

League stars vow to bring back pride

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The Mindaribba Warriors are not heading to the annual NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout competition in Lismore this weekend to simply make up the numbers.

Appearances in recent years have promised so much from the Maitland team, who have managed to make the top-eight the last four years but not pressed further.

Warriors captain and hooker Ron Griffiths said the team was heading to the North Coast with the aim of bringing the silverware back to Maitland, which in turn would see the city host the event in 2008.

The talent-rich team though, faces a tough task dislodging defending champions and winners the past four years, the Cec Patten-Ron Merritt Memorial Redfern All Blacks.

But Griffiths said rather than the team dwelling on its misfortune in past campaigns they needed to “create their own luck” across the weekend.

He said the team welcomed some National Rugby League experience within its squad this year in Manly Sea Eagles centre Ashley Alberts and Newcastle Knights forward Mick Young.

Young had intended to play last year but he was injured and joins brothers Luke, Bob and Ben in the team in 2007.

Cessnock Goannas players Griffiths, Mick Campton, Alfred Whaleboat, Daniel French, Joby Patten and Scott Mason all add further flair and experience, along with former Newcastle representative five-eighth Joey Griffiths.

The event enters its 37th year in 2007 and Griffiths said the players were proud to represent the region at the carnival.

“It’s a showcase of aboriginal rugby league and it’s a chance for some of the younger players to impress at a higher representative level because there’s always Sydney scouts there,” Griffiths said.

Griffiths said the Warriors would not have been able to compete in the event without the support of major sponsors Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ), who helped fund team uniforms, travel and accommodation, training and medical costs.

“We would not have been able to do it without them and we would also like to thank the Mindaribba Lands Council and members for their support,” he said.

The Warriors first match is at 11 am on Saturday against a tough Taree outfit.