

Vol 2001

A new era as Scorpions Men's dominance comes to an end.

*After 29 undefeated games
spanning four years of NTL
competition, the Scorpions'
Men's team finally surrender
their title.*

In the opening game of 2001, the Scorpions' Men played the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones. Led by superstar Gavin Shuker, the Cyclones were the first team to inflict a defeat on the invincible Scorpions, narrowly beating them 4-3. Spectators were shocked and the players knew they would need a miracle to defend their title again.

The miracle dissipated when the Gold Coast Sharks made it two defeats in five years, winning their round game 4-1 and putting the Scorpions out of the finals. In Group B, the star-studded Brisbane Cobras were too good in the opening game against Sydney Mets and went through their preliminaries undefeated.

The Mets only loss was to the Cobras which secured them a semis spot to keep a NSW team in the hunt for the title. Without the Scorpions it was anybody's championship. The Brisbane Cobras shot to favouritism when they disposed of the Cyclones 4-2 in their semi. The best players for the Cyclones were Gavin Shuker, Phillip Gyemore and Tim Villalba.

In the other semi, the Sydney Mets won a hard fought victory over the Gold Coast Sharks 3-2. The best for the Sharks were Corey Foster, Craig Searston, Ben Robertson, Ricky Best and Ryan Pollack.

The final was a torrid affair and resembled a State of Origin match. Unfortunately the Sydney team were no match for the Cobras who went on to

record a 6-2 win. The best for Cobras were Brent Madders (Player of the Final), Brenton O'Shanesy, Trent McDonald, Jarrod Tump, Craig Madders and Shane Duell.



Gavin Shuker playing for his beloved NQ Tropical Cyclones.

The vanquished were best served by Kurt Nowotny (Player of the Series), Tim Ashbolt, Daniel Walsh, Daniel Rushworth, Anthony Ziade and Scott Danswan.

Cobras Women want third consecutive Title

Like their Men's team, the Women's Cobras boast a large number of players who represent Australia at International Tests and World Cup events. Defending the title they won in 1999 and 2000, the Cobras went through their preliminary rounds undefeated, only being pushed by the Gold Coast Sharks who held them to a 0-all draw. The Sharks came in second on the ladder despite having three drawn games.

In Group B, the Sydney Mets signalled their intentions by also going through undefeated. Their closest game being 4-2 against the Rebels who came in second on the ladder. In the semis the Cobras disposed of the Rebels 3-1 with Selene Thornton, Karen Lawson, Erin Turner,

Dominique Maher and Player of the Series, Gabriel Maher, standing out.

The other semi saw the Sydney Mets scrape home against a hot Sharks outfit 2-1. Best on field for the Sharks were Theresa Anderson, Amy Fong, Justine Smith, Sharyn Williams and Rebecca Chesterton. The final was another Interstate clash and fought just as fiercely.

In a game where both sides treasured every inch of territory, the advantage see-sawed between one team and the other. In the end, the strength of the Sydney Mets prevailed and denied the Cobras their third title in a row. Best for the ex-champions were Tina Elliot, Rachel Reid, Alyson Kay, Catherine Bell and her sister Angela Barr, Shelly Matcham and Sharyn Martin.



Player of the final Louise Winchester

The Mets were best served by Player of the Final Louise Winchester, Belinda Murdoch, Renee Willmott, Amanda Judd, Trish McCarthy and Melinda McMaha.

Mixed Division dominance shared amongst three teams

In four years of competition three teams had shared the Mixed title. First it was the Sydney Rebels, then the Sydney Scorpions twice, then the Brisbane Cobras in 2000. The scene was set for a new side to join the elite group.

The Gold Coast Sharks arrived at Coffs Harbour with the strongest Mixed team ever assembled by them. They breezed through their first five games scoring a total of 33 touchdowns with only six against. They then came up against the Sydney Mets who put them to the test and went down narrowly 2-3 to the northern invaders.

The acid test came in the next game against title holders the Brisbane Cobras whose class shone through, with the champions disposing of the visitors 5-1. The semis saw the Sharks dispose of the Hunter Western Hornets 4-0 and the Brisbane Cobras demolish the Sydney Scorpions 8-0. The scene was set for the current title holder to show the new comers who were the real champions.

In an intense low scoring game the Cobras, led by Cameron Costello and Katie Curtis, (both named Player of the Series), Stephen Swan, Alita McPhee, Costello and Kate Barker set about showing the Sharks how to play finals Touch. They dominated possession and territory but could not draw away from their opponents.

The Sharks repelled each attack and led by Craig Slavin and Belinda Dawney, (both Players of the Finals), Zara Houston, Adam Falzon, Karley Banks and Mark Hartley, the underdog Sharks finally prevailed to win 2-1 and claim the title.

2001 NTL Final Results

Men's Open

Cobras 6 Mets 2

Women's Open

Mets 3 Cobras 2

Mixed Open

Sharks 2 Cobras 1

National Touch League 2001

Overall Placing

Teams	Men	Wm	Mx	#
Brisbane Cobras	15	12	9	36
Sydney Mets	12	15	6	33
Gold Coast Sharks	9	10	12	31
NQ Cyclones	10	6	2	18
Sydney Scorpions	7	2	7	16
Hunter Hornets	4	7	4	15
Sunwest Razorbacks	8	1	5	14
Sydney Rebels	3	9	-	12
Southern Suns	2	8	1	11
Northern Eagles	5	3	3	11
Crusaders	6	5	-	11
Barbarians	1	4	-	5

NTL for Seniors in its fourth year

2001 saw the Senior Touch players from all over the country gathered again at Coffs Harbour from 14 to 17 March to contest the Australian Senior Touch Titles.

Men 30 Semis Series

In the premier seniors division - the Men's 30 - the competition could not be tighter. Champions for the first two years and missing a place in the final last year South Queensland Sharks turned up with a 'gun' side and were favourites to take the title back. Placed in Pool A, they opened their account with a tight 3-1 win over the ACT but were over confident after a 10-1 decisive win over the ADF.



Tony Eltakchi on the run for the Scorpions.

They then came up against a committed Sydney Metropolitan team who narrowly defeated them 3-2. As it was the quarter final series, they made the play off and after winning their quarter 6-2 against the NQ Tropical Cyclones (Bill Searle being their best); they met another Sydney side in the Scorpions who knocked them out of the race

5-4 in their semis clash. The best for the Sharks were Adrian Harrington and Corey Foster. Leading Pool A was the Sydney Mets who had an easy run into the finals by defeating Northern Eagles in the quarters 9-1 and Brisbane Cobras 5-2 in the semis. The best for Eagles was Steve Graham and for Cobras, Ashley Heiniger and Darren Pfeffer.

Pool B saw Scorpions and Cobras come one and two. Cobras got to the semis by winning their quarter against Southern Suns 6-2 with Dave Elliott the Suns' best. Then in the semis they went down to the Mets. The Scorpions had an easy 4-0 win against the Crusaders in the Quarter and as mentioned earlier, a tight semi against the Sharks saw them get to the final for the second year running.

The all Sydney final was a contest where no quarter was given. Both sides followed each other on the score board with the Scorpions finally defending their title and running out winners, 3-2. Best for the Mets were Jamie Black and Fenro Harb, while for the winners Tony Eltakchi (Player of the Series) was a stand out and he was ably supported by James Marks and Graham Beale (Player of the Final).

Men 35 Semis Series

Having won two out of three and coming runner up on the other occasion, the Crusaders were red hot favourites to retain their title won last year. Their main rival was the Sydney Scorpions who lost narrowly to them last time around. In a twist to the normal ranking of teams by tournament organisers, the Crusaders and Scorpions (last year's finalists) were seeded in the same Pool (B). They finished one and two after the preliminary rounds with the Crusaders taking heart from their victory over the Scorpions, 4-2.

In Pool A, the Mets finished undefeated with the Hornets second after going down to the leaders 2-3. However, as there was a quarter final series, the Hornets scored a semis berth defeating the Southern Suns 3-1, while surprisingly the Mets went down to the Sunwest Razorbacks 4-1.

The other quarters saw the Scorpions dispose of the Sharks 5-3 while the Crusaders had a comfortable 6-3 win over the Eagles. This brought the Scorpions up against the Razorbacks in the semis, while the Crusaders played the Hornets. Despite strong games from Scott Notley, Peter Marsh and Niel Goetsch, the Razorbacks could

not produce their quarter final form and went down to the Scorpions 2-4. Strong games from Dean McManus, Andy and Dave Proust and Barry Walsh appeared to get the Hornets over the line against the champions but in the final seconds the Crusaders came back and eventually won 4-3.

The final was a reply of last year's decider and it again lived up to its reputation of a fast and furious encounter. In a game that saw the lead change constantly, the Crusaders finally got home 4-3 to retain their title. The best for the runners up were Michael Sproule, Tim Kitchingham and the Cheung boys, David, Jeff and Michael. The Crusaders' best were John Samin (Player of the Series), Simon Minney (Player of the Final), Ray Kiley and Steve Hughes.



Tim Kitchingham, playing for the Scorpions, trying to evade a Touch.

Men 40 Semis Series

Like the Crusaders in the 35's, the Sydney Mets were out to show everyone who were the champion Over 40's team and brought to Coffs Harbour a strong team to defend their title. Like the 35's, the finalists from last year was seeded in the same pool and their round game resulted in a 5-all draw.

Like the Mets and Suns who went through their round games undefeated, the Sharks and Razorbacks did likewise in Pool B sharing the points after their 1-all draw. The quarters saw the

Mets thrash the Eagles 12-3, the Razorbacks just get home 3-2 against the Cobras, the Sharks beat the Hornets easily 7-1 and the Suns dispose of the Scorpions 12-3.

After such a good quarter final win, the Suns fancied their chances of playing for the title again, only this time winning it. They came up against a committed Sharks side in the semis, who took them to the wire just losing 2-3. Best for the Sharks were Tim Burt, Phil Evans and Bob Young.

In the other semi the Mets ended the aspirations of the Razorbacks, winning 6-2. The best players for the losers were Don Baartz, Kevin Fleet, Murry McAuliffe and Bob Roberston. Again like the 35s, the final was a replay of the previous year and in a game that changed leaders on four occasions, the Mets stole the break and went on to record 6-5 victory thus retaining their title.



Victor Tagliferra player of the Series for the Mets

The Suns were best served by Bryan Brown (Player of the Final), Gary Newman, Dave Smithers and Mick McCall. For the Mets, Victor Tagliferra (Player of the Series), Joe Lancuba, Emanuel 'Budgie' Behagiar, Bob Behnke and Phil Lindsay all stood out.

Men 45 Semis Series

The Mens 45s consisted of a nine team competition where all teams played each other and only the top two played the finals. The Eagles, who had made all three past finals (winning the inaugural title), were again a contender to make it four in a row.

They took a mighty blow during the round games, suffering a 1-6 loss to the Razorbacks and scraping home 2-0 against the Brisbane Cobras, never the less finishing second on the competition table and meeting their destiny in the final. The Hunter Hornets and Sydney Mets were also contenders but in the end suffered two losses to put them into third and fourth spot.

The Hornets lost 2-7 to the Mets and 1-4 to the Eagles, while the Mets lost 10-4 to the Eagles and 1-3 to the Razorbacks. The best players for Mets were Dieter Major, Garry Gallen and Paul McGouran and Hornets were best served by Brian Hanson, Kim Miller and Vince Cronin.

The final between Razorbacks and Eagles was again a replay of the previous year, with the Eagles throwing everything into their performance only to come away as runners up losing 2-4. The best for the Eagles were Barry Draws (Player of the Series), David Mitchell, Peter Vincent, Ross Knox and Geoff Spargo, while for the victors Jock Pratten (Player of the Final), John Mason, Kevin Feldman, Colin Maddick and Ray Standish played superbly.

Men 50 Semis Series

Six teams again contested the second Men's 50 division with last year's finalist bound to provide the fireworks. The Sydney Mets started off their campaign to wrest the tile from the Sharks but faltered when defeated 3-4 by the Cobras and having their game against the Rebels forfeited.

The Sharks on the other hand felt they were in with a chance, losing only one preliminary game 2-3 to the Razorbacks, whose only loss was 3-5 to the Mets. The Rebels claimed third place on the table with the Cobras fifth, missing out on a touchdown difference against the Mets.

The semis saw the Mets struggle to claim a win over the Razorbacks 3-2 but the Sharks demolished the Rebels 6-3. The best for the Rebels were Phil Billsborough, John Oakes, and Dan Coates while for the Razorbacks Bill Bray, Greg Wallace and Trevor Howard stood out.

Again a replay of the 2000 final, the Sharks simply dominated the Mets, running out comfortable winners 6-2. Player of the Series Maurice Stewart stood out for the Mets ably assisted by Kevin Farmer, Terry Reynolds and



Darrell Madge on the attack for the Sharks.

Michael Jonson.

Terry Hadfield (Player of the Final), Doug Robson, Darrell Madge, Bernie Lowther and Ray Forster starred for the Sharks who were overjoyed at retaining their title.

Women 30 Semis Series

A healthy eleven teams turned up to contest this year's title with no team having won it twice. The title holders, the Brisbane Cobras, were hopeful of being the first but finished third in their Pool and subsequently met the Suns (winners in 1999) in the quarter finals going down a miserable 0-8.

Other contenders, the Sydney Scorpions, finished top of Pool B and won well over the Sharks in their quarter final encounter, beating them 3-1.

Also in with a chance were the Hornets and Crusaders who came first and second in Pool A. The Hornets defeated the Eagles 5-1 in the quarters and fancied their chances but the Crusaders were well beaten in the quarters by the Razorbacks 6-1.

The semis produced some great Touch for these 30+ Women athletes. The Suns and Hornets game was a cracker with neither side showing superiority over the other and in the end it was sad to have a loser. The Suns however prevailed 3-2, with Kirsty Inglis, Gai Taylor, Dot Stockwell and Anne Drinkwater playing strong for the Hornets.

In the other semi, again both teams didn't give an inch with the lead changing several times. The Razorbacks just edged out the Scorpions 5-4. Best for the Scorpions were Tracey Elliott, Lisa Wilkes (Player of the Series), Tracey Simpson and Alicia O'Keefe.

A close semis series was mirrored in the finals where the Razorbacks just got on top of the Suns 1-0 to claim their second championship. Best for the Suns were Kylie Crossley, Veronica Price and Kaye Norris while for the winners; Kerry Strasser was Player of the Final and was well assisted by Jacque Morden, Leanne Sharman, Jo Verrenkamp and Julene Robertson.

Women 35 Semis Series

The Scorpions, winners of two of the three titles in this division, were out to avenge their semi final loss of last year and dominate this year's championship. Last year's finalists the Cobras and Eagles both fell to the Scorpions in the preliminary rounds 1-0 and 4-2 respectively. A 0-all draw against the Suns saw the Scorpions come first and the Suns second on the competition table.

The Scorpions met the Sharks in the semis who put up a great struggle to go down 0-2 despite the best efforts of Michelle Robertson, Julie Shaw, Kerry Norman and Charley Beitzel. In the other semis the Suns had a hard encounter against a committed Cobras side just winning against them 2-1. Best for the Cobras were Angie McPheen, Chris Poppi, Leanne Hudson and Michelle Schafer.

The final saw the Scorpions and Suns battle out a tough game with the Scorpions wearing down their opponents to record a 2-0 victory.

Starring for the Suns were Allyson Fisher, Jill McGuinness, Denise Clune and Jennifer Clancy while for the winners Donna Clapham was Player of the Series, Michelle Smidt was Player of the Finals and they were ably assisted by Jann Rose, Gabrielle Whelan and Judy Malcolm.

2001 NTL Final Senior Results

Men's 30

Scorpions 3 Mets 2

Women's 30

Razorbacks 1 Suns 0

Men's 35

Crusaders 4 Scorpions 3

Women's 35

Scorpions 2 Suns 0

Men's 40

Mets 6 Suns 5

Men's 45

Razorbacks 4 Eagles 2

Men's 50

Sharks 6 Mets 2

Youth Titles enter their fifth year

From the 12th to the 13th March, the Men's and Women's under 20's enjoyed their chance to shine in front of their heroes.

Boys 20's

Like many other divisions, the experiment of having last year's finalist in the same group proved that the cream always rises to the top and in this case the Sharks and Mets finished one and two in Pool A, not allowing any other team in that pool a chance of making the semis.

Besides losing 2-3 to the Sharks, the Mets had a close call against the NQ Tropical Cyclones drawing 2-all to a team that finished last in this division. The Sharks had a close call 2-all against the Northern Eagles.

The Scorpions and Razorbacks finished one and two respectively in Pool B but the latter were no match for the Sharks in the semis going down 1-5. The best players for the Razorbacks were Ben Roberts, Matthew Roberts and Daniel Feldman.



The Mets boys not enjoying their final.

The other semi featured the two Sydney teams, the Mets and Scorpions. Neither gave an inch in the game but the Mets prevailed 2-1 over their rivals. The best for the Scorpions were Mark Thompson, Matthew Takchi, Troy Malcolm and Steven Takchi.

Again the final was a replay of last year with the Mets expecting to take the title off the Sharks, but it was a 'no brainer' as the Sharks stormed home 8-2. The best for the Mets were Adam Springfield, Dan Munro, Paul Dwyer and Marc Walsh.

Best on field for the Sharks were Jeb Hipperson, Player of the Series and Player of the Final Brad Davids. They were assisted by strong games from Drumayne Dayberg-Muir, Mark Regazzoli and James Duignan.



A determined Toby McKay, Mens 20's Sharks player sees the score line within reach.

Womens 20's

Chasing their fourth title in a row, the Sharks disposed of all teams in their pool including last year's finalist the Rebels 5-1. The Rebels finished second and were destined to meet their Sydney rivals, the Mets, in the semis.

Both the Mets and the Razorbacks suffered losses in their round games, the former losing 0-3 to the Hunter Hornets and the latter losing 1-2 to the Mets. The Sharks versus Razorbacks semi was a close game until late in the second half when the Sharks pulled away for a 3-1 win.

The best for the Razorbacks were Peta Rogerson, Megan Lynch and Casey Clark. The clash of the Sydney teams saw a one sided event with the Rebels proving too strong for the Mets, winning 5-2. Best on field for the Mets were Michelle Garnett, Sally Christie and Kate Fitzsimmons.

The Sharks versus the Rebels was again a replay of the previous year's final which was an amazing feature of the 2001 titles. As in many of the other divisions at this tournament, the defending champions again retained their title.

In a game that went from one end of the field to the other at a constant pace, the score changed to produce a new leader on five occasions.

The Rebels were out to revenge last year's loss and appeared to have the game won until two late touchdowns by the Sharks saw them run out the winner, defeating the Rebels 7-6 in an extremely tight and entertaining game.

Elise Anthony was declared Player of the Final in a beaten team but despite the loss, players like Courtney Collings, Melissa McCall and Skye George shone for the Rebels. For the victors the stars were Missy Shaw - the Player of the Series, Roxanne Winder, Candace Winder, Katie Shaw and Rebecca Horrigan.

2001 NATIONAL TOUCH LEAGUE CLUB CHAMPIONS



2001 NTL Final Youth Results

Men's 20

Sharks 8 Mets 2

Women's 20

Sharks 7 Rebels 6

2001 Overall Points Table

1	SQBD Sharks	103
2	Sydney Metropolitan	95
3	Sydney Scorpions	80
4	Brisbane Cobras	77
4	Sunwest Razorbacks	77
6	Southern Suns	65
7	Hunter Western Hornets	57
8	Northern Eagles	49
9	NQ Tropical Cyclones	45
10	Crusaders	43
11	Sydney Rebels	33
12	Barbarians	12
13	Australian Defence Forces	6
14	Touchwest	3



Roxanne Winder running the ball.

Under 18's return to Coffs Harbour

From 20 to 23 August, Schools and Permit Holder teams converged again on Coffs Harbour for the Sixth championships under the NTL format.

With Jamie Soward leading the way the Southern Suns **Boys 18's** were out to avenge last years defeat in the final by the Queensland State Secondary Schools. Unfortunately their quest came to a sudden halt in their first game against NSW CHS who trashed them 12-1 and then in their third round game against Central Queensland they lost 4-6.

Queensland on the other hand went through their preliminary rounds undefeated in Pool A, while in Pool B NSW CHS also were undefeated. The semis saw Queensland play Central Queensland whose only loss to date was 3-7 at the hands of CHS.

Although trying hard they were no match for the Title holder and went down 3-7. Best for Central Queensland was their MVP Matt Baker who was assisted by Daniel Higgins and David Zanette.

NSW CHS faced the Sydney Mets in the other semi and the Mets only loss was a 6-8 defeat at the hands of Queensland. Their luck continued to desert them when they were beaten soundly by CHS 11-6. Best for the Mets was their MVP Adam Springfield who was also supported by a strong game from Luke Rayner and Marc Walsh.



An anxious group of North Canberra Boys 18's awaiting the referees decision on a Touchdown

The final pitted the two undefeated teams against each other and in a game where one mistake could cost dearly the NSW CHS defence held off and Queensland skipped to an 8-5 victory. Best for the CHS side were Dane Allen (MVP) supported by Luke Ackroyd, Nash Beeby, Troy Malcolm and Aaron Tandeck. For the victors David Conlon was their MVP and Adrian O'Shanesy the player of the final.

Others who stood out were Darryl Parker, Tory Hipperson, Graeme Clancy and Matthew Manz. Player of the Series was Joe Williams from the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges.



Joe Williams in action for NSW CCC

The **Girls 18's** saw Queensland (QSST) looking for their fifth title in a row. Going through their round games undefeated they were destined to meet strong opposition from then two other undefeated teams from pools B and C the NSW CHS side and the SQBD Sharks.

In the quarter finals these three teams had relatively easy game with Queensland defeating the Southern Suns 11-0 and NSW CHS winning 3-0 over the Sunshine Coast. The Sharks however although dominant just got home against the Northern Eagles 5-4 while NSW CCC managed to get on top of the Sydney Mets 3-2 in the fourth quarter final.

Semi final Touch is always tough as CHS found out in their game against the Sharks. A game that offered no quarter, the final result came close to full time with CHS getting home 3-2. Shaye Macleod (MVP), Biannca Johnson, Tamara Appo and Tara Mako all had strong games for the Sharks.

In the other semi Queensland just proved too strong for NSW CCC easily winning 10-1 in a lopsided contest. Best for the losers were Cassie Callinan (MVP), Melissa McCall, Claire Winchester and Kate Baseley.

Expecting a close game like last years final, Queensland skipped to an early lead and simply did not allow CHS into the game finally running our winners 5-0 and capturing their fifth consecutive title.

Best for CHS were Leah Mandell (MVP), Bianca Barnier, Casey Cunningham and Jessica Howe while for QSST Kelly McGennity was outstanding and a class above all players winning both the Player of the Series and Player of the Final Awards. She was supported by strong performances from Kate Adams, Roxanne Winder, Amanda Cran and Rachel Reid.



Although coming 13th the very young Northern Territory side gained a wealth of experience especially from coach and legend player, Bo de la Cruze

2001 National Schools Competition Finals Results

Girls Open

Queensland 8 NSW CHS 5

Boys Open

Queensland 5 NSW CHS 0

2002 Sixth NTL Championships attract crowds to Coffs Harbour *From 16/19th March teams again crowd into Coffs Harbour for the Annual National Touch League*

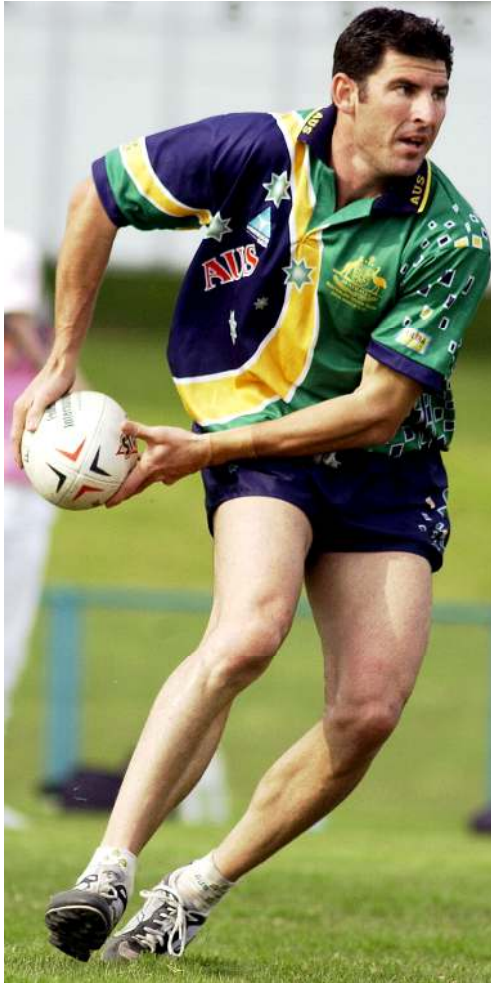
Mens Open

Last years winners the Brisbane Cobras had high hopes of retaining their title when they arrived for the sixth NTL tournament. However their hopes were dashed when the Sydney Mets turned the table on last year's champions defeating the Cobras to win the 2002 Mens open title.

The scorching heat of the finals day saw a number of players and referees suffer from heat exhaustion. The play on the field was also hot with individual and team brilliance on display. The clash between cross border rivals was always going to have plenty of feeling in it and with the added fuel of the Cobras looking to win back-to-back titles, the game was poised on a knife edge.

The Mets led the Cobras and were in front at the half time break 3-1. At that point they were in control of the game. The second half saw a revival from the Cobras, who were asked by coach Ash Heiniger to "give it a dig" and be patient during the second half. They did that and almost pulled off the win, unfortunately time ran out on them.

The Mets coach David Collins was ecstatic with the victory, indicating that his young players who had experienced defeat last year were ready for whatever came their way this year. The Mets were the form team throughout the tournament and many of the punters present had predicted they would win the final in a canter. Whilst they did win, it was far from a canter.



Garry Sonda playing for his country was inspirational throughout the NTL leading his team to victory over the Cobras

The fast finishing Cobras scoring late in the second half to ensure the Mets worked hard all the way to the final whistle. The final result saw the Mets get home 5-4.

Best for the Cobras were Trent McDonal, Shane Duell and Craig Madders. The Mets were well served by Gary Sonda (Player of the Series), Paul Forrester, Steve Roberts, Jason Stanton, Jason Yee and Player of the Final Kurt Nowotny. Coach Forrester described the win as "fantastic" and "an

amazing feeling that has been a year in the making".

Womens Open

The Womens open National Touch League final was an exhibition in class touch by the Brisbane Cobras team when they defeated the Hunter Western Hornets 12-1. In a game that saw last year's runners-up determined to erase the bad memories of the past, they powered home to run away with the game. The Cobras scored early and were to classey for their southern opponents.

The Cobras were the form team of the competition and deserved winners. They defeated last year's winners Sydney Mets in the semi-final, whilst the Hornets defeated the Razorbacks in a close game in the other semi. On a day better suited to sitting by the beach rather than in the 40 degree heat in the centre of Coffs Harbour International Stadium, the Cobras fitness was the telling factor.

The Cobras showed that preparation pays off and steamrolled the ball from one end of the field to the other every time they gained possession, with their relentless efforts being rewarded time and again.



Kelly Woods playing for her country was inspirational in assisting her team to victory over the Hornets

The Hornets were plagued by injuries and went into the final under-strength, as a result the burden was spread across the park. The Hornets were well served by Australian representative Karina Castle and young players Morgan Arndel and

Amanda Henderson. Hornets coach Tony Howard said that the Cobras were a class act and an awesome team.

He indicated that his team could not match the speed of the Cobras. Howard said that four of his girls had never played at the level and it would hold them well for the future. This was the first appearance by a non-metropolitan team in the finals of any open division of the National Touch League and shows the benefit of the Permit system introduced by the Australian Touch Association in 1997.

Hornets were best served by Natalie Conway, Kellie Jean Miller, Karina Castle and Morgan Arndell. Cobras coach Gary Madders credited his team's performance to the skills and individual dedication to fitness. The campaign started many months ago and a fair amount of work has gone into this performance. Madders pointed to the efforts of Rachel Reid as one of his best, which was reinforced when she was later awarded Player of the Final.

The Cobras had many good players throughout and were served well by Player of the Series Kelly Woods. Others to shine were Shelley Matcham, Katie Curtis and Sharon Martin.

Mixed Open

The Mixed open final was a close tussle, which saw the Sydney Scorpions too strong for the Sydney Mets. In an entertaining game the final scoreline favoured the Scorpions 7-5. The Scorpions who were third last year, were the form team at the tournament.

With early favourite Cobras beaten in the quarter finals, the Scorpions, had preformed strongly and looked likely winners after they defeated last year's winners the Sharks in the semi-final..

Meanwhile the Mets defeated a hugely improved Sydney Rebels in the other semi-final to secure a position in the main game. Scorpion's coach Terry Cooper expected his team to do well and thought they would be favourites. The Scorpions came from behind to win the game, something that they had mastered having done it three times throughout the tournament.

The Scorpions were a better team in all areas in the final and best for the beaten Mets were Player of the Final, Christina Frost, Natalie Chenhall, Jason Hunt and Paul Dwyer.

In the end the experience of Tony Eltakchi., Phil Jarrett together with the brilliance of Jamie Chan was instrumental in the victory. Player of the Final was Mets player Christina Frost, while Player of the series went to veteran campaigner Tony Eltakchi.

2002 NTL Final Results			
Men's Open			
Mets	5	Cobras	4
Women's Open			
Cobras	12	Hornets	1
Mixed Open			
Scorpions	7	Mets	5

National Touch League 2002 Overall Placing

Teams	Men	Wm	Mx	#
Sydney Mets	15	10	12	37
Brisbane Cobras	12	15	8	35
Gold Coast Sharks	10	6	10	26
Sydney Scorpions	8	3	15	26
Sydney Rebels	5	7	9	21
NQ Cyclones	9	4	6	19
Sunwest Razorbacks	7	9	2	18
Southern Suns	1	8	7	16
Hunter Hornets	2	12	-	14
Crusaders	6	5	3	14
Barbarians	3	2	4	9
Northern Eagles	4	1	1	6

Seniors NTL enter their fifth year with titles on the line and bragging right up for grabs

Sharks and Scorpions battle to be the first Mens 30's team to win three titles

Mens 30

After winning the first two titles the Sharks brought a team to Coffs confident of knocking off the Scorpions who were chasing their thirds title

in a row. At the completion of the preliminary rounds both teams had suffered one loss. The Scorpions 1-6 against their Sydney rivals the Mets and the Sharks 3-5 against the Scorpions.



Phil Jarrett in NSW colours played a major role in keeping the Scorpions in the game during the Final

The semi finals produced some great Touch especially in the Sharks – Mets game which was eventually won by the Sharks 6-4. Best for the Mets were Barry Clemas, George Ornelas, Jamie Black and Dom Squadrito. The other semi saw the Scorpions run away with the game against the Cobras 7-3. Best for the Cobras were Dave Farrell, Kieran Trenerry and Ron Nordberg.

The final was going to put one team on three wins while the other remained on two. Only time would tell, if the Scorpions could make it three in a row, or if the Sharks would ruin their party. Corey Foster drove the Sharks to the scoreline and each time they scored Phil Jarrett drove the Scorpions back.

Finally the Sharks prevailed winning an entertaining game 5-4. Best for the Scorpions was Player of the Series and Player of the Final Tony

Eltachi although pundits who watched thought Phil Jarrett played a better game in the final. Others who stood out were Stewart Syron, Graham Beale and Craig Nicholls. The Sharks were best served by Dave Raper, Corey Foster, Peter Tong, Andrew Willett and Patrick Grehan.

Mens 35

The Crusaders came to town expecting to win their third title in a row in the Mens 35 and fourth overall out of five tournaments. Their only hiccup was in 1999 when the Mets stole the title from them 4-2 in the final.

After the round games the Crusaders found themselves in third spot on the table after losses to the Scorpions 3-7 and the Mets 5-7. Their confidence got a boost when they played disciplined Touch to defeat the Mets 4-2 in their semi final clash despite strong games from Andy Yaingou (Player of the Series), Steve Kolenko and Scott McLeod.

The undefeated Scorpions clashed with the Brisbane Cobras in the other semis and after defeating them 5-1 in the round game they set about demoralizing them with a 7-0 victory in the semis. Best for the Cobras were Stephen McIntyre, Sean Slinger, Peter Kavanagh and Trevor Beasley.

“Once you make the final anyone can win” a quote often made by aspiring team and echoed by the Crusaders, who believing in themselves, they fancied their chances. The earlier losses were put aside as they approached the final hurdle, however their euphoria was short lived.

The Scorpions came at them with guns blazing and with legend New Zealand player Peter Walters (Player of the Final) leading the charge the Crusaders was no match for the Sydneysiders.



The three Cheung boys who help the Scorpions to victory; David, Jeff and Michael

Peter was ably supported by Jeff, Michael and David Cheung, Mark Springfield, Tim Kitchingham, Peter Wandl and Anthony Cridland. The Crusaders went down to the star studded Scorpions 7-3 despite a strong game from John Samin, Robin Kildare and Mark Hearnden.

Mens 40

After coming second in 1999 the Sydney Mets put together a strong group who won the 40's title the following two years and who turned up at Coffs hoping to make it three in a row.

They came down to earth in the opening game when the Brisbane Cobras defeated them in a close 7-6 encounter and went on to steal top spot on the table after the round games. Mets came in second and played the Southern Suns in the semis who came in third.



Steve Cullen starring for the Scorpions

Fourth place went to Northern Eagles who faced the Cobras in the semis. After playing the Cobras in the last round game and losing only 2-4 the Eagles gave themselves a chance of upsetting the Cobras in the Semis.

However it was not to be and the Cobras won comfortably 3-0. Best for the Eagles were Mark Jansson, Steve Hancock, Wayne Saunders and Brett Newby. In the Southern Suns and Sydney

Mets semis the Suns were expected to put the Mets to the test.

Unfortunately the Mets got on top early and didn't allow the Suns into the game winning comfortably 3-0. Best for the Suns were Brian Brown, John Clune, Dave Smithers and Steve Morris.

The final saw the Cobras and Mets clash in a battle fitting for a Roman arena. With the lead changing constantly the Mets finally got on top and won the contest 4-3. Best for the Cobras were Don Bartz, John Smith, Kevin Hickey and Greg Young while for the Mets Jeff McGhie (Player of the Final), Victor Tagliaferro (Player of the Series), Steve Cullen and Emmanuel Buhagiar stood out.

Mens 45

The Northern Eagles had won the first two and the Sunwest Razorbacks the next two titles and one of them was expected to go to the lead 3-2 in the title race. The Eagle's plan to defeat the Razorbacks in the final to earn bragging rights was short lived when they lost two round games and ended up meeting their old rival in the semi finals.

The battle of the two champion sides was fast and fierce despite the age of the athletes. At the final whistle the Razorbacks had edged out the Eagles 4-3. For the vanquished Peter Vincent, Michael Prowse, Barry Draws and Ray Bastian had strong games.

North Queensland Tropical Cyclones thought they were in with a good chance in their semis clash after defeating former champions the Northern Eagles 4-3 in their round game. Their semi against the Southern Suns however proved to be a tough hurdle and after early promise they faded away to a 1-4 loss.

Best for the Cyclones were Ray Bastian, Robert Tranberg, Max Bryant, David Mann and Bruce Johnson.

The final saw the title holder the Sunwest Razorbacks up against the Southern Suns whom they defeated in a close round game 3-2. With high hopes and leading from the front Trevor McPhillips (Player of the series) took the Razorbacks to an early lead but it was short lived.

Mick McCall (Player of the Final) inspired his troops and the Southern Suns ran out winners 5-3 for their first forties title. Besides McPhillips the Razorbacks were well served by Kevin Feldman, Peter Somerville, Mal Bunney and Terry Ford.



Mick McCall starred in the Suns victory over the Razorbacks

Best for the Suns was Mick McCall who was assisted by strong performances from Gary Newman, John Ruzzene, Ron Wall and captain Don Barbaro.

Mens 50

This division only introduced in 2000 had only one winner on the two previous occasions and they were the South Queensland Sharks (also known as the Gold Coast Sharks or the South Queensland and Border Districts Sharks). With high expectations they expected to play again in and win this years' final. Other teams however had other ideas about the outcome.

After one preliminary round there was a cross over of pools and extra games played which gave a final competition table showing the Sydney Rebels on top followed by the South Queensland Sharks, the Sydney Mets and the Sunwest Razorbacks, all teams however being equal on competition points.

For and against percentage determined places but for the Sharks and Mets their ratio was exactly 2.18% resulting in them playing a drop off to determine their position and who would go straight into the semis and who would contest a quarter final against the Southern Suns.

A loss to the Mets saw then up against the Suns whom they disposed of 5-1 only to then run up against the Sharks again in the semi finals. In a game both sides knew was never going to be easy the Mets got the better of the Sharks in the end winning 5-4.

For the Sharks, Player of the Series Bernie Lowther played strong and was assisted with good games form Terry Hatfield, Jim Baker, Doug Robson and Ray Dunkley.



Terry Hatfield on the move for the Sharks

The other semi saw the Sydney Rebels have a tough match against the Hunter Hornets just getting home 2-0. Best for the Hornets were Kerry Campbell, Dave Knight, Graham Meally and Rod Bruce.

Final encounters in this division have been “gentle” affairs given that most of the players have been playing some sort of football for over 40 years.

The clash between the Sydney Rebels and the Sydney Mets was far from neighbourly love. It was a torrid race to get on top of your opponent and after forty minutes of touch, the Mets prevailed 5-2.

John Oakes, Ken McCulloch, Ray Bussell and Roy Wotton played strongly for the Rebels while the Mets stars were Michael Jonson (Player of the Final), Gary Brown, Dennis Day, Terry Reynolds and Laurie O’Brien.



The late, the GREAT Michael Jonson, playing for his beloved country was instrumental in ensuring the Mets secured a victory over arch rivals the Rebels

Women 30

With two titles under their belts in five years the Sunwest Razorbacks were shooting for their third championship and second in a row. After an uneven number of round games followed by the cross over of pool games the title holder saw themselves finish second on the ladder behind the Hunter Western Hornets on percentages.

Coming in third and fourth were the Southern Suns and South Queensland Sharks who had a quarter finals play off before contesting the semis against the top two. Their opponents were the

Northern Eagles and Sydney Scorpions respectively. The Eagles caused an upset by defeating the Suns 3-2 to move in to the semis while the Sharks narrowly defeated the Scorpions 3-2 to gain the last semis spot.

Despite a close semi and finishing fourth on the table the Sharks rose to the occasion and defeated top of the table winner the Hunter Hornets in a close fought duel 3-2 to advance to the finals. Best for the Hornets were Debbie Potts, Gai Yaylor, Natilee Greenwood and Kirsty Inglis.

The Northern Eagles knew they were in for a tough game against the title holders in the semi finals and despite a gutsy effort they were no match for the champions going down 2-7. Best for them were Julie Seward, Lyn Eason, Cathy Conomos and Leigh Carlton.

During the preliminaries the Razorbacks and Sharks had not met so they needed to “feel each other out” before either team tried to usurp some authority on the game.

For the full forty minutes neither had the upper hand until finally the Razorbacks put the ball over the line and with the referee agreeing it was a touchdown, they finally had the advantage and won 1-0.

Strong games from Karyn Murphy, Rhonda Grehan, Karley Banks and Margie Allen could not prevent the Sharks from going down to the champions.

For the Razorbacks Sue Ginns was Player of the Final and she was assisted through the tournament by strong performances from Teena Jennings (former Victorian Elite players), Dianne Pierce, Kerry Strasser and Jodie Luck. Player of the Series was Jody English from the Sydney Scorpions who finished sixth.

Women 35

After winning four out of the last four titles the Sydney Scorpions approached this years championships to prove they were the outstanding Women 35 team and win their fifth title and third consecutively.

After the preliminary rounds the Scorpions were on track finishing on top of the table and remaining undefeated.

In their semi final clash the Scorpions easily disposed of the South Queensland Sharks 5-0 with Anna Fuiava, Kerry Robinson, Kerry Norman and Lisa Miller all trying hard for the defeated Sharks.

Second placed Southern Suns came up against the Brisbane Cobras in the second semi final.



Carol Forlonge running hard for the Scorpions

In a tighter encounter than the first semi the scores changed constantly before the Suns got on top to win 4-3. Best for the Cobras were Deborah Jones, Angie McPhee, Leanne Hudson and Haylene Grogan.

The Scorpions versus the Suns final was another hard fought game with the Scorpions just getting home 3-1. Strong efforts from Leanne Gregurke, Allyson Fisher, Jill McGuinness and Megan Kennedy kept the Suns in the game until the final whistle.

For the Scorpions, Tracey Simpson was Player of the Final and she was supported by good performances from Megan Stanford, Kim Wiles, Carol Forlonge and Gabby Whelan. Cherie Green from the Northern Eagles (who finished fifth) was Player of the Series.

2002 NTL Final Senior Results

Men's 30

Sharks 5 Scorpions 4

Women's 30

Razorbacks 1 Sharks 0

Men's 35

Scorpions 7 Crusaders 3

Women's 35

Scorpions 3 Suns 1

Men's 40

Mets 4 Cobras 3

Men's 45

Suns 5 Razorbacks 3

Men's 50

Mets 5 Rebels 2

Sixth Youth Titles attract the champions of tomorrow to the National at Coffs Harbour

*South Queensland Sharks Boys
looking for second title to match
the Cobras and Mets*

Boys 20

In five years the Brisbane Cobras won the first two and the Sydney Mets the next two titles. The Sharks were current title holders and wanted to equal the other two clubs and set up a dynasty to continue winning the title for many more years. Their first hurdle was taking out this years' event and they stumbled in the round game against the Southern Suns going down 1-4.

Coming second to the Suns after the preliminary rounds they had to wait for their semi final opponents until the quarter final game between the Sunwest Razorbacks and Sydney Mets was decided. The Razorbacks just got home 3-2. In the other quarter final the Brisbane Cobras had a much easier run in disposing of the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones 7-3.

The semis saw the Suns dispose of the Brisbane Cobras 5-3 and the Sharks sent the Razorbacks home defeating them 5-2. Best for the Cobras were Jarrod Kendall, Brett Doyle and Tim Willett while for the Razorbacks Daniel Feldman, Seb Rey and Justin Huser stood out.



Player of the Finals for the Suns Andrew Wise

The final was expected to be a torrid affair with the Sharks chasing back to back victories. Unfortunately the star studded Suns were simply too good and ran away with the game 6-2. James Harrington, Ralph Hickman, Mark Regazzoli and Tory Hipperson played strongly for the Sharks

while Player of the Series Jamie Soward, and Player of the Final Andrew Wise together with Michael Swarko, Christian Lotter and Andrew Baggio starred for the Suns.

Suns Coach, Barry Jackson, said that his team's defence had been the key to the success. The nucleus of the Suns team was runners-up at the Australian 18 years championships a couple of years back and they showed plenty of spirit, speed and skill in the game against the highly fancied Sharks.

Womens 20

The Gold Coast Sharks Womens 20s team made it five on the trot when they won their final of the National Touch League at Coffs Harbour on Tuesday. The Sharks overwhelmed the Cyclones 4-0 in the heat of the day.

Sharks coach Frank Bondolfi, in his second year at the helm, said his young team had worked hard for the prize. It was a pretty impressive score-line and a great achievement, Bondolfi said. "Fitness, combined with their drilling and rucking patterns, had carried them to victory", he said. Bondolfi said that the team had saved their best game for last.

Cyclones coach Steve McCarron said he had been confident of his side's ability going into the final, but they had lacked experience. "It had also been difficult to get the squad to training when players were drawn from an area from Cairns to Bundaberg, with only one full training run; the job was always going to be difficult."

McCarron said that his team was happy, and there are no excuses why they lost. "We just need to keep pushing for more training. I'm very proud of the girls. We've got two 16-year-olds playing in this division, so they've got four or five years to go. At the end of the day, a loss like that is a good experience. You've got to go through games like that to be better", McCarron said.

He indicated that Kelly McGennity and Shannon Whitehouse, two Australian 18 years' representatives, were always going to be their important players, which also put pressure on the pair. Winger Kierra Davis also shone, McCarron said. South Queensland Sharks swept the awards with Lauren McDonald being awarded Player of the Final and Roxanne Winder Player of the Series.

**2002 NTL Final
Youth Results**

Men's 20

Suns 6 Sharks 2

Women's 20

Sharks 4 Cyclones 0

**2002 NATIONAL TOUCH
LEAGUE CLUB CHAMPIONS**



2002 Overall Points Table

1	Sydney Metropolitan	91
2	Gold Coast Sharks	90
3	Brisbane Cobras	82
4	Southern Suns	73
5	Sydney Scorpions	66
6	Nth Qld Cyclones	59
7	Sunwest Razorbacks	57
8	Hunter Western Hornets	49
9	Northern Eagles	41
10	Sydney Rebels	34
11	Crusaders	33
12	Barbarians	9
12	Australian Defence Forces	9
14	Touchwest	4

***Under 18's invite
New Zealand to
return***

***The return of New Zealand
School teams adds considerable
interest to the 2002
Championships***

The 2002 National 18's Touch Championships played at Coffs Harbour in September were one of the most successful ever for NSW teams, with NSW Combined High Schools again finishing second in the women's competition and for the first time ever the Sydney Mets came away with the title of best youth men's team in the country.

Boys 18's

The Sydney Mets performance was probably the most remarkable being the first time ever a non-school team has won the national championship. With state schools teams having first choice of all the junior players still in the school system, it is ever difficult for regional teams to compete on an equal level at national championships.

What may be more remarkable still is, with Brisbane Cobras also in the final, the fact both of the teams in the final were regional teams.

NSW Touch General Manager, Dean Russell, believes it is a credit to the local junior competitions that two regional teams managed to win their way through to the final.

"I feel the focus for touch is moving away from the schools and into the local competitions. Of course it is still very strong in schools and players get a very good grounding there, but there are very strong community based competitions out there now as well, so players who don't go through to year 12 can get a very solid grounding." said Russell.

"We are over the moon about the Mets winning. It was a terrific performance from them and they thoroughly deserved everything they achieved." The Sydney Mets had to get past six time winner and current title holder the Queensland State Secondary Schools in the semis and in a high scoring game defeated them 12-9. Best for

Queensland were James Roberts (MVP) Peter Mills, Gian Guerra, and Brendon Thimble.

The Cobras had an easier win in their semi against Central Queensland defeating them 9-4. Josh Essex (MVP and Player of the Series), Adrian O'Shanesy and Luke Bunt played strongly for CQ.



Despite this spectacular Touchdown by QSST they failed to defeat the Mets

In the main event, Player of the Final, Mets Daniel Brown, caused the Cobra's defence trouble all day, while excellent finishing saw Blake Green score four touchdowns for the newly crowned champions.

The Mets almost let the championship slip through their fingers when they let slip a 1 touchdown advantage late in the game to force the final into a sudden death 'drop-off'. Fortunately for the Sydney based side they regrouped and scored the winning touchdown during their first set with the ball in extra time.

Besides Brown and Green, the Mets were well served by Joseph Phillipe their MVP, Raymond Moujalli and Dean Springfield. For the Cobras Ian Lacey was their MVP and he was ably assisted by Kieran Gibbs who scored 15 touchdowns through the tournament, while Matthew Colleton and David Conlon ably assisted

Unlike in the series from 1993 to 1996 the New Zealand teams were ineligible for the finals series. They did however provide some amazing skilful touch and after their preliminary rounds were undefeated scoring 103 touchdowns for and 20 against and on the way disposing of the Mets 8-3 in the opening match of the tournament. Shaun Ngawini was their star closely followed by Maurice Stone and Ryan Hotham.

Womens 18's

Unfortunately for NSWCHS women's team the Queensland Secondary Schools Team again beat them in the final. Part of the battle for NSW in winning the National 18's Championships is having its best schools players split between three different representative teams whilst Queensland only have the one representative team.

"We do have a bit of a problem when we face QSST," said Russell, "in that we split our best players into three teams." "I would like to think if we put all our best players into one team we would have one great game against QSST."

"There are four or five girls from the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges who would fit straight into the NSWCHS side and straightaway make it a stronger team."

"Then again, we give more girls the opportunity to go and compete at the Championships. If we only sent the one representative team we would be cutting down the number of girls representing NSW from 42 to 14, so from a perspective of giving more players a chance to have a higher level of development our system is excellent."

One of the great experiences for the players who travelled to Coffs Harbour this year was the opportunity to see the Australian teams take part in the Trans Tasman Test Series.

It is not everyday most of these young players will be given a chance to watch the best two teams on the planet face off against each other and most took their chance and supported the series, most of the time at the top of their voices, eagerly.

Australian Touch Association Assistant Chief Executive, Peter Topp, is extremely pleased with the way the tournament worked out. "It turned out really well," said Topp, "having the Trans Tasman teams there at the same time worked well. It gave the young players a chance to see touch at its best."

"It will probably be one of the only chances some of these players, especially the ones from W.A, Victoria, and the Northern Territory, will have to see this level of touch." "From the perspective of the ATA, this years tournament was one of the best ever."

In getting to the final Queensland had to defeat the Northern Eagles 12-2 and then face a determined North Queensland outfit who surprised them going down only 2-3 on the bell. Best for North Queensland were Amanda Cran (MVP), Kelly McGinnithy and Kirsty Le Gay Brereton.

The other finalists were perennial runners ups NSWCHS who defeated NSW CCC in a close quarter final 5-4 then South Queensland Sharks came close to knocking them over in the semis going down 2-3. Best for the Sharks were Jarah Jennings their MVP, Katherine Moore, Emma Law and Katie Shaw.

Led by the Player of the Final, and current Australian women's shadow player, Kate Adams, QSST controlled the final from start to finish. After allowing the NSW team to score the first touchdown the reigning champions hit back quickly and continued applying pressure to take the lead.

The final was a tightly contested game with both sides stringing together impressive pieces of play at times through the match. In the end QSST drew away and went on to win 6-4. Best for CHS were their MVP Jai Curry, Kirstie Jenkins and Kirrily Bradstock while Kate Adams starred for Queensland and was ably assisted by Lauren McDonald, Roxanne Winder and Natasha Fry. Melissa McCall from NSW CCC, who finished sixth, was Player of the Series.

**2002 Australian Under-18
Championship Results**

Girl's Bronze

SQBD 4 Nth Qld. 2

Girl's Grand Final

QSST 6 NSWCHS 4

Boy's Bronze

Central Qld. 10 QSST 5

Boy's Grand Final

Mets 6 Cobras 5

2003 Seventh NTL sees Queensland Young Guns steal the show

The dominance by NSW teams in the Opens divisions is set to be tested from 13th to 16th March by a new breed of Touch players.

Mens Open

Current title holders the Sydney Mets were hoping to make it two in a row and chase the dominance of titles held by their neighbours the Sydney Scorpions who won the first four Mens Open crowns.

Going through undefeated in 2002 the Mets started their campaign off with three hard fought wins before coming up against the South Queensland Sharks. The game was fast and furious and the Mets came up against an opponent with playing skills rarely displayed at this level before.

Each time Gary Sonda, Steve Mayne and Terry Delana put the ball over the line for a touchdown; Shark's Benji Marshall replied then went one better to score four touchdowns himself and almost single-handily give victory to the Queensland team 4-3.

With a draw 3-3 against the Brisbane Cobras the Mets earned a quarter final berth against the Sunwest razorbacks who they disposed of 4-2 in a tight encounter.

The Sharks and the Cobras went straight into the Semis and were joined there by the Sydney Scorpions who had a 7-2 victory over the North Queensland Tropical Cyclone in the quarters. Both semis were tough fought battles with the Sharks and the scorpions trading blow for blow in a high scoring game.



Drumayne Dayberg Muir (above) and below fellow star Benji Marshall



Four touchdowns by Glen Fitzgerald could not prevent the Sharks running out winners 8-7. Besides Fitzgerald; Jamie Stowe, Ben Webster, Mark Boland and Shane Frederiksen played strongly for the Scorpions. In the other semi the Sydney Mets got over the top of the Brisbane Cobras 6-4 despite two touchdowns each to Brent Madders and Trent McDonald. Also starring for the Cobras were Mick Rogers, Craig Madders and Shane Duell.

The Mets were now in with a chance to defend their title and in finals football anything can happen. Touchdowns by Jim Marinos and Kurt Nowotny were not enough for the four the Sharks scored (Harrington, Wastall, Bartlett and Dayberg-Muir).

Despite the score the Mets were best served by Gary Sonda, Jason Stanton and Chris Hill. For the Winners; Drumayne Dayberg Muir was Player of the Final, Benji Marshall (Player of the Series), with Turoa Needham and Clayton Wastall putting in strong performances.

Womens Open

A strong Cobras outfit turned up to defend their 2002 title. Like the Mets men they were undefeated in the previous year and were expected to be the team to beat at this event. They showed their strength by going through the preliminary rounds undefeated and eventually met the South Queensland Sharks in the semis.

Their main opponents were the Sydney Mets who lost narrowly to them in the rounds 1-3 and who came up against the Sunwest Razorbacks in the semi finals. Despite a strong game from Tanya Bovgoupe (Sewter) and Carly Bell who both scored touchdowns the Razorbacks were no match for the Mets and went down 2-5. Angela Doyle and Casey Sharpe also played strongly for the vanquished.

The Cobras semi game with the Sharks was tough going until the champions usurped their authority and ran away with the game 7-4. Best for the Sharks were Tena McIlveen, Lauren McDonald, Katie Shaw and Zara Houston who all scored and were ably assisted by Renee Murphy and Sharyn Williams.



Sharyn Martin in beloved Queensland colours was Player of the Final in Cobra's win over the Mets

The final was the Mets chance to get revenge for their third place the previous year. Despite two touchdowns from Michele Winchester and one each from her sister Louise and Nadina Bambury and Stephanie Sorrensen the Mets could not overtake the Cobras who won narrowly 6-5.

Scorers for the Cobras were Kelly Woods (Player of the Series) 2, Ashley Candice, Daina Hobbins, Sharyn Martin (Player of the Final) and Shelley Matcham, all one each.

Mixed Open

Runner up twice, two time winners and current Champions the Sydney Rebels arrived at Coffs chasing back to back titles. A draw with the Sydney Scorpions and losses to the Brisbane Cobras, South Queensland Sharks and Sydney Mets saw them miss out on the semi finals and eventually come in sixth place.

The four teams mentioned however made up the group who would play off for the title. With no team being undefeated the semis were open for the taking. One touchdown each by Cobra's Swain Rovelli and Natalie Parker were not good enough to beat the Sharks who recorded four touchdowns by Justin Robson, Nathan Jones, Michael Frith and Karley Banks.

The Other semis were more one sided when the Sydney Scorpions ran away from the Mets to record an 8-4 victory. Scorers for the Mets were Daniel Rushworth, Renee Willmontt, Inshan Sheriff and Charbel Bainou while for the Scorpions one each to Adam Fahim, Mahuta Teika, Dean Murphy, Sally Armstrong, Drew Davies, Philip Jarrett and Rachel Byrne.

The final saw both sides throw the ball around and attack from all parts of the field. In an entertaining game that saw the lead change many times the Scorpions finally got on top of their opponents in the second half and ran out winners 7-5.

Caroline McDonald scored two for the Sharks and Justin Robson, Leonnie Smith and Karley Banks one each while Craig Slavin and Nathan Jones played strongly to keep the Sharks in the game.

For the Scorpions two each to Michelle Flewitt and Michelle Roberts while Mahuta Teika, Drew Davies and Tony Eltakchi scored the remainder of the touchdowns.

Yvette Teika from the Scorpions was named Player of the Series and Tony Eltakchi was the Player of the Final. Phil Jarrett and Adam Fahim were strong performers throughout the series with Fahim scoring eleven touchdowns for the Scorpions while Justin Robson scored ten touchdowns for the Sharks.

2003 NTL Final Results			
Men's Open			
Sharks	4	Mets	3
Women's Open			
Cobras	6	Mets	5
Mixed Open			
Scorpions	7	Sharks	5

National Touch League 2003

Overall Placing

Teams	Men	Wm	Mx	#
Gold Coast Sharks	15	9	10	34
Brisbane Cobras	10	15	8	33
Sydney Mets	12	12	7	31
Sydney Scorpions	9	2	13	24
Sydney Rebels	6	8	5	19
Sunwest Razorbacks	7	10	1	18
Southern Suns	5	6	6	17
NQ Cyclones	8	4	2	14
Barbarians	3	7	3	13
Crusaders	2	3	4	9
Hunter Hornets	4	5	0	9
Northern Eagles	1	2	0	3

*Sixth Seniors
NTL sees a new
challenger to the
title as best senior
permit*

*The Mets, Sharks and Suns
dominated in 2002 and their
supremacy is about to be
challenged.*

Mens 30

The Scorpions who were runners up in the previous year were out to show the 30's division why they should be champions in 2003.

Their aspirations were dealt a blow when in Round three they lost 4-5 to their neighbours the Sydney Mets. John Moujalli scored three for the Mets while Darren Swain got two touchdowns for the Scorpions. They showed plenty of grit to get back up and go on to meet the Brisbane Cobras in the quarter finals disposing of them 10-1. They then met the undefeated South Queensland Sharks in the semi finals.

The Mets on the other hand went through undefeated and disposed of the Defence team 8-1 to set up a semi final showdown with the Hunter Hornets. A strong performance from Adrian Sutherland for the Hornets saw him score two touchdowns while Wayne Merritt and Geoff Stait put on one each but it was not enough to counter the six from the Mets. Scott Mcleod got two while Len Ryan, Tok Puroka, Geoff Plummer and Robert Barakat all scored one touchdown each.



Len Ryan in Australian colours played a major role in the Mets victory

The Sharks felt they had a good chance against the Scorpions in the other semi finals as they had already defeated them in the round game. Touchdowns by Adrian Harrington, Adam Hope and Patrick Grehan, from the Sharks were not enough to match the five scored by the Scorpions' Darren Swain, Christian Browne, Phillip Jarrett, Russell Cox and Barry Gibson.

The Scorpions were now in the final and determined not to be bridesmaids again. They gave no quarter and received even less from the Sydney Mets who, led by Barry Clemas, Michael Farhat and Paul Sfeir went onto win 5-4.

Scorers for the disappointed Scorpions were Anthony Dudeck 2, Mark Leonard and Tony Eltachki one each while for the Mets John Moujalli, Len Ryan, Robert Elbahou, Milad Almaoui and Tok Puroka got one each. Tony Eltakchi from the Scorpions was named Player of the Series while Barry Clemas from the Mets was Player of the Final.

Mens 35

Sydney Scorpions and Mets, the South Queensland Sharks and the Crusaders are all winners of the Mens 35 division and this year's title was expected to go to one of the past champions. The Sydney and Gold Coast teams chances were made a lot easier when two time title holder the Crusaders did not enter teams.



Brandon McDonald scoring a touchdowns for the Scorpions

Defending their title the Scorpions made an impressive start by going through the round game undefeated disposing of the Mets 3-2 and Sharks 8-1. Their hardest game was a 5-5 draw with the Brisbane Cobras.

The semis saw the Scorpions playing the Southern Suns and the Sydney Mets up against an in form Cobras with the Sharks failing to make the cut. The Suns were no match for the champs going down 2-8 with John Mercieca and Vena Sale putting points on the board. For the Scorpions David Cheung and Brandon McDonald scored two each with Mick Cheung, John Nolan, Brett Gillard and Mark Mahoney notching up one each.

The Cobras and Mets semis was also a no contest with the Sydney side defeating the Brisbane team 6-1 setting up an all Sydney clash in the Finals. Scoring for the Cobras was Steve McIntyre while the Mets scorers were; Peter Velo (2), Sarkis Zalloua, Tony Iannella, Andrew Yiangou, and Pule Latoa.

After easy semi final wins both teams approached the final with a degree of caution each knowing the capabilities of the other team. An enthralling game saw the lead change constantly until the Mets got on top of the champions and took their crown from them 4-3.



Andy Yiangou on the move for the Mets

Steve Kolenko scored two for the Mets while Peter Velo and Andrew Yiangou finished the scoring. For the Scorpions Tim Kitchingham,

Derek Duguid and Brandon McDonald scored. Player of the Finals was Derek Duguid from the Scorpions and Player of the Series was Dave Elliott from the Southern Suns.

Mens 40

The Crusaders not entering in the 35's division meant they would be fielding an exceptionally strong Mens 40 team. Winners for the past three years the Sydney Mets welcomed the challenge of the "young guns" into the forties ranks.

A loss in the opening round 3-4 to the Crusaders was no great hiccup but a 4-4 draw with the Northern Eagles saw the Mets go to the quarter finals up against the Brisbane Cobras who were runners up the previous year. A tough game ensued with the Cobras just getting home 3-2 and keeping their title hopes alive but putting the Mets out of contention.

Sydney pride was on the line with only the Scorpions left to take up the challenge. They struggled to defeat the Hunter Hornets in the quarters 4-3 and struggled to get on top of the Sharks in the semis but failed 3-4.

Ian Clarke, Gary Simmons and Quentin Johnson scored for the Scorpions while the Sharks four came from David Fairbanks, Geoff Bunt, Terry Savage and Vinnie Garrick.

The Crusaders and Sharks had no trouble in their quarter final games defeating the Suns 6-1 and Eagles 8-4 respectively.

The semis saw the Crusaders struggle against the Cobras before getting the advantage 4-3 at the final whistle. For the Cobras Tony Lachze, Eddie Wiegman and Kevin Hickey scored while the Crusaders scorers were; Brady Cummins, Stephen Tomlin, Allan Furlong and Peter Elliot.

The other semi was just as tight and mirrored the 4-3 scoreline with the Sharks edging out the Scorpions and leaving Sydney without a team in the final. Neither the Sharks nor the Crusaders had won this division before so a new Champion was about to emerge.

A struggle ensued from the first whistle and it appeared the game would be an old fashion arm wrestle between two old foes. In the end the Crusaders pulled away and went on to record a 4-2 victory.



Steve Tomlin about to nick up the ball for the Crusaders

David Fairbanks and Barry Smith scored for the Sharks while Steve Hughes, Stephen Tomlin, Mark Edwards and Andrew Reid scored for the Crusaders. Steve Hughes from the Crusaders was named Player of the Series and Player of the Final.

Mens 45

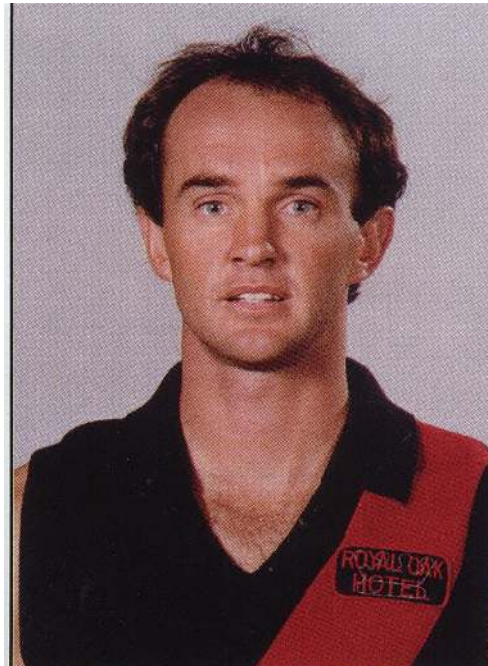
The Northern Eagles won the first two titles, the Sunwest Razorbacks the next two and the Southern Suns, as defending champions, also want to make it two in row. Two drawn games in the preliminary rounds allowed the Northern Eagles to take top spot on the ladder with the Suns having to settle for second place. Both teams remained undefeated so it appeared they were destined to meet again in the final after their round draw of 4-4.

The Eagles met the Cobras and after some early tough defensive exchanges the Eagles got on top defeating the Cobras 6-3. Leon Tanson, Ross Bateson, Ross Casey scored one each for the Cobras while Michael Prowse and Peter Vincent got two each for the Eagles with Robert Kahler and John Singh adding the extras.

The other semis saw the Suns run away with the game defeating the Sydney Mets 5-0. Adrian Murray, Peter Clayton, Gary Newman, John Ruzzene and Ron Wall all scored for the Suns

Looking for their second successive title the Suns started strongly and never allowed the Eagles into the game. Half way through the game Suns player Richard Hamilton collapsed and died. The game was concluded and the Suns declared the winner with the score being 4-1 at the time.

Mike Biltoft was the Eagles lone touchdown scorer while Mick McCall, Peter Clayton, Graham Lovell and Grant Harris got one each for the Suns. Ron Wall from the Suns was Player of the Series but due to the tragedy in the final no Player of the Final award was made.



The late Richard Hamilton, a gentleman, a family man, a mate and a great sportsman

Mens 50

With the defending champions the Sydney Mets not participating in 2003 the two times winner the South Queensland Sharks fancied adding another title to their collection. A 2-2 draw against the Sunwest Razorbacks and then a 1-5 loss to the Hunter Hornets put a big dent in their aspirations.

After the preliminary rounds the Hornets were on top with the Sharks second followed by the Northern Eagles and Sunwest Razorbacks. This saw the Hornets meet the Eagles in the first semi final whom they easily disposed of 7-1. Lone score for the Eagles was Max Strong while for the Hornets Kim Miller scored two, Brian

Hanson, Barry Herbert, Graham Meally, Kerry Smith and Don McGill got one each.

South Queensland Sharks had a less easy time of disposing of the Razorbacks 4-1 with the "Pigs" lone scorer being veteran Peter Somerville. Jim Baker got two for the Sharks while Jim Donnan and Ray Moody scored one each.

The final saw the Sharks quietly confident of winning their third title despite the loss to the Hornets in the round game. Unfortunately the Hornets led by Player of the Series Graham Meally never let the Sharks into the game and ran away with a 6-3 win.

David Sheppard, Bryan Scott and Jim Donnan all scored for the Sharks but their efforts were overshadowed by the six from the Hornets scored by Col Campbell and Graham Meally (2), Phil Flowers and Barry Herbert one each. Terry Hatfield from the Sharks was named Player of the Final.

Womens 30

Three time champions the Sunwest Razorbacks wanted to make four titles when they brought a strong contingent with them to this year's championship. Their chances were enhanced when they went through the preliminaries in Pool A undefeated and disposed of the Brisbane Cobras 8-1 in the Quarter finals.

Their main threat appeared to be the Sydney Scorpions who were the other undefeated team from Pool B and who disposed of the Southern Suns 10-1 in their quarter final. However nobody told the other winning quarter finalists that the end result was a forgone conclusion.

The Northern Eagles just managed to get on top of the Sydney Mets 1-0 while the Hunter Hornets disposed of the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones 4-1.

The semis saw the Hornets cause an upset to the Razorbacks plans by defeating them 3-2 with Teena Jennings and Lisa Harriss scoring for the Razorbacks. Heidi Novosell, Gai Taylor and Alison Daskalovski were the Hornet's scorers.

Sydney Scorpions had an easier passage to the final defeating the Northern Eagles 6-3. Lisa Wilkes, Cherie Green and Larraine McLaughlin scored for the Eagles while Monique Nolan (2),

Judy Collins, Jody English, Kim Melville and Tania Cullimore scored for the Scorpions.



Jody English Player of the Series for the Scorpions

For most of the final the contest was a close encounter until Player of the Final, Michelle Brown, inspired the Hornets who pulled away to record a 5-3 victory.

Maria Ekde (2) and Judy Collins scored for the vanquished while for the winners Michelle Brown (2), Debbie Potts, Kirsty Inglis and Judith Tynan put points on the board for the Hornets. Player of the Series was Jody English from the Sydney Scorpions.

Womens 35

After winning the first two over 35 Womens title the Sydney Scorpions had their party ruined by the Brisbane Cobras who relegated them to third place in 2000. However the Scorpions recovered and won the next two championships and felt confident the Cobras would not deny them three in a row this time round.



Judy Malcolm one of the Scorpions Stars

Whilst the Cobras struggled in the round games getting beaten twice by the Scorpions, another Queensland team the South Queensland Sharks emerged as the challengers to stop the Scorpions run. Drawing 2-2 then defeating them 2-1 the Scorpions title hung loosely around their heads.

It must have felt a lot looser when the Southern Suns emerged as the danger coming in second on the competition table ahead of both the Sharks and the Cobras.

With only a final being played the Scorpions had to call on all their resources to mentally approach the game against a foe they had beat 4-2 in the first round but had a 4-4 draw in the second round.

The final was played at a fast pace with neither side giving an inch until finally the Scorpions won their third title in a row and fifth out of six events beating the Suns 3-2 in a tight tussle.

Denise Clune's two touchdowns couldn't match the three from the Scorpions scored by Michelle Smidt, Kim Wiles and Trish Verhoeven. Tracey Simpson was named Player of the Series and Player of the Final was Megan Stanforth both from the Scorpions.

Womens 40

For the first time more than one or two teams turned up to contest the Womens 40's division. In fact six teams took part and after preliminary games the Northern Eagles topped the charts remaining undefeated. South Queensland Sharks came second with the Hunter Hornets and Sunwest Razorbacks third and fourth.

The Eagles versus Razorbacks semi did not reach too many highs with the Eagles too dominant winning 5-1. Sharon Williams scored the lone touchdown for the losers while Joan O'Neill, Michelle Carney, Lindy Roberts, Debbie Walsh and Lorrae O'Brien all scored for the winners.

The other semi produced a better contest with the Hunter Hornets just edging out the Sharks 3-2 before the final whistle. Jill Bonner and Kathy O'Brien scored for the Sharks and Janelle Frost, Anne Dunning and Alison Tudball put points on the board for the Hornets.

The final was a hotly contested event when both sides tried to dominate from the outset. In the end the Eagles got on top of the Hornets 4-3.

Anne Dunning scored two for the Hornets with Sharon Considine adding the extras, while for the Eagles Denise Hurst, Joan O'Neill, Michelle Carney and Lindy Roberts all scored one.

Denise Hurst from the Northern Eagles was named Player of the Series while Doreen Kearney from the Hornets was Player of the Final.

2003 NATIONAL TOUCH LEAGUE CLUB CHAMPIONS

2003 NTL Final Senior Results

Men's 30

Mets 6 Scorpions 4

Women's 30

Hornets 5 Scorpions 3

Men's 35

Mets 4 Scorpions 3

Women's 35

Scorpions 3 Suns 2

Men's 40

Crusaders 4 Sharks 2

Women's 40

Eagles 4 Hornets 3

Men's 45

Suns 4 Eagles 1

Men's 50

Hornets 6 Sharks 3



2003 Overall Points Table

South Qld Sharks	102
Sydney Metropolitan	90
Sydney Scorpions	76
Brisbane Cobras	76
Hunter Western Hornets	70
Southern Suns	63
Sunwest Razorbacks	54
Northern Eagles	51
Nth Qld Cyclones	47
Crusaders	44
Sydney Rebels	35
Barbarians	13
ADF	9
Touchwest	2

2004

Eighth NTL sees Sydney Mets fight to take back the overall title.

Spurred on by their defeat at the hands of the Sharks in 2003, the Mets rebuilt for dominance in the Opens divisions between 13th and 16th March

Mens Open

Winning the Mens Open Championship for the first time since the NTL began in 1998 the Sharks started off their title defence with a loss to the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones. This was not the start they were hoping for. Led by Gavin Shuker the Cyclone fought hard for their 5-4 victory over the defending champions.

A repeat of their 2002 undefeated season was all the Mets were thinking of when they began their campaign with a 5-2 win over the Razorbacks. Their only glitch before the quarters was a 6-6 drawn with their eventual grand final opponents the Brisbane Cobras.

As it turned out the Cobra's path to the grand final was marred only by the same result against the Mets. The Sharks defence looked good with a 5-0 win in the quarters against the Sydney Rebels with both Turoa Needham and Shannon Hough scoring 2 each and Nathan Jones the remainder.

The arch rivals meet in the semis where the Mets displayed a superb team performance which saw them defeat the Sharks 6-4 thus ending their reign as champions. The Cobras led by Mick Rogers (5 touchdowns), Stephen Swann (4 touchdowns), and Sebe Rey (3 touchdowns) disposed of the Sydney Scorpions 10-1 in the quarters and the Razorbacks 8-7 in the semis to set up the clash with the Mets in the final.

The final started at express pace with both teams attack going from one end of the field to the other. One team would score only to be matched in the scoring by their opponents. Eventually the Mets ran out winners 5-4 with the scorers being Adrian Tan 2 Daniel Rushworth Noel McLean and Scott Danswan 1 each.

For the Cobras Sebe Rey scored 2 while Stephen Swann and Luke Parker crossed for 1 each.

Jason Yee from the Mets was named player of the final while Ashley Farrow from the Sunwest Razorbacks was player of the series. Stephen Swan from the Cobras scored a double by being the highest scorer with 13 touchdowns coupled with a record for the event scoring 5 in the one game against the Barbarians.



Jason Yee on attack against the Scorpions

Womens Open

Looking for their third title in a row a committed Cobras teams arrived at Coffs harbour ready to defend their undefeated record over the past two years. In their third game they suffered their first loss in three seasons at the hands of the Sharks.

Touchdowns by Sharks players Roxy Winder and Caroline McDonald were only matched by a solo score from Angela Barr for the Cobras. Shrugging off the loss the Cobras went on to beat the Razorbacks 8-1 in the quarters and narrowly defeat the Mets 5-4 in the Semis. This was the Mets only loss of the despite strong performances from Naomi Gerace, Louise Winchester, Stephanie Sorrensen and Judd girls.

The Sharks run into the finals was much easier with victories over the Barbarians 9-2 and Suns 8-2 with Nicola Slade and Sharyn Williams standing out through the playoff series.

In the final, the order of the day was defence with both side showing exception skills in restricting the opposition scoring. Touchdowns by Roxy Winder and Halley McAnelley were too good for the lone touchdown by Delwyn Tupuhi for the Cobras thus securing the Womens title for the first time for the Sharks 2-1.

Player of the Series was Louise Winchester from the Sydney Mets while Tenna Mcilveen from the Gold Coast Sharks was Player of the Finals. Both Melissa Gelea (Sydney Mets) and Mary Steele (Cobras) scored 10 touchdowns for the tournament.



The Champion Sharks Womens team

Mixed Open

NSW teams had dominated the Mixed division since 1997 with the Scorpions having three titles and the Rebels two. The Sharks and the Cobras make up the balance with one championship belt each.

The Queensland teams were out to show their worth and swing the equation back towards the northern state The Sharks went through the preliminaries undefeated and accounted for the Barbarians 7-0 in the quarters and the Sydney Rebels 5-0 in the Semis setting up a grand final appearance for the second consecutive year. Brad Davids was the star with 4 touchdowns.

Brisbane Cobras run to the quarters was only marred by a 1-2 loss to the Gold Coast Sharks. They defeated the Southern Suns 4-2 in a hard fought quarters but succumbed to the 'red hot' Sydney Mets 2-12 in the semis with Matty Mataio starring for the Sydney team.

In the quarters the Sydney Mets disposed of the Sunwest Razorbacks 13-1 with again Matty Mataio starring with 4 touchdowns for his side. The final was a tough struggle for the Sharks being unable to match the skill and speed of the Mets. Sara Hamilton scored 3 of the teams touchdowns in defeating the Sharks 8-3.

Players of the Series were Matty Mataio (Mets) and Amy Fong (Sharks) while Players of the Final were Jason Stanton (Mets) and Amy Fong (Sharks). Matty Mataio again starred by scoring 13 touchdowns for the tournament.



A jubilant Sydney Mets Mixed Team

2004 NTL Final Results

Men's Open

Mets 5 Cobras 4

Women's Open

Sharks 2 Cobras 1

Mixed Open

Mets 8 Sharks 3

National Touch League 2004

Overall Placing

Teams	Men	Wm	Mix	#
Sydney Metropolitan	15	10	14	39
Gold Coast Sharks	10	15	11	36
Brisbane Cobras	12	12	9	33
Southern Suns	8	9	7	24
Sunwest Razorbacks	9	8	5	22
Sydney Rebels	5	7	8	20
Sydney Scorpions	6	2	6	14
Barbarians	3	6	4	13
NQ Tropical Cyclones	7	4	2	13
Hunter Hornets	4	5	1	10
Crusaders	1	3	3	7
Northern Eagles	2	1	0	3

Seventh Seniors NTL opens the door for bragging rights for the victors

*Queensland and NSW teams have
each won three Title as overall
Seniors Champions*

Mens 30

In six years of competition the Scorpions has placed first once, second on four occasions and fourth in their initial year. They vowed the former superiority of the Sharks and Mets was not going to stand in their way in 2004.

They fell to both the Mets and the Sharks in the preliminary rounds but reversed the table on the Sharks in the semis. They defeating them 3-2 to reach the finals again for the sixth consecutive year with Anthony Dudeck, Ian Kalms and Phil Jarrett playing superbly.

The Sharks having won four titles in five years felt this was their year again after the minor hiccups of 2001 and 2003. They won six in a row in the preliminaries before running foul of the Sydney Mets to the tune of 2-6 then as mention succumbing to the Scorpions in the semis. Andrew Willett was the leading scorer with 13 touchdowns with then next best only at 5 line crossings.

Sydney Mets won their first nine games before the semis and ran into an indifferent Cobras outfit in the semis. Kevin Eckersley posted one for the Cobras but the Mets had nine more winning the semi 10-1 with Garry Sonda scoring three and John Moujalli and Tony El Takchi two each.

Neighbourly love went out the window in the final with neither team wanting to give an inch. The game was tough from the outset with matching touchdowns one foe one. The strength across the board in the Mets team was displayed

by no player scoring twice in the 7-5 win over the Scorpions. Relegated to bridesmaids again the Scorpions could not match the power and strength of their Sydney rivals. Player of the Series was Tony El Takchi from the Mets while also from the Mets Garry Sonda was the Player of the Final. Colm Maguire representing South Australia was the leading touchdown scorer with sixteen.



Garry Sonda starred in the Final

Mens 35

State bragging rights were up for grabs in the Mens 35 division with each State's permits holding three titles each. 2003 champions the Sydney Mets started sound only losing only one preliminary game (1-2) to the 2002 champions the Sydney Scorpions.

The Semis saw them meet a below strength Sharks who despite the loss of key players went down fighting 0-2 to the Mets. The Sharks were best served by Paul Erickson, Shannon Brophy and Paul Lees.

North Queensland Tropical Cyclones whose best finish was fifth in 2002 were the surprise package having only competed on four previous occasions. Having lost 3-4 to the Sharks and 5-7 to the Mets they edged out their other State rivals for a Semi spot. Unfortunately they met a well drilled Scorpions outfit who defeated them comfortable 7-2. David Dowden top scored for them with 6 touchdowns for the tournament. Chris Fry and Roy Scoot each got five.

As was the case in the Mens 30 final the two Sydney neighbours meet in the Mens 35 division final with the Scorpions out to avenge last year's loss. Across the board the Scorpions man for man were stronger, more experienced and skilful than their opponents running out comfortable winners 8-3.

John Samin (ADF) was named Player of the Series with David Cheung from the Scorpions Player of the Final. He was also the highest scorer for the Scorpions with 7 touchdowns. Leading scorer for the division was Jon Monroe and John Schembri from the Mets with eight.



Tim Kitchingham avoid the touch of the Mets player

Mens 40

Queensland teams have struggled in the 40's division since the NTL began but last year the Gold Coast Sharks showed they would be a team to be reckoned with when they were runners up to the Crusaders. With the ACT being accepted as a Permit the bulk of Crusaders players went home to represent their State hoping they could repeat their 2003 performance and deny NSW and Queensland team a victory.

With Lex Gillespie being the only player backing up from the 2003 team, the Sharks new look side had a disastrous start losing their first four games and ending any chance of making the semis. In fact their only victory was a 4-2 win over the Razorbacks.

ACT opened their campaign with a loss to their neighbours the Southern Suns. Two more losses to the Scorpions and Northern Eagles saw them scrape into the Semis. The Suns suffered only

losses to the Scorpions and Eagles to also make the Semis. The Scorpions went through the preliminaries undefeated and were favourites to take out the title especially as their cross town rivals and three times champions, the Sydney Mets were not in attendance.

Finishing sixth in 2003 the Northern Eagles only loss was to the Scorpions 3-9 in the preliminaries and despite finishing second after the prelims they were only expected to make up the numbers in the semis. Unfortunately for the other teams a 3-0 victory over the Southern Suns saw them in the Finals. Steve Hughes scored two while Tony Cox added the other touchdown.

After defeating the ACT 4-0 in round five the Scorpions were extremely confident of meeting the Eagles in the final. With eight players from the winning Crusaders backing up for their State the ACT team were equally confident of taking down the Eagles.

The star studded Scorpion boasting players of the calibre of Cliff Lyons, Paul Beeby, Bruce Ager, Gary Simmons, Andy Proust and Brett Gillard started well but were no match for the well drilled ACT outfit led by Garry Lawless, Clint Jory, Stephen Cullen, Steve Merchant and Tony Job who ran out victors 5-2.

The unexpected finalist the Northern Eagles began strongly posting the first points. ACT matched them touchdown for touchdown until late in the second half when the Eagles forged a two point's advantage they kept until the final bell running our winners 6-4 with Mark Jansson scoring a double.

Steve Hughes from the Northern Eagles who played with the winning Crusaders in 2003 was the highest scorer with ten touchdowns while Mark Jansson (Eagles) was named the Player of the Series and Player of the Final



The Winning Mens 40 Northern Eagles