



Queensland Independent Secondary Schools Rugby League Confraternity Carnival



LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

UNITY College Caloundra, one of two new additions to the Queensland Independent Secondary Schools Rugby League family, will open the 40th annual showpiece Confraternity Carnival hosted by Shalom College at The Waves Sports Complex as it returns home to Bundaberg for the first time in a decade but the fourth occasion overall . They will suit up against defending Cup (Division 5) holders Chanel College of Gladstone at 10am today in one of 48 day one matches.

After a combined spiritually uplifting Mass and Opening Ceremony at the Bundaberg Multiplex late yesterday afternoon attended by all 48 competing teams and the 64 sides participating in the 20th annual Queensland Independent Secondary Schools Netball Carnival, which is also being hosted this week by Shalom, as well as many other dignitaries, officials, family and friends, the league-fest will begin with all sides to play two Pool games today. The other new kids on the block, Ambrose Treacy College, Indooroopilly, which was only opened in 2015, will then make their Confraternity debut in the next time slot at 10.50am against Our Lady of the Southern Cross Dalby. Again, six trophies will be up for grabs in Friday's grand finals, headed by the coveted Confraternity Shield, the others being the Bob Lindner Trophy, Plate, Bowl, Cup and Challenge for Divisions 2 to 6 respectively, with all teams to play six games over four days, two each today and tomorrow and one each on Thursday and Friday. St Mary's Toowoomba, who blitzed St Peter Claver College 42-6 in Charters Towers last year to break a 20 drought and claim the Shield for the fourth time, will start their title defence at 11.40am when they do battle with Iona College Lindum, who have been promoted to Division 1 after they took out the Plate in 2018 with a 46-0 white-wash of St Michael's Cararra.

St Brendan's College Yeppoon, one of the six foundation schools from the maiden Confraternity Carnival which was inaugurated by Shalom's fore-runner Christian Brothers College back in 1980, heads the Shield honours list, having won it 13 times, including in 2009, when the carnival was conducted by Shalom, and they will be keen to qualify for top tier quarter-finals after the disappointment of missing the cut in 2018 but going on to take out the Lindner Trophy with a 38-12 grand final victory over Marist College Ashgrove.

St Patrick's Mackay are second on the Shield winners tally sheet with eight, including starting the new Millennium in style in Bundaberg with a famous victory over a St Mary's Toowoomba side which included a young Johnathan Thurston, but they have not held that silverware aloft since 2003 on the Gold Coast.

Ignatius Park College, Townsville, have their name on the Shield five times, with Padua and Aquinas College the other multiple champions, three and two times respectively, and Clairvaux Mackillop College Mt Gravatt, St Augustine's Cairns, St Teresa's Abergowrie and Rockhampton Grammar School having won it each once. St Mary's have just five players from their champion team of 12 months ago – centres Ed Witherspoon and Sam Elara, five-eighth Preston Weatherall, captain and second rower Coby Fechner and front rower Flynn Kaiser – but coach Rob Anderson they have a very good side once again which is fit and rearing to go with two others also having Confro experience, interchange duo Tristan Voll and Brody Murphy who both played with St Joseph's Toowoomba in 2018 as they were short in numbers.

"Ed Witherspoon is an athletic and strong outside back, Preston is a skilful player who can play multiple positions in the backline and was an Under 16 Queensland Murri's rep in 2018, and Coby is an effort player who will lead from the front," Anderson said.

"Flynn and Sam were late inclusions in 2018 but Flynn is a workhorse middle forward who loves the tough stuff, and Sam Elara is very versatile and creative – he can play hooker, halves, centre, wing and fullback – and is deceptively strong and creative, while Tristan and Brody are effort players that give 100% on every play."

Last year, Ignatius Park swept all before them until suffering a surprise 22-10 semi-final loss to St Mary's but they bounced back to finish third with a win over fellow perennial contenders The Cathedral College Rockhampton, and the Townsville heavyweights are certain to be a major force once again under their coach Steve Lansley.

Their named side includes six survivors from their 2018 outfit – centre Ethan Hagarty, five-eighth Jake Bourke, hooker Tom Whiting, second rower Dean Barnes, lock Tai Laidlow and interchange Jack Taylour – as well as recently selected Queensland Schools Open representative front rower Isaiah Vailalo, who was also a star in the Northern team which was pipped by South Coast 18-16 for the state title.

St Brendan's are also on a mission under their long-time master-coach Terry Hansen and they have seven players named from their 2018 squad – winger Mauga Nona, five-eighth Laish Salam, front rower Liam Kenny, second rowers Chase Demaine-Beale and Bill Gunning, lock Sam Strohfeldt and interchange Jett Hill.

Shalom has won the Plate twice, and Bowl and Cup both once, and they have shared in the spoils at the last two carnivals they have staged, the Bowl in 2000, and the Plate in 2009 when their side included current Australian, Queensland Origin and Melbourne Storm star Felise Kaufusi and his younger brother and fellow NRL player Patrick. They are fresh from a tough 10-6 triumph over the strong Bundaberg State High School in the Bundaberg District Secondary Schools (BDSSS) Rugby League Open grand final, and they will be co-captained by fullback Jake Bonus, who has been a revelation for Brothers in Bundaberg A Grade this season and whose father Anthony played for Melbourne Storm, Parramatta Eels and Illawarra Steelers during his distinguished career.

They have a mix of year 11 and 12's, as well as Year 10 powerhouse front rower Flynn Purkis, who have been training hard under coaches Neil Feather and Antonio Kaufusi for the past 10 months, and with a tough opening assignment against fired-up relegation team St Edmund's Ipswich, they will be looking to the experience of their nine players from last year's disappointing carnival, Bonus, potent centres co-captain Harry Bull and Darcy Clarke, crafty hooker Corey Picaro, who took out their Spirit Award at 2018 Confro, tough forwards Aaron Cunnington, Liam Morrison, Brad Edwards and Jobe Lister, and winger Arin Crook, who stood tall in the BDSSS decider. The other trophy holders are Columba Catholic College Charters Towers (Bowl) and St Anthony's College Townsville (Challenge).