MORE than 70 athletes from 22 countries have converged on Darwin for this week’s Top End Open Squash Tournament at the Darwin Squash Centre.

The May 9-11 tournament at the Darwin Squash Centre at Marrara signals the start of the 2014 Professional Squash Tour; with the Australian leg also featuring the NT Open in Alice Springs from May 15.

The tournament has a truly international feel, with world No.67 Jan Koulak from the Czech Republic the No.1 seed for the men’s draw. Australian squash legend Mike Corren, closing in on his 50th win on the professional circuit, is the No.2 seed.

The NT Junior Sportsperson of the Year, Rhys Dowling and Darwin’s Joseph White, ranked No.3 nationally in the under-17 age group, are also in the main draw.

Hong Kong’s Tong Tsu-Wing is seeded No.1 in the women’s draw. But previous tournament winner Milou van der Heijden from the Netherlands and Australia’s Christine Nunn will make life tough for her.

Corren, a semi-finalist in last year’s Darwin and Alice Springs tournaments, is a big fan of the world-class facilities at the Darwin Squash Centre.

“IT is always a very exciting prospect travelling to and competing in Darwin,” he said.

Firstly, the event is the true test for kids looking up to us.’’

Secondly, the chance to enjoy the world-class facilities and enjoy the world-class facilities at the Darwin Squash Centre is a pleasure and a real step up for the game in general.

“Obviously, I want to do my part to keep the title in Australian hands, but with a staggering 22 nations competing that is a job being a challenge, one,” he said. “I’m back at the Broncos and I have to concentrate on our game this week.

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Pro tour opener in Darwin has No.2 seed Corren chasing 50th win

**SPORT 43**

By GREY MORRIS

SQUASH

**Clippers president is latest casualty**

BASKETBALL

LOS Angeles Clippers President Andy Roenig, who has been with the NBA club since 1994, will take an indefinite leave of absence starting immediately, the league announced yesterday.

The news came three days after the NBA announced that it would appoint a new chief executive of the club in the wake of the racism scandal that led to a life ban on owner Donald Sterling.

“This will provide an opportunity for a new CEO to begin on a clean slate and for the team to stabilise under different circumstances,” said NBA spokesman Mike Bass.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver banned Sterling, the longest-tenured NBA team owner, for life after racist remarks he made in a private conversation with a girlfriend were made public.

The comments, first released by celebrity website TMZ, included Sterling saying he didn’t want his girlfriend bringing black people to games or posting photographs of herself on social media with black people.

A firestorm of outrage followed, leading the Clippers players to wear their uniforms inside out in a pre-game warm-up before Silver banned Sterling and fined the 80-year-old billionaire $2.5 million, the maximum allowed under league rules.

**RUGBY UNION**

ISRAEL Folau says the Wallabies have the talent and hunger finally to reclaim the Bledisloe Cup this year, ending the years of pain and suffering for Australian rugby fans.

Folau yesterday admitted he could not even remember what he was doing the last time Australia enjoyed trans-Tasman bragging rights, back in 2002.

“It’s been a long time since the Bledisloe has been here in Australia,” he said after the unveiling of the 2014 Wallabies jumper in Sydney.

“The All Blacks have been a very strong side the last 12 years and they’ve set the benchmark.

“I think we’ve got great talent in the team to get the job done this year.”

Under second-year coach Ewen McKenzie, they open the international campaign with a three-Test series against France, kicking off in Brisbane on June 7.

The Wallabies will launch their Rugby Championship campaign with the first of three Bledisloe Cup Tests against New Zealand in Sydney on August 16.

Folau said the hunger in the Wallabies and the momentum gained from four straight wins against Italy, Ireland, Scotland and Wales – to finish last year would help Australia regain the Bledisloe Cup.

**Maroon or Samoa: The Origin of Vidot’s dilemma**

By CHRIS GARRY

RUGBY LEAGUE

DANIEL Vidot admits he may turn down Mal Meninga if he’s asked to play for Queensland.

One of the competition’s form wingers, Vidot’s allegiance to Samoa is so strong he may decide to choose a Four Nations spot with the Pacific nation over a Maroons jersey. And he is upset about the eligibility laws that make him choose between Queensland and Samoa.

He also revealed Canberra sensation Anthony Milford was hurt that he could not play for Samoa last Saturday, instead playing for Queensland’s under-20s team.

Vidot said eligibility laws should be changed to allow Queensland and New South Wales players to represent second nations if they want to, a stand backed by Meninga.

Vidot has emerged as one of the boys of the season, averaging 160 metres a game to lead the category for the Broncos.

Vidot averages more metres a game than the Australian front-row of Matt Scott and James Tamou, the Cowboys pair the Broncos will meet in Townsville tomorrow.

Born and raised in Brisbane to Samoan parents, Vidot was a standout in Samoa’s win over Fiji last Saturday that qualified them for the Four Nations.

If Vidot plays one game for Queensland this series, which on form is likely, he would be ineligible for Samoa for two years. Asked if he would switch allegiance if a Queensland official called him, Vidot was “not too sure”.

“That is a decision I would have to make another time,” he said. “I’m back at the Broncos and I have to concentrate on our game this week.

“This is the first time Samoa has been a top-four ranked nation. We want to be role models for kids looking up to us.”

Meanwhile, the NRL yesterday endorsed a $5000 fine after Warriors player Konrad Hurrell and New Zealand television personality Teusla Blakely were involved in a sex tape scandal.

Hurrell was driving while filming himself and the video found its way onto social media. The Warriors centre yesterday apologised.

**World’s best flock to open**

**By GREY MORRIS SQUASH**

Four Nations spot with the allegiance to Samoa is so strong for rugby league rules.

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