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SEMIS IN THEIR SIGHTS: Mullumbimby Giants' new coach Graham Eadie, left, with club president Ken Barnham.

PHOTO: DIGBY HILDRETH

## Eadie to coach Mullum Giants

By DIGBY HILDRETH

THE Mullumbimby Giants are going in to the 2012 season with a fresh and formidable asset.

They have signed on head coach Graham "Wombat" Eadie, an icon of Australian rugby league, and one of the country's finest ever players.

He will replace Damon Scott who, as the father of two young kids, no longer had the time.

Gold Coaster Eadie will be in Mullum for training nights on Tuesdays and Thursdays and for games at the weekend.

He says he's looking forward to the new role and working with the Giants, whose players "are a good blend of experience and youth".

Eadie's own experience will be "invaluable" for the club, said committee member Steve Butler.

Playing as a fullback, Eadie represented NSW in the State of Origin, and helped win World Cups with Australia. He was a pillar of the Manly-Warringah club during its 1970s heyday, winning four premierships with them and becoming Manly's major pointscorer in 1973 at the age of 19.

He kicked 14 goals in a match

against Penrith and for the next three years he was the leading pointscorer in the competition.

His high point was 242 points (14 tries and 100 goals) in 1975, and his 1917 points in first grade and 2070 points in all grades were both records at the time of his retirement.

He toured with the Kangaroos in 1973 and took over as fullback for the last two Tests after Graeme Langlands was injured.

Eadie retired after Manly lost the 1983 grand final but resurfaced at the English club Halifax three years later, scoring 16 tries and helping it win the 1986 Club Championship and 1987 Challenge Cup.

He already has some knowledge of Mullumbimby.

"When I coached with the Gold Coast Chargers I had a few blokes from the Giants - Glen Godbee, Adam McKenzie and Andrew Moroney - and my old mate Neil Pringle used to coach them," he said.

Steve Butler said Eadie is the highest-profile player to ever fill the role. He will give the club a much-needed fillip after its season in 2011, Butler said.

"It was a horrific year for injuries, with 12 first-grade

players off the field at one time. Anything compared with that will be on the up," he said.

Eadie hopes the bad year is out of the way.

"There'll always be injuries, and you can't do much about broken bones. I'll be working closely with the medical side of things, and using ice-baths to get soft tissue injuries over and done with quickly," he said.

As to his coaching style, Eadie said: "I'm very big on discipline, and on players having respect, including for each other, so they can work well together.

"We've got a good chance of getting into the semis," he said.

The game has changed a lot since his playing days, he said.

"It's a lot more intense, quicker and the skill level of the players is a lot higher - mainly because they've got the time to do it. They're working five days a week on skills and fitness," he said. He will find a willing squad in the Giants, said Butler.

"We've got a good core of young players coming through as the older players retire. And even in a bad injury year Mullum is always competitive. That's the kind of spirit we've got in the joint," he said.

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