



Points on the board

By Andrew Johnston
■ RUGBY LEAGUE

Canberra Raiders Cup, Grand Final

■ Who: Queanbeyan Blues v Queanbeyan Kangaroos
■ Where: Seiffert Oval
■ When: Sunday, 3pm

CENTRE Tyler Stevens isn't quite sure just what has made the Queanbeyan Blues' left-edge defence so devastatingly effective this season.

Winger Craig Wilkinson credits it in part to a few "left-side" dinners and the occasional trip to the ten pin bowling alley.

Both are lavish in their praise for former Canberra Raiders playmaker Marc Herbert and representative backrower Levi Freeman.

But whatever the recipe behind its success, the Blues' strike rate down the left-hand touchline looms as perhaps the side's most potent weapon heading into Sunday's grand final showdown with the Queanbeyan Kangaroos.

At the Canberra Rugby League awards night on

Monday, Stevens was honoured as this season's top try scorer this season after crossing the stripe 20 times.

Between them, Stevens, Wilkinson, Herbert and Freeman have gone in for 47 tries in just 14 games.

With a tally of 208 points meanwhile, Wilkinson took out the award as the competition's top point scorer.

"I'm not really sure why we work so well together, I think the fact that we all bring something different to the table helps," Stevens said.

"Levi's a big man out there who defends really well, Herbie's a great playmaker and me and Wilko have got a bit of speed out wide."

"We spend a bit of time together off the field as well so I think it helps that we all get on pretty well and enjoy playing with each other," Wilkinson adds.

"It does come down to Herbie a lot as well though. He's our strongest player and he gets a lot of good ball out to us on that side so for us it's just about picking the right time to have a go."

Stevens' and Wilkinson's points scoring prowess - the duo scored more than twice as many points as the entire West Belconnen Warriors side during the regular season - is even more impressive given neither was even playing rugby league last year.

Wilkinson is in his first year back on the footy field after a two-year break while Stevens switched codes from rugby union this season.

For Stevens, his first campaign with the Blues has brought a welcome break from the injury concerns that had previously plagued the former Australian Schoolboys rugby star.

For the first time in years, Stevens has played every minute of every game this season, a fact he said had contributed greatly to his try scoring efforts.

"Not having to constantly worry about niggles and injuries has been massive for me," he said.

"The fact I haven't had that playing on my mind and that I can just play footy and enjoy it, it's really sparked my enjoyment to be out there again."



Try scoring centre Tyler Stevens (left) and winger Craig Wilkinson have formed a lethal combination on the Queanbeyan Blues left side this season.

Photo: Andrew Johnston

Kangaroos aim for historic finals 'threepeat'

By Andrew Johnston
■ RUGBY LEAGUE

WIN, lose or draw on Sunday, the Queanbeyan Kangaroos have already rewritten the record books this season.

This weekend will see the Kangaroos contest grand finals in all three senior grades - the first

time the club has ever achieved such a feat since the old Molonglo Shield made way for the Canberra Raiders Cup in 1998. The last club to sweep the senior grades in the same season was the Queanbeyan Blues in 2000.

The Roos will meet traditional rivals the Queanbeyan Blues in both the first grade and reserve

grade deciders while squaring off against Gungahlin for the under-18s division two title.

Combined with the fact the Kangaroos will be lining up in a fourth-straight first grade grand final, this generation of "Roo Dogs" as they're known, has firmly established itself as the greatest in the club's history.

Not bad for a club that, before its breakthrough premiership victory in 2009, had gone 25 long years without tasting grand final success.

But while it's the players who'll invariably occupy the grand final spotlight this weekend, spare a thought for those whose names won't be listed on the team sheet but whose

contributions have been no less significant.

"There's a hell of a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes in order for a club to be as successful as we have been and we've only got a small committee to get things done," Kangaroo Club general manager Leigh Kiely said.

"It's not about attention or personal glory from our

point of view, it's the players who are up on stage. But it's just a good feeling to come from a club that had struggled for many years to now be in the position we're in."

"There are a lot of other clubs who'd like their first-grade side to be playing in a fourth-straight grand final so that's a bit of a feather in our caps."

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