



Rookie halves to steer the ship

By Andrew Johnston

■ RUGBY LEAGUE

Canberra Raiders Cup, Round 1

■ Who: Queanbeyan Kangaroos v Belconnen Oval
 ■ Where: Northbourne Oval
 ■ When: Saturday, 3pm

HE'S been in the country less than two weeks but 19-year-old Englishman Ben Whitehead will be thrown straight into the deep end when the Queanbeyan Kangaroos take on the Belconnen Scholars this weekend.

Whitehead will start at halfback for the Kangaroos in Saturday's grand final rematch despite having less than a handful of training sessions with his new teammates under his belt.

And the Huddersfield Giants junior will be just one half of a rookie Kangaroos halves pairing with first grade debutant Luke Jones to wear the number six jersey.

It's hardly an ideal situation to start the season for Queanbeyan.

But with captain/coach Aaron Gorrell still on the injured list, Jordan Macey overseas and Clint Wright having moved on at the end of last season, the club's playmaking stocks are all but bare.

Whitehead however, said he had no qualms about taking on the added responsibility in his first

start for the club.

"I think I'll slot in there pretty easily," he said. "I enjoy the organising side of things and directing the boys around the paddock, it seems to come pretty naturally to me."

"So I don't think it'll be much of a problem [on Saturday]. It'll be a challenge but I think I'm up to it."

Whitehead spent last year as part of the Giants under-18s program and is one of two English imports at Freebody Oval this season along with Castleford centre Josh Atkinson.

As well as a rookie halves pairing, the Kangaroos will also boast an all-new three-quarter line this season with Atkinson to team up with fellow off-season recruit, Robbie Byat.

Whitehead and Atkinson join a long list of English players to have honed their skills under Gorrell at the Kangaroos in recent seasons.

And while Whitehead said his immediate focus was simply solidifying his first grade spot, long-term the ballplayer said he would be looking to use his stint at the Kangaroos as a springboard for higher honours.

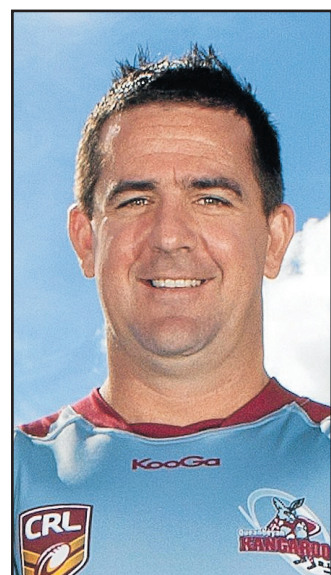
"At the moment I'm just looking to concentrate on playing first grade and see what comes from there," he said.

"I guess I'd like to see how far I can go here or maybe try to pick up something with a Super League squad back home."



19-year-old English import Ben Whitehead will debut at halfback for the Queanbeyan Kangaroos in the side's grand final rematch against Belconnen this Saturday. Photo: Andrew Johnston

Doctor's orders put hold on comeback



Queanbeyan Kangaroos' Aaron Gorrell.

By Andrew Johnston

■ RUGBY LEAGUE

QUEANBEYAN Kangaroos captain/coach Aaron Gorrell has lost his race against time to be fit for this weekend's Canberra Raiders Cup season opener against the Belconnen United Scholars.

Gorrell had been hopeful of starting the season 10 months after suffering a knee injury that brought a premature end to his 2012 campaign.

But doctor's orders are set to deny the 32-year-old a long-awaited return to the field for at least another fortnight.

"I'd been hoping to get back for round one but I

think the surgeon's plan was always closer to round two or three and he's the boss," Gorrell said.

"If I go against him and something happens [to the knee] it comes back on me so I'll just have to wait it out until I get that clearance. It's a long season and no one's winning any comps in round one so there's no point rushing it."

Gorrell suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament and torn lateral and medial cartilage in his left knee after being tackled during the Queanbeyan's round 10 loss to the Scholars last year.

At the time, the former St George Illawarra and Brisbane Broncos

representative questioned whether he would play on before recommitting to the Kangaroos for a further two seasons.

Gorrell admitted the long road back to full fitness had not been an easy one but said the sting of last year's grand final defeat had provided extra incentive to get back on the paddock.

"It's always hard to train by yourself," he said.

"It can be boring and a bit lonely I guess but if you want to get back you've just got to put yourself through it."

"I've said it before, you're a long time retired and the way our season ended last year does make me hungrier to get back out there."

TO THE TOP

SCAFFOLDING

Go the Roos!

For all your scaffolding needs
 Call John on 0406 135 022

CELEBRATE @ THE ROOS CLUB AFTER THE GAME!

DON'T GO HOME AND COOK, ENJOY A MEAL WITH PEPPERS @ THE ROOS

CNR STUART ST & RICHARD AVE QUEANBEYAN Ph: (02) 6297 6222 www.roosclub.com.au



ROOS vs SCHOLARS

First Grade at 3pm Northbourne Oval

Tuesday Raffles
 Badge Draw \$3000
 If not won before going to print

SUNDAY RAFFLES
 DRAWN 6PM

Queanbeyan Kangaroo Rugby League Football Club GO THE MIGHTY ROOS!!

Thursday Raffles & Badge Draw \$4000
 If not won before going to print