

Great balls of fire fun

By ADAM MITCHERSON

ANY mention of Quidditch and people instantly think of Harry Potter, but universities around the world have transformed this high-flying game into a very grounded contact sport.

The 2015 Quidditch World Cup was recently held in South Carolina, USA, where 80 teams of highly competitive players ran around a pitch that bore striking similarity to a standard soccer pitch.

To play the game adapted for real life, teams hold a broom between their legs and attack the standing hoops behind the defence with a volleyball. Dodgeballs are used as bludgers and the golden snitch takes the form of a sprinting player wearing an Oztag belt.

Closer to home, the game is played in most established larger Australian universities, including the University of Newcastle Quidditch Club, who operate the Newcastle Fireballs representative team.

The squad of 21 are a mixture of students and locals who play and train to develop fitness and strength for competition in national and state tournaments such as the Midwinter Cup. This year's gathering in July was both hosted and won by the University of Newcastle team.

Currently there are nine teams in the state and the battle for top spot is hotly contested in monthly matches against squads like 'Snaps On A Plane' representing UNSW.

Spokesperson for the Fireballs, James Hosford points out "the end goal for all teams is to compete seriously and try and win the QUAFL National Championships



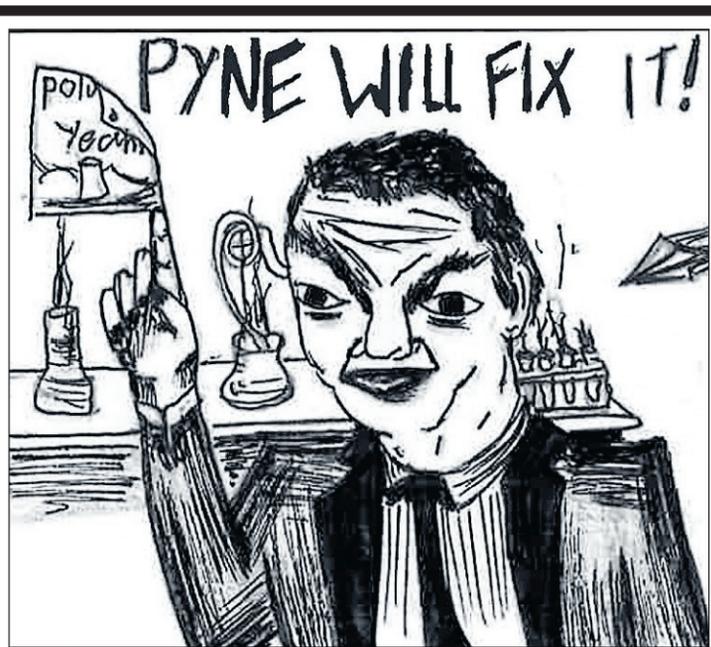
Quidditch in action. Picture: University of Newcastle Quidditch Club

every December. We have just booked our flights to go down to Melbourne, where they're being held this year. There will probably be around 15 or 16 teams playing at a really high and serious level trying to be crowned National Champions".

Thoughts of wands, witches and flights of fancy are a blessing and a curse for current members of the

Australian Quidditch Association. Mr Hosford points out that the Harry Potter connection helps with recruitment and there is easy recognition in the community.

"People still have a perception of us being a novelty sport. But that definitely changes as soon as anyone sees or plays the sport and understands its level of seriousness and physicality."



Cartoon:

Forcing maths and science on pupils

EDITORIAL

By NATHAN ELENA

IT is easier for me, and I'm sure most people, to focus on and apply 100 per cent effort into my work if I am choosing to do it, rather than being forced.

The Federal Education and Training Minister Christopher Pyne is lobbying Parliament for mathematics and science electives to be made compulsory for year 11 and 12 students. Why? Because a large majority of students are dropping maths and science like hot potatoes and the government estimates that up to 75 per cent of the areas of fastest growing jobs will require science, technology, engineering or maths - STEM skills.

For Australia to remain highly competitive in the areas of science and technology, advancement is necessary in a rapidly growing technological age. Change and development is enormous in East Asian nations - our competitors in the international markets.

In his latest bright idea for educational reform, Mr Pyne feels that making maths and science compulsory will ensure all stu-

dents are completing their HSC with foundation mathematics and science skills and knowledge. Voila! Students are cured of their preference for the arts and humanities and get back to the serious business of fixing our economy ... someone, anyone?

Australian Association of Maths Teachers chief executive, Will Morony says that making maths and science compulsory will make year 11 and 12 teachers have to teach students who don't want to be there. Essentially specialist mathematics and science teachers will have to engage and cater for the least teachable student; entering adulthood and angry at the system that makes them endure every lesson.

As a year 10 student, I am against being forced to do subjects if I do not have to do them in my further study. Instead of forcing students, make subjects more appealing. Encourage them to want to do them because it's interesting.

When students enjoy maths and science subjects, the same way they enjoy the ever-growing vocational education and training in schools subjects such as trade skills, hospitality and child care which are delivered in a very practical hands on and engaging manner; perhaps we will see maths and science regain their appeal.

Alternative education celebrates 21 years

By GARY BEALE

THIS year marks the 21st anniversary of Steiner education on the Central Coast, yet many locals are unaware of the school and its heritage.

Often mistaken for special education, Steiner or Waldorf schools are focused on the holistic development of the child as the foundation for learning. First established in 1919 by Rudolf Steiner, a prolific Austrian lecturer and philosopher, schools have expanded

from Germany to 60 different countries and 1000 schools worldwide.

CCRSS had humble beginnings in a mud brick cottage with eight students. Today there are 264 students across early kindergarten to grade 10 and a growing alumni pursuing careers in the arts, humanities and sciences, and in a variety of vocations.

Stage 5 students are producing a commemorative book to showcase the 21 years of history, events and festivals that bring the community together.



At the Rudolf Steiner school. Picture: Gary Beale

Miguel, a student of the school for 11 years, said "The school has grown a lot, from an old farmhouse

room to modern facilities. This school has taught me lots of skills that other schools may not have."

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