

Tonny Times

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Ricky's Rio bound

One Tongala Primary School grade sixer has dual identities when it comes to his two winter sporting pursuits. When he plays Aussie Rules with the Tongala Blues he is known simply as Ricky, but when he is in the soccer pitch he becomes Enrique Dos Santos. Full story on Pages 3, 4 & 5 of TTE.



**INSIDE THIS
MONTH**



FULL PLATES, HEALTHY MATES

Men gathered at the Tongala Town Hall for a free Men's Breakfast as part of Men's Health Week. Sponsored by Stride Mental Health, the event offered connection, conversation, and promoted better health and wellbeing.

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From Tonny to Rio

A Tongala 12-year-old who lives dual sporting identities will represent Australia on the world soccer stage later this month at the renowned Iber Cup, an international youth football tournament that is this year being held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Enrique Dos Santos, the international soccer player, and Ricky, the grade six Tongala Primary School student, are one and the same. He will be Enrique in Brazil for the soccer tournament, while anyone watching him run around under lights on a Friday night will simply know him as Ricky.

Anyone watching would probably dismiss him as just another enthusiastic grade sixer with ambitions to emulate the feats of his AFL heroes and make it into the big league. How wrong they would be. Ricky is about to embark on an exciting journey, one that will see him return to his



father's homeland, Brazil, but in the green and gold of Australia and not in the famous blue and green of the soccer-mad South American nation. Ricky will be competing in one of the world's largest youth football tournaments, the Iber Cup, which attracts



junior soccer stars from all over the world. He will be playing with the Australian team at the prestigious tournament, facing off against top junior teams from Brazil and around the globe.

• **Continued on pages 4 & 5 of TTE**

JORJA'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

• From Page 1

"I remember cooking fried rice with Nan Sandra a lot, and every time we visited Nan Patricia, we'd come home with biscuits. I still try to make them now, but they never taste quite as good as hers did." Last year, Jorja competed in the event at Gordon TAFE in Geelong, where she achieved silver – the highest placing for a first-year student. She recalled her nerves as medals were announced but was thrilled with her result, finishing just nine per cent behind the overall winner. This year, she was excited to compete again and hoped to do her supporters proud. "Everything I've done so far is to get me that one step closer to where I want to be," she said.

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From Tonny to Rio

• From Page 3

Ricky, who turned 12 in March, plays as a winger or central midfielder for Shepparton United in the local BSL league.

His team currently sits first in the competition, having only been beaten once in five games this season.

He is excited that despite missing six weeks of football he will return just in time for the finals.

Ricky's soccer journey began at age five, inspired by his father Jose Dos Santos, a former professional player for Palermo FC in Brazil's second division.

"My dad played professionally, so I've always had football in my blood."

The Iber Cup is an internationally renowned youth tournament that draws teams from academy clubs from Spain, Brazil, France, Chile, and Peru – among others. This year's event will see Ricky's Australian squad competing against four Brazilian teams in multiple group matches from July 15 to July 19.

"We will be up against some really strong teams from Brazil," he said.

"It's going to be a great experience to play against players from my dad's country."

While in Brazil, Ricky and his parents will visit extended

family in Jose's hometown of Santa de do Sul, and this will be his third visit to the country – the first when he was a baby and the second three years ago.

"I'm looking forward to spending four weeks with my family. It's going to be amazing to see where my dad grew up and see my uncles and aunties again."

His mother Leanne, originally from Rockhampton in Queensland, expressed pride in her son's achievements.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for Ricky to compete on an international stage and connect with his heritage," she said. "We'll be going with him, and the whole family is excited to support

him and enjoy the trip together."

Ricky's Tongala Primary School will be able to follow his progress on the Iber Cup website, where full statistical information will be available and even live feeds of the games. Ricky has been at

the school since prep and balances his soccer commitments with playing Aussie Rules with his mates. "I play soccer on Saturdays and I also play footy, but the footy season will be over by the time I get back from Brazil."





In addition to his club performances, Ricky has been recognised for his talent through selection in elite squads. He was part of Global Football's elite squad in September, which was scheduled to play against Premier League academy teams. Unfortunately, he was unable to accept this offer, instead making the commitment to the Iber Cup squad and the Brazilian adventure. "Making those teams is a big deal. It motivates me to keep working hard." Ricky's older brother, Jye Dos Santos, is also carving out his own path in soccer. At 17, Jye is currently part of the SEDA College Melbourne Victory high performance program — a prestigious pathway for young players aiming to break into professional ranks through Melbourne Victory. His dedication and skill have already attracted attention beyond Australia. Last year, the *Herald Sun* featured Jye's journey after he spent three months



training with a soccer academy in Spain, gaining invaluable international experience and exposure to European football styles. "He's way better than me," Ricky laughs, "but he's a big inspiration." The Dos Santos family are passionate about football and proud of their multicultural background. Ricky is a devoted Arsenal supporter, admiring their attacking style and

resilience, while also keeping an eye on Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, his favourite player. "I like watching Arsenal because they never give up," he said. The Iber Cup tournament offers more than just competition — it's a cultural experience and a stepping stone for young athletes aiming for professional careers. Players are scouted by top

clubs worldwide, and Ricky has already been identified as a prospect, with interest from one of the major Manchester teams. "It's incredible to think that I might get a chance to play at that level someday," he said. "We try to support them as much as possible, and seeing Ricky compete internationally is a proud moment for us." "Soccer is a huge part of our family," Leanne said. "Having the chance to connect through sport makes this trip even more special." As Ricky prepares to leave on July 12 for his six-week trip, the excitement is palpable. The tournament will not only test his skills but also deepen his understanding of his roots and the global game he loves. The school has recently decided to invest further in its soccer facilities and will have new goals set up on the school oval for next term. This follows the construction of new Aussie Rules goal posts last year. With several soccer-playing residents in Tongala, the goals will also be available to the general public, who will no doubt appreciate being able to play the sport in their home town. As for Ricky, he will no doubt be one of the highest users of the new goals in his last two terms of primary school at Tongala. And, just maybe, one day he will be returning to Brazil with Australia's national team, rather than as a 12-year-old in the Iber Cup tournament. "Playing in Brazil and wearing Australia's green and gold—it's going to be unforgettable," Ricky said.