



# MIGHTY MAGPIES

2014

AW1356996



## Mighty ambitions

□ All new Magpies: After a strong pre-season the Magpies are set to swoop in on the competition, playing for the season premiership and the memory of a fallen mate.

AFTER a long pre-season, the official start to the 2014 Group 19 rugby league season is here and the Glen Innes Magpies are preparing for an all-out assault on the competition.

Group 19 new comers the Moree Boars travel to Mead Park on Saturday to take on the Magpies and kick off the new season.

Saturday's matches will have extra special meaning for all Magpies players, coaches and supporters.

The day will be dedicated to long-time club stalwart and past president Gordon Creighton, who was tragically killed along with his son Michael in a plane crash in Laos late last year.

Gordon or "Gordy" as he was affectionately known, was a rock for the Magpies in times of hardship and he holds a special place in the heart

of all associated with the Magpies for the past three decades.

The club has purchased a new scoreboard, worth over \$12,000, which will be unveiled before the kick-off of first grade on Saturday.

The scoreboard will be named the Gordon Creighton Scoreboard, in honour of a man who contributed so much to the club.

After missing the grand final for the first time in three seasons in 2013, the Magpies first grade side will be hungry to hit back with authority in 2014.

Dale Keegan has stepped down from the helm after four seasons, which yielded three grand final appearances and two premierships, and Sam Key will take over as player-coach.

A Magpies junior, Key has a

wealth of experience under his belt.

He moved to Manly to play for the Sea Eagles following high school and played there for a number of years in the lower grades, before relocating to France to play six seasons for the Limoux Grizzlies in the top tier French Rugby League competition.

Retaining the crux of the side that has seen such success in the past four years, the Magpies' A Graders have finished the squad with a handful of new players boasting fresh talent to open the season.

Former Magpie junior Nick Ehsman has returned to suit up for the Magpies after four seasons in Sydney playing for the Sydney Roosters, Newtown Jets and Wentworthville Magpies.

Mone Loketi also returns after one

season away.

Loketi was part of the 2012 Magpie side who took out the premiership.

Key said those two signings were huge for the club.

"Ehsy is a big signing for us," He said.

"He is going to contribute so much with his class, impact in defence and silky feet.

"Big Mone coming back is great too.

"He's a big presence on the field and people hate tackling him."

The two new faces to the squad will be joined in the forward pack by Jeff Moate, Jamie "Ducky" Watts, Mark Ierome and Sam Schiffmann.

"The retention of Ducky is massive for us," Key said.

"He's been the best of the best

players and finishers in the comp for a number of years.

"The return of Kiwi (Ierome) will also be daunting for teams.

"It's going to be a monster pack."

Key has also handed the captaincy to halfback Nick Say, giving a little more responsibility to one of the most capped Magpies in the side.

"He's a leader and people follow him," Key said of Say.

"Not to mention a quality half back."

The Magpie coach is also urging the community to get behind the club on Saturday and get over to Mead Park to form a massive crowd.

"We need to get people over there to pay one final tribute to Gordy."

The league-tag ladies kick off proceedings at 10.45am.

Ben Lonergan

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**□ New talent:** Former Glen Innes High School gifted and talented rugby league (GATRL) player Brock Simpkins has moved into the Magpies ranks this year, along with a number of fellow players for an all new line-up.

## Junior talent moves to new season

COMING up against an all new Moree side in the first round, the Magpies' Under 18s coach Mark Gallagher said the Boars pose a unique tactical challenge after their long absence from Group 19.

Coming out of Group 4 to contest the Group 19 title, Gallagher said securing the win is a matter of his team buckling down and charging through.

"If you keep banging at a door, eventually you'll break

through," He said.

Coming out of a close defeat in the 2013 grand final, Gallagher said the side is hungry for a win to kick off another successful season.

Bringing a number of fresh players up from the minor league grades, the under 18s coach said he is confident with the level of talent in local football, pinning the team's success to their commitment to training.

"The under 16s coming up

through the ranks, a lot of them never lost a game last year," Gallagher said.

Adding three players from Guyra, the all new line-up will take the field alongside experienced and promising young players, with rising talent Chris Pedlow committing a regular engagement to the side after playing a number of games in the previous season.

Young local player Jayden Ehsman will complete the under

18s line-up along with Dragons scholarship front rower Brayden Gallagher and lock Mitch Cook, both picked as promising young players.

As the team's first home game draws near, Gallagher said he is confident with the talent running in the 2014 line-up, calling for community support in the lead up to game day on Saturday, April 5.

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## Home ground

Reserves line: Nick Ehsman, Jack Price and Ben Lonergan hit the training field ahead of this Saturday's first round match against the Moree Boars.

VETERAN coach Barry Grob has seen all facets of local football and as one of the few former players to have faced off against the Moree Boars before over a decade's absence from Group 19, said the Magpies' first home game will prove a tough challenge.

Coming into the season as underdogs following close losses in last year's season, locking the Reserves out of the finals, Grob said that the success of the team depends on tightening the line-up and pushing for a fast tactical game.

"Flat football is shocking to watch," He said,

calling for local players to sign up for a tight hard-hitting team.

As this year's season shapes up to follow a number of previous seasons, Grob said the Reserve side will be promising hard competition in the new season, while calling for players to fill open positions on the field.

Calling for support, Grob said the first home game is proving promising, with local league players encouraged to come along and support their team.

"Having the first game at home will help a long way," He said.

Joining fellow coaches Sam Key and Mark Gallagher, Grob said that the Magpies home ground is boasting all new facilities with the opening of the Magpies' gym and Gordon Creighton Memorial scoreboard.

"With the new scoreboard opening, we'll hopefully attract a good number of people," Grob said.

With aspirations to field a fast, hard-hitting reserve side on April 5, Grob will be bringing over 40 years of experience to the side, with high hopes for local talent on game-day.



## New direction from tag team coach

Girl power: Under new coach Megan Fuller, the 2014 Magpies league tag squad have developed a new game strategy, focusing on existing strengths for a fast tactical game, with game-controlling ball players in all positions.

IN her first year as coach, Megan Fuller said she is keen to bring a more permanent structure to the ladies league tag.

In the new season, the

league tag coach said that a set structure will play to the advantage of the ladies' almost entirely new line-up.

"We have a lot of new

girls this season," Fuller said.

"We'll be bringing in more structure. Each player will know their position on the field."

With talented local players returning and coming up through the ranks, the league tag squad has secured a strong line-up of ball

players for the new season, with players controlling the game across the field.

After playing for five years with Glen Innes, Fuller said the local side has developed a strong reputation in Group 19, boasting a tactical line-up reliant on speed and strategic offensive raids to dominate the field.

In the new season, the ladies' coach said the side would benefit from the fresh ranks of experienced and talented players, capable of controlling the game from all positions and broadening the possibility of varying offensive strategies.

Following inclement weather, Fuller said the side has had a slow start to the season, but said that the league tag Magpies will be making a strong entrance on April 5 and encouraged local league fans to come along and support their team from 10.45am on Saturday.

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Local talent: Sam Schiffmann, Nick Say, player/coach Sam Key and Nick Ehsman join big names in local football to round out the 2014 A Grade line-up.

## Veteran player turns coach in all new line-up

IN his second appointment as player/coach since 2009, A Grade five-eight Sam Key said that he is aiming to bring a wider club engagement as the Magpies set to face the Moree Boars on April 5.

With aspirations to establish a tighter club unity between all grades and players, Key said 2014 is shaping up as the

year of the Magpie with new upgrades to the Mead Park complex, the opening of the club's new gym and the dedicated Gordon Creighton Memorial Scoreboard.

"We're looking for more of a sense of team and club unity," Key said.

Facing off against an all new side, Key said the Boars' long absence from Group 19 will be a

tough challenge as the Magpies attempt a game-day strategy against a virtually unknown line-up.

"It will be the same as any other game," Key said, pushing his side to come out strong for a consistent and tactical game.

With a strong starting 13 and big forwards pack, Key said he is confident with his line-up

but numbers have been a challenge going into this year's season.

As the first round draws near, the Magpies coach said that the club is in a strong position going into the 2014 season, but is encouraging local players to sign up.

As former local Nick Ehsman returns from premier league engagements in Sydney to con-

test the season, Key said the level of talent on the field will be hard to beat as Ehsman is joined by local player Jamie "Ducky" Watts and big forwards Mone Loketi and Mark Jerome.

In an all new season Key said that a commitment to team and club will be key to the Magpies success in 2014.

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