

## A never to be forgotten encounter

The roar of the jets that flew overhead at Newcastle's Energy Australia Stadium on Friday 26 November was easily matched by the roar of the hundreds of local students attending a clinic in which players from Newcastle Jets and LA Galaxy participated. While LA's number 23 David Beckham was the main attraction, the students responded to the request to cheer just as loudly for each of the players as they were introduced. Formalities over, team members joined games on the field and shared their expertise with the star struck young players.

Students from St Patrick's Wallsend, Holy Family Merewether Beach, St Joseph's Merewether, St Columban's Mayfield and St Therese's New Lambton attended.

Harrison Jones, 8 of St Therese's New Lambton was delighted to find David Beckham on the field with him – but better was to come. Noticing that Harrison's shoelace was undone, "Becks" knelt down to tie it for him. Harrison was happy to tell his story to the assembled media – and he had a great tale for his mates on returning to school.



Sophie Amanatides, 9 and Bridgette May, 9, from St Therese's were also on the field with "Becks" and took the opportunity to ask for an autograph. He obliged graciously, so Sophie's cap and Bridgette's shirt were no doubt very carefully washed on the weekend!

Speaking after the game about how she was chosen to attend the clinic, Sophie said, "My teacher Mr Rouse had a roll of all our names and he said, 'yes' or 'no', meaning

'Do you want to be in the draw or not?' so I said 'yes'. After recess it was raffle time. I was the second girl called out - and look where I ended up!"

Sophie said she had been "very nervous and excited" before the games, and when she showed her Mum the signature "she screamed!" Sophie will wear the signature cap "a little bit not much".

Following games with the professionals, the students moved to the main ground to watch the two teams train. They were preparing for a 'friendly' match on Saturday night at which the Jets were victorious, 2-1.

For Isaac Clifford, the morning's activities were a curtain raiser to his role as mascot for the Jets. He won the opportunity through a competition run by a local radio station.

Helene O'Neill, Education Officer (Sport) at the Catholic Schools Office, said, "This program has been a joint initiative of the NSW Premier's Department, Northern Football, Maitland-Newcastle Catholic Schools Office and DET. Twenty of our secondary students acted as mentors on the day. The Beckham experience will long be remembered by our students as the day the world's most recognizable footballer took time out to play with them on their level."

*Tracey Edstein*