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Woods Take on Western Force!

Perth
Saturday 22 February 2020



Picture above are some of the Woodies boys who've lined up for the Force over the years

The mighty Woods are off to the other side of the country to take on the Western Force this Saturday in what is an exciting development for the club.

It is a great opportunity to see how our 2020 squad shapes up against a high level opposition. With ex Woods player, Matt Hodgson, now the General Manager for the Western Force Ben Batger took the opportunity to get in touch with his old team mate to see what could be organised. "I knew Matt a little from our playing days and fortunately our schedules aligned. So we organised the game and the bonus is the boys get to go on tour helping with the team bonding that is so important. We are taking a 26 man squad across with a mixture of first graders, developing players and new players. We were fortunate enough that Batger Furniture (yes a relation) were able to provide financial support for the trip", Ben explained. "The experience of playing a fully professional team will be invaluable and it will hopefully give us a bit of an early snapshot of where we are at and what we need to work on. The off field experience of travelling together, sharing accommodation and sharing a few beers will also be great."

The Western Force will be strong opposition for the first hit out in 2020 for the Woods who have seen 10 first graders from last year retiring or moving on to more attractive contracts either here or overseas. The latest being **Ed Craig** getting a call up into the Queensland Reds Super rugby squad. One of those who has moved on is **Pama Fou** who won a contract with the Western Force after joining them in the NRC last year. Also in the Western Force squad are ex-Woods **Chris Allcock** and **Keiran Longbottom**.

With Woods losing 10 first graders, this year it is an exciting time for the club. We have looked to recruit as well as giving current talent the opportunity to press claim for the first grade jersey. I don't have time to name all of the new recruits but a couple to keep an eye on are **Tane Edmed**, an exciting young fly half who is contracted to the Waratahs and played for Randwick Colts last year. Tane has lots of potential. **Jack Powell** is a big 197cm lock from NZ who has come through the Canterbury system and will add to the second row with the loss of Rhys and Weapon. Although they are not touring there are a couple of big Welsh forwards who are joining us and **Reece Fuller** a half back who played last year in the NRC with the Rebels.

While we will be keen to see how these new recruits go in 2020 we do have a number of current players looking to consolidate a place in the top side. "It's a great opportunity for guys like **Josh Anderson**, **Matt Gonzales** and **Rhys Sheriff** to play regular first grade. The remaining senior guys really need to step up and lead the next generation. **Afa Pakalani** and **Latu Talaki** have just returned from a World Cup. **Jed Gillespie**, **Pat Sio**, **Matt Gonzales** have all won premierships and know what it takes to be successful. Then you have young players like **Michael Icely**, **Enoka Muliufi** and **Barton Picone** who need to show they can dominate first grade rugby year in year out - if those guys do that, they will play at the next level. It is also good to have **Tom Murphy** back from Ireland. He was an established first grader when he left and I'd imagine his time in Ireland would have helped him develop especially when it comes to tight forward play and the breakdown" Ben added.

While not many will get to see the Woods play in Perth local supporters will get their chance to see the 2020 squads in action in March with trials against Gordon, Northern Suburbs and West Harbour. Trial locations are still TBA - we should know later this week



Two Woodies supporters who are going to be at the game: Ralph Sirmulis, who played in the early seventies and Geoff Kirk (above) from the 80s



Cowra Road Trip

Its on again - the big Country game everyone looks forward to.

In 2020 we're back at Cowra on Anzac Day v Sydney Uni. Better start making your plans and booking accommodation. Cowra Rugby are putting on a big lunch on the day and there's going to be people coming from all over. Ticket details shortly

National Club Competition

"A new national club rugby competition with two divisions, could be introduced as early as next year under Rugby Australia's new broadcast proposal.

The two-division club tournament would have a promotion-relegation system and could open the door for the return of the Penrith Emus to the rugby scene.

The tournament would replace the National Rugby Championship, which is set to be scrapped after this year.

[Read the story here.](#)

