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Hospital Cup: Bond University's Rhian Stowers signs two year Major League Rugby deal with San Diego

One of Queensland's most exhilarating amateur rugby talents is off to the US after years of being snubbed by Super Rugby clubs. Inside his journey to an unlikely professional deal.

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Rhian Stowers in action for Bond University. Picture: Stephen Tremain.

One of Queensland's most exhilarating amateur rugby talents is off to the US after years of being snubbed by Super Rugby clubs.

Electric Bond University fullback Rhian Stowers has penned a two-year contract with the San Diego Legion in Major League Rugby.

Bond's head of rugby, Grant Anderson, has worked with Stowers at from grade six at Benowa State School and later at Somerset College – as well at Bond – and knows him better than most.

“He's just such a naturally instinctive player, he sees what's in front of him and takes those opportunities on,” Anderson said.

“He's probably the most exciting player in the (Hospital Cup) competition and has been for a couple of years.

“He’s very explosive, he’s got really good top end speed but he’s also incredibly strong for his size which gives him the ability to take tackles, defend hard and really get through line breaks well.

“The (Queensland) Reds haven’t looked at him although he’s been the best player in the competition for the past two years.”



Rhian Stowers leaping high for Bond University. Picture: Stephen Tremain.

It’s his explosive and instinctive play that Anderson believes will lay the foundation for Stowers to make his name in America.

“It’s a very structured competition, so having someone like Rhian with his natural attacking ability and instinctive play will be something that they haven’t seen a lot of,” Anderson said.

“I think he will be a definite standout over there.”

San Diego’s newly appointed head coach John Manenti is just months removed his decorated stint coaching the Australian men’s sevens outfit, and its from that national set up where he knew of Stowers, who is also a bright sevens prospect despite having his heart set on pursuing the traditional 15s.



Rhian Stowers lighting up the Hospital Cup. Picture: Stephen Tremain.

“It just sort of came out of nowhere,” Stowers said of the move.

“It happened pretty quickly, my manager told me that San Diego was interested and wanted me to go over there, they thought I’d be a good attacking addition and it all fell into place.”

A Colleges Knights junior on the Gold Coast, Stowers played a season of rugby league on the Gold Coast just two years ago with a stacked Southport Tigers outfit, adding a Rugby League Gold Coast premiership to his resume while playing on the wing alongside the likes of former NRL men Michael Oldfield, Sione Katoa (ex-Penrith and Canterbury hooker), and Greg Bird.



Rhian Stowers runs the ball for Southport in the 2022 Rugby League Gold Coast finals series. Picture by Richard Gosling.

Since his return to union in 2023, the now 24-year-old has cleaned up in the Hospital Cup, winning the 2023 Alec Evans Medal as the competition's best player and back-to-back Slipper Trophy's as Bond's best and fairest.

Despite the success, Super Rugby clubs remained uninterested in Stowers' exploits.

"He just gets branded too small at times and people can't see past his physical size the attributes that he brings to a team," Anderson said.

"He spent time with the Australian sevens, he's a great teammate and works incredibly hard on his skills and his game, when he can't get an opportunity in Australia we're more supportive of him going over (to the US).



Rhian Stowers celebrates a successful season. Picture: Meaghan McCarroll

“He’s been a special player for us for a long-time, and particularly because he’s a Gold Coast kid and has developed his rugby through Gold Coast rugby pathways, which we are the pinnacle of.”

Stowers views his upcoming San Diego stint as a “stepping stone”, with the end goal of cracking into Japan Rugby League One, the country’s premier union competition.

“It’ll be good to doing rugby full-time and seeing how much I can develop my skills and just get better as a player,” Stowers said.

“This is a stepping stone to hopefully get into Japan and go from there, I think I’m a bit small for the kind of style that Super Rugby teams play.

“Japan is the long-term goal.”