

SPORTING LIFE
MARK HAWTHORNE



AFL gets funky in talent search

THERE has been much talk in recent months about the AFL's push into foreign ground. The addition of Greater Western Sydney and the Gold Coast mean a further 80-odd players are required to fill club playing lists over the next two years. As a result, the AFL has been active, recruiting whatever talent it needs. **Israel Folau** and **Karmichael Hunt** have been poached from the NRL. Lists of talented basketball players have been provided to clubs. Yesterday, some of the fruits of the AFL's grassroots endeavours were put on show. Melbourne University hosted a match between a South Pacific team and a World XVIII, both of which will compete in this year's NAB under-16 championships. The AFL has certainly cast its net wide. The World XVIII includes players from South Africa, Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq, the US, Canada, Europe, China, Indonesia and Argentina. The South Pacific team consists of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Nauru, Solomon Islands and New Zealand. Former North Melbourne player **Jason McCartney** was on hand to take a look at the talent. Last year, the 13-year veteran took over as high-performance coach of the Australian Institute of Sport/AFL program. He turned up to have his own look at the teenagers. "We are looking at opportunities to continually develop the talent pool and the draft pool," he said. "We've done a lot of work with the program in South Africa and the program in Fiji. With new teams, there are 80 spots on AFL lists available over the next two years. We've already got players from overseas playing now, but there's no



The "Funky Bunch", and Komang Sulaya and Jason McCartney (below).

PICTURES: JOHN WOULDSTRA

reason why there can't be more." One of those players is **Komang Sulaya** of Indonesia. McCartney is a survivor of the 2002 Bali bombings. Komang's father was one of the unlucky ones. The 16-year-old relocated to Melbourne in 2006 with his mother, and is playing his third season of Australian rules. "It has been really hard, because when I got here I didn't even know the rules of the game," Komang said. "But I love playing and have been learning as fast as I can." McCartney first met Komang and his family in 2003, when he was giving evidence in a court trial of the Bali bombers. "He was just a kid



running around at his mum's feet then. I would never have thought one day I'd be watching him play Aussie rules." Former Sydney great **Michael O'Loughlin** is coach of the World side. He is assisted by three-time Brisbane Lions premiership player **Chris Johnson**, and the pair have trained with them since Sunday. The players will need every bit of that experience. Just 10 members of the 25-man squad live in Australia, and all are recent immigrants who have been here less than five years. The other 15 have flown in from overseas. The World team was well beaten by a South Pacific side yesterday that boasts just one AFL international

scholarship player, **Peter Labi** from PNG, who is tied to Carlton. In the NAB under-16 championships, the World team will take on Tasmania on July 7 and a combined NSW/ACT team on July 10. Both teams are loaded with AFL aspirants. "I'm impressed with their commitment at the ball and some of their athleticism, but the experience of the game varies greatly," O'Loughlin said. "Some have only played a handful of organised games, so we're still teaching them where to run, reminding them to man-up." O'Loughlin described the task of playing Tasmania as "enormous". "The 'funky bunch', we're calling them," he laughed. "They're a great bunch of kids. Everyone who has worked with them has loved them, but they have a big task ahead of them to be ready for that game."

Seemed like a good idea at the time . . .

FOOTBALL clubs are always striving for an edge. High-altitude training, ice baths and recovery sessions are part of the life of an AFL footballer. The Carlton coaching team has something unique at its disposal: a high-performance golf cart, complete with mag wheels. The men behind the *Pimp My Ride* golf cart are called **Spirit of Carlton Past & Present**. Founded at University Cafe on Lygon Street in 2006, the group includes some famous names from Carlton's past. At the first meeting were of **Alex Jesaulenko**, **Stephen**

Kernahan, **Mike Fitzpatrick**, **David Parkin**, **Jim Buckley**, **Ken Hunter**, **Geoff Southby**, **David Rhys-Jones** and **Robert Walls**. They elected a six-man executive that is "entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the spirit of Carlton alive" and "raise funds to help improve the Carlton team performance". The cash from the fundraisers, it seems, has gone on the souped-up golf cart. Not sure if it helps with the spirit or the team's performance but add some fuzzy dice and it would fit right in on Lygon Street on a Saturday night.



Got a tip? Contact: mhawthorne@theage.com.au

Howard's unique turn

AUSTRALIA'S former prime minister **John Howard** is under fire after his bid to become International Cricket Council president ended in tears. The men who run cricket in Zimbabwe are said to be the ones undermining Howard's bid, and it is lack of cricket experience on which they are focusing. Zimbabwe casting aspersions about the cricketing abilities of others might smack of hypocrisy, but this is Howard we are talking about. Maybe the ICC board has jumped on YouTube and taken note of the former PM's ability with the ball. Howard famously rolled the arm over in Pakistan for the cameras and, the footage reveals, his left foot was in more danger than the pitch. A few members of the Canberra press gallery are yet to stop laughing, we hear. For those who missed the moment, go to theage.com.au/sport/sportinglife.

Sidebottom shows hand

WITH the school holidays in full swing, a few Magpies players have been doing the promotional rounds for the club. **Dale Thomas** and **Steele Sidebottom** turned out for the launch of *The Official Collingwood Illustrated Encyclopedia* at Angus & Robertson's Bourke Street store yesterday, and were roped into a handball competition for the crowd. Sidebottom ended up winning 3-2. Asked if he was the better handballer, Sidebottom responded: "I am now."

Best recruits bar none

A MONTH is a long time in football. Especially if a couple of former AFL stars arrive at your club. Just three weeks ago **Montrose** was second bottom in the Eastern Football League. Then former **Richmond** ruckman **Troy Simmonds** decided to join his father's old club. Three wins later and Montrose is knocking on the top four, and another old Tiger has joined in — **Kane Johnson**, recently retired Richmond captain and dual premiership player with Adelaide. The Tigers pair share an apartment. Sporting Life hears that Johnson was tired of hearing what a good time his flatmate was having, and decided to pull on the boots. Johnson was presented with his jumper at training last night, and will make his debut this weekend at home against Wantirna South. Great news for Montrose. In just four home matches this year they have surpassed last season's entire bar takings. Another bumper crowd is expected.

The missus dishes out some tough love when angry love goes sour

MY WIFE and I decided to make "angry love" last night when I detected a small pimple on her back, which I felt compelled to squeeze. It was fortunate that I had not cut my fingernails for some time so I was able to dig right into the spot in an attempt to give the yellow head a nice little pop. But rather than be grateful for this service, she was furious. She told me in no uncertain terms that squeezing pimples was not in the spirit of angry love. But I had become singularly focused by this stage and, as anyone who has squeezed another's pimples will understand, all I



could think about was draining the small growth of its off-white puss. So, determined, I gave it another pinch. Well, she went right off. She was about to explode in rage and the pimple was about to explode too. I had them both right where I wanted. But then something happened. I went too far. It was heated, it was passionate. I nibbled on her ear and whispered: "Your thighs are looking a little heavy these

days." I swear, I don't know what got into me. Well, the angry love was off and it was just plain angry now. She called me an annoying, bald runt with ugly feet. Then she gave me one almighty boot in the backside and I slipped out of bed, banged my head against the bedside table, split my face open, giving myself a Rocky Balboa-like shiner. In fact, the eye closed up immediately and I had to slice it open in order to watch *Masterchef*. It was a cold, frosty evening inside our house that night, and little was said before I remarked that I was waiting for an apology. It was

then she looked at me with eyes as dark as a shark and said: "There is nothing brave about zeroing in on a pimple or a blackhead. It's hardly the manly exercise of physical force to pinch someone's pimple. You knew I had a pimple and you tried to zero in on it to get an advantage." I said: "But baby, we were making angry love. The point wasn't to be brave, I was trying to make you angry. I was trying to be annoying. That was the game. And I resent you questioning my masculinity, by the way." She then charged me with three instances of squeezing a pimple, each case receiving 225 demerit points plus a 50

per cent increase to 337.5 points because I failed to unload the dishwasher on Tuesday. She also charged me with a misconduct offence for making unreasonable and unnecessary comments about her thighs. And then, after I pleaded with her that these rules had not been clear prior to our angry love session and, indeed, they seemed like completely new rules, she found me guilty of unsuccessfully challenging the charges. I begged her: "You've shifted the goal posts, baby," staring at her through my dying eye.

"Tough," she mumbled, before informing me I would be spending the next nine weeks on the couch. I protested: "You wouldn't be saying that if I was Daniel Giansiracusa." And you know what she said? "Well, you ain't."

BEST BETS:
Hawthorn v W Bulldogs (Hawks first to 25 points \$2).
St Kilda v Melbourne (Saints more than 32.5 points \$1.90)
Collingwood v West Coast (Collingwood more than 60 points \$2.25)
Adelaide v Essendon (Adelaide under 39.5 points \$2.30)