

1997

Presidents Report

Welcome to all Pirates and supporters to the annual presentation night. Even though it is hard to compare last years achievements, I still believe this year has been very successful with the mighty Under 19's taking out back to back premierships, Reserve grade making the finals and First Grade showing their true form in the last round. The U19's showed that last year was not luck, especially considering that resounding way in which they orchestrated the this years win. Gordo and his assistants deserve a special congratulations in their commitment to the team over the last few years.

In fear of omitting any names I would like to thank everyone involved in the club this year. As is often quoted it is no one individual who makes a club but the contributions made by many individuals who help from preparing the ground, to driving the buses (full of players with questionable dress sense). In my first year as President I was immensely, lucky in having a club left in great shape by the previous President, Pip, the one eyed supporter, McCann and also having Graham Yeo to train me in my apprenticeship and who I give special thanks too.

I would like to thank all the sponsors for their support during the year especially to our major sponsors, Imperial Hotel, Rutec, Meers & Shelton and Tamair. Their support is greatly appreciated and without them would make the survival of the club that much more difficult.

The move to Chillingworth Oval has proved successful and with a bit of luck the club will hopefully be able to consolidate at this venue. There are moves at foot to improve the facilities at the oval and I believe that with support from members within the club, the ground can evolve into one that will be ideal for us.

Congratulations once again to the U19's, and to all the Trophy winners, I hope everyone enjoys the evening and look forward to an even more successful season in 1998.

Neal Albert
President

First Grade Coach's Report

I like to start by congratulating Gordon, Steve, Chris and the entire D19's squad on the emphatic Grand Final victory. It is this group of players who will lead the Pirate Club into a new era. Our Juniors have competed in three consecutive Grand Finals, won two and lost one, however, until now, Alf Partlin is the only player who has moved up into the grade ranks. We have some very talented players coming through in 98, who will ensure our competitiveness in years to come.

For the First Grade it was a rebuilding year with the loss of seven first fifteen players through retirement or relocating. Our inability to mould as a unit proved costly in the first round, losing matches to Quirindi and Gunnedah, in particular.

When talking about the 97 season I would like to focus on the tremendous second round effort. I distinctly remember saying to the team before Narrabri that this game was a Grand Final. Pretty daunting words considering it was June, and another seven games to play before the semi finals and the previous week Tamworth had defeated us convincingly (33-3).

However the teams performances improved as did the results, in fact, of the eight games in the second round we lost to Moree by one point drew with Walcha (eventual competition winners complete with Russians), and when all hopes of making the semi final had gone a loss to Tamworth which did not reflect the true capabilities of the group of footballers.

By and large the 97 season was a productive one with the club attracting a large number of new players, nine of which played first grade.

Congratulations to three first graders who achieved representative honours, Brendon Blowes and Patu Patu with Central Norths victorious Country Week campaign and Matt Gett being selected in the Country under 21 's team which played in Melbourne.

To Andrew O'Halloran who handled the captaining with the style only he can, Peter thanks for another enjoyable year, you will be sadly missed on Mondays selections, Dennis, the performance of the under 16's all year was not only a credit to them but true reflection of your appreciated efforts.

Neal, congrats on your first year as President, job well done and sadly to Dave Russell who is stepping down from his role of co-coach, your efforts and contributions are not always fully recognised. The past two years in rugby have provided me with my greatest enjoyment and I thank you for your valuable time, commitment and most of all your friendship.

In closing I like to pass comment on the point of retirement, some players, particular first graders, feel their time has come to be sideline bound, your contribution does not have to be in first grade, we have a large number of young players entering grade who will require guidance and knowledge as they make this step. Your input maybe playing reserve grade or coaching these actions would greatly benefit our clubs goal of three, no, four premierships in 1998 Thank you all for you efforts and support Yours in Rugby..

P.S. Kerry, your efforts both on game day and during the week ensured many players were able to take the field. On behalf of all the players and coaching staff a very appreciative thank you xxxxxxxoooooo! ! ! ! ! !
Gary Walsh

Reserve Grade Coach's Report

FELLOW BUCCANEERS,

1997; Another challenging year both on and off the field, with reserve grade again reaching the semi finals, only to be beaten by Walcha at Moree in the minor semi final.

After reaching the grand final last year a lot was expected unfortunately our usual heavy turnover of players meant that come semi final time we only had six of the previous years 22 players from the photo of 1996, in the photo of 1997.

Luckily all the new recruits were fine players as well as fine fellows. Anybody that went on our away game bus trips can confirm that while the players may have not always won the game, they always enjoyed the after match revelry.

We had many fine wins in the season, but none were any better than the Inverell win when the three Miskle boys led us on the field and played a large part in an against the odds away win.

I would like to congratulate last years Reserve grader Garry Littlejohns on cementing a place in the First grade during 1996 and encourage more of the young Reserve grade brigade to aspire to reach the same consistent standard of First Grade level of playas Garry in the next season.

In closing I would like to thank the Captain Cameron Tongue and all the boys for a very enjoyable season that while disappointing in what we finally achieved on field was very rewarding in the off field camaraderie. Congratulations to Garry Walsh and First grade on another competitive season and a big thank you to Gordon and the under 19's for not only winning another premiership but also doing it in fine open rugby style.
Yours in Rugby, Peter Treasure

Under 19 Coach's Report

Well here you are tonight (Presentation night) wondering what's he going to say this year? One could say back to back! 2 up !! Two from three etc.

Never the less the 1997 Pirates Juniors will go down in the history books as comfortable winners over Narrabri in the under 19 Grand Final by 28 to 8.

The 1997 season saw the return of twenty one members of the 1996 team. These being Tim Baker (95,96,97), Quinn Bruce (95,96,97), Ross Barnes (96, 97), Gerrard Callinan (96, 97), Will Howarth (96, 97), Ross Knight (96, 97), David Lewis (96, 97), Tim Mazengarb (95, 96, 97), Patrick McCann (95, 96, 97), Simon McCann (95, 96, 97), James Newlan (96, 97), Luke ODell (96, 97), Craig Simpson (94, 95, 96, 97), Matthew Stewart (96, 97), Peter Swan (96, 97), Paul Tongue (95, 96, 97), Howard Webster (96, 97), Cameron York (96, 97), Jeremy Richards (96, 97), Matthew Noland (96, 97), Alister Pitt (96, 97).

Talented new comers to this years squad were: Lincoln Abberfield, Ben Botfield, Garth Cowley, Robert Gothard, Shaun Mallon, Shaun Noble, Phillip Sleman, Allan Tongue, Warwick Crosby and Grant Baker. Thus the total squad number was 31, however injuries and sickness (vinegar & ammonia) through out the season played havoc, with our numbers being as low as 17 for a few weeks running. Others to make appearances during the season were Andrew Yeo, Ben Austin, Gary Miller and Clint Woods.

A very pleasing aspect of our player numbers was the fact that this proud club attracted genuine players who wanted to play Rugby with Pirates, our numbers did not grow out of any nocturnal competition. Thank you boys for you efforts in recruitment over the years, those returning next year need to continue the tradition.

In a season that contained many memorable events, worthy of mention was;
The bus trip home from Narrabri. The Juniors in the front mini bus gave the Reserve graders a cheeky royal brown. The return trip from Moree, 3ks out of Tamworth after dropping off Peter Swain, picked up a kangaroo via the bumper. Return journey from Wa1cha watered at Wa1cha Road, Bendy and Nemingha whilst acquiring seeing the orange lights - see manager Paul Tongue for details.

The 1997 season progressed predictably and reasonably smoothly with the odd disappointing result. Gunnedah

(10-0), Tamworth (12-3), Narrabri (12-3), Barraba (19-15), Tamworth (14-8), Narrabri (17-14) - Major Semi Final. This was balanced by some truly memorable victories, which contained huge amounts of character, courage, commitment, pride, sportsmanship and heaps of Pirate comradeship. Games: were Inverell away (20-0), Moree home (13-0) Barrabra home (18-11) ask Yorkie, Quirindi away (53-3), (31-6) home, Inverell home (13-0), Moree (22-7) away, Gunnedah home revenge (24-0), Tamworth (9-0) away, Preliminary Final, Narrabri away (22-8) Grand Final.

Throughout the season the team was superbly captained by Paul Tongue and V /C Simon McCann. Others to fill in for the season were the evergreen veteran Craig Simpson first joined in 1994 as a RAW 15 year old and Jeremy Richards.

Tongue certainly commanded the respect of his fellow team mates with stand out performances v Moree (home/away), Tamworth away at Walcha, Narrabri away, Tamworth Major Semi Finals and Grand Final. The game v Moree at home is a cherished memory - this game dedicated to the Webster Family and in particular young Howard. The boys all close to tears pulled off a very special victory despite the predictable ring side antics of Moree.

This inner feeling (comradeship) was a special attribute that the 1997 team possessed. In the final month leading to the Grand Final, I have never seen a team dedicate themselves to their goal of winning the Grand Final. Their spirit at training was something very special - the feeling of togetherness was so inspiring, they just had the powerful will to win and win well.

My inner feelings that this was the most talented Pirates Juniors ever fielded were vindicated in their Grand Final performance - absolutely sensational!!!

The manner in which they conducted themselves was awesome, truly great ambassadors to themselves, their families, the proud Pirates Rugby Club and the game of rugby.

To the entire squad I thank you sincerely for your cooperation and dedication throughout the season. I was and always will be happy to be part of your historical performance both on and off the field.

Finally I must acknowledge the tremendous assistance given to me by Steve Wilson assistant Coach, Steve Mazengarb, Garry Walsh, Christopher Ajani (Spindle), Barry Everingham, Graham Yeo and lastly Pip McCann. Behind every success is a group of guys who support one in every facet, from the heart - thanks a hell of a lot. Your individual contributions are treasured memories.

To the under 16's Coach, Dennis Hare, you hold a special memory with the boys. Your father image throughout the season was touching. You were the bus driver, you ensured they got home safely, your work at the Grand Final breakfast was truly sincere. Thanks a lot Den.

To all those First graders, Reserve graders, Club supporters and parents your outstanding support given to the Juniors over the past month truly showed outstanding qualities and the true spirit of the Pirates Rugby Club - one big family.

A very special thank you to Kerry Armstrong (Masseuse) for your preparation and unselfish dedication shown to the boys. Finally congratulations to Patrick McCann for winning the Central North Under 19's Best and Fairest for 1997.

Gordon Barbara

Under 16's coach's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present the inaugural report for Pirates Under 16's.

At the start of the seasons training we only had three or four Under 16 players, these players put in the effort through friends, schoolmates etc., to swell the player numbers to 15 in the home games against Gunnedah, and we managed on average to have 10 players for home and away games. Even though games in the Under 16's weren't played on a week to week basis, the boys continued to train on a regular basis, working well on their skills and without a doubt, they enjoyed their rugby.

Their effort throughout the year resulted in them reaching the minor semi final, played at Moree. Well done fellows. You are to be congratulated on your behaviour on and off the field and to be your coach for 1997 has been a pleasure.

I would like to say on behalf of the Under 16's and myself a big thank you, to the mighty Pirates Rugby Club for the support that has been given to the Under 16's this year and I can say that Pirates are the better club.

Thanks for a great year

Dennis Haire