

Taking a punt on an NFL career

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TIM McMullen could have followed in the footsteps of some of his Sandringham Dragon TAC Cup teammates and taken a shot at getting drafted by the AFL.

But the Parkdale teenager is rolling the dice and going down a different path, the one taken by Arizona Cardinal Ben Graham, Philadelphia Eagle Sav Rocca and Dallas Cowboy Mat McBriar.

McMullen 18, has his sights set on an NFL career as a punter and has received a pair of partial scholarship offers from two US colleges to play football (gridiron) and study.

"Tim is looking at the education side of it, a chance of getting a degree, which is something the AFL couldn't offer him," dad David McMullen said.

His son is the first Australian to be offered a scholarship at an American University as a punter for a football team. McBriar went to the University of Hawaii, but paid his own way for his first year.

"I'm rapt with the way things are going and am really looking forward to the challenge," Tim McMullen said.

McMullen, a Mentone Grammar graduate, will be attending either Midlands, an NAIA division three school in Nebraska, or division two Humboldt State University in California this winter.

McMullen's plan is to attend either Midlands or Humboldt for two years, make a name for himself, and then transfer to a division one school. Division one football is the feeder program for the NFL.

At 193cms and more than 90kgs, McMullen, a former Sandringham Sabres junior basketballer, has the body for an NFL career.

Dragons specialist coach David Wing, a former punter with NFL Europe team Scotland, first got McMullen interested in punting.

"He asked if any players were interested in punting and Tim took him up on it," David McMullen said.

Wing worked with McMullen for several months before steering him to the OzPunt program.

The OzPunt program trains and coaches would-be punters and helps place them at universities in the US.

Former Sydney Swan Nick Davis is the latest AFL player looking at a career in the NFL. Davis and McMullen have been training together for the past year.

McMullen has adapted well to the American style of kicking.

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