

Touchdown USA! p13

GRIDIRON

TOUCHDOWN USA!

Robert's punt scores a college gridiron berth



BASKETBALLERS PATRICK MILLS AND NATHAN JAWAI PROVED THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE HEIGHTS THAT INDIGENOUS SPORTING TALENT CAN REACH. NOW ROBERT YOUNG HAS HIS SIGHTS SET ON BECOMING THE FIRST BLACKFELLA TO PLAY NFL FOOTBALL. HUT ONE, HUT TWO ...

If the phrases "first down", "second and goal", "touchback" and "audible" mean absolutely nothing to you, don't fret. It's American football jargon.

For most Australians, the closest they've come to a gridiron match is watching the movies *The Longest Yard* or *Jerry Maguire*. But if 20-year-old Robert Young has anything to do with it, American football, or gridiron, could open up a new world of opportunities for blackfellas.

"I want to be the first Aboriginal to play in the NFL," Robert says with a matter-of-fact determination as he takes his first steps towards playing US college football.

Robert's journey began when his father, Richard, heard a radio ad for American football punting tryouts at Melbourne's Olympic Park.

"Dad heard about the try-outs and asked me if I wanted to check it out," says Robert. "So I went down and had a go and I took to it straightaway."

"I met some lads there who played in a team, so I started training with them. From there I got selected to play for the Victorian team, and in 2008 I competed at the National Championships on the Gold Coast."

A talented junior sportsman, Robert comes from an Australian Football background, having played with the Adelaide Magpies in the Under 17s for four years.

"The wearing of pads and helmets allows them to throw their bodies headlong into tackles Aussie Rules or Rugby League footballers wouldn't even think of"

After relocating with family to Victoria, Robert "dropped off" Aussie Rules, and his first taste of American football at the tryouts that day set him on a completely unexpected sporting pathway.

"American football is just crazy. The average Joe might think it's a slow game and very stop-start, but it's actually very fast," says Robert.

The speed in which Robert can get his punts off has turned heads in the local gridiron scene.

While missing out on a recent Australian appearance, Robert is set to join the national side in a tour of Great Britain in June when the team will play England, Ireland and Wales.

Even more exciting is his impending move to California later that month where he is set to become the first Indigenous Australian to play college football in the US.

Robert has been picked up by Long Beach College in California. From there, he hopes to move to a Division 1 college such as UCLA where enrolment, housing and tutoring, usually costing upwards of \$100,000, would be provided under a sporting scholarship.

Robert's abilities have also alerted other American colleges to the abundance of football talent in Australia, particularly in the Indigenous community.

With the recent exploits of Patrick Mills on the American college basketball scene, an international spotlight is focused on Indigenous sportspeople like never before. Richard Young hopes to partner with American colleges for an Indigenous talent-identification program.

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Coming from an AFL background, 20 year old Robert Young wants to be the first Aboriginal to play gridiron in the National Football League in America.

He was selected to play for the Victorian team in 2008 and competed at the National Championships.

Robert has been picked up by Long Beach College in California.





Activity 1 Reading

Read *Touchdown USA!* on page 13
Shade one bubble.

1. Robert Young is originally from

- ☐ South Australia
- ☐ Victoria
- ☐ California
- ☐ New Zealand

2. Which other Indigenous sports player has also had success in America?

- ☐ Robert's father
- ☐ Patrick Mills
- ☐ Jerry Maguire
- ☐ Long Beach College

3. Which sport do these terms come from: first down, touch down, touchback?

- ☐ AFL
- ☐ basketball
- ☐ cricket
- ☐ gridiron

4. What is this text mainly about?

- ☐ Patrick Mills' success in America
- ☐ Indigenous sports players overseas
- ☐ Robert Young's steps towards playing US college football
- ☐ how to play gridiron

5. Number the bubbles 1,2,3,4 to show the correct order of events.

- ☐ Robert went to the American football tryouts at Melbourne's Olympic Park
- ☐ Robert played Australian Rules for the Adelaide Magpies Under 17s
- ☐ Robert was picked up to play for Long Beach College in California
- ☐ Robert and his family moved to Victoria

6. What is the main purpose of this text?

- ☐ to warn
- ☐ to argue
- ☐ to inform
- ☐ to criticise



Activity 2

Language conventions - Spelling

The spelling mistakes in these sentences have been circled.
Write the correct spelling for each word in the box.

1. Robert Young has set his sites on playing college football.

2. American football could open a lot of oportunityss for other Indigenous sports players.

3. Robert's journey started with punting tryouts.

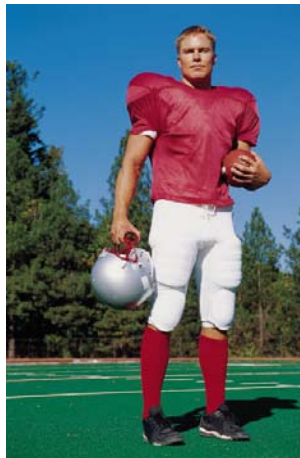
4. Robert's father herd about the tryouts.

5. Robert liked American football straitaway.

The spelling mistakes on these labels have been circled.
Write the correct spelling for each circled word in the box.

sholder pads

helmett



thy pads



Below is some writing from *Touchdown USA!*
Each line has one word that is incorrect.
Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

Robert's ability's have also alerted

other American coleges to the abundance

of Indigenous football tallent in Australia.

Activity 3

Which of the following correctly completes the sentence?
Shade one bubble.

1. Wearing helmets and pads *** gridiron players to throw themselves into tackles.**

- ☐ allowed
- ☐ will allow
- ☐ allows
- ☐ allowing

2. Robert wants to be the first Aboriginal to *** in the NFL.**

- ☐ play
- ☐ played
- ☐ plays
- ☐ playing

3. Some people think gridiron is a slow game, *** it is actually very fast.**

- ☐ so
- ☐ but
- ☐ except
- ☐ in case



Activity 4

Punctuation

**1. Which sentence has the correct punctuation?
Shade one bubble.**

- ☐ Have you heard of gridiron.
- ☐ Have you heard of gridiron?
- ☐ have you heard of gridiron?
- ☐ Have You Heard Of Gridiron?

**2. Which sentence has the correct punctuation?
Shade one bubble.**

- ☐ Its actually a fast game
- ☐ Its actually a fast game?
- ☐ It's actually a fast game.
- ☐ It's actually a fa'st game

**3. Which sentence has the correct punctuation?
Shade one bubble.**

- ☐ "I want to be the first Aboriginal to play in the NFL," says Robert.
- ☐ I want to be the first Aboriginal to play in the NFL says Robert.
- ☐ "I want to be the first Aboriginal to play in the NFL says Robert."



Activity 5

Writing a narrative

The common features of a narrative often include:

Beginning/Orientation: This sets the scene, creating a visual picture of the setting, atmosphere and time of the story. Characters are introduced and clues are set in place for the coming complication.

Problem/Complication: This is where a problem or complication occurs that affects the setting, time or characters.

Character's Reaction: Characters are developed through the ways they react to the problem.

Problem seems to be resolved/Minor Resolution: Everything seems to be resolved.

New Problem/Complication: The problem or complication is now often worse than before.

Problem is solved/Ending/Resolution: The problem is solved and the story ends.

Moral/Coda/Evaluative ending: There may be a moral or message at the end of the story.



Write a narrative.

The idea for your story is FOUND.

Your story might be about finding a lost pet, hidden treasures or new friends.

It could be about finding the solution to a problem or finding an opportunity to do something different and exciting.

Your story could be about how people in difficult situations find courage, help or understanding.

Think about:

- The characters and where they are.
- The complication or problem to be solved.
- How the story will end.

Remember to:

- Plan your story before you start.
- Write in sentences.
- Pay attention to the words you choose, your spelling and punctuation.
- Check and edit your writing when you have finished.