



AFL

Aussie duo search for NFL kick

By Rebecca Williams

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VICTORIAN NFL aspirants Stephen Paulke and Finbar Simpson will take the first step to realising their dream of becoming American footballers at a prestigious camp in the US next week.

Paulke, 18, and Simpson, 20, have been invited to attend the Chris Sailer annual national kicking event in Las Vegas from January 12.

The camp, which attracts 300 NFL hopefuls every year, provides expert tuition and exposure to recruiters from the top colleges across the US.

In the past five years, more than 180 kickers/punters who attended the camp have earned full scholarships to division one colleges to boost their prospects of an NFL career.

Paulke and Simpson will also attend top camps held by NFL legend Ray Guy and leading NFL coach Ray Pelfrey while in the US.

"It's a great opportunity," said Simpson, who comes from a rugby background in Queensland.

"There is no real future for gridiron in Australia, so that's where you have got to go and this is the way to go about it."

Paulke and Simpson have honed their kicking techniques with other American football hopefuls at the Ozpunt punting and kicking academy in Melbourne.

Ozpunt's Adam Runciman said there was a lot of interest in Australian kickers from the US colleges.

"The best kicker in the NFL at the moment, Mat McBriar, is an Australian, so that has created a hype over Australian kickers," Runciman said.

"The other thing is when Ben Graham first went to the (New York) Jets, he introduced the drop punt, which they call end-over-end, which has become quite popular among the NFL punters.

"Now all these college coaches love it, but they don't have anyone that can use it or who has ever kicked it before.

"When you say you've got an Australian, the first question they ask is, 'Can they kick it end-over-

end?!"

Herald Sun

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