

Trae on the way to UK



Sports Star of the Week

This week: Trae Clarke - rugby league

By Mick McDonald

TAREE rugby league player Trae Clarke will tour England and France with an Australian Institute of Sport under 18 squad next month.

Clarke, 17, will be away a month. The selection process started last year when Clarke was named in a squad of more than 100 players. He has since attended coaching clinics every school holidays while his form was monitored by the AIS before he was confirmed as a starter in the final squad of 28.

Clarke is the Manning River Times-Iguana Sportstar of the Week, earning a \$50 open order at Iguana.

The quick stepping fullback said he can't wait to get on plane to Europe.

"Yeah, I was pretty confident I'd make the team," he said.

"I thought I played pretty good during the season."

Australia will play a British Academy side along with the French under 17 and 19 selections and other academy squads during their stay.

While Taree City had a horror year in Group Three, Clarke's form both for the club's under 18s and as a replacement in first grade proved a shining light.

With the Bulls regularly struggling for numbers Clarke often played under 18s then backed up for first grade. In one game against Camden Haven he dazzled the defence, scoring four tries in the opening half hour.

Clarke's form was quickly noted by NRL scouts and he has been included in the SG Ball (under 18s) squad for West Tigers and the Newcastle Knights for 2012. He'll stick with the Knights.

"It's closer to home and my dad's down there," he explained.

Should he impress there Clarke could also get a start in the Toyota Cup (under 20s). The Ball season finishes early, so Clarke could also be available for the Bulls, although this will depend on whether he wants to move full time to Newcastle or commute to play and train.

He started playing league in the Group Three Juniors, first with Red Rovers then with Taree Panthers. He represented Country under 16s last year and Oxley Pioneers under 18s this season.

Not surprisingly Clarke also shows promise as a touch player and has represented Northern Eagles in the various age groups. However, he says league's his No 1 sporting priority and he hopes to eventually make it to the NRL.

He is in year 12 at Chatham High School.



Clive Bloomfield from Iguana with this week's sportstar, rugby league player Trae Clarke.