

The History of National Touch Championships

**Cary
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The History of National Touch Championships in Australia 1980 to 2009

FORWARD

These works are a combination of writings taken from an unpublished book titled **The History of Touch** authored by Dr Grant Rodwell, Dr Paul Webb and myself (*ATA Produced 2006*) and writings done by myself as a result of research into the past records of Touch Football Australia.

Much of the history is taken from statistical data and although the works are not completed (only finalised up to and including 2003) thanks must go to Lauren Pritchard for her editing skill and to Marianne Maguire for her support in providing me with many of the photos.

Much of what you will read is my opinion based on what I saw at the time and what history has already recorded. If there are mistakes or errors then fell free to let me know. I hope you enjoy your journey back in time and may many of your memories be reignited at some of the articles and photos over the past thirty years.



Cary Thompson
TFA Historian

The National Touch League

Although a year away from being implemented the National Touch League concept was first introduced into the 1996 Schools Tournament. This herald a new era in Schools Touch and the forerunner of a concept that changed the National competition

The traditional State versus State, which was disbanded in 1992, to be replaced with a triangular series, now embraces permit holders.

While Queensland, NSW and New Zealand engaged in a tri series from 1993 to 1995, plans were being made to expand the Australian Secondary Schools Championships to the show piece it is today.

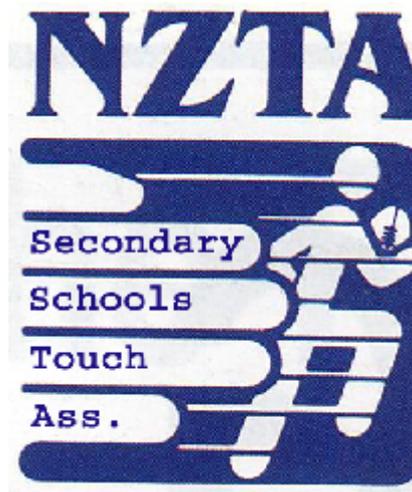
The introduction of the new format saw states like ACT, Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania join with NSW, Queensland and New Zealand to compete in Coffs Harbour against permits namely: Brisbane Cobras, Northern Eagles, Sydney Metropolitan, Sydney Rebels, Sydney Scorpions, South Queensland Border Districts and Southern Suns.

The underlying premise of the championships was that the school systems had first choice at the playing strength of the competitors. This would ensure the schools were always truly represented and competitive and guarantee the longevity of Touch players from the schools system to the community.

In the Boy's Open division the teams were split into two groups, one of eight and one of seven teams. After the preliminary rounds Queensland and the Brisbane Cobras headed group A, while New Zealand and NSW CHS were one and two in Group B.

The semis saw Queensland up against CHS and in true form both teams fought to the end with the northern visitors too good, running out winners 4-3. The best player for NSW CHS was Daniel Rushworth. In the other semi, a new look New Zealand team proved too classy for Brisbane Cobras, defeating them 7-1, with David Dawson being the best player for the Cobras.

The final was going to make history with Queensland defending their title hoping for three in a row. They were up against a first time finalist in New Zealand, who finished third at their first three attempts. In a sensational display of speed and skill not seen before at this level, New Zealand ran away with the title 8-3.



Glen O'Davis tried hard and was best on field for Queensland but he and his team mates were out gunned by Quincy Ikifana (MVP), Steven Te Amo, Zane Logopati, Shuggie Mohi and the rest of the NZ team. It wasn't until six years later that New Zealand returned to play in the schools tournament.

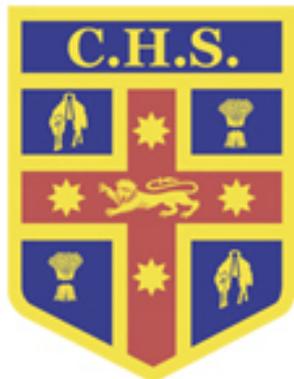
The Southern Suns, who finished eighth, were the only team to get close to New Zealand, drawing 3-3 with them in their round game, with Matthew Marsh being the best on field for the Suns.

Like the Boys, the Girl's division was split into two groups - one of eight and one of seven teams. Again like the Boys, Queensland's Girls were aiming for their third title in a row. After the preliminary rounds, Queensland and the Northern Eagles headed group A, while NSW CHS and New Zealand were one and two in

Group B. After playing their seven preliminary games, Queensland remained undefeated and met New Zealand in the semis winning comfortably 3-0. Sarina Fiso was best on field for the losers.

In the other group NSW CHS were also undefeated and disposed of the Northern Eagles 3-1 in their semi finals bout with Emma Clifton being the Eagles' best. CHS had beaten Queensland twice in the 1994 preliminary round only to falter in the final and legend coach Karen Smith knew this would weigh on their minds. A stern pep talk to the girls saw CHS dominate in a game that changed fortunes early in the first half. However in the second half CHS ran away with the match 4-2 ending Queensland's winning streak.

Best for Queensland was Bianca Tsakissiris while NSW were best served by Joanna Nelson and ably assisted by Lisa Finch, Sarah Thomas and Joanna Nelson.



NSW Combined High Schools Logo

1996 National Schools and Under 18's Championships Finals Results

Boys Open

New Zealand 8 Queensland 3

Girls Open

NSW CHS 4 Queensland 2

Schools Touch League 1996

Placing	Boys	Girls	#
NSW CHS	14	15	29
QSST	16	13	29
New Zealand	15	12	27
Southern Suns	9	14	23
Cobras	12	11	23
SQBD	13	10	23
Eagles	10	9	19
Sydney Rebels	8	8	16
Sydney Mets	11	5	16
NSW CCC	6	7	13
ACT	7	1	8
Northern Territory	1	6	7
Hornets	-	5	5
South Australia	3	2	5
Sydney Scorpions	5	-	5
Touch West	5	-	5
Victoria	-	3	3
Tasmania	2	-	2

1997
Saw the start of a new era of National Competition

The introduction of the Liptonice National Touch League in October was another milestone in the development of Touch in Australia. Touch now joined the ranks of other high profile Australian sports with the introduction of a truly national competition.

The National Touch League was created to replace the old National Championships where the smaller states and territories found themselves totally engulfed by the more

powerful states of New South Wales and Queensland. Rather than concentrate Australia's representative talent into two powerhouse teams, the NTL was designed to divide the 240,000 strong Australian market into 12 competitive sides and in the process establish a strong national club structure.

The NTL was a move away from the past and another exciting step forward in the future development of Touch in Australia," explained Australian Touch Association President, Russell Mowles.



Each of the 12 permit holders represents an equal number of registered players which makes for a much fairer, more competitive tournament. The playing talent is spread far more evenly and it

gives more participants an opportunity to impress for higher representative honours.

"The NTL also provides the players, referees and selectors with an important stepping stone between local and state teams," Mowles said. The inaugural NTL was played at the superb Coffs Harbour International Sports Complex from 17 to 19 October, 1997. Most of the 12 permit holders fielded Mens, Womens and Mixed teams.

The tournament finals were broadcast on WIN, NBN and Optusvision, while NBN, the host broadcaster, ran 50 television commercials to promote the event. The Brisbane City Cobras was the strongest NTL club with all three teams reaching the finals.

Mens Open

The Men's Open Final was a nail biter. With the Sydney Scorpions seemingly cruising with a 3-1 lead, suddenly they had two players sin-binned, allowing the Brisbane Cobras to level the game at 3-all.

The deadlock was broken when Scorpion's star, Shane Frederiksen, beat his player with a brilliant step before diving low for the winning touchdown. Frederiksen had an outstanding game with his elusive dance work causing the Cobras problems all day, and he was a worthy Player of the Final recipient. Gavin McDonald was judged Player of the Series.

Womens Open

The Women's Open Final was a tale of two halves. In the first half the Sydney Mets dominated the Brisbane Cobras and were unlucky not to be more than 1-nil ahead at the break.

However, the Cobras picked up the pace in the second stanza, scoring two quick touchdowns to dominate a tiring Sydney team and take out an unexpected 2-1 victory. As always, Cobras' captain Catherine Barr led from the front and was awarded the Player of the Final. The Gold Coast's Sharyn Williams was voted Player of the Series.

Mixed Open

The Mixed Open Final was a high scoring match between the Sydney Rebels and the Brisbane Cobras. The teams went touchdown for

touchdown until the 5-5 deadlock was broken by two quick touchdowns by the Rebel's playmaker Darren Shelley. The Rebels then managed to hold out a fast finishing Cobras side to take out a solid 7-5 win.

Player of the Final went to the Rebels' Darren Shelley, and Player of the Series went to Dione Williams from the Brisbane City Cobras. "As a marketing tool the NTL is vital to the long-term wellbeing of the sport," explained Bill Ker, ATA Chief Executive Officer. "A strong national club structure provides the players with a stronger regional identity and is seen as fundamental to the grassroots development of the sport," he said.

"These 12 permit holders will directly influence the course of grass roots development. While it's still early days, I think you'll see the NTL grow increasingly important in years to come. The 20s have already been included, and the Masters divisions are also looking to come on board," Ker said.



1997 Liptonice National Touch League Results			
Men's Open			
Scorpions	4	Cobras	3
Women's Open			
Cobras	2	Mets	1
Mixed Open			
Rebels	7	Cobras	5

National Touch League 1997 Opens Overall Placing

Placing	Men	Wm	Mix	#
Brisbane Cobras	11	12	10	33
Gold Coast Sharks	10	10	9	29
Sydney Mets	10	11	7	28
Sydney Scorpions	12	4	9	25
Sydney Rebels	3	10	11	24
NQ Cyclones	6	8	3	17
Hunter Hornets	4	7	4	15
Sunwest Razorbacks	7	5	2	14
Crusaders	8	3	1	12
Barbarians	5	6	-	11
Northern Eagles	2	1	6	9
Southern Suns	1	2	5	8

1997 Australian Youth follow their idols into a new League

Eleven permits of Men and Women under 20 years players meet for the first time to secure the future of Australian Touch

The Barbarians permit was the only adult group not represented in the inaugural Youth divisions. Queensland Permits dominated at the event in both the Men and Womens divisions.

Mens 20

Both the Brisbane Cobras and Gold Coast Sharks went through their preliminary games without loss. In the absence of a semis series these two teams met in a final. A torrid game from both sides saw the Cobras run out victor to the tune of 7-6. Best for the Cobras were Peter Stoddart, Brent Madders, Like Parker, Stephen Swan and Michael Rogers. For the Sharks Ben McCullen, Karel Bos and Matthew Selge stood out.

Womens 20

Nine Womens 20 teams contested the first National Youth League to determine the inaugural winner with again Queensland and NSW teams wanting to hold the bragging rights. Three NSW based teams the Rebels, Mets and Eagles were sure to get a victory over the lone Queensland team the Sunwest Razorbacks.

Both the Rebels and Razorbacks had undefeated preliminary rounds and while the Rebels struggled to get a 302 victory over the Mets in their Semis game the razorbacks accounted comfortably for the Eagles to the tune of 8-3.

Coached by Kathy O'Brien and boasting future stars such as Angela Doyle, Kelly Woods, Natalie Gilchrist and Melissa Forde the Razorbacks played a almost mistake free game to edge out the unlucky Rebels 2-1. Best for the Paul Conlon coached Rebels were Sarah Thomas, Selene Thornton and Neridah Tomczyk.

1997 Liptonice National Youth Touch League Results

Men's 20

Cobras 7 Sharks 6

Women's 20

Razorbacks 2 Rebels 1

National Touch League 1997 Youth Overall Placing

Placing	M20	W20	#
Sydney Mets	6	7	13
Gold Coast Sharks	7	5	12
Northern Eagles	5	6	11
Sunwest Razorbacks	2	9	11
Brisbane Cobras	8	2	10
Sydney Rebels	-	8	8
Southern Suns	4	3	7
Hunter Hornets	-	4	4
Sydney Scorpions	3	-	3
Northern Territory	1	1	2

1997 Second Year of new format for Schools and under 18's

From 18 to 20 September twenty seven (27) Boys and Girls teams gathered at Coffs Harbour for the National Titles

With New Zealand not being present after their devastating performance in the Boy's division last year, the title was there to be won by any of the twelve Boy's teams. In the two groups both Queensland and the NSW Northern Eagles went through their preliminary rounds undefeated. They met NSW CHS and South Queensland Border Districts respectively in the semis.

The clash of old rivals in the Queensland CHS game saw the result see-saw throughout the match with CHS eventually winning a very close encounter 4-3. The best for Queensland was Charles Seeto. In the other semi, the Eagles proved too strong for SQBD running out winners 3-2. The best for Border Districts was Jade Barnes.

For the first time in 10 years (since Schools Touch was played on the national scene) the Queensland Boys were not in the final. CHS and the Eagles held the crowd spellbound with the speed and skill displayed by the youngsters. CHS finally prevailed to win 3-1.

Best for the Eagles was Chris Swan while Daniel Rushworth was best for the second year in a row for CHS. He was ably assisted by Derek Santalucia (who went on to represent Italy in the 1999 World Cup), Joel Campbell and Toby Ryston-Pratt (a future Men's Open player for the Eagles). Mark McLinden starred for the ACT team in their preliminary round defeat of NSW CHS winning 2-0 and stopping them from going through undefeated.

The Girl's division saw two groups of seven teams fight out for the top two placings in each group. Group A saw NSW CHS and Northern Eagles fill the top two places while in Group B Queensland and NSW CCC came in one and two.

Both semis were one sided affairs with Queensland disposing of the Eagles 9-2 despite Shaney Ramand starring for the vanquished side.

Despite a strong effort by Louise Winchester and her team mates, they failed to make any impression on the strong CHS team who went on to defeat CCC 7-1.

The final was a repeat of the last three years finals with NSW hoping to square the ledger 2-2. However a strong performance by CHS's Cara Webb failed to get them over the line going down to Queensland 3-2 in extra time.

The best for the winners was Christie McTaggart ably supported by Kelly Woods, Karlena Nelson, Kelli Donnelly, Bianca Tsakissiris and Renee Henderson.

Schools Touch League 1997

Placing	Boys	Girls	#
Queensland SSTA	12	15	27
NSW CHS	11	14	25
Sydney Mets	6	13	19
Sydney Rebels	10	8	18
NSW CCC	7	11	18
Northern Eagles	9	9	18
Hunter Hornets	5	12	17
SQBD Sharks	8	4	12
Southern Suns	-	10	10
Victoria	4	5	9
ACT	3	6	9
Sunshine Coast	-	7	7
Touchwest	1	3	4
South Australia	2	1	3
Tasmania	-	2	2

1997 National Schools and Under 18's Championships Finals Results

Boys Open			
NSW CHS	3	Northern Eagles	1
Girls Open			
Queensland	3	NSW CHS	2
(Drop Off)			

1998 Sydney teams sweep the Second National Touch League

The tournament was staged in Coffs Harbour from 10- 17 October. It separated Australia's vast pool of representative talent into 12 regional sides.

The 1998 National Touch League carried forward from last year's initial success with another outstanding tournament. Still in its infancy the revolutionary concept received widespread support from the Touch community and beyond and continued to gain momentum. The event was expanded to include a number of senior divisions, including the Men's 030s, 035s, 040s, 045s and Women's 030s and 035s. In all, the six-day tournament played host to 116 teams and over 2,500 players and officials.

Tournament Director, Jon Pratt, commented on the improvement in the standard of play. "It's good to see the level of improvement from one year to the next. The NTL is giving many teams the competition that they wouldn't ordinarily participate in. They get to play against the big boys, and it's doing wonders for their experience and confidence," Pratt explained.

"I think that the NTL is a great concept for the teams, and it'll only get stronger. There's just a wonderful feeling amongst the players who really seem to enjoy the standard of competition," he said. Indeed, the local Coffs Harbour Council had been similarly impressed with the tournament and its economic benefits, and they pitched for a long-term association.

"It's very encouraging to see the level of support we are receiving from the local business and tourism sectors," contended Bill Ker, Chief Executive Officer of the ATA. "Coffs Harbour recognises the benefits that this tournament brings to the local community."

Much in the same way that the NSW State Cup had found a home in Port Macquarie, the NTL had found a home in Coffs Harbour. With the spectacular beaches, hotels, scenery and superb playing facilities, Coffs Harbour has plenty to offer.

"It's a great location and a really good tournament for the players," commented Sydney Scorpions player, Mark Boland. "The players have definitely accepted the concept and I think it'll continue to grow. I really enjoy playing here."

Apart from NBN, WIN and Optus coverage, this year's NTL Finals were also broadcast nationally on the ABC, which was another huge coup for the tournament and the sport of Touch. An interesting NTL trend was the large number of Queensland versus NSW permit holders' final match-ups, and this was a critical factor in bringing the best out of the players.

Mens Open

The Men's final featured another NSW versus Queensland clash, with the Sydney Scorpions up against the Sunwest Razorbacks. In one of the best games of the tournament the Scorpions just got up in the semi final, beating the Brisbane Cobras 4-3 in a classic encounter.

The Razorbacks came into the final with some indifferent form. After an 11-4 loss to the Cobras in the last round, few gave them a chance of taking the title. However, they returned to form with a solid 8-4 win over a much-improved Crusaders side in the semi-final. Both teams started the final at full throttle. Six-a-side at this level was played at an incredible pace and the transitions from the bench were fast and furious.

History of T.F.A.'s National Touch League

The Scorpions soon began to dominate territory with better ball control and movement. It was not long before Robert Smith scored after a clever switch with Jason Zabiello close to the line.



A vastly improved Crusaders side pushed the eventual winners, the Sydney Scorpions, to the limit in a narrow pool loss.

It was Jason Zabiello again who set up the second touchdown after a brilliant step to put Adam Fahim over in the corner taking the score to 2-0. It was only a signature score by Scott Notley late in the half that kept the Razorbacks in the game. While the Razorbacks were still smarting over what looked to be a very dubious touchdown, the Scorpions were in again with Adam Lollback advancing the score to 3-1 just minutes before the break.

Six minutes into the second half the Razorbacks' Neil Ward took a brilliant reflex intercept against the run of play to narrow the score to 3-2. Then it was another piece of individual brilliance by Gavin McDonald who dummied his way over to level the score at three touchdowns each. Suddenly, the Razorbacks were back in the game with momentum and territory swinging their way. The teams slugged it out to full time, finishing all square at three-a-piece. The teams immediately returned with five players.



Sydney Scorpions celebrate back-to-back Men's Open NTL titles.

The Scorpions were favoured by a mountain of possession and the Razorbacks were forced to

desperately defend their line. Finally, it was down to a four-on-four situation when the veteran, Scott Notley, was matched up with the fresh legs of Shane Frederiksen.

Frederiksen seized the opportunity, getting on Notley's outside before throwing a wide ball to winger, Glen Fitzgerald, who dived for the corner to score. In the end it was sheer weight of possession that got the Scorpions home. The Scorpions successfully defended their title, with an exhausted yet delighted Mark Boland collecting the Most Valuable Player award.

Womens Open

The Gold Coast Sharks came into the Women's Final unbeaten after six games and were confident of a win. On the other hand, the Sydney Mets lost one game to the Sydney Rebels and had a nerve-racking one-point win over last year's winners, the Brisbane Cobras in the semi final.

After a tentative start, before a 3,000 strong crowd, the Mets took a solid 2-1 lead to the break after touchdowns to Sloane Whiteman and Nadina Bambury. A quick dump and pass early in the second half by Giselle Tirado saw the Mets stretch the lead to 3-1, which was enough to get them home.

Gabriel Maher (Rebels) was named Player of the Series while Amanda Judd (Mets) was Plater of the Finals. Debbie Knapp from the Scorpions was the leading scorer with 10 touchdowns/



Last year's runners-up, the Sydney Mets, go one better with a strong win over the Gold Coast Sharks to take the Women's Open title.

Mixed Open

The Sydney Scorpions always had the measure of the Gold Coast Sharks in the Mixed final, despite a one-point win. The Scorpions carried on from their 4-2 half time lead to win 6-5 in an

entertaining, high scoring game. Scorpion's player Dean Murphy had an excellent game and was always a handful, scoring two touchdowns in his Player of the Final performance. Tony Eltakchi (Scorpions) was Player of the Series while Neville Donovan (Northern Eagles) was the leading scorer with 9 touchdowns.

1998 NTL Results

Men's Open

Scorpions 4 Razorbacks 3

Women's Open

Mets 3 Sharks 1

Mixed Open

Scorpions 6 Sharks 5



National Touch League 1998 Opens Overall Placing

Placing				#
Sydney Scorpions	15	8	13	36
Gold Coast Sharks	7	12	10	29
Brisbane Cobras	9	10	8	27
Sydney Mets	8	15	4	27
Sydney Rebels	5	9	7	21
Sunwest Razorbacks	12	7	1	20
NQ Tropical Cyclones	6	6	6	18
Crusaders	10	4	3	17
Hunter Hornets	4	5	-	9
Northern Eagles	3	1	5	9
Southern Suns	1	3	2	6
Barbarians	2	2	-	4

New Era of Seniors Touch commences as aged athletes join their opens counterparts in a National League

*The State versus State format
gives way to Permits who
gathered at Coffs Harbour in
October to determine Seniors and
Masters Touch superiority.*

The venue was the International Stadium at Coffs Harbour and the dates were 10th October to the 13th where the elite aged touch players in Australia met in the new format of the National Seniors Touch League.

With the Seniors event preceding the Opens divisions an opportunity presented itself for over aged players participating in the Opens NTL to also play in the Seniors NTL and many elite players took that opportunity.

Mens 30

Twelve teams contested the first Mens 30 event with the Gold Coast Sharks and Sydney Scorpions going through the early rounds undefeated both with an average for and against of 3 touchdown per game.

The Brisbane Cobras only loss was 3-5 to the Sharks and they came up against the Scorpions in the semis who boasted players like Michael Cheung, Brendan McDonald, Derek Duguid, Dave Nolan, Sam Ayoub and Andrew Stergio.

Despite all their experience the Scorpions could not match the Cobras outfit led by Ashley Heiniger, Daryl Francey and Darren O'Reilly who went on to win the semi in convincing fashion 5-1.

The other semi saw the Sharks face up against the Mets. Both teams were chock full of State

representatives and what was thought to be a dour struggle was in fact a comfortable win to the Sharks. Best for the Mets were Len Ryan, Laurie Horder and the Mueller brothers while to the victors Patrick Grehan, Paul Dart, Adrian Harrington and Bob Brindell stood out.



"Who me?" I never claimed a touch

The final was an all Queensland affair with the neighbours fighting it out at a rapid pace. Patrick Grehan was undoubtedly the star of the final scoring three of his team's four touchdowns while the Cobras could only manage two.

The score was not an indication of the ability of both teams to produce top line entertaining Touch. The leading scorer for the Mens 30 was Patrick Grehan with 12 touchdowns.

Women 30

Of the eight teams in this division only the Sydney Scorpions survived the preliminary round without a loss. They were joined in the semis by three Queensland teams determined to continue the States supremacy in the revamped format.

The Scorpions opponents were the Razorbacks whom they disposed of 3-1 in the early rounds. The Razorbacks led by Kerry Strasser, Janelle Thorburn and Pam McPherson reversed the round result with a resounding 4-1 win over the Sydneysiders. Best for the Scorpions were Lisa Wandl, Margy Boland and Tracy Simpson,

The second semi final was between The Gold Coast Sharks and the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones who met in the rounds resulting in a 2-2 draw. With both teams boasting several State players the games was tight with defence from both teams excellent. Eventually the Sharks prevailed beating their Northern rivals 3-2.

Kerry Norman, Haylene Grogan, Therese Gage and Toni-Lyn Brown stood out for the Sharks and Gina Baker, Sue Ginns and Heather Desbois tried hard but in vain for the Cyclones.

The final between the Sharks and Razorbacks was as much a battle of the two contrasting coaches. Greg Jones of the Sharks and Sue Walsh from the Razorbacks, A dour struggle saw the Razorbacks edge ahead 1-0 and finally add one more for a 2-0 win.



Sunwest Razorbacks logo

Leading touchdown scores were Abigail Cox (Hornets), Megan Kennedy (Suns) and Monique Nolan with six each.

Mens 35

Of the ten teams competing for the Mens 35 title the strong Sydney Scorpions and Gold Coast Sharks teams were expected to fight out the final. A group representing the ACT, Victoria and Tasmania also had expectations of causing an upsets. To the surprise of all teams the Crusaders and the Hunter Western Hornets were the only teams to go through the preliminary rounds undefeated.

The Crusaders defeated the Sharks 4-3 in round 4 while the Hornets accounted for the Scorpions for the same score in the same round. Thus the makeup of the semis saw the Crusaders meet the Scorpions in a struggle that saw the score fluctuate for forty minutes before the Crusaders prevailed 5-4.

Best for the victors were John Samin, Andy Reid, Garry Lawless, Barrie Lamont while for the Scorpions Jeff Cheung, Bruce Ager and Tim Kitchingham stood out.

The second semi was between the Hornets and Sharks and was contrasting in so far as it was a highly defensive match with the Hornets just snatching victory 2-1. For the Hornets captain Dean McManus, Peter Cumberland and Mark Renshaw led the way and for the Sharks Neil Paton, Mark Bonner and Geoff Bunt shone.



*Neil Paton (right) aboard the Michael Walsh skippered Prudential when they won the World 18ft Skiff Title on Sydney Harbour in 1989
Photo by courtesy of the Manly Daily*

The unlikely final between the Crusades and Hornets saw an exciting game that had the Crusaders in front for most of the game before pulling out an extra touchdown to win 3-1. Steve Hughes, Garry lawless,

Tony Ryan and Danny Goodwin led the way for the Crusaders while the Hornets were best served by Terry Harvey, dean, McManus and Mark Langbridge. Chris Bradley and Steve Hughes from the Crusaders top scored in the Mens 35's with 5 touchdowns.

Women 35

A great turnout of nine team greeted players in the Womens 35 years division for their inaugural National Titles. Speculation was rife that NSW teams would dominate as their State team had since this division was introduced in 1996.

The competition was fierce and The Sunwest Razorbacks lost only to the Scorpions and Northern Eagles on their way to the semis and were the best performed Queensland outfit and were joined in the finals series by their neighbours the Brisbane Cobras.

The Scorpions went through undefeated and the Eagles had one loss on their way to the semis. The Scorpions Cyclones clash was to establish who the dominant team was after they had held each other to a 4-4 draw during the rounds.

Although fighting bravely the Cyclones could not hold the Scorpions and went down 2-0. They were best served by Kym Grundy, Eva Finn, Sue Salter and Di Rossi while the Scorpions were inspired by performance by Judy Malcolm, Jann Rose and Michelle Smidt.

The Eagles and Razorbacks semi was also a struggle with the Eagles eventually keeping their opponents scoreless winning 3-0. The defeated Razorbacks best players were Sharon Williams, Julie Lobwein and Karen Vorpagel while for the Eagles Cate Simms, Donna Gorman and Dianne Maher played well.

The final was as predicted between two strong NSW teams and they lived up to all expectations with the Scorpions running over the Eagles to the tune of 3-0. Strong performance by Louise McCourt, Audrey Zonbellie, Therese Spear and Lindy Roberts were not good enough to match the excellence and team work of the Scorpions led by Judy Malcolm, Tracey Conry, Gabby Whelan and Kathy Wickham.



The Mercurial Judy Malcolm

Leading scorer for the Womens 35 division was Audrey Zonbellie from the Northern Eagles with fourteen touchdowns.

Mens 40

With Queensland dominating this division at the previous two National it was expected to be an initial victory to one of the four Queensland based permits. Five NSW based permits thought they were in with a good chance of upsetting the plans of their northern neighbours. With eleven teams overall the competition was split into two pools.

After the preliminary rounds Pool A saw the Sunwest Razorbacks and Sydney Mets fill the top two position while in Pool B The Southern Suns and Northern Eagles were top of the table. Both the Suns and Razorbacks were undefeated and destined to meet in the final.

The Suns met Sydney Metropolitan in their semi and despite strong performances from Jack Liston, Dieter Major, Lindsay Delpech and Wayne Brennan the Suns proved too strong and went on to record a 4-3 win. Ron Wall and Mick McCall was exceptional for the Suns as was Vince Cavanagh and Kevin Hastings.



Kevin Hastings in his hay day with Eastern Suburbs Rugby League Team

In the other semi the Razorbacks were too strong for the Northern Eagles running away with game to the tune of 6-1. Eagle players Barry Draws Tony Webb and Allan Davies tried hard but the more skilled Razorbacks prevailed. Best for the victors were Trevor McPhillips, Ray Standish, Don Baartz and Gary Poppi.

Interstate rivalries were at the fore when the finals came around. Players from both teams had player against each other on many occasions over many years and neither team gave an inch. At the fulltime whistle the Suns had run out winners 4-1 against a very determined opponent.

Best for the Razorbacks was the ever present Trevor McPhillips assisted by Kevin Feldman, Don Baartz and Michael Long. For the winners Ron Wall and Mick McCall again stood out as did Ron Chilby and Gary Newman who top scored for the Division with 9 touchdowns.

Mens 45

Like the Mens 40 the four Queensland based permits and five NSW permits all though they were with a chance to take out the first Mens 45 title at the revamped National Championships.

After the round games were completed two Queensland teams stood out at the top of the ladder having both won five games, lost one and drawn two. They were the North Queensland Tropical Cyclones and the Brisbane Cobras.

However the semis would tell another story. The Northern Eagles who drew 2 all with the Cyclones during the round game ran away with their semi defeating the Cyclones 6-1. Best for the Cyclones were Robert Jackson and Charles Simpson while Garry Chesher and Chris Veech played well for the winner

The Hunter Western Hornets met the Brisbane Cobras in Round 8 defeating them 3-0 only to have to back up and meet them in the next game the semi final. The result was the same except the Hornets bettered their performance in winning 6-1.

Trevor Kennett, David McGuinness and Greg Chamberlain played solid games for the Cobras while for the Hornets it was hard to fault any player but Kim Miller, Colin Friend, Mick Anastas and Phil Flowers played strongly

With two NSW based teams in the final neither was going to give an inch in the race for supremacy. In an exciting struggle by two very skilful and cunning senior teams, the Eagles snuck home 2-1. Led strongly by Peter Vincent, Ian Wilson, Peter Richards and Steve Ryan the Eagles were just that one touchdown better than the Hornets.

Kim Miller again had a strong game for the Hornets and he was ably assisted by Dave Knight, Barry Herbert, Michael Gallagher and Len Blakeney. Three players shared the leading scorer prize with six touchdowns each. They were, Michael Gallagher and Len Blakeney from the Hornets and Terry Wright from the Eagles.

1998 NTL Age Divisions Results			
Men's 30 Years			
Sharks	4	Cobras	2
Women's 30 Years			
Razorbacks	2	Sharks	0
Men's 35 Years			
Crusaders	3	Hornets	1

1998 NTL Age Divisions Results (Continued)			
Women's 35 Years			
Scorpions	3	Eagles	0
Men's 40 Years			
Suns	4	Razorbacks	1
Men's 45 Years			
Eagles	2	Hornets	1

National Touch League 1998 Seniors & Masters Overall Placing

Placing	Points
Sunwest Razorbacks	40.5
Gold Coast Sharks	39.5
Northern Eagles	36.5
Hunter Hornets	36
Sydney Scorpions	35
Southern Suns	34
NQ Tropical Cyclones	32
Brisbane Cobras	31.5
Sydney Mets	28
Crusaders	23
Sydney Rebels	7
Northern Territory	5

England sends teams to Youth Championship with permits showcasing the stars of tomorrow

The under 20 Years Men and Women Permits join with the Opens Divisions to display their talents between 15th and 17th of October

Mens 20

The under 20 year's Men and Women players representing their permits gathered at Coffs Harbour to play alongside their heroes and the legends of Touch.

They were joined by youth teams representing England. Twelve Men's 20's teams were split into two pools with the Cobras, Cyclones and Sharks going through preliminary rounds undefeated.

The fourth team to make the semis was the Southern Suns. The Cobras played hard to narrowly defeat the Sharks 4-3 while the Cyclones spent no time in demolishing the Suns 7-3.

Best for the Sharks were Nathan Halford, Jeb Hipperson and Terence Kong and best for the Suns were Shane Turton and Lucky Phrachanh.

The final was a gripping encounter with the Cobras running out eventual winners 3-2 over the Cyclones. Best for Cyclones was Francis Cathern and Andrew Pratt while for the Cobras, they were best served by Brent Madders, Michael Rogers, Peter Stoddart, Steven Swan and Luke Parker.

Womens 20

In the Women's 20 division, the Sharks and Mets topped their pools going through undefeated. They were joined in the semis by the Cyclones and Cobras.

The Mets defeated the Cyclones 2-0 in a tight struggle but the Sharks versus Cobras game saw-sawed until finally the Sharks prevailed 4-3.

Best for the Cyclones were Bernadette Carroll, Toni Hodges and Chantae Zunker and for the Cobras Shan Corcoran and Daina Hobbins stood out. The final saw the Sharks overwhelm the Mets 4-2.

For the losing team Meagan Mannix, Stephanie Sorrensen, Maribel Ingelmo and Kate Fitsimmons played well while for the victors Zara Houston, Jasmine Silk, Cristie McTaggart, Shaye Macleod and Rebecca Curtis stood out.

1998 National Youth Touch League Results

Men's 20

Cobras 3 Cyclones 2

Women's 20

Sharks 4 Mets 2

National Touch League 1998 Youth Overall Placing

Placing	M20	W20	#
Brisbane Cobras	15	9	24
Gold Coast Sharks	9	15	24
NQ Tropical Cyclones	12	10	22
Sydney Metropolitan	6	12	18
Northern Eagles	7	6	13
Southern Suns	10	2	12
Sunwest Razorbacks	5	7	12
Sydney Scorpions	8	4	12
Sydney Rebels	2	8	10
Crusaders	4	5	9
Hunter Hornets	3	3	6
England	1	1	2

An article from "In Touch" Summer Edition 1999 Tournament Director Jon Pratt commented on the improvement of the standard of play.

"It's good to see the level of improvement from one year to the next. The NTL is giving many teams that wouldn't ordinarily get this level of competition an opportunity to play with the big boys and its doing wonders for their experience and confidence".

"I think the NTL is a great concept for these teams and it will only get stronger. There is just a good feeling amongst the players who really enjoy the standard of competition".

Bill Ker, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Touch Association stated Coffs Harbour recognises the benefits this tournament brings to the local community.

**National Touch League 1998
Overall Championships Placing**

Placing	O	S	Y	#
Gold Coast Sharks	29	39.5	24	92.5
Sydney Scorpions	36	35	12	83
Brisbane Cobras	27	31.5	24	82.5
Sydney Mets	27	28	18	73
Razorbacks	20	40.5	12	72.5
NQ Cyclones	18	32	22	72
Northern Eagles	9	36.5	13	58.5
Southern Suns	6	34	12	52
Hunter Hornets	9	36	6	51
Crusaders	17	23	9	49
Sydney Rebels	21	7	10	38
Northern Territory		5		5
Barbarians	4			4
England			2	2
South Australia		1		1

***Australian Under
18 Championships***

The Australian Under 18 Touch Championships again proved to be the breeding ground for national stars in the various football codes, as well as a vital experience for players of both sexes as future elite Touch players.

The Australian Under-18 Championships were held at Coffs Harbour in September 1998. Queensland showed their strength in the junior ranks with both their Boys and Girls teams completing the tournament undefeated after seven rounds of competition.

The NSW Combined High School Boys team won six of their round games, only drawing with the NSW Combined Catholic Colleges team. Brett Panozza was CHS's best throughout the tournament.

The best performed non-school based team was the Southern Suns Boys, led by Marc Laird, who won the Bronze play-off against the NSW

Combined Catholic Colleges, with Noel McClean being CCC's best

Jarod Tump from the Queensland Boy's team had an outstanding tournament and was rewarded with the Player of the Series, while Nathan Russo was named Player of the Final. Six of the 14 players named in the Australian Under-18 National Squad were from the Queensland Team which won 6-1 in the final.

In the Girls division Queensland and NSW CHS again went through undefeated in their groups. The semis saw CHS defeat CCC in a close encounter 6-5 with Louise Winchester again being CCC's best. Queensland came up against Sydney Mets but easily defeated them 9-1, despite a strong performance from Mets' Sara Hamilton.



Marc Laird from NSW's Southern Suns, one of the many talented young guns who made their mark on the tournament.

The final was a repeat of last year and would be repeated again every year until 2009. Despite a strong game from Stacey Lapham, NSW CHS was overrun by a Renee Henderson inspired Queensland team winning 4-2.

Six Queensland girls were also included in the Australian Under-18 Girls National Squad. Queensland's Renee Henderson was a clear choice as the Player of the Series, while NSW Combined High School player, Belinda Dawney, received the Player of the Final award.

**1998 National Schools and Under
18's Championships
Finals Results**

Boy's Grand Final
QSSST 6 NSW CHS 1

Girl's Grand Final
QSSST 4 NSW CHS 2

Schools Touch League 1998

Placing	Boys	Girls	#
Queensland SSTA	17	19	36
NSW CHS	14	16	30
NSW CCC	11	14	25
Hunter Hornets	8	12	20
Southern Suns	12	7	19
Northern Eagles	9	9	18
SQBD Sharks	7	10	17
Brisbane Cobras	10	4	14
Northern Territory	5	8	13
Sydney Metropolitan	-	13	13
Sydney Rebels	-	11	11
Touchwest	4	6	10
Sunshine Coast	6	3	9
South Australia	3	5	8
NSW CIS	2	2	4
Victoria	1	1	2

1999 National Touch League

Scorpions Sting Again! Three in row for the Sydneysiders. The 1999 NTL was held from 14 to 20 March. The ATA moved the competition from late in the year to the first major tournament on the Touch calendar.

The timing of the 1999 NTL resulted in many of the World Cup stars making themselves unavailable resulting in the Sunwest Razorbacks and North Queensland Cyclones pulling out all together. Despite this the tournament once again proved successful.

Mens Open

As the headline reads the Scorpions take their third Mens Open title but before winning the faced the daunting task of maintaining their undefeated record.

To achieve this they had to defeat the barbarians, Gold Coast Sharks, Brisbane Cobras and Hunter Hornets in the preliminary Rounds. Unfortunately for their opponents they successfully navigated the rounds, quarters, semis and finals.

Scorpions Mens Opens Score Sheet

1	Barbarians	Won	10	1
2	Sharks	Won	3	2
3	Cobras	Won	5	4
4	Hornets	Won	7	4
QF	Eagles	Won	5	4
SF	Crusaders	Won	4	2
GF	Cobras	Won	3	2
MVP - Shane Fredericksen			37	19

Besides Shane Fredericksen who was named Player of the Series, the Scorpions were also best served by Jamie Stowe, David Roberts, Adam Fahim, Jason Scharenguivel and Philip Jarrett

The Brisbane Cobras made their journey to the finals after succumbing to the Scorpions in the preliminaries then defeating the Sydney Rebels in the quarters 3-0 despite strong performance from Greg English and Robbie Brien.

In the Semis the strong Sydney Mets outfit led by solid games from Jason Stanton, Jamie Black, Jason Yee and Garry Sonda tried in vain to hold out the Cobras but went down fighting 3-4.

The final was a hard fought game with the Cobras failing to capitalise on good lead up work by Player of the Final Trent McDonald. Strong games were also recorded by Brent Madders, Shane Duell and Greg Ross. Shane Fredericksen was the leading scorer for the division with seven touchdowns.



*Trent McDonald from the Brisbane Cobras
Was Player of the Final in a losing team*

Women Open

With Queensland Permit the Brisbane Cobras and the NSW Permit Sydney Metropolitan holding one title each after two years of NTL competition, this year's event was more about, not only winners bragging rights but State supremacy.

After the round games the two "gun" Queensland teams the Brisbane Cobras and Gold Coast Sharks were both top of their respective tables with two Sydney side beneath them. Easily progressing through the quarters the Cobras met the Rebels in the Semi and accounted for them to the tune of 5-1 despite desperation defence from Cathy Ring and Stephanie Breadon. Selene Thornton, Alison Hall and Sarah Thomas also played well for the Rebels.

The Sharks found the Mets a much tougher proposition and recorded a hard fought win 4-3. Best for the Mets were Louise Winchester, Donna Westwood, Stacey Lapham and Jade Walsh.

The clash of the two Queensland titans was a must watch event with the game see-sawing from one scoreline to the other with Cobras eventually prevailing 4-3. Strong performance from Elisha Burgess, Sharyn Williams, Simone Eggers and Jasmine Silk were match by an excellent game from Cobras player Sharon Martin who was named not only Player of the Final but also Player of the Series.

Other Cobras players to shine were Megan Rose, Dione Williams, Natalie Parker and Amanda Baska. The Cobras thus proving they are worthy champions and taking a 2-1 lead over their NSW rivals. Kylie Beattie from the Rebels and Sharon Martin were the leading scores with seven touchdowns each.

Mixed Open

Unlike the Queensland and NSW rivalry in the Womens division the Mixed revelry was between two NSW teams the defending champs the Sydney Scorpions and the Sydney Rebels. After the early rounds, both teams stood at the top of the ladder as one and two with the Gold Coast Sharks and Brisbane Cobras filling the other semi final spots.

The Scorpions met the Cobras in the first semi and a tight game saw the Peter Cassey coached Scorpions get over the line 4-3. Shane Heiler, Belinda McKelvey, Jason Lonergan and the inspirational Tony Eltakchi had strong games for the victors while Stephen Swan, Haylene Grogan Danny Parker and Kevin Eckersley played well in a beaten team.

Sydney Rebels and the Gold Coast Sharks also had a tight match with the Rebels just edging out their Queensland opponents 6-5. Brad Wardrobe, Donna Hollingsworth and legend players Darren Shelley and Stacey Gregory stood out for the rebels while for the Sharks Michael Frith, Graig Slavin, Ryan Pollock and Karen Otway were worthy of praise.

The final was to establish not only the National Champions but bragging right in Sydney itself. Both teams had Australian Representative, Star Players and Legends of the Sport and superiority on the day would ensure free drinks for a long time to come.

In a game that had the scoreboard showing changing leaders at all stages of the forty minute tussle the Scorpions prevailed to the tune of 5-4 over the unlucky Rebels. An inspirational effort by Darren Shelley and Steve Sutton ably assisted by Stacey Gregory and Kylie Wardrobe was not enough for victory. The Scorpions were just too good and were ably led by Player of the Series Gary Toohey and Player of the Final Tony Eltakchi and were assisted by good performance from Lisa Wilks and Rebecca Hayes.

Stephen Swan from the Cobras was the leading scorer with nineteen touchdowns. So the mighty Sydney Scorpions once again dominated the Open's divisions with their Mens and Mixed Opens taking their respective titles. Nick Walshaw from the *Coffs Harbour Advocate* reported on the event:

It seems the only thing more successful than the Sydney Scorpions Men's Touch side is the game they represent. The Scorpions won their third consecutive National Touch League Men's Open title at Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium on Saturday.

Despite being without their national players, who opted to miss the tournament and prepare for next month's World Cup in Sydney, the young Scorpions again dominated the competition and finished with a 3-2 victory over the Brisbane City Cobras in the final.



Maree Curran from the Crusaders puts on the big step.

The Men's Open match was just one of several exciting games played on the final day of the competition, now regarded as the best in the world. Australian Touch Association marketing director, Richard Scotts, said the outstanding performances of the players at the Coffs Harbour tournament represented the strength and growth of Australian Touch.

"Touch as a spin-off sport played by rugby league players, but it has become so big it's got its own rules, balls and uniforms ... Touch is its own entity," Scotts said. The sport has grown so rapidly over the past decade that the association now has 240,000 registered players, 10 full-time development officers, paid referees and a million dollar sponsorship in Liptonice. The sport has also discarded its 'men only' tag with women making up 55 per cent of the junior ranks.

"Touch is undermining netball at the moment it's so popular," Scotts said. "It's unbelievable when you consider it was a male sport only 15 years ago. And now Touch is making its mark on the global scene [with next month's World Cup in Sydney]. Touch is a homegrown sport that is now played in 60 countries around the world," Scotts said. "Not many games designed purely by Australians have gone on to become a worldwide sport."

1999 Liptonice National Touch League Results

Men's Open			
Scorpions	3	Cobras	2
Women's Open			
Cobras	4	Sharks	3
Mixed Open			
Scorpions	5	Rebels	4

National Touch League 1999 Opens Overall Placing

Placing	Men	Wm	Mix	#
Brisbane Cobras	10	13	6	29
Sydney Scorpions	13	4	11	28
Sydney Rebels	5	8	8	21
Gold Coast Sharks	6	10	5	21
Sydney Mets	7	7	3	17
Crusaders	8	5	1	14
Northern Eagles	3	6	-	9
Southern Suns	4	1	4	9
Barbarians	2	3	2	7
Hunter Hornets	1	2	-	3

Second Seniors NTL has permits looking to retain inaugural titles

After the success of the combined Opens, Youth and Seniors division at the National Touch League event in 1998 senior players set their sights on defending the titles they won last year.

Top Touch Senior Players Hit Town at Coffs Harbour.

The *Coffs Harbour Advocate* reported:
Australia's best senior Touch footballers will have barely finished partying this morning when play gets underway in the nation's premier Touch competition. More than 700 of Australia's elite Touch players will compete in the National Touch League Open, Under-20s and Mixed competitions beginning today at the Coffs Harbour International Sports Stadium.

And if the action is anything like yesterday's fast-paced Australian Senior Championships finals, players and spectators are in for an exciting four days of Touch. Tournament Director, Jon Pratt, said the National Touch League was not only Australia's premier Touch event, but the best of its kind in the world.

"It is without doubt the world's number one competition for Touch players...there is no equal," Pratt said. "That's why countries like England come here, just for the experience of the competition in the world's number one tournament."

Players have got to go through an extensive qualifying process just to get to this tournament. "For instance, the Southern Suns sides have two tournaments before they select a side to come here."

The excitement of returning to Coffs Harbour to challenge for the titles on offer saw 46 teams

contest the Seniors National Touch Championships. Again there were four Men's divisions but only one Womens division as only three teams turned up for the Womens 35's.

Mens 30

The main event was the Mens 30's and defending champions the Gold Coast Sharks turned up again with a strong representative team. The Mets went through their round games undefeated with the Scorpions, Cobras and Sharks filling the other semi's spots.

The Cobras went into their semi with the Sharks quietly confident after a strong game against the Hornets which they lost 2-3 and an equally hard game against the Scorpions which they won 3-2.

A fierce and hard fought game against the Sharks saw them go down in the final stages 4-5 with their best being Daryl Francey and Darrin Pfeffer.

The other semi was a local derby between two Sydney teams, the Mets and Scorpions. The Mets with their strong eastern seaboard influence were thought to be dominant but the western Sydney connection held them out and finally ran out winners 5-3.

Best for the Mets were Scott McLeod (Player of the Series), Len Ryan, Mark Wheatley and David McIntyre.

The final was an interstate clash between two heavyweights both with excellent skilled players who could turn the game one way or the other. The Sharks strength prevailed and they won an intriguing game 3-1 retaining their title. Best for the Scorpions were David Apps (Player of the Final), Sojun Kim and Andrew Stergio.

Title holders the Gold Coast Sharks were best served by Paul Erickson, Patrick Grehan, Adrian Harrington and Peter Owen. Brian Fitzroy from Western Australia was the leading scorer with eight touchdowns.

Womens 30

Six Women's 30's teams combined with three over 35's women's sides to compete for the senior's titles in 1999. In the absence of last year's champions, the Sunwest Razorbacks and the Gold Coast Sharks who were runners up, felt they were in with a good shot at the title.

However a demoralizing loss to the Scorpions over 35's team saw them fall into fourth spot on the table and subsequently face the undefeated Southern Suns in the Semis.

Despite beating the Sharks in the round game 5-3, the Suns struggled to get the advantage over them in the semis. They prevailed however running out winners 3-2. Best for the Sharks were Rhonda Grehan, Anna Fuiava, Sue Robba and Simone Brady.

In the other semi the Brisbane Cobras struggled to get supremacy over a strong South Australian outfit just winning 2-1. Best for South Australia were Stephanie Martin-Sadler (Player of the Series), Carol Minervini-Grimes and Franca Castanzo.

The final saw the Suns inflict the second loss of the tournament on the Cobras 1-0. Their previous loss was the opening game where the Northern Eagles 35 years' team won a close game 4-3.

Best for the Cobras were Tarita Frain, Leanne Kavanagh and Lexia McMillan while Megan Hastings (Player of the Final), Kylie Mazaloom (the leading scorer with eleven touchdowns), Kylie Crossley, Allyson Fisher and Anne-Maree Parrish starred for the Southern Suns.

Mens 35

In a nine team division each side played a preliminary round against all other teams. In the end, four emerged to contest the semis and not one of them was undefeated. This made for an interesting contest as all knew how hard it would be to take out this year's title. Last years champions the Crusaders only defeat was a 3-4 loss suffered at the hands of the Sydney Mets.

Their only loss was a 2-5 drubbing by their neighbours the Sydney Scorpions whose only loss was a 2-4 defeat by the Crusaders. The fourth spot in the semis went to Gold Coast Sharks who suffered losses to the Cobras 1-2 and the Scorpions 0-2.

Both semis were close encounters with the Mets disposing of the Sharks 4-3 and the Crusaders just pipping the Scorpions 5-4. Best for the Sharks were David Baulch, Wayne Holder and Mark Bonner while for the Scorpions David Cheung (Player of the Series), Mark Jepson and David McDonald played strong.

The final was expected to be two in a row for the Crusaders as their star studded teams contained eight ACT state players. The game was tight for both teams and highly defensive however the Mets got the ascendancy and went on to win 4-2.

Best for the Crusaders were Barrie Lamont (the leading scorer for the division with ten touchdowns), Steve Hughes, Danny Goodwin and Garry Lawless while for the title holders Andrew Yiangou (Player of the Final), Steve Kolenko, Philip Collier, Jon Monroe and Darryl Gillard all played a starring role.



Andy Yiangou (Player of the Final)

Women 35

As there were only three teams entered into the Womens 35 Division in its inaugural year the Scorpions, Northern Eagles and Gold Coast Sharks played against the Women 30's teams before contesting their own finals series.

During the preliminary rounds the strong Manly District dominant Scorpions lost only one game to the Southern Suns 30's (who won that division) and thus went straight into the Final.

The Eagles and Sharks therefore played off in the semis for the right to meet the Scorpions. An inspired Eagles outfit led by Louise McCourt, Donna Goman, Donna Woolridge and Therese Spear were simply too strong for the Eagles and ran away with the game winning 9-0.

During the preliminary rounds the Scorpions accounted for the Eagles to the tune of 5-0 but the Eagles had fought too hard to allow a repeat performance. In a game of changing fortunes the Scorpions were always in front by one with the Eagles ready to equalise at any time.

A Judy Malcolm inspired run saw the Scorpions skip away to a 6-4 lead they held onto until the final whistle. Kathy Wickham, Jann Rose and Carol Forlonge had strong game along with Malcolm and Dale Roland. Tracey Conry from the Scorpions top scored in the division with 12 Touchdowns.



Carol Forlong put in a strong performance in the final

Mens 40

After eight round games the Sunwest Razorbacks were the only undefeated team in the 40's division and were out to avenge their second placing in 1998. They were joined in the semis by the Sydney Mets, Gold Coast Sharks and Northern Eagles whom they dispatched out of the race with a 3-0 semis win.

Allan Davis (former Manly Rugby League and Touch representative player), Chris Dibben, Tony Webb and Michael Prowse played strongly for the Eagles.

The Sydney Mets versus Gold Coast Sharks match was anything but easy for either team with the result not being known until near the final whistle where the Mets just got home 3-2 against their rivals. Best for the Sharks were Ron Jackson, Barry Lebby, Mark McLean and Greg Newman.

The final was a closer affair with both sides trying to attack from all parts of the field. In the end the Razorbacks secured victory 4-3 against the unfortunate Mets.

Best for the losers were Victor Taglioferrio (Player of the Series), Graeme Frazer, Lindsay Delpesch, Martin Fletcher and Jeff McGhie. The victors were best served by Trevor McPhillips (Player of the Final), Michael Long, Don Baartz, Max Grundon and Kevin Feldman. From the Sunwest Razorbacks Michael Long was the leading scorer with ten touchdowns.



Trevor McPhillips (Player of the Final)

Mens 45

The Northern Eagles arrived at what could be described as their home ground desperate to retain the title they won the year before. Along with Central Queensland and the Hunter Western Hornets they went through the preliminary rounds undefeated.

They were joined in the semis by the Sunwest Razorbacks who defeated the more fancied Gold Coast Sharks in the quarter finals. The Hornets versus CQ clash was easier than expected for the NSW based side defeating their opponents 5-1 in their semis clash. Best for CQ were Robert Piva, Douglas Robson and Robert Jakeman.

The other semi saw a much closer game with the Eagles just getting on top of the Razorbacks 2-1. Best for the losers were Malcolm Bunney, Kevin Enchelmaier, Bill Bray and John Greenland.

The final brought together last year's title holder and last year's runner up. In a strong display of Masters Touch the Peter Vincent coached

Northern Eagles disposed of the Hornets 4-2 to retain the title for a second year running.

Best for the Hornets were Colin Friend (Player of the Series), Pat Smith, Brian Hanson, Kim Miller and Vince Cronin while for the Eagles Terry Wright (Player of the Finals), Peter Vincent, Gary Chesher and Ian Wilson stood out. Pat Smith and Brian Hanson were the leading scorers with six touchdowns.

1999 NTL Senior Results			
Men's 30			
Sharks	3	Scorpions	1
Women's 30			
Suns	1	Cobras	0
Men's 35			
Mets	4	Crusaders	2
Men's 40s			
Razorbacks	4	Mets	3
Men's 45s			
Eagles	4	Hornets	2

National Touch League 1999 Seniors & Masters Overall Placing

Placing	Points
Gold Coast Sharks	35
Sydney Mets	33
Northern Eagles	29
Southern Suns	23
Brisbane Cobras	22
Hunter Hornets	19
Sunwest Razorbacks	19
Sydney Scorpions	16
Crusaders	15
ADF	13
Central Queensland	8
South Australia	4
Touchwest	3
Sydney Rebels	2

Youth again play alongside their idols, heroes and Touch legends

March 17 to 20 saw the under 20's return to Coffs Harbour to play along side the Opens divisions.

Men 20

Nine Mens 20's teams played each other in the preliminary rounds with the current title holders Brisbane Cobras confident of defending their title. Cobras only loss was to the Sharks 3-4 but saw their threat from the undefeated Mets (five drawn games) and the Crusaders who held them to a 4-4 draw.

However when the rounds were completed the Cobras, Mets, Sharks and Suns held the top four spots. Both semis were tight with the Cobras just edging out the Suns 4-3. Best for the Suns were Marc Laird, Greg Marsh, Andrew Wise and Craig Nichols.

In the other semis, the Mets and the Sharks (who held each other to a 1-1 draw in the last round game and met again in their next game) fought hard for territorial rights but in the end the Mets got on top and won 3-2. Best for the Sharks were Kent Macleod, Kane George, Adam Falzon and Jeb Hipperson.

The Cobras second entry into the finals in two years was an omen for them and they were up against the Sydney Mets who were yet to suffer a loss. The game was fast and highly skilled with both teams answering their opponents after a score. In the end the Mets edged them out with no time left on the clock to record a 4-3 win.

The Cobras were best served by Dylan Kendal, David Dawson, Clayton Lafferty and Jarrod Tump (Player of the Series) while the Mets stars were Scott Mitchell (Player of the Final), William Buchanan, Daniel Rushworth, Marc Walsh and Kurt Nowotwy.

William Buchanan from the Mets and Kent McLeod from the Sharks were the leading scorers in this division with eight touchdowns each.

Women 20

Only seven teams vied for the Womens 20 title with the Hunter Hornets going through their round games undefeated while the defending champions the Gold Coast Sharks just scraped into the semis after two wins, three losses and a draw.

The other two spots were filled by two Sydney teams, the Mets and the Rebels, who met each other in the semis with the Rebels winning 6-5 against their neighbours. Best for the Mets were Trish McCarthy and Olivia Bayley.

The Hornets versus Sharks semi was expected to be a one sided affair however the Sharks players lifted and defeated their more fancied opponents 3-2. Best for Hornets were Leanne Thompson, Amanda Henderson and Natalie Conway.



Elisa Anthony gets a pass away during the final

The final was now anybody's with the Hornets not contesting it, but the Sharks felt quietly confident as they had been here before and had gone home winners. The Sharks again lifted and the Rebels were no match for them going down 1-4 to the title holders.

Best for the Rebels were Elise Anthony (Player of the Series), Coby Smith, Katrina Eisenhauer, and Neridah Tomczyk while for the champions Missy Shaw (Player of the Final), Lisa Bryant, Kelly Thomas, Katie Shaw and Shaye Macleod stood out. Leanne Thompson from the Hunter Hornets was the leading scorer with eleven touchdowns.

1999 NTL Youth Results

Men's 20

Mets 4 Cobras 3

Women's 20

Sharks 4 Rebels 1

National Touch League 1999 Youth Overall Placing

Placing	M20	W20	#
Gold Coast Sharks	7	10	17
Sydney Mets	12	4	16
Brisbane Cobras	9	-	9
Southern Suns	6	3	9
Sydney Rebels	1	7	8
Crusaders	5	2	7
Hunter Hornets	-	5	5
Northern Eagles	3	1	4
Sunwest Razorbacks	4	-	4
Sydney Scorpions	2	-	2

National Touch League 1999 Overall Championships Placing

Placing	O	S	Y	#
Gold Coast Sharks	21	35	17	73
Sydney Mets	17	33	16	66
Brisbane Cobras	29	22	9	60
Sydney Scorpions	28	16	2	46
Northern Eagles	9	29	4	42
Southern Suns	9	23	9	41
Crusaders	14	15	7	36
Sydney Rebels	21	2	8	31
Hunter Hornets	3	19	5	27
Sunwest R'backs		19	4	23
Defence Forces		13		13
Central Queensland		8		8
Barbarians	7			7
South Australia		4		4
Touchwest		3		3