

Cougars new Board Member

Already Sherylene Stevens has heard enough of the Cougar jokes that come with being a female member of a sporting organisation operating under that name.

However, the new board member is more concerned with strengthening the brand of the Cougars within Central Queensland's business and sporting communities.

She admits it's another challenge on top of her work as the principal of successful Rockhampton business Design Real Estate.

While admitting her knowledge of football is not the reason for joining the board of the Cougars, Stevens has worked in sport and has a passion to see the city of Rockhampton promoted positively.

"I started the CQ NRL Bid and met with David Gallop in September 2008," she said.

"I also bought the Titans up here to have a chat."

While the NRL Bid is a part of the past for Stevens, she still believes a team would be a massive development for the city and perhaps a window of opportunity for the Cougars.

Stevens sees similarities between the goals of the CQ NRL Bid and the Cougars which are both out to provide pathways for Central Queensland youngsters to reach elite levels of their respective football codes.

"The Cougars are fantastic that way as they provide a pathway to the A-League," she said.

While the Cougars finished 2011 at the bottom of the Hyundai QSL ladder, that does not deter Stevens from looking ahead at a bigger picture and that includes an A-League position for the Rockhampton-based team.

Already, with Joe Fenech taking up his new coaching position in Central Queensland, Stevens plans to develop closer relationships with existing A-League clubs.

She said if the NRL Bid proved successful then they would be seeking all-year tenancy of their stadium and an A-League team would satisfy that arrangement.

However, while the dream exists Stevens knows the immensity of the task ahead in marketing the Cougars brand.

"That is my area of expertise (on the board) business, development and branding," she said.

While taking the message to the CQ business community is tough, Stevens knows that first the brand must be accepted by local football lovers.

She sees the Cougars brand as an integral part of football in Queensland.

"There's a great relationship between the Cougars and Football Queensland," she said.

Now the Cougars are trying to improve relationships with Central Queensland clubs, something she sees as improving over the past few months.

"The Cougars are not in competition, they are a pathway for the other clubs," she said.

In the meantime, she is happy with her start as one of the Cougars' five board members.

"I'm feeling content. Everything is very positive," she said.

"In CQ we have a very strong football following but we have to tap into it.

"We have a large base, bigger than any other sport."

This year the Cougars have successfully introduced another level to their management which will assist board members with their duties and Stevens believes this will give the organisation extra strength.

"The Cougars are not so much a football side but very much a business," she said.

With all the work needed to be done behind the scenes it is just as well she has the backing of husband, Darrin, who used to play football at Nerimbera.