Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Strengthening Lions prepare for final tournament

A steadily improving University of Tasmania Lions rugby team is training hard ahead of the final tournament in this year’s inaugural Aon Uni 7s Series.

Coming off disappointing bottom of the table finishes in the first two tournaments, the Lions put on a strong performance last weekend to take fifth place in the University of Queensland-hosted tournament.

Coach Luke Burgess said the Lions were aiming to solidify their gains and push harder as they headed into the final tournament on 29-30 September on the Gold Coast.

Burgess said the insertion of Olympic Gold Medallist Nicole Beck, returning to the elite level only five months after the birth of her second child, helped the team step up their performance last weekend.

“Nicole proved why she is considered one of the best players to have represented Australia over the last ten years,” he said.

“She displayed amazing leadership, skill and resilience, and slotted seamlessly into a team she’d met only the day before the tournament.”

Despite starting the tournament with obvious nerves, the Lions were able to ensure tight results between several of the more favoured teams. Burgess said the team put extreme pressure on the hosts, tournament favourites, and still unbeaten University of Queensland.

Burgess said great combination work from national junior Shanice Parker, US players Kiki Morgan and Sydnee Watanabe, and Nicole Beck helped the Lions defeat Griffith and then Adelaide on Day 2 of the tournament to take out fifth place.

“Local player Tahni Champion-Peakman, one of the team's youngest players grew from game to game before succumbing to a dislocated shoulder. And 16-year-old Alice Robinson from Launceston, known for her speed, had some great breaks on the wing.”

Burgess said it had been exciting to see the improvements the team was making and noted the consistent performance of Hobart’s Lauryn Cooper and the strong debut of Lucy Featherstone, from Glenorchy.
“We have some superstars of Rugby 7s playing for the Lions, but for many of the girls this is a relatively new sport and a very new team,” Burgess said.

“We’re getting stronger every time we step onto the field and the other teams are starting to recognise this: the Lions are dangerous.”

The final two-day tournament will be held on 29 and 30 September at Bond University on the Gold Coast.

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