

# Clean sweep for broomballers

By **JAMES NICHOLSON**

THE ACT teams have returned from the Gold Coast with two more titles to add to their growing collection of prizes in that most obscure and unheralded of sports — broomball.

The ACT Men's team, the Flames, beat North Queensland 3-1 in the final of the Australian National Broomball Tournament. The Mixed team, the Cougars won its title by beating North Queensland 2-0 in the final.

Two goals by Chris Lucas and assists by Tracey Martin, Deanne Lucas and Anthony Drabsch set up the Cougars' victory, while two goals by Shane Martin and one by Peter Mar-

shall and assists from Simon Gamlen and Trevor Banks were decisive for the Flames.

The ACT double was as certain as any sporting outcome can be. The Men's team has only lost twice since the tournament's inception in the mid-80s. The Mixed team has lost only once — in 1995.

Broomball is a game of Canadian origin which differs from ice hockey only in the equipment that is used. Specially moulded rubber shoes are used instead of skates, paddle-shaped sticks, or brooms, are used and a rubber ball the size of a volleyball replaces the puck.

Consequently it is a slower game than its cousin, and since a shake-up

in the Australian game seven years ago, much less of a blood-sport.

"The size of the ball makes it easier for spectators and it means anyone can get on the ice and have a go but the skill and excitement level is comparable to ice hockey," ACT Broomball's Peter Marshall says.

Since 1990 player numbers in Canberra have grown from 20 to 150, though a shortage of ice rinks is the biggest obstacle to further expansion.

Yet, so far ahead of the rest of Australia is the ACT in terms of administration and player numbers, that you wouldn't bet against the locals sweeping all before them again next year.