

KICKIN' ROUND THE PACIFIC

AFL SOUTH PACIFIC



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Can't stop, won't stop!

The year has been action packed already for AFL in the South Pacific, and we're barely passed the halfway point!

We have lots to share in this edition of Kickin' Round the Pacific and the terrific **AFL Tonga** sits front and centre with impressive numbers and enthusiasm from players, staff and new committee members alike, plus a feature on one of AFL Tonga's star performers **Julie Mauala**.

PNG and **Nauru** are firing on all cylinders, with their **National Talent Academy** programs training hard, and their U19 sides joining in the AFL's **U16 National Championships** on the Gold Coast to play international games against each other,

While **Vanuatu** has a ton of positive news with Senior Women's Grand Finals, umpire/coach training and **Plei Footy Blo Jenis** (PFBJ) school programs.

Some much-deserved media recognition for AFL Fiji's **Loata Vakausausa** and a story on the connections made outside of the cities features for **Fiji**.

Add in a handful of South Pacific players impressing in Australian local leagues, a cheeky **Ace** appearance and upcoming workshops with the **ADF**, we have everything you need to fill your AFL South Pacific boots.



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Tonga is 'All In'

AFL Tonga is enjoying a swell of interest and support since the Australian Defence Force Sports Official workshops in March.

AFL Tonga Development Officers and Volunteer coaches have been out in the community delivering school programs in **Liahona High School, Tailulu College, Toloa College and Apifoou College** with an estimated **400 kids** participating in programs over the past three months.

The coaches have also been out working in the districts of **Vahe Hahake, Vahe Loto, Vahe Hihifo, and Vahe Nukualofa** to prepare teams to play in AFL Tonga's first ever district competition. The competition started with a bang on **May 27th** with **3,000 people** attending the opening round, including Australian High Commissioner **Her Excellency Ms Rachael Moore**. The competition will culminate with finals in early July.

An open Saturday morning program has also been operating since March with over **300 regular players** arriving in the early hours before sunrise for training and games. What commitment!

AFL Tonga has formed a new **committee** to drive the vision of the organisation. Congratulations to the members listed below:

- Hon. Ma'afu Tuku'iaulahi (Patron/ Chair)
- Tevita To'a (AFL Tonga President)
- Henele Lautaimi (Assistant to President)
- Nesiasi Tu'ipulotu (Assistant to President)
- Malakai Mahina (Development Officer)
- Sulieti Mauala (Assistant Development Officer & Liaison Officer)
- Suka Manumu'a, Deancum Hurrell (Secretaries)
- Angela Hurrell, Ofila Kaho, Unaloto (Treasurers)



NAURU



Youth Front and Centre

Naurus **U15 Youth Cup** came to its finale in April with the **Lions** overcoming a strong **Panzers** team 9. 7. 61 to 8.7.55 in the Grand Final with **Her Excellency the Australian High Commissioner Dr Helen Cheney** attending. Congratulations to players and coaches!

The U15 Youth Cup was a huge success with 150 boys participating. The competition was also used to identify the first Level 1 Boys **National Talent Academy** squad, click [here](#) to see the selection announcement, congratulations to all players and the districts they represent!

As for the **U15 girls**, Nauru Academy Coaches will be getting out, into schools to run **Talent ID programs** to select the first Level 1 Girls National Talent Academy squad, good luck coaches and players!

Continuing on Talent Academy news, **U19 National Talent Academy** players have not rested since the Talent Camp in March, with both Male and Female Squads training **4 times a week**, preparing to play PNGs U19 Talent Academy teams in **Brisbane** on the 5th of July which will be streamed live on **Clutch TV**.

Part of the U19 Academy teams' preparation where exhibition games on **Constitution Day** (20th of May), where AFL Nauru organised Male and Female combined senior teams to play against U19 National Talent Academy Teams. Unfortunately these games were postponed.

Wrapping up a busy few months is the start of AFL **Nauru's Senior Womens** competition which kicked off on the 10th of June with four teams competing over 6 weeks.



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TUBWA KOR





VANUATU

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"I have faced many barriers in my life and football has reminded me that even in the darkest times, there is another side to life, which is full of excitement and opportunities."
Nancy Patterson, Program Manager for the Plei Footy Blo Jenis Program.

Grand Finals & School Development

AFL Vanuatu's Womens Senior competition came to a thrilling close with the formidable **Freswota** beating a gallant **Grand hotel** 2.3.15 to 1.2.8. A third-place game played prior saw **Mele** claim the bronze over **Tassiriki**. The competition was a great showcase of AFL Vanuatu's support of women's sport with **Inspector Lily Joel** of the Vanuatu Police Force, who is a partner of AFL Vanuatu's Gender Equity program 'Plei Footy Blo Jenis' (PFBJ) attending to hand out medals.

Speaking of **PFBJ**, this year sees the program enter schools for the first time to engage and motivate students to be active through footy and to stand up against gender-based violence (GBV) through education with the Vanuatu Police Force. Since **March** AFL Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Police Force have visited 4 schools, engaging with over 500 students, with plans turning to schools in Pango and Mele over the next few months.

Continuing on the school theme, AFL Vanuatu invited local PE Teaches and youth community leaders to attend a **Level 1 coaching and umpiring courses** held in March. The courses held at Lycee High School and facilitated by **AFLQ** staff, **Dan Cordwell** and **Lachlan Martyr** gave, 26 teachers and community leaders the opportunity to complete their Level 1 coaching and umpire certificates with the goal of each participant starting a **Pikinini Kik** program within their local school or communities. The **Vanuatu Police Force** also attend to present on the work they are doing with AFL Vanuatu on GBV.

A highlight from the past few months was the **Pikinini Kik** program run for Port Vila's Northern Ward in support of VASANOC. Through this program 50 kids were exposed to our great game.

Lastly check out a story **ABC Pacific** did on the Vanuatu player Mark Niamak playing in the top league of Cairns, click [here](#) to listen.

TANGKYU TUMAS





Strong Foundations



AFLPNG Development National Talent Academies are in full swing with **560 players** training throughout its 6 regions (POM, WNB, ENB, NI, Lae, Highlands). Each centre will have a focus on the **Regional Academy Carnivals** to be held from June 28th - July 4th. Carnivals locations are, Kimbe, Lae and Port Moresby with Academy teams playing against each other in age groups from U14-U18.

National Talent Academy Coaches also have their eye on the **U19 International** game against **Nauru** in June with new National Academy Manager **Prudence Sindriwen** working closely with her team to make final squad selections. These games against Nauru will be streamed live on **Clutch TV**.

The Academy might get all the attention, but the real stars are the **AFL PNG Development staff** who are promoting the game through the Smart Start Niukick program. This year is really humming. Since January the development team have:

- Run Smartstart Niukick programs across AFL PNG Developments **7 regions**.
- Held a Gala Day in **Mt Hagen**
- Started School competitions in the **Port Moresby, Lae and Mt Hagen**
- Took a boat across to Salamaua to deliver community school programs following the dawn service on **ANZAC day**.

From January to May a total of 23,885 Smart Start NuiKick kids have participated in programs PNG wide, ensuring the next generation of talented players are raring to go.

TENKYU TUMAS



Strong Foundations



AFL PNG is also working hard to support and develop its talented coaches with Southern Region Development Manager and Talent Academy Coach **David Topeni** invited to travel to Cairns and work as the Assistant Coach of the **Indigenous & South Pacific** representative side who played against a Carins All Starts team in May. This was a great opportunity for David to further developing his coaching skills as he goes through his Coach AFL accreditations. Check out these two great interviews with David on **AFL Queensland** and **Sports Scene**.

And for the Umpires, AFL PNG hosted an online **Umpire Mentor series**, presented by the AFLQ Umpire department. **26 Umpires** attended the mentor series which was delivered over 5 nights through April, May and June. At the completion of this mentor series the umpires earned their basic umpire accreditations.

Senior competitions are well and truly underway in Lae and POM with over 30 teams competing in POM and 6 in Lae. At the time of writing Lamana Dockers are leading the Division 1 POM Men's and Womens leagues, with University Tigers leading the reserves competition. While in Lae, the Swans sit in first spot with a 4 point buffer over the Salle Dogs.

Gold Coast Suns player **Hewago Paul Oea**, also known as "**Ace**" visited the international schools of **Gordons, KoroBoro, and Ela Murray** to promote his extraordinary story and his amazing rise to playing for the Gold Coast Suns and scoring a goal with his first touch in the AFL.

Finally, congratulations to PNG Mozzies International Cup Champion & AFL PNG Talent Academy Graduate **Laurie Logo** who has been selected in the South QLD Representative side to take on North QLD.





FIJI



Going Regional

AFL Fiji Development Officers have left no stone unturned spreading our great game by supporting **Fiji National Sports Commission** programs that visit **regional** and **remote** parts of Fiji.

Since April the team have visited **Mokani Village**, and the Naitasir schools of **Nabua Topline** and **Viria Village School**, plus the districts of **Nadera, Nakelo and Rewa**. A highlight being the opportunity to work with **188 students** from schools in the Rewa District, with AFL Fiji Development Officer **Loata Vakausausa** saying, "it feels amazing to help these kids learn the core skills of AFL, and to see the joy in their faces."

Another fantastic opportunity the Fiji National Sports commission programs provide is the chance to work with special needs schools. AFL Fiji Development staff worked with **164 students** from Nadi Centre for Special Education and Lautoka School for Special Education in May.

Community is truly at the heart of what AFL Fiji do which is encapsulated by its **Family Fun Day** the organisation is running on the 1st of July, pushed back from its original date of 17th of June due to wet weather. The day will be held at Albert Park with partners, sponsors and players all invited to enjoy a Bula Kick program amongst the plethora of other fun activities.

On top of all this, **30 player** between U14-U18 have been in training 3 times a week as part of a Pre-National Talent Academy Training program, preparing players for the start of the **National Talent Academy** which will be official launched later this year.

And if you missed it, check out a great story the **ABC, That Pacific Sports Show** ran on AFL Fiji's Development officer and Academy Manager Loata Vakausausa, the footage was taken when the ADF visited in November 2022, click [here](#) to watch

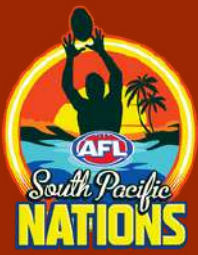
VINAKA VAKA LEVU



FIJI NATIONAL
SPORTS
COMMISSION



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Up Coming / Latest Events



U19 Nauru vs PNG International Games

U19 male and female National Talent Academy Teams from **Nauru** and **PNG** faced off against each on the 5th of July, The games were held at Ausworld Oval on the Gold Coast.

Alongside the AFL's **Diversity** and **Indigenous games** these international clashes gave players great exposure to the **Gold Coast Suns** and **Brisbane Lions** Academies whose staff were on hand to observe the games and also assist national team coaches

You can view the games [here](#) on Clutch TV and a full report on these games will be in our next edition

ABC features Talent Camp story

The U19 South Pacific Talent Camps took place in March where **47 players** (23 female, 24 male), **6 coaches** (2 female, 4 male), **3 umpires** (2 female, 1 male) and **4 Academy Managers** (2 female, 2 male) attended in what was a real highlight of the year so far, **That Pacific Sports Show** on the **ABC** where on hand for games against the **Brisbane Lions Academy** teams and filmed and interviewed several participants. The story recently ran during their regular weekly program in **May**. Don't worry if you missed it, you can find the link to the program [here](#).

PNG ADF Visit

In partnership with **Australian Defence Force** the AFL will be traveling to the **PNG** cities of **Port Moresby** and **Lae**, from 24th to the 29th of July to facilitate coaching, umpiring and medical workshops as they did in Tonga (Mar) and Fiji (Nov).

By the end of this week, AFL PNG are aiming have **30** level 2, and **60** level 1 coaches completed the course, **with** an additional **60** umpires completing their level 1.

The AFL workshop facilitators will also attend academy trainings and community game days





SOUTH PACIFIC ACADEMY PLAYER PLACEMENTS



Five blazing trails

As part of the **AFL South Pacific Talent Academy** pathway, five players (three from PNG, two Nauru) have recently found a home at community clubs within Australia.

AFL PNG have supported their charges as follows:

- **Kelly Kaula** and **Glen Saniong** playing for Nhill & District in regional Victoria
- **Kila Rawali** playing for Manunda Hawks A.F.C in Cairns

While AFL Nauru's players are both in Queensland

- **Voss Baguga** playing for Mt Gravatt Vultures' Colts (U19s)
- **Febulous Kanth** playing for Beenleigh - Womens 2nd division

All five have been part of the PNG and Nauru National Talent Academy Programs. Player live locally, and support the local community and play for their clubs in their local leagues.

The experience is vital to development and growth of the game back in each players country as players will bring home the lessons and skills learnt to share with their country men and women. These placements form part of the AFL South Pacific **High Performance Pathway** which is proudly supported by the Australian Government's **PacificAus Sports** program.



Highlights

Febulous has been leading the way for **Beenleigh** - sometimes getting plenty of attention from opposition enforcers (13 free kicks her way in one game alone!) but always a valuable performer and best on in four games so far.

Voss has improved in every match and against **Surfers Paradise** set up four goals in a consistent performance.

Glen and **Kelly** both put in great games against **Minyip Murtoa** - **Kelly** with three goals and **Glen** a mountain of tackles, blistering pace and crisp handballs.

Kila is becoming a cult figure at **Manunda Hawks** with strong performances through the midfield and half forward.





MEET THE TEAM

Julie is a stalwart of our game in Tonga, almost part of the furniture! She's a force of nature and if she decides to do something, you know it will get done. A big driver behind AFL Tonga's recent revival, she gave a few insights into the woman behind the Sherrin

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH AFL TONGA?

It's been 20 years now since I started with AFL Tonga

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

I'm a development and liaison officer, but I also help with a bit of everything!

DID YOU GROW UP PLAYING FOOTY?

No, I played mainly basketball and other sports that were popular on the island.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR TONGA FOOTY IN 2023 AND BEYOND?

To teach our youth how best to play their footy, improve their lives and build towards more opportunities in Australia. One day I'd love to see a stadium for AFL Tonga in Nuku'alofa!

FAVOURITE NON-FOOTY PASTIME?

Sometimes I'm a tour guide for cruise ships, which is enjoyable. I also like to cook, read, fish and spend time after school to help kids better their English skills.

**JULIE
MAUALA**



**ASSISTANT DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER & LIAISON OFFICER**



WRAP UP

We got to shine a spotlight on **Tonga** this time around - be it workshops, schools or committees - we're thrilled to see how things have progressed in the kingdom and will continue to keep a close eye on the huge potential the country holds.

PNG and **Nauru** have been able to build upon the momentum that their **Academy** players and staff brought to the **Talent Camp** earlier this year and look to be humming along with a perhaps a bit of a rivalry brewing?

PNG also had some good news around coaches and umpires while Nauru's youngsters are on the march. Both countries would be proud of their representatives playing in Australian community competitions too.

Fiji's family fun festivities look promising, equally as fantastic has been the spread throughout regional areas.

And **Vanuatu** keeps elevating their impact on GBV mitigation programs via **PFBJ** while the senior women look set to pass the baton to the men next in competitive games.

[Click to follow](#)

Upcoming events for 2023

- PacificAus Sports Academy Challenge - Nauru vs PNG (Brisbane)
- Queensland Academy Champs (Sunshine Coast; September)
- AFL Youth Oceania Cup (Suva; December)



Stay safe out there and happy playing/coaching/umpiring/supporting!

If you're in Solomon Islands and are keen on building towards something similar, please get in touch with us at AFL South Pacific - we'd love to help!

AFL SOUTH PACIFIC WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS FOR THEIR ONGOING SUPPORT



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT – DFAT, TEAM UP, PACIFICAUS SPORTS, AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE, GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAURU, FIJI NATIONAL SPORTS COMMISSION, PNG TRIBAL FOUNDATION, GOLD COAST SUNS, BRISBANE LIONS, VANUATU SPIRIT, ABC AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM, NAURU DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PARADISE FOODS LIMITED – PNG, VANUATU WOMENS CENTRE, HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT PNG, PNG MURUKS AFC, NAURU AIRLINES, TRIBAL SPORT, BENDIGO BANK, HART SPORT, DIGICEL NAURU, PNG SPORTS FOUNDATION, VANUTU POLICE FORCE

AFL SOUTH PACIFIC IS PROUD TO PARTNER AND BE SUPPORTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THROUGH THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM, TACKLING THE BIG ISSUES SURROUNDING HEALTH, GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION, AND THROUGH THE PACIFICAUS SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS, IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING THE NEXT WAVE OF TALENTED MALE AND FEMALE PACIFIC AFL FOOTBALLERS.