

PURE GOLD

Chance to even score but Lions play it cool

CONNOR O'BRIEN

AUSSIE RULES: It won't be a Round 1 rematch but Palm Beach Currumbin will not have to wait long to play their QAFL grand final conquerors.

Beaten 15.12 (102) to 7.7 (49) by Gold Coast rivals Labrador in September, the Lions will be eyeing another crack at the now back-to-back premiers in Round 2 at Cooke-Murphy Oval, when the Tigers will blazon their latest flag.

"We've been back for four weeks (and) we haven't spoken about it," Lions coach Chad Owens said of the rematch.

"Regardless of what happens on that day, they don't give you a premiership cup for beating them in a rematch. I reckon some of the boys will be pretty keen, though."

First, Palm Beach will face another test, taking on Morningside away in their season opener on April 22.

"It's two huge games to start the season," Owens said. "It's good though, it will be good to find out where you are at early."

Owens expected the competition's reduction from 18 rounds to 16 would help players in the back end of the season and added his squad had returned to training strongly.

"They have come back really good, actually ... we have retained probably 90 per cent of our list so that has helped us," he said.

Labrador play Surfers Paradise in Round 1 at Sir Bruce Small Park on April 23 while Broadbeach start with a bye.

The Demons are set to hit the road in Round 6, scheduled to play the Western Magpies at Heritage Oval in Toowoomba.

Round 11 in July will mark rivalry round, pitting Palm Beach against Labrador for a second time as well as Surfers Paradise against Broadbeach.

See the full draw at goldcoastbulletin.com.au



Liam Gander (second from right) wins the 2016 Gold Coast Australia Day Gift.

Picture: REGI VARGHESE

Gift could be lost

Griffith Uni pulls funding after becoming Games partner

TOM BOSWELL

ORGANISERS of the Australia Day Gift can't guarantee the future of the historical event after naming rights sponsor Griffith University decided not to recommit to next year's race.

Griffith University, which has sponsored the race for the past 11 years, has withdrawn funding after becoming an official partner of the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

It has left the future of the Gift in doubt beyond next year's January 26 event as the Queensland Athletic League scrambles to try to find corporate backing.

Queensland Athletic League president Bruce Duncan said he was concerned about the future of the event, which is going into its 34th year.

"If we don't get sponsored then that's it," Duncan said.

"The Australia Day Gift is all about preparing athletes

for the Commonwealth Games. It has gained fame as a feature sporting and community event and is vital towards providing competition for athletes in the lead-up to the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games."

Duncan said the body didn't receive any financial backing from the State or Federal governments and relied solely on sponsorships and donations.

Prizemoney for the Gift was \$15,000 in the year 2000

but organisers will struggle to put up \$5000 for the upcoming race.

It is another blow to the Australia Day Gift which was homeless in recent months before the Southport Sharks offered up their home at Fankhauser Reserve.

The race had previously been run on the lawns of the Gold Coast City Council's Evandale headquarters but the venue has now been overtaken by equipment being used for roadworks.

The Australia Day Gift is a proven breeding ground for international stars including Olympians Steven Brimacombe, Blair Young, Nathan Allen and Steve Proudlock and Commonwealth Games representative Matt Davies.

Four runners over the past five years have also won the lucrative Stawell Gift that comes with \$60,000 worth of prizemoney. They are Aaron Stubbs, Mitchell Williams-Swain, Murray Goodwin and Isaac Dunmall.



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