



2013 Rugby Union Major Semi Final

AW1204875



Your 8 page souvenir liftout

Central North Rugby Union Finals Series

Major Semi Finals at Weebolla Oval, Moree

24th August 2013

Gates Open 10am

1st Grade – 3pm Moree v Pirates

2nd Grade – 1.20pm Moree v Narrabri

Under 18's – 11.50am Moree v Pirates

Under 16's – 10.30am Pirates v Inverell



Weebolla Bulls



MOREE RUGBY UNION **WEEBOLLA BULLS**

THE PRESIDENT & COMMITTEE

*Congratulate the 1st grade,
2nd grade and under 18's
in making the Major Semi Finals*



GO THE BULLS!!



2013 Rugby Union Major Semi Final

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Successful season

2013 president Paul Cooke reflects on the year...



ON behalf of the Moree Rugby Club, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Damien Kelly, Peter Copeman, Josh Connell, Kylie Dawson and their sides for a successful season so far.

At the start of the year when all the boys got together for pre-season training little were we aware of what was about to unfold for the club in 2013.

We're very happy with the way things have gone this season and we have a good feeling among the club from the committee through to the players.

Everyone in the club has their own way of doing things and it's a credit to them all in the way they've gelled. A happy club is a successful club.

I could start trotting out the rugby clichés, but I'll try to keep them to a minimum.

I've been associated with the club on and off for about 15 years and it's been a long time since we've had all three grades in the semi-finals. It's something we're extremely proud of.

Kylie has done an outstanding job with the under 18 boys and they seem to be putting it together at the right time of the season.

The signs were there back in April and as the weeks have progressed they've shown their true abilities.

They'll be primed to go on Saturday morning after tuning up for the finals, winning two finals-like matches during the last two rounds which secured them the minor premiership.

The second grade side, under the watchful eye of Josh, have also been thoroughly impressive this year.

They get another chance to repeat the dose of two weeks ago against Narrabri this weekend.

Which brings me to the first grade boys.

If you had have told me at the start of the year they'd have won 17 in a row I'd have taken it, but perhaps not really believed it was possible.

Damien Kelly and Peter Copeman



Paul Cooke

have got the boys playing a good brand of rugby and they'll be right to go come the weekend.

The team have been outstanding this year and I genuinely believe the four-point loss to Narrabri a fortnight ago was a minor hiccup.

This weekend Pirates will ensure we don't get everything our way.

They're finals specialists, but the boys know what they need to do.

A home grand final should ensure the Moree boys don't need any further motivation come kick-off.

If things don't go well we still have another shot at it, but I'm fairly confident without being overconfident in the boys' abilities to get the job done.

Finally, as president of your loyal club, many thanks go out to our loyal members, sponsors and the *Champion* for their support in 2013.

Regardless of what happens on Saturday, the fat lady won't be singing, she won't even be warming up her vocal chords.

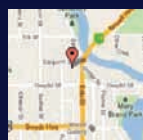
We'll still get another chance in the finals but hopefully it's back at Weebolla Oval in a fortnight's time and I believe it will be.

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2013 Rugby Union Major Semi Final

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Colley ready to lead Bulls to victory

MOREE Bulls captain Ben Colley knows what it takes to win a grand final, something that hasn't happened for the Moree club in several years.

But before they start worrying about possible grand finals, they need to navigate their way around the tricky (and sometimes treacherous) semi final waters being patrolled by Tamworth Pirates. It was 2007 the last time first grade tasted grand final success and this weekend in many ways shapes as a grand final in itself.

It's going to be a tough ask against Central North Rugby Union's version of the Queensland State of Origin team, but Moree have already shown this season they have what it takes to beat Tamworth's finals specialists. A win on Saturday means Moree will host the grand final on September 7.

Experience is important in finals football, how is the Moree side situated compared to Pirates?

We made the final two years ago but 2007 was the last time we won it. Pirates have won almost every one in between since so experience for them will be more than us.

They've played the last four finals series and haven't lost so we'll be up against it.

Is experience perhaps overstated a bit in finals?

If you haven't been a part of it you probably don't have the pressure. We're lucky that we've got a few of the younger blokes in the team because it is so early in their careers and they're coming up to finals they think it is a little bit easy to be a part of it.

The guys who are a bit older like myself, Heath and Mat Wannan feel a bit more pressure because finals are so hard to come by.

Is there added pressure on the side after this year's success?

It's a pretty good side we've got who realise the opportunity we've got and that it doesn't come around very often. It's hap-

pened plenty of times before where a team has finished first throughout the season and gone out the back door straight away.

We'll have to be on our game from the kick-off on Saturday and make sure something like that doesn't happen. Everyone's willing to work hard and we're not the flashiest side, but we do the small things well and it seems to pay off.

It's been a while since a grand final success, is this side capable of ending Pirates' dominance?

It's a great thing for the club to get a bit of silverware back in the clubhouse and it is hard to come by.

There's guys in our team who have played for three or four different clubs in the zone and never been in a final so it's not something to take for granted. We've definitely got a team that's capable of winning it. Whether we do is up to us the next couple of weeks.

What do you expect from the Pirates?

They just raise the bar. They're specialist finals footballers. If they get on top of us early it'll be unstoppable almost. They just get a roll on, so we've just got to come out switched on from the word go. If we let them get a lead on us they're too good a side to let another side back in.

Fair to say despite Moree winning the minor premiership you'll go in as underdogs?

You'd back them (Pirates) on their form. You look at the Queensland State of Origin

side - they always seem to think they're going in as underdogs.

Pirates are going in looking for five in a row this year so to think that we think we're not underdogs would be a bit immature.

They've got blokes who have played in all four grand finals so they know what it's all about.

What are their strengths?

They're methodical in what they do. They

just get the ball downfield.

They don't play in their danger zone and they just don't make mistakes.

Their game is to put you on your line and force you to make a mistake through their defence. We'll have to be wary about not getting trapped in our half.

It mightn't be as exciting kicking the ball down field instead of running it but we're trying to win it, not be exciting.



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Finals fever for A-grade

EVERY win brings you closer to a loss, or so the saying goes.

But you wouldn't think a loss in the last round of the regular season would be the best way to go into a major semi final.

But Moree Bulls co-coach Damien Kelly said while it would have been ideal to go through the season undefeated, the manner with which they lost the game against Narrabri a fortnight ago wasn't something

for too much concern.

"There was about half a game of watching someone kick goals.

"We probably do need to work on our cleanout at the breakdown a little bit, but it was

a good hit-out considering we knew we were going to finish first a few weeks ago."

Compounding matters a little was the injuries to come out of the game, but Kelly believes everyone except centre Damien Meppem will be right to go come Saturday.

"I think they'll all be right to play, but Damien might be a little bit touch and go with his ribs."

Moree might have missed the finals last year, but the experience gained from 2010 and 2011 when they made the grand final would be beneficial in the atmosphere associated with finals.

Moree heads into the game against Tamworth Pirates having won both games against each other over the course of the 2013 Central North season.

In June, Meppem landed a penalty goal a few minutes from fulltime to secure a 20-19 victory after the Bulls started the season in style with a 32-28 win in the opening round.

Kelly believes Saturday's clash will be another closely fought encounter with both sides evenly matched across the park.

"I think it'll come down to our defence and we'll need to defend as well as we have all

year. Our undefeated run was built on the back of that.

"We've worked on it and we've spoken about it, and know defence is an attitude thing."

Pirates possess several good ball-runners, a sharp backline and a mobile forward pack so while Moree respect them, they know what they need to do to secure grand final hosting rights on September 7.

"They're a very similar side to ours but maybe a bit more structured because they've been together for a lot longer.

"If we roll up our sleeves in defence like we have all year, our attack will come after that," Kelly said.

Experience is an important factor in any end-of-season match and both teams again cancel each other out.

Kelly was a member of the Moree 'golden years' when they won the competition in successive years and captain Ben Colley and fullback Heath Riggs have been around the Bulls the most in recent times.

The Moree coach said he hoped for a free-flowing contest, despite their most recent matches being punctuated with penalties and stoppages.

"Pirates and us will be going hammer and tong trying to give



Damien Kelly

it to each other in the breakdown and wherever else.

"We're expecting more penalties than normal but hopefully some common sense will come through that has perhaps been lacking in some games.

"It's a bit like when the refs don't know what decision to make, they award penalties."

With a bumper crowd expected to turn out, Moree can rely on their home support to get them over the line.

"The boys enjoy playing in front of big crowds.

"We want a grand final here. "That's our goal now."

Chesterfield Australia would like to congratulate the Bulls & wish them the best of luck for the finals.



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At back; Michael Grant (guidance counsellor), Angus Boileau, Simon Dunlop, Damien Kelly (coach), Mathew Wannan, Simon Hall, Andrew McNamara, Tom Ryan and Sam Bacigalupo with in front; Jack Hughes, Henry Noble, Heath Riggs, Ben Carrigan, Ben Colley, Peter Copeman (coach), John Adams and Joe Henderson.

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2013 Rugby Union Major Semi Final

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Bulls primed to charge again

DESPITE first grade suffering a surprise loss two weeks ago, Moree Bulls' second grade head into this weekend's major semi final against Narrabri full of confidence.

It's a case of déjà vu following the clash between the same two sides just a fortnight ago.

On that occasion the Bulls registered a 23-13 victory, ensuring they finished the season as minor premiers.

"We were a man down for 10 minutes and they scored 10 points, which brought them back into the game, but the pleasing thing about the team is they've hardly leaked a point all year and trophies are won on the back of defence," coach Josh Connell said.

"Narrabri is always a very forward-orientated game and we didn't use our backs as well as we could have. We've got to find a way to shift the ball because that's where the space is."

Despite beating the Blue Boars two weeks ago and again earlier this season, Connell said they weren't taking too much out of both those games.

"We're not taking too much out of beating them twice in the year.



Josh Connell

"It was only a few years ago we came from fourth spot to win the premiership. Finals football is all about taking your chances when they come. You've just got to put yourself in that position."

With so much at stake on Saturday, it's important the Bulls' players don't get too far ahead of themselves but Connell said the possibility of having all three grades playing on grand final day at home was something which excited the players.

"We're happy with our season so far. We're happy with where we sit and we've spent a lot of time making sure guys don't get too far ahead of themselves.

"They know what they've got to

do. They're confident in their ability and more importantly they're confident in the bloke standing beside them.

"You lose sight a little bit of how important a grand final is. It's pretty rare in football that firsts and seconds both get to play at home. First spot in first grade picks it and then everyone else falls around it."

Without dwelling too much on the negatives despite their 10-point win over Narrabri, Connell believes his side needs to be a bit better with their set pieces this weekend.

"We had some real dramas with the scrum. Prior to that game we'd prided ourselves on the set pieces and it fell apart last time. It was still a good win and the main focus is to fix that up which will create the space for everyone else."

With so much at stake on Saturday afternoon, the Bulls' coach said he wanted the officials to be consistent in their rulings, but was also aware of how difficult refereeing can be at times.

"All anyone has ever asked is to get some consistency and that the ref has an understanding of what's going on. Then you hope everyone out on the field adjusts to it."



RIGHT: Jake Williams

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Proud achievements for reserves



AS the Moree Bulls prepare to face Narrabri in this Saturday's reserve grade major semi-final, Mick Grant spoke with the *Champion* about the season.

He discussed if there was any pressure on the reserve grade side following first grade's 17-match undefeated run (despite the fact it came to an end a fortnight ago).

The reserve grade side and its achievements, however, shouldn't be overshadowed after also finishing as minor premiers.

Victory in all three grades this weekend will ensure the town is painted black in a fortnight...

Do you feel a bit of pressure after the success of first grade this year?

We don't see their success as putting pressure on us to perform.

It's probably a bit the other way around - they've had a successful season so everyone's talking about them and they've maybe got a bit of pressure and expectation.

In saying that, expectation is what other people put on you, not how you react personally.

How proud are you of what you've achieved as a team this year?

We've got a healthy club.

All three grades are in the finals so it's a chance for us to share some success around.

It's a big few weeks.

What have the boys learnt during the last month or so?

The last few weeks we've had some injuries, so we haven't been able to field the same side two weeks in a row, but we've still managed to win games



Mick Grant

which is good.

I think it's a sign of a good side when it doesn't matter who plays of a weekend.

We probably gain the benefit of having some first graders playing in our second grade side.

Has the success this year surprised you?

It has a bit.

We played sevens at the start of the year and if you had have asked me in January how we'd go this year there's no way I'd have said we'd be where we are now.

But it's not over yet.

How is the feeling amongst the team at training?

There are a few nerves

amongst the boys, but there's also excitement.

We're hoping for a big crowd to get behind us on Saturday and we've got some experienced boys in the side which will help have a calming influence over the rest of the boys.

A few of them will also help with our patience in the game.

Big weekend this weekend, isn't it?

It's been a few years since we've had a home final so we see this weekend as a chance to make up for a bit of lost time.

Over the last few years we've struggled a little bit, so it's important to make the most of your success when the time comes.

We only lost the one game all year but we still need to be better and I've got no doubt all the boys know that too.

What does the future hold?

We're trying not to look too far ahead of this weekend.

It's been a successful year so far but to have a home grand final with all the three grades playing, it would be something special.

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We wish Moree Rugby all the best in the Major Semi Final this Saturday

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AW1204530



Third row, left to right; Brett Starr, Chris Holland, Ben Hatton and Sam Kelly with in the second row; Luther Williams, Jake Williams, Fraser Brown, Rodney Keam, Nathan Goodworth, Scott Antees and Paul King (coach), and in front; Maciu Latabua, Kyle O'Connor, Adam O'Neile, Michael Grant, Josh Connell (coach), Brendan Williams, Will Hiscock and Phillip Winter.



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Good luck on Saturday!

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Drive to be better

AFTER winning the grand final 12 months ago, Moree's under 18s side hosts Pirates on Saturday knowing what it takes to be successful.

Their season could already be termed a success, following in the footsteps of the older two grades in securing the third minor premiership for the club.

Coach Kylie Dawson said she expected her team to have taken a significant amount out of their final-round encounter with Narrabri leading in to this weekend's major semi-final.

"They learnt a lot in that last game because they had to win it to secure the minor premiership," Dawson said.

"There was plenty on the line, but over the course of the year they've probably learnt more from a loss than a win."

For the last few years, Dawson has been at the helm and despite being a female coach, of which there aren't many throughout the zone, she doesn't see it as anything out of the ordinary.

"I don't find it unusual to be coaching them. They (the players) have known me for a long time and as far as the boys are concerned it's nothing different.

"It did turn a few heads to start with, but I enjoy it and I've found if you relate to them (the players) it works a lot better.

"You just think about what their dads would say to them."

Despite taking out the minor premiership, Dawson said the year had been one where her team haven't been happy with what they've achieved and have continued to strive to be better.

And it's been a difficult year – not in terms of results, but how the results have come to be and Moree have run up some big scores on more than one occasion.

"This year has been a year of learning; they've learnt the art of patience and the art of playing rugby.

"They now know there's more to it than just running around and belting each other, and you don't win a game in the first five minutes.

"You also don't score nearly 100 points every week."

With Moree winning last year's under-18 grand final, did the coach think this year's team felt pressured to repeat history?

"There was a high expectation on them this year because the 18s won it last year. But instead of being pressured, it gave them the drive to be better. They weren't intimidated by it."

Players such as Mark Sayers, Kyle Cormie, Adam Duncan, Craig Norrie, James Readford, Sam Brown and captain David Jenkins have the experience to count on in the dying stages when the game will be on the line with several of them having represented Central North in previous years.

"We've got a few experienced heads in the team. Mark Sayers was out injured for a few weeks this year and when he came back he had a bit of a calming influence on the rest of the boys, and that was good for them."

As is normally the case with Moree-Tamworth sporting rivalries, there will be plenty of feeling on the field when kick-off rolls around on Saturday.

"It'll certainly be one to watch. It'll be a grudge match," Dawson said.



Kylie Dawson

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2013 Rugby Union Major Semi Final

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Under 18s ready to perform

TO borrow a sporting cliché, these matches are what every player plays the game for – finals footy.

On Saturday the Tamworth Pirates will try to put a dent in Moree's hopes of back-to-back under 18 premierships following on from the Bulls' 2012 grand final triumph. But while the loser doesn't quite leave the country, they do forfeit possible grand final hosting rights, depending on results in first grade. Under 18s captain David Jenkins spoke to the *Champion* about his side's year so far.

What has been the best part of the season?

We've got the luxury of having a double chance by finishing as minor premiers, but as captain I try not to think like that. I always go

out to win the game and I'm sure the boys will be doing the same come Saturday.

How have the boys prepared for this weekend? How well are they prepared?

Our last two games in the regular season have steeled us a little bit for finals footy. We had to win both to make sure we won the minor premiership. There's no doubt that has been a positive for the boys. We know what we need to do in important games.

What did you learn over the season that you can do better?

We lost to Narrabri and then we lost to Pirates throughout the season. I didn't play those games but the feeling talking to a few of the boys after the games were that they

felt they switched off a bit.

Without making excuses both those games were around school holiday time so the boys' minds probably weren't quite on the job.

The travel from Tamworth to Moree every second week could be understated a bit. How have the boys managed it?

The travel can be tough at times, but the Moree club have been great to us. They've provided us with a coach for pretty much every home game which helps the boys relax and stretch out without having to worry about the drive.

We have a lot of fun on those trips and the boys can do what they want pretty much.

What's impressed you the most this season?

We've learnt over the year to play well as a

team. The coaching staff have noticed we play a lot better when we're not playing as individuals. We're a close-knit bunch of boys.

What's the key to being successful?

The key to a successful team is to make sure you're all having fun and all the boys enjoy each other's company. If you're enjoying what you're doing, the performances on the field will show that and so far this year I believe they have.

Without giving too much away, where can you beat Pirates?

We've got a strong forward pack and a quick backline but we'll need to make sure we do everything right on the weekend to give ourselves the best chance. We head into the game confident.

Any semi-final experience sprinkled in amongst the team?



David Jenkins

There's a little bit, but the two emotions that best describe the camp at the moment are excitement and nerves. For some of them it's their first major semi so they're excited about it but there are also a few nerves as well. It makes it a bit easier on some of the boys knowing there'll be a big home crowd on Saturday behind us. We're all looking forward to it.



In front: Mitchell Clarke, Craig Norrie, James Readford, David Jenkins (captain), Corey McKinnon (vice-captain), Mark Sayers, Jayden Miller, Ethan and Jack Dawson with; Jeremy Heiken, Harrison Miller, Shannon Wolfgang Wicks, Ben Watts, Andrew Rumbel, Billy Hartmann, Jay Worley, Adam Duncan, Nic McCabe, Sam Brown, Angus Thorne, Campbell Williams, Grant Armstrong, Keagan Size. Absent: Harry Altus, Alex Noble, Kyle Cormie, Tom Russ, Dan Cormie, Nic Bacon, Will Kelly and Angus Mactavish.

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