



Prologue

Travis and I are locked together at 11 points each on the Legends ladder. I've just won the Legend of Rugby and I'm feeling confident about doing well in the footy. But Travis Fisk is strutting about the place like he owns it. Football is his favourite of all the Legend sports. He was the Legend of Football last year and his mate Richard was runner-up. I guess he has reason to be confident.

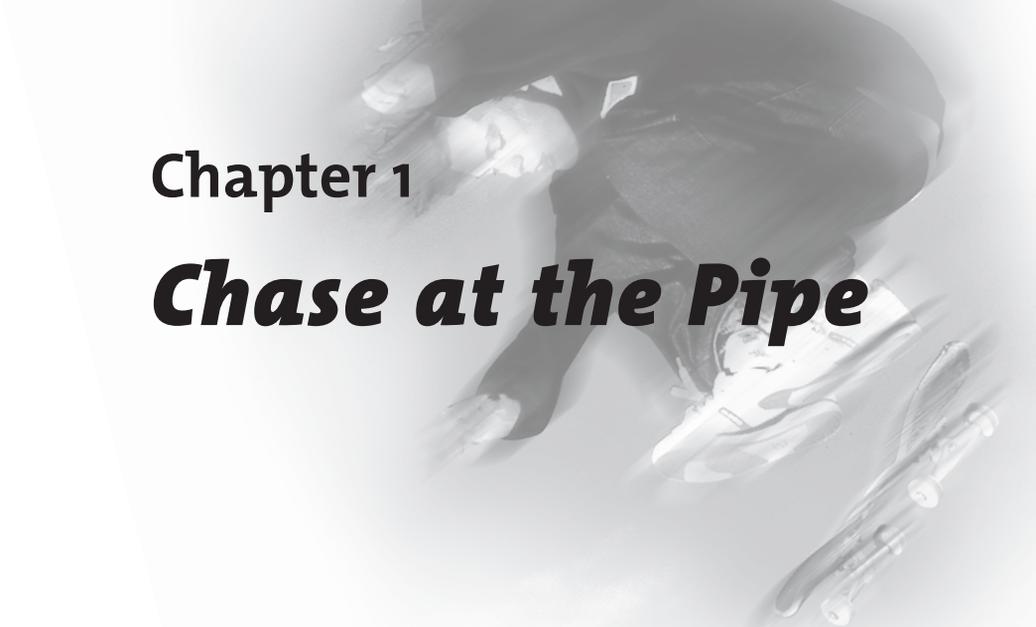
There's a storm brewing at Sandhurst and it's not just the dark clouds that have been hovering these past few days.



Out of Bounds

Karla Harris has been complaining as usual. This time she's cheesed off that the girls can't play football. For once I have to agree with her. I'd be rapt to have Karla playing on the same team as me. I've seen her on a soccer pitch and a netball court. She's tough, determined and very skilful.

I don't know whether Luci or Becky will play football. I reckon they might be good enough to get into the 18, but... oh, heck... hang on...



Chapter 1

Chase at the Pipe

‘Bubba! Don’t worry, I’ll get it,’ I yelled.

Bubba was talking with three rough-looking kids down by the Pipe. They were holding his footy. I jogged over to find out what was going on.

‘Fat Kid reckons he wants his football back,’ one gangly kid snarled.

‘Sounds reasonable to me,’ I said.

‘Yeah? How about this then?’ The kid took a few steps back, then jogged forward and planted his foot into the ball.

‘Cool, what a spiral,’ Bubba drooled, as the ball disappeared over the skating area.



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‘Hero,’ I muttered.

Bubba trotted alongside me as I jogged off to retrieve the ball.

‘Hey, Mitch? I reckon that would have gone at least 50 metres—’

‘Bubba—’ I couldn’t begin to explain to him. Bubba was like a big puppy dog. He was happily oblivious to the kid kicking his ball away. Instead, he was excited with the torpedo the gangly kid had nailed.

Bubba looked at me, a little confused.

‘You reckon he’ll do another—’

‘No!’

I scooped up the ball, then Bubba and I went over to a grassy hill to watch the skateboarders. Bubba grabbed a couple of snack bars out of his backpack. He hesitated, then slipped one back into his bag. It looked kinda healthy. Maybe Bubba was back on his training diet?

‘I’m right thanks, Bubs,’ I smiled, grabbing a packet of chips from my bag.

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Bubba's bottom lip began to quiver.

'Mitch, do you wanna swap?'

'Nah.'

'Two snack bars for your bag of chips?'

'I'm alright, Bubba.' I tore open the packet.

'Mitch, this is my last offer. You know I'm not starting my carbon-loading diet till tomorrow. I'll give you—'

'Hey! Fancy seeing you two here.'

Karla was striding towards us, skateboard in one hand, mobile phone in the other.

'Mitch,' Bubba whimpered.

You'd think some flesh-eating monster was lumbering towards us.

Karla ignored me and went straight to Bubba.

'Hey hottie,' she crooned, leaning over him.

Bubba leaned back. Then leaned some more. Finally he toppled over. Karla and I laughed.

'Not the normal reaction I get. I'd rather



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see your face than your butt if it's all the same to you,' Karla laughed.

Bubba finally managed to right himself.

'Now what say I teach you a few moves on the board?' Karla asked Bubba, reaching down to pull him up.

The next thing I knew, Bubba was being marched towards the largest pipe. He looked back at me once, his face as white as chalk.

'I'll save you the chips, Bubbs!' I called.

He didn't seem to hear me. Suddenly I felt sorry for him. Maybe Bubba was scared witless by skateboards and girls. For me, it would just be a bit of fun. But maybe Bubba really was spooked — freaked out by a girl who wouldn't take 'no' for an answer.

I got up and jogged down after them.

'We've gotta go, Karla. C'mon Bubbles,' I said, shoving his footy into my bag.

'Listen, Mitchell. Isn't it about time you let Bubba do what *he* wants to do? Stop treating him like he's your baby brother.'

Chase at the Pipe

‘Bubba, are you okay? Do you wanna have a go?’ I asked, trying to read his face.

‘Maybe just a little go, yeah Karla?’ he squeaked.

It seemed that though there was a part of Bubba that wanted to run, another part wanted to stay and have a go.

I shrugged, gave him a thump on the arm and stepped back — straight into the same kid that had booted Bubba’s footy a few minutes before.

‘Watch yourself,’ he said, scowling at me. The kid reached into my bag and took out the footy.

‘Do you wanna another torp, Fat Kid?’ he chuckled, waving the ball at Bubba.

‘Leave it, Nails,’ Karla sighed, shaking her head.

But Nails was lining up for another huge kick — this time towards the road about 40 metres away. He’d make the road on the full. He dropped his skateboard and jogged back



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with the ball. His mates were cheering him on.

Without thinking I jumped on the board and powered away towards the road.

‘Hey!’ Nails yelled.

I glanced around quickly.

Nails had grabbed another skateboard and was *pumping* after me. Others were following. I could hear Karla laughing.

The smooth concrete path snaked towards the main road. The click of the wheels going over the concrete sections accelerated as I gathered speed. I hunched down, two feet on the board, and took the two curves easily. But the shouts from behind were getting closer. I looked up at the lights. Still green. I increased speed, flying through the air at a small downhill section before the road itself.

The lights turned orange as I raced across the intersection, swerving at the last second to avoid a man and his dog. Too late, I realised that I wasn’t going to be able to make the

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jump to get back onto the footpath on the other side.

I jumped off, my speed carrying me forward. I stumbled for a pace, and then slammed my foot down hard on the back of the skateboard. It flew into the air, spinning backwards. Reaching up, I guided the board back down, face up, and was back on again, two feet, crouching low. I was weaving my way between pedestrians, most jumping out of the way.

I stole another look. The three kids were running across the crossing, skateboards in their hands. They obviously hadn't attempted the gutter before.

I swerved into the car park then veered suddenly to the right as a car started to back out towards me. I kept my eyes up, scanning for cars. I was heading towards the cinema. I aimed for a little ramp, flew up it and raced towards the front automatic doors. Suddenly, the doors opened.



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‘Good timing!’ I yelled, jumping off the skateboard as it slowed on the carpet. I kicked it behind me, towards the closing doors.

‘Hey!’ someone shouted near the doors.

The ticket usher took a sudden interest in the activity by the doors, as the skateboard jammed between them.

I slipped into the toilets hoping that management would take care of the rest. I gave it a good ten minutes, then slid out a back entrance and into a laneway. It was deserted. Another 15 minutes and I was home.

The phone rang about half an hour later.

‘Mitch,’ Bubba said, breathlessly.

‘Bubba, what happened?’

‘Nothing. Karla’s gonna teach me how to skateboard,’ he said.

‘That’s cool. Did those kids turn up? Did you get your footy back?’

‘No and yes. Karla and me found it. Mitch?’

‘Yes Bubba?’

Chase at the Pipe

‘Have you still got those chips you promised me?’

‘Two packets, Bubba. What did Karla say?’

‘About what?’ he asked.

‘Me!’

‘Oh, well, she was impressed with your skateboarding skill. She said that Nails had it coming to him. She also said that you shouldn’t turn up to the Pipe for about six years.’

‘Six years, huh?’

‘I reckon five years’d be enough, Mitch. I reckon she was exfagorating a bit, you know.’

‘Yeah, I think you’re right, Bubbs.’

‘Pity there’s not a Legend of Skateboarding, Mitch.’

I laughed and hung up. The Legends. The Legend of Football. I wondered how they were going to organise the competition this year.

