

# Gymnastics and martial arts collide

A new sport, accurately termed 'tricking', is currently taking the northern beaches by storm. **MARJ BELESSIS** caught up with some of its young enthusiasts this week



Morgan Flook and Jonathon Wong: pioneers of the new sport. Picture: ANNIKA ENDERBORG XQG 22550



New enthusiasts for the sport at Manly Warringah Gymnastics Club. Picture: VIRGINIA YOUNG ZJF 63342

**W**EDNESDAY nights at the Manly Warringah Gymnastics Club aren't typically filled with gymnasts. After the parents pick up their daughters and the weights are packed neatly away, the gym is filled with kids who come every week to practise their skills in a new sport termed "tricking".

Coach Jonathon "Jono" Wong, 22, describes tricking as an art form, performed for personal enjoyment and aesthetic value.

"Tricking is a blend of martial arts and acrobatics, with skills from karate, tae kwon do, gymnastics and breakdancing."

Tricksters perform skills such as backflips from gymnastics, kicks from tae kwon do and twists from the Chinese martial art of wushu. They link as many tricks together as possible to create a "combination", performed with explosive power and artistry.

Gymnasts and traditional martial artists have criticised tricking as a bastardised version of their sports. But Morgan Flook, 22, one of the first Australian tricksters and a coach at the gymnastics club, disagrees.

"Tricking has filled that gap between the two sports," he says. "A lot of tricksters come from either a gymnastic background or martial arts background. People like myself who have no interest in competing in either sport have found something that has flashier flips than gymnastics and better-looking kicks than your average martial artist."

"Tricking is not only about the moves you do, it's also a lot about the good times you have with friends while doing tricks."

It was during the 1990s that martial artists in America began to incorporate more creativity into their moves, slowly

## HOW IT WORKS

- The main aim of tricking is to perform a visually impressive display of moves.
- It has no formal rules or official governing body to regulate the sport - just perform the most impressive 'trick' possible.
- The only requirement to be able to trick is a well-conditioned body in both strength and flexibility
- Moves range from butterfly and 540 kicks, to frontflips, backflips, corkscrews and aerial cartwheels.
- Tricking combines martial arts, gymnastics and breakdancing.
- The internet revolution, particularly since 2003 through websites such as YouTube, has given tricking more popularity and a wider audience.
- The term *tricking* originally stems from a variation of martial arts tricks.

building up a tricking repertory which would spread around the world.

The classes at Manly Warringah Gym aim to increase tricking's popularity in Australia.

Mr Flook discovered tricks in 2002 after watching videos online and was immediately captivated, although he didn't know how to get started.

"At first I tried capoeira (a martial art similar to tricking) and took a couple of tae kwon do classes but they were not

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