTBALL

Henry farewell

THIERRY Henry will be looking to give the club he loves a farewell gift as he makes his final appearance for Arsenal against AC Milan in the Champions League tomorrow. Henry's second spell at the Gunners is set to come to an end tomorrow when he will return to the New York Red Bulls in Major League Soccer.

GOLF

Royal reward

ROYAL Melbourne has reclaimed its place atop the list of Australia's best golf courses. The club's West Course topped *Australian Golf Digest's* biennial list of the country's top 100 courses for the first time.

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