

Media Release
14 May 2010

Suncorp Bank and the Wallabies seeking kids who have tackled bullying

Qantas Wallabies Lock James Horwill today paid a surprise visit to a boy who has taken a stand against bullying and made a difference to the life of his peers.

Twelve-year-old Dominic Andersen-Strudwick has been announced as the first Suncorp Bank Wallabies Ball Kid for 2010 after his story of bravery and compassion secured him a chance to put on his footy boots for official Ball Kid duties at the Qantas Wallabies vs Fiji Test in Canberra on 5 June.

Dominic, a student at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Darra, is an inspirational youngster who has battled bullying from his peers. With the support of his school, which has a whole school approach to the eradication of bullying, he has triumphed over the experience.

Dominic is actively involved in his school's student leadership group which builds friendships with the younger kids in his cohort. He is also working with the school principal who is spearheading an anti-bullying program.

His mum Kate said Dominic did not have an easy childhood as he fell victim to bullying when he was in Year 3.

"It all started when he stood up for a classmate who was bullied. He naturally became the next target after that incident. He was smaller in build compared to his friends back then so that didn't help matters," she said.

"The effects of bullying took a toll on him and he used to come home some days feeling helpless and sad. It is definitely not something a parent would ever want to see happen to their child.

"I'm proud Dominic has emerged a fighter and is now doing everything in his power to help other kids overcome bullying. I'm also glad his school is taking an active step towards creating a safe learning environment for our children."

Suncorp Bank Executive Manager Tony Meredith said the national search was on for Australian kids like Dominic who have tackled bullying to take on the role of the Suncorp Bank Ball Kids at the Qantas Wallabies domestic Test matches this season.

"Suncorp Bank encourages the Brisbane community to nominate a deserving kid for the chance to win them and their family a once in a life time Wallabies experience," Mr Meredith said.

"The winner will have the chance to meet the Qantas Wallabies, see the exclusive pre-match training session and be a Ball Kid at one of this year's biggest matches with their family cheering them on from the sidelines.

"To enter the competition, you just need to be aged eight to 15 and show how you have overcome a bullying experience, done something to combat bullying or led a change at your school or sporting club."



Official bank of the Wallabies

Six kids will be selected and they and their families will win a Suncorp Bank Wallabies Ball Kid experience at the Perth, Sydney, Brisbane or Melbourne Qantas Wallabies Test matches this season.

Qantas Wallabies Lock James Horwill said it was an inspiration to meet a warrior like Dominic and looked forward to having more kids like him join the Team on the field this year.

"I'm happy to join Suncorp Bank in recognising kids who show great character and courage to stand up against bullying," Mr Horwill said.

"It's an admirable quality to have and I urge anyone who has a positive story to tell to come forward and share their experience and inspire others to do the same."

Kids Helpline Counsellor Leo Hede said bullying was a serious concern in Australia which could have major negative impacts on young people.

"Victims of bullying often experience sadness, embarrassment, anxiety and frustration. In the long term, they are likely to develop low self-confidence and difficulty in maintaining relationships. In extreme cases, bullying may also lead to suicidal thoughts," Mr Hede said.

"A recent study found one in four Year 4 to Year 9 students are bullied every few weeks and our research shows one in 10 kids who are bullied and tell an adult, get no support or resolution.

"As a community and nation, we should not condone bullying in any form and must teach our young people it is never okay to resort to such behaviour."

Kids Helpline, a service of BoysTown, offers free, private and confidential counselling services over the phone, email and internet for young people aged five to 25 years. Its counsellors respond to more than 5,500 contacts each week about issues ranging from bullying and relationship breakdowns, to homelessness and drug and alcohol abuse.

Dominic said he was thrilled to be selected as Suncorp Bank's first Wallabies Ball Kid which includes meeting the Wallabies squad on the eve of their Test match against Fiji in Canberra.

"I was surprised to see Wallaby James Horwill walk through the classroom door today. I can't believe my mum and teachers kept it a secret from me all this time," he said.

"I love rugby and have been a fan of the Qantas Wallabies for ages. I'm really excited to be on the sidelines of an international rugby match. It will be an experience I'll never forget."

In addition to performing official Ball Kid duties for the Qantas Wallabies, Dominic has won two-night's accommodation for a family of four, three tickets to the game, the opportunity to meet the team during a pre-test training session, an official photo with the players and an official Suncorp Bank Wallabies Ball Kid uniform.

Suncorp is giving away another six of these packages starting with the 12 June clash with England in Perth. There will also be 50 finalist prizes. To nominate someone you think deserves the prize, all you need to do is visit www.suncorpbank.com.au/ballkids and tell us their story in 100 words or less.

For all media enquiries contact Karin Wong, Sequel Communications on (07) 3251 8144 or 0418 278 029.

FACT SHEET

About the Suncorp Group's ARU (Qantas Wallabies) Sponsorship

2010 marks Suncorp's seventh year as the Official Financial Services sponsor of the Australian Rugby Union and the Qantas Wallabies. As a flagship property for the Group, accessed by multiple brands, the ARU property is both a commercial and community focused national sponsorship which brings Australian Rugby to as many of Suncorp's customers and Australian rugby supporters as possible.

Key programs delivered via Suncorp Group's ARU sponsorship include extensive customer acquisition and retention focused hospitality, ticketing and business events; match day advertising and branding; money-can't-buy and ambassador programs; EdRugby and Suncorp Bank Walla Rugby Week; Suncorp Bank Wallabies Ball Kid program and more.

About Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline offers free, private and confidential 24 hour counselling services over the phone for young people aged five to 25 years. Email and web is also available.

Its counsellors respond to more than 5,500 calls each week about issues ranging from relationship breakdowns and bullying, to sexual abuse, homelessness, suicidal thoughts, and drug and alcohol use.

The service aims to empower young people by assisting them to:

- Affirm the value of each individual child and young person
- Develop options and strategies to help them deal with their issues
- Identify and understand the consequences of a particular course of action
- Facilitate more productive relationships with family and friends, and
- Provide information on local support services.

Kids Helpline counsellors are fully qualified professionals who undergo additional accredited training at Kids Helpline.

Kids Helpline is a service of BoysTown.