Chassis switch as Vettel checks his ‘sanity’

RED Bull has changed the chassis on Sebastian Vettel’s car in a move the struggling four-time Formula One champion calls a “sanity check”.

With Vettel’s dominance of F1 in jeopardy, Red Bull replaced the chassis with an old one it used during preseason testing before starting practice at the Spanish Grand Prix this week.

“It’s more a sanity check rather than a real problem with the other chassis,” Vettel said. “So it’s just to try everything we can, and basically reset and start again.”

Vettel enters tomorrow’s race in fifth place in the standings with 33 points, far from Mercedes driver Nico Rosberg’s competition-leading 79.

The massive rule book overhauled and the switch to V6 turbo hybrid engines this season has dislodged Vettel as the perennial favourite.

He has only one podium finish through four races, marking his worst start since joining Red Bull. His troubles have even led his team to order Vettel to let new teammate Daniel Ricciardo pass him in the last two races.

Vettel defended Red Bull’s engine-provider, Renault, saying both team and motor-maker needed to share the burden of improving the car and increasing its speed in straightaways.

“It’s not a big secret. If you look at the sector times or comparisons we have available, we currently lose out too much on the straights,” he said.

By DOUG BOOTH

THE Northern Territory Rugby Union is one third of the way through the season and the competition is hotting up.

The NTRU has introduced a mid-season cup in which the top two A-Grade clubs after Round 1 play for the Presidents Cup when they next meet in Round 2. Casuarina and South Darwin have finished top of the table after the first round and therefore get to play each other for the Presidents Cup after they meet next Saturday at Warren Park.

Many believe this could be a prelude to a possible grand final showdown should these two teams maintain their consistency throughout the season.

“Presidents Cups were a huge part of the NTRU back in the 1980s and early 1990s drawing grand final-like crowds and the day was a gala event,” NTRU chief executive Mark Heath said yesterday.

“We would like to reinvigorate this type of atmosphere again mid-season.”

Playing for the Presidents Cup gives clubs an incentive to finish first and second on the ladder and to set new benchmarks and goals.

This appears to have happened this season as the Presidents Cup showdown was only decided two weekends ago when University and South Darwin met in the last game of Round 1 to determine the opposition for the Cuppers.

This should be a cracker of a game to be played at South Darwin’s home ground.

The NTRU also has a Secretary Cup for reserve grade.

This will be decided in the clash between Palmerston and South Darwin on May 24 at Rugby Park.

By DOUG BOOTH

RUGBY LEAGUE

THE Parramatta Eels have strengthened their ties with their home away from home, supplying new training kits to 100 of the Northern Territory’s rising rugby league stars.

Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing Matt Conlan said he was delighted to see the NRL club donate the kits to the Territory Eels Academy as part of its partnership.

“It’s fantastic to see the Parramatta Eels fulfil its relationship with the Northern Territory yet again, with the donation of these 100 training kits to some of our best up and coming juniors,” he said.

“The training kits include a Parramatta jersey, singlet and shorts, so the blue and gold will be worn with pride by all the talented players in the Territory Eels Academy.

“Our partnership with the Eels will be hard to miss, with juniors from the Academy right across the Territory receiving the new gear, including Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs.

“This is just another way the Eels are showing their year-long commitment to the Territory, their home away from home. Throughout the year, the Territory Eels Academy program juniors will receive visits from Eels coaches and players, and will learn what it takes to achieve success on and off the footy field.

“This week’s generous donation of the Eels training kits follows several visits Eels players and coaches have already made to Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and remote communities in Central Australia for coaching clinics, coaching courses and school visits.

“It is fantastic to see kids from all over the Territory benefitting from this Government’s partnership with the Eels.”

The Territory Eels Academy aims to develop talented juniors in sport and in life and is supported by and feeds into the Northern Territory Institute of Sport’s rugby league program.

The NT will be showcased next weekend when Parramatta’s Pirtek Stadium hosts Territory Eels Day, featuring the NRL match between the Eels and St George Illawarra Dragons.

The Eels play host to Canberra at TIO Stadium in August.

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You’re in Eels Territory

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