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# RUGBY LEAGUE

## Review

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# THIS WAY TO KICK-OFF 2021



## CELEBRATING 150 ISSUES



# SEASON PREVIEW 2021

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

## SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITOHS



**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Rabbitohs finished season 2020 in red hot form, as star five-eighth Cody Walker recaptured his stunning early season form from 2019. Souths racked up some big wins, none more impressive though than their 60-8 demolition of the defending premiers who were at near full strength and sitting third on the ladder.

Souths finished a converted try shy of the Grand Final, which, given their form at the halfway point of the season, looked like an impossibility, as they slipped down to 10th place. They rallied to win 9 of their next 11 games, becoming the form team of the competition.

2021 should see them build on that, given they were without several stars for long stints last year. The addition of Benji Marshall gives the Bunnies more experience.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Jai Arrow. The former Titans forward is a genuine workhorse who will add some much needed starch to the Souths middle, in both defence and attack.

He is the type of player that can deliver good results for the South Sydney forward pack and he will pushing for more representative honours during the year.

**STRENGTH:** Scoring points. From Round 12 until the Grand Final, Souths scored 59 more points than the next best team. They averaged 33.58 points per game in this period, almost 5 points per game more than the second best Penrith.

**WEAKNESS:** Top eight teams. Of the nine losses by Souths in 2020, seven were to teams that finished in the top eight. Worryingly, their

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** : Jai Arrow (Gold Coast), Jacob Host (St.George-Illawarra), Josh Mansour (Penrith), Taane Milne (Warriors), Tautau Moga (Newcastle), Benji Marshall (Wests Tigers).

**LOSSES:** Corey Allan (Canterbury), Jack Johns (Newcastle), Ethan Lowe (retired), James Roberts (Wests Tigers), Bayley Sironen (Warriors), Joseph Suaalii (Sydney).

other two losses were against the bottom two sides. If they don't rectify this, they may be seen as nothing more than pretenders. They are more than that though.

**KEY MAN:** Cody Walker. When Walker is playing with confidence, the Rabbitohs score points at free will.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Latrell Mitchell. Mitchell had a tough first season at the club, initially struggling with form and the new role of fullback, the covid-enforced shut down and injury meant he was unable to build some consistency. With all that behind him, expect him to have a big year in 2021.

Everyone knows that he has the ability to be one of the superstars of the game.

**YOUNG GUN:** Steven Marsters. This very talented centre looks to be a bright long-term prospect and Souths will do everything to hang onto him. He could very well be considered one of their top centres.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Dane Gagai. His form was good in 2020, but with a number of younger centre prospects already at the club, all of whom would be cheaper, could mean Gagai is pushed out of the club at the end of the season, when his contract ends.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Thomas Burgess. While he didn't have a poor season in 2020, he needs to step up and be the leader of this forward pack now.

He will be another year older and unless he delivers the form fans are aware of, he could be playing second-tier Rugby League.

**THE COACH:** Wayne Bennett is the master-coach. Many wrote Souths off in the pre-season last year, but he proved all the doubters wrong. Many will doubt Souths credentials again in 2021 and you can be sure he'll be serving egg to their faces at season's end.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Wayne Bennett (2019-20)  
Jason Demetriou (2020 interim)  
Anthony Seibold (2018)  
Michael Maguire (2012-17)  
John Lang (2010-11)

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Latrell Mitchell
- 2 – Josh Mansour
- 3 – Dane Gagai
- 4 – Steven Marsters
- 5 – Campbell Graham
- 6 – Cody Walker
- 7 – Adam Reynolds
- 8 – Thomas Burgess
- 9 – Damien Cook
- 10 – Liam Knight
- 11 – Jaydn Su'A
- 12 – Cameron Murray
- 13 – Jai Arrow

- 14 – Tevita Tatola
- 15 – Benji Marshall
- 16 – Hame Sele
- 17 – Alex Johnston



South Sydney take to the field in last year's clash against Parramatta at Bankwest Stadium.



## SYDNEY ROOSTERS

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Adam Keighran (Warriors), Joseph Suaalii (Souths).

**LOSSES:** Mitchell Aubusson (retired), Poasa Faamausili (St.George-Illawarra), Kyle Flanagan (Canterbury), Ryan Hall (Hull KR), Christian Tuipulotu (Manly).

**2021 OUTLOOK:** After becoming the first team in nearly 3 decades to win back-to-back Premierships (in a unified competition), the Roosters underwent just a few small personnel changes coming into 2020, but they were major ones. Legendary halfback Cooper Cronk retired and was replaced by a rookie in Kyle Flanagan, while point scoring machine Latrell Mitchell left the club, replaced by Josh Morris.

After a slow start, the Roosters got their way into the top 5 and stayed there. They looked certain to finish third until they copped a devastating hammering from Souths in the final round, which essentially killed their momentum, as they lost in straight sets in the finals.

They've tweaked their halves yet again for 2021 but apart that, their side is largely unchanged again. They will again be one of the benchmark teams and short priced favourites for the title.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Adam Keighran. The talented utility back can cover the halves and centres, as well as being a very good goal kicker. The Roosters are light on depth in all three departments making him a very astute acquisition.

**STRENGTH:** Back 5. You'll be hard pressed to find a more complete back 5 in the world than that at the Roosters. James Tedesco, Joseph Manu, Josh and Brett Morris and Daniel Tupou are an insanely brilliant combination, potent in attack, plenty of height and pace, great kick returns and with a great mix of youth and experience.

**WEAKNESS:** Depth. The Roosters have an incredibly good top 20 players, but their depth beyond that is largely untried and inexperienced. A bad year with injuries could expose their depth very quickly.

**KEY MAN:** Luke Keary. With a stellar backline to work with, it's vitally important that you have a half who get them in position, run plays and direct traffic to give them the best chance of scoring points. Keary fits the bill perfectly. The Roosters need him healthy for as much of the year as possible if they are to win the title.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Joseph Suaalii. He may not appear in the NRL until the end of the year as he is still 17 years old, but the rookie is regarded as one of the most talented juniors in the game in recent years. He is set to be the long term replacement for James Tedesco.

**YOUNG GUN:** Lachlan Lam. Another year, another halfback for the Roosters. After the failed Kyle Flanagan experiment, the Roosters are now placing their faith in the son of former half Adrian Lam. Lam is a better fit for the club and will hopefully be their long term option at 7.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Jake Friend. The captain and hooker is now in a fight to keep his spot from the very talented Victor Radley. Friend's service has at times been sketchy, however his defence can never be questioned.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Boyd Cordner. The Roosters back rower and forward leader has had a very disrupted past 2 years, missing 17 games, many of which have been due to concussions. He's a wholehearted player and throws his body into every minute he plays, but his form is starting to drop off with the growing number of games he's starting to miss.

**THE COACH:** Trent Robinson has proven to be a very astute coach. He has a squad full of players who are nearing their career peaks and already has 3 Premierships in his last 7 years at the helm of the Bondi club. He's already started building the new spine of the club as they begin preparing their transition to the next era, even though it is several years away.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Trent Robinson (2013-20)  
Brian Smith (2010-12)  
Brad Fittler (2007-09)  
Chris Anderson (2007)  
Ricky Stuart (2002-06)

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – James Tedesco
- 2 – Brett Morris
- 3 – Josh Morris
- 4 – Joseph Manu
- 5 – Daniel Tupou
- 6 – Luke Keary
- 7 – Lachlan Lam
- 8 – Jared Warea-Hargreaves
- 9 – Jake Friend
- 10 – Siosua Taukeiaho
- 11 – Boyd Cordner
- 12 – Angus Crichton
- 13 – Isaac Liu

- 14 – Victor Radley
- 15 – Nat Butcher
- 16 – Lindsay Collins
- 17 – Sitili Tupouniua



Jared Warea-Hargreaves, Jake Friend and Angus Crichton show the strength of the Sydney Roosters defence.



# SEASON PREVIEW 2021

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

## CANTERBURY BULLDOGS



**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Bulldogs have finally got to the end of their woefully mismanaged salary cap from several years ago and have spent much of the offseason building a strong squad which new coach Trent Barrett will work with over the next few years. The end of 2021 will see a lot of their players also be off-contract, so don't be surprised to hear the Dogs chasing more big names for 2022 as well.

The Bulldogs under Dean Pay were genuine scrappers. They did not yield. They were not easy beats. However they lacked too much in attack, meaning they struggled to score enough points to win games.

If that defensive stubbornness can be retained, while improving their attack, the Dogs could well find themselves in the finals picture within the next 2 years.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Kyle Flanagan. The Roosters halfback was unceremoniously dumped after one year, despite playing reasonably good footy while at the club. He comes to the Bulldogs as a very accurate goalkicker and a genuinely reliable playmaker, filling the boots of the departed Kieran Foran.

**STRENGTH:** Defence. It may seem odd for a team that only avoided the wooden spoon on points difference to have their defence as a strength, but when you consider they were defensively better than four other sides, two of which had more than twice as many wins than the Dogs in 2020, shows that they have a strong defensive culture to build upon. They also conceded just 24 points more than eighth-placed Cronulla.

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Dallin Watene-Zelezniak
- 2 – Jayden Okunbor
- 3 – Will Hopoate
- 4 – Nick Cotric
- 5 – Corey Allan
- 6 – Lachlan Lewis
- 7 – Kyle Flanagan
- 8 – Dylan Napa
- 9 – Jeremy Marshall-King
- 10 – Luke Thompson
- 11 – Josh Jackson
- 12 – Raymond Faitala-Mariner
- 13 – Adam Elliott
- 14 – Corey Waddell
- 15 – Sione Katoa
- 16 – Jack Hetherington
- 17 – Renouf To'omaga

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Corey Allan (Souths), Nick Cotric (Canberra), Kyle Flanagan (Sydney), Jack Hetherington (Penrith), Corey Waddell (Manly).

**LOSSES:** Jack Cogger (Huddersfield), Kieran Foran (Manly), Kerrod Holland (retired), Marcelo Montoya (Warriors), Sauaso Sue (Newcastle), Aiden Tolman (Cronulla).

**WEAKNESS:** Attack. Up the other end of the field, the Bulldogs have struggled massively. They have scored fewer points over the last 7 years than any other side. This needs to be addressed if they are to move up the ladder significantly.

**KEY MAN:** Lachlan Lewis. The talented playmaker has had a tough run thus far in his career, but has still managed to perform reasonably well. With a consistent halves partner and a stable spine around him, he should be able to settle into his role and spark this Bulldogs attack.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Luke Thompson. The English import arrived midway through the 2020 season and played with plenty of energy. He will be expected to shoulder a lot of the Bulldogs attack up front in 2021, a task he appears to be keen to accept.

**YOUNG GUN:** Jake Averillo. The talented utility back played 13 games in his debut year last season, covering wing, centre and five-eighth.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Dallin Watene-Zelezniak. The big signing from Penrith halfway through 2019 has struggled to fire in his time at the Bulldogs. With the roster being rebuilt, DWZ needs to hit his straps otherwise he could be without a club and, given his form, may well struggle to find a new club.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Dylan Napa. The former Maroons prop needs to really rip in in 2021. If he does, he and Thompson could well form a formidable middle pairing that the backs could capitalise on.

**THE COACH:** Trent Barrett had an unhappy three years at Manly from 2016-18 before moving to Penrith where he worked as an assistant coach. He's picked up some top signatures already, including Origin and Test wingers Josh Addo-Carr (who arrives in 2022) and Nick Cotric. But Canterbury supporters want instant success and a spot in the top eight.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Trent Barrett (Current)  
Steve Georgallis (2020 interim)  
Dean Pay (2018-20)  
Des Hasler (2012-17)



## PARRAMATTA EELS

riod to keep their season on track.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Reed Mahoney. The young rake has been impressive in his NRL career to date and is improving with every year. He's set to have a huge year in 2021.

**YOUNG GUN:** Dylan Brown. The talented playmaker has had just 2 seasons in the NRL and has already shown he has the potential to have a long career. He has formed a good partnership with Moses, Gutherson and Mahoney.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Mitchell Moses. The Eels halfback has been at times a rocks and diamonds type player. 2021 is an important year for him and the Eels, as he could become the first player to reach 100 games starting at halfback since Peter Sterling retired.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Bryce Cartwright. The former Titan has been handed a lifeline by the Eels after a very disappointing tenure at the Titans which saw go from Origin hopeful to fringe first grader. He will have to work hard to get into the Eels forward rotation.

**THE COACH:** Brad Arthur has taken some time to finally build a competitive and consistent outfit, his biggest challenge begins now – taking his team to the next level.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Brad Arthur (2012 interim, 2014-current)  
Ricky Stuart (2013)  
Stephen Kearney (2011-12)  
Daniel Anderson (2009-10)  
Michael Hagan (2007-08)

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Clinton Gutherson
- 2 – Maika Sivo
- 3 – Tom Opacic
- 4 – Waqa Blake
- 5 – Blake Ferguson
- 6 – Dylan Brown
- 7 – Mitchell Moses
- 8 – Junior Paulo
- 9 – Reed Mahoney
- 10 – Reagan Campbell-Gillard
- 11 – Shaun Lane
- 12 – Ryan Matterson
- 13 – Nathan Brown
- 14 – Marata Niukore
- 15 – Keegan Hipgrave
- 16 – Isaiah Papali'i
- 17 – Joey Lussick

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Bryce Cartwright (Gold Coast), Keegan Hipgrave (Gold Coast), Joey Lussick (Salford), Michael Oldfield (Canberra), Tom Opacic (North Queensland), Isaiah Papali'i (Warriors), Nathaniel Roache (Warriors).

**LOSSES:** Daniel Alvaro (St George-Illawarra), Andrew Davey (Manly), Kane Evans (Warriors), Jai Field (Wigan), David Gower (retired), George Jennings (Melbourne), Jaeman Salmon (Penrith), Brad Takairangi (Hull KR), Peni Terepo (retired), Stefano Utoikamanu (Wests Tigers).

**2021 OUTLOOK:** After seven years being in the Premiership wilderness, anchored to the wrong end of the table, The Eels have made the semi-finals in three of their last four seasons and have now established themselves as one of the top teams in the competition.

2020 though saw them start the season in red hot form, before injuries and the suspension of the Premiership due to covid-19 killed their momentum.

2021 is a tricky one for Parramatta. There's a sense that they may have missed their opportunity for a title last year, but at the same time, it doesn't appear as though they will slide down very far on the ladder, if they do at all.

The Eels haven't won the premiership since 1986 and that makes it 35 years since they lifted the premiership trophy.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Keegan Hipgrave. The rugged back rower comes to the Eels after a relatively decent stint at the Titans and will add much needed depth to the Eels edge forwards. A strong ball runner, he could well be used to create some second phase play.

**STRENGTH:** Kicking game. It may not sound that important, but when you consider that the Eels rely so heavily on their kicking game for field position and for points, it's vital that they are one of the best teams when it comes to kicking. Parramatta's wingers have scored 56 of the club's 176 tries over the last two years, almost 32%.

**WEAKNESS:** One dimensional attack. As we saw in 2020, when Maika Sivo was injured and Blake Ferguson was out of form, Parramatta's point scoring ability dried up fast. A lot of this was due to half Mitch Moses playing without confidence in his running game after returning from injury.

**KEY MAN:** Clint Gutherson. The Eels fullback had a strong season, topped off with an Origin call up for the Blues. When the Eels were without young five-eighth Dylan Brown for four games, due to injury, and half Mitch Moses was in a form slump, Gutherson stepped up and helped guide the Eels to three wins in the pe-



John Hopoate  
(Canterbury)



The Parramatta Eels after conceding a try against South Sydney.





# NRL COMPETITION DRAW 2021



<b>ROUND 1</b>		
<b>Thursday, March 11</b>		
Storm vs. Rabbitohs	AAMI Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Friday, March 12</b>		
Knights vs. Bulldogs	McDonald Jones Stadium	6:00pm
Broncos vs. Eels	Suncorp Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Saturday, March 13</b>		
Warriors vs. Titans	Mt Smart Stadium	3:00pm
Roosters vs. Sea Eagles	SCG	5:30pm
Panthers vs. Cowboys	Panthers Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, March 14</b>		
Raiders vs. Tigers	GIO Stadium	4:05pm
Dragons vs. Sharks	Netstrata Jubilee	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 2</b>		
<b>Thursday, March 18</b>		
Eels vs. Storm	Bankwest Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Friday, March 19</b>		
Warriors vs. Knights	Mt Smart Stadium	6:00pm
Titans vs. Broncos	Cbus Super Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Saturday, March 20</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Panthers	Bankwest Stadium	3:00pm
Sea Eagles vs. Rabbitohs	Lottoland	5:30pm
Cowboys vs. Dragons	QLD Country Bank	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, March 21</b>		
Tigers vs. Roosters	Campbelltown Stadium	4:05pm
Sharks vs. Raiders	Netstrata Jubilee	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 3</b>		
<b>Thursday, March 25</b>		
Panthers vs. Storm	Panthers Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Friday, March 26</b>		
Dragons vs. Sea Eagles	WIN Stadium	6:00pm
Rabbitohs vs. Roosters	Stadium Australia	8:05pm
<b>Saturday, March 27</b>		
Raiders vs. Warriors	GIO Stadium	3:00pm
Broncos vs. Bulldogs	Suncorp Stadium	5:30pm
Eels vs. Sharks	Bankwest Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, March 28</b>		
Knights vs. Tigers	McDonald Jones Stadium	4:05pm
Cowboys vs. Titans	QLD Country Bank	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 4 (EASTER)</b>		
<b>Thursday, April 1</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Panthers	Lottoland	8:05pm
<b>Friday, April 2</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Rabbitohs	Stadium Australia	4:05pm
Storm vs. Broncos	AAMI Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Saturday, April 3</b>		
Titans vs. Raiders	Cbus Super Stadium	7:35pm
Sharks vs. Cowboys	Sunshine Coast	5:30pm
<b>Sunday, April 4</b>		
Knights vs. Dragons	McDonald Jones Stadium	4:05pm
Roosters vs. Warriors	SCG	6:15pm
<b>Monday, April 5</b>		
Tigers vs. Eels	Bankwest Stadium	4:00pm

<b>ROUND 5</b>		
<b>Thursday, April 8</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Broncos	Stadium Australia	7:50pm
<b>Friday, April 9</b>		
Warriors vs. Sea Eagles	Mt Smart Stadium	6:00pm
Panthers vs. Raiders	Panthers Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, April 10</b>		
Titans vs. Knights	Cbus Super Stadium	3:00pm
Bulldogs vs. Storm	HBF (Perth)	5:30pm
Roosters vs. Sharks	Central Coast	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, April 11</b>		
Tigers vs. Cowboys	Leichhardt Oval	4:05pm
Eels vs. Dragons	Bankwest Stadium	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 6</b>		
<b>Thursday, April 15</b>		
Broncos vs. Panthers	Suncorp Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, April 16</b>		
Knights vs. Sharks	McDonald Jones Stadium	6:00pm
Storm vs. Roosters	AAMI Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, April 17</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Titans	Mudgee	3:00pm
Rabbitohs vs. Tigers	Stadium Australia	5:30pm
Raiders vs. Eels	GIO Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, April 18</b>		
Dragons vs. Warriors	Netstrata Jubilee	2:00pm
Cowboys vs. Bulldogs	QLD Country Bank	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 7 (ANZAC)</b>		
<b>Thursday, April 22</b>		
Panthers vs. Knights	Panthers Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, April 23</b>		
Titans vs. Rabbitohs	Cbus Super Stadium	6:00pm
Eels vs. Broncos	TIO Stadium (Darwin)	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, April 24</b>		
Sharks vs. Bulldogs	Netstrata Jubilee	5:30pm
Cowboys vs. Raiders	QLD Country Bank	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, April 25</b>		
Tigers vs. Sea Eagles	Bankwest Stadium	1:45pm
Roosters vs. Dragons	SCG	4:05pm
Storm vs. Warriors	AAMI Stadium	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 8</b>		
<b>Thursday, April 29</b>		
Raiders vs. Rabbitohs	GIO Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, April 30</b>		
Storm vs. Sharks	AAMI Stadium	6:00pm
Broncos vs. Titans	Suncorp Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, May 1</b>		
Panthers vs. Sea Eagles	Carrington Oval, Bathurst	3:00pm
Bulldogs vs. Eels	Stadium Australia	5:30pm
Knights vs. Roosters	McDonald Jones Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, May 2</b>		
Warriors vs. Cowboys	Mt Smart Stadium	2:00pm
Dragons vs. Tigers	WIN Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 9</b>		
<b>Thursday, May 6</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Storm	Stadium Australia	7:50pm
<b>Friday, May 7</b>		
Panthers vs. Sharks	Panthers Stadium	6:00pm
Eels vs. Roosters	Bankwest Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, May 8</b>		
Raiders vs. Knights	Wagga	3:00pm

Tigers vs. Titans	Campbelltown Stadium	5:30pm
Cowboys vs. Broncos	QLD Country Bank	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, May 9</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Warriors	Lottoland	2:00pm
Dragons vs. Bulldogs	Netstrata Jubilee	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 10 (MAGIC)</b>		
<b>Friday, May 14</b>		
Tigers vs. Knights	Suncorp Stadium	6:00pm
Sea Eagles vs. Broncos	Suncorp Stadium	8:05pm
<b>Saturday, May 15</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Raiders	Suncorp Stadium	3:00pm
Sharks vs. Rabbitohs	Suncorp Stadium	5:30pm
Roosters vs. Cowboys	Suncorp Stadium	7:45pm
<b>Sunday, May 16</b>		
Warriors vs. Eels	Suncorp Stadium	1:50pm
Storm vs. Dragons	Suncorp Stadium	4:05pm
Titans vs. Panthers	Suncorp Stadium	6:25pm

<b>ROUND 11</b>		
<b>Thursday, May 20</b>		
Cowboys vs. Knights	QLD Country Bank	7:50pm
<b>Friday, May 21</b>		
Warriors vs. Tigers	Mt Smart Stadium	6:00pm
Sharks vs. Dragons	Netstrata Jubilee	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, May 22</b>		
Titans vs. Bulldogs	Cbus Super Stadium	3:00pm
Roosters vs. Broncos	SCG	5:30pm
Raiders vs. Storm	GIO Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, May 23</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Panthers	Apex Oval, Dubbo	2:00pm
Eels vs. Sea Eagles	Bankwest Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 12 (INDIGENOUS)</b>		
<b>Thursday, May 27</b>		
Broncos vs. Storm	Suncorp Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, May 28</b>		
Cowboys vs. Warriors	QLD Country Bank	6:00pm
Tigers vs. Dragons	Bankwest	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, May 29</b>		
Panthers vs. Bulldogs	Panthers Panthers	3:00pm
Rabbitohs vs. Eels	Stadium Australia	5:30pm
Roosters vs. Raiders	HBF Stadium (Perth)	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, May 30</b>		
Sharks vs. Titans	Coffs Harbour	2:00pm
Knights vs. Sea Eagles	McDonald Jones Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 13</b>		
<b>Thursday, June 3</b>		
Dragons vs. Broncos	Netstrata Jubilee	7:50pm
<b>Friday, June 4</b>		
Tigers vs. Panthers	Leichhardt Oval	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, June 5</b>		
Storm vs. Titans	AAMI Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, June 6</b>		
Knights vs. Eels	McDonald Jones	4:05pm
Byes :Bulldogs, Cowboys, Rabbitohs, Raiders, Roosters, Sea Eagles, Sharks, Warriors		

<b>STATE OF ORIGIN I</b>		
Wednesday, June 9	TBA	TBA

<b>ROUND 14</b>		
<b>Friday, June 11</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Cowboys	Lottoland	6:00pm
Sharks vs. Panthers	Netstrata Jubilee	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, June 12</b>		
Titans vs. Roosters	Cbus Super Stadium	3:00pm
Rabbitohs vs. Knights	Stadium Australia	5:30pm
Raiders vs. Broncos	GIO Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, June 13</b>		
Warriors vs. Storm	Mt Smart Stadium	2:00pm
Eels vs. Tigers	Bankwest Stadium	4:05pm
<b>Monday, June 14</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Dragons	Stadium Australia	4:00pm

<b>ROUND 15</b>		
<b>Thursday, June 17</b>		
Broncos vs. Rabbitohs	Suncorp Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, June 18</b>		
Cowboys vs. Sharks	QLD Country Bank	6:00pm
Panthers vs. Roosters	Panthers Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, June 19</b>		
Knights vs. Warriors	McDonald Jones Stadium	3:00pm
Dragons vs. Raiders	WIN Stadium	5:30pm
Storm vs. Tigers	AAMI Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, June 20</b>		
Eels vs. Bulldogs	Bankwest Stadium	2:00pm
Titans vs. Sea Eagles	Cbus Super Stadium	4:05pm

<b>WOMEN'S STATE OF ORIGIN</b>		
Friday, June 25	TBA	TBA

<b>STATE OF ORIGIN II (Representative weekend)</b>		
Sunday, June 27	TBA	TBA

<b>ROUND 16</b>		
<b>Thursday, July 1</b>		
Roosters vs. Storm	SCG	7:50pm
<b>Friday, July 2</b>		
Warriors vs. Dragons	Mt Smart Stadium	6:00pm
Panthers vs. Eels	Panthers	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, July 3</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Sea Eagles	Stadium Australia	3:00pm
Raiders vs. Titans	GIO Stadium	5:30pm
Knights vs. Cowboys	McDonald Jones Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, July 4</b>		
Broncos vs. Sharks	Suncorp Stadium	2:00pm
Tigers vs. Rabbitohs	Leichhardt Oval	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 17</b>		
<b>Thursday, July 8</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Raiders	Lottoland	7:50pm
<b>Friday, July 9</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Cowboys	Stadium Australia	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, July 10</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Roosters	Bankwest Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, July 11</b>		
Sharks vs. Warriors	Netstrata Jubilee	4:05pm
Byes: Broncos, Dragons, Eels, Knights, Panthers, Storm, Wests Tigers, Titans		

<b>STATE OF ORIGIN III</b>		
Wednesday, July 14	TBA	TBA

<b>ROUND 18</b>		
<b>Friday, July 16</b>		
Titans vs. Eels	Cbus Super Stadium	6:00pm
Sea Eagles vs. Dragons	Lottoland	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, July 17</b>		
Raiders vs. Sharks	GIO Stadium	3:00pm
Cowboys vs. Roosters	QLD Country Bank	5:30pm
Storm vs. Knights	AAMI Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, July 18</b>		
Warriors vs. Panthers	Mt Smart Stadium	2:00pm
Broncos vs. Tigers	Suncorp Stadium	4:05pm
Rabbitohs vs. Bulldogs	Stadium Australia	6:15pm

<b>ROUND 19</b>		
<b>Thursday, July 22</b>		
Eels vs. Raiders	Bankwest Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, July 23</b>		
Roosters vs. Knights	SCG	6:00pm
Cowboys vs. Storm	QLD Country Bank	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, July 24</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Warriors	Sunshine Coast	3:00pm
Sea Eagles vs. Tigers	Central Coast Stadium	5:30pm
Panthers vs. Broncos	Panthers Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, July 25</b>		
Dragons vs. Titans	Netstrata Jubilee	2:00pm
Bulldogs vs. Sharks	Bankwest Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 20</b>		
<b>Thursday, July 29</b>		
Roosters vs. Eels	SCG	7:50pm
<b>Friday, July 30</b>		
Tigers vs. Warriors	Bankwest Stadium	6:00pm
Broncos vs. Cowboys	Suncorp Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, July 31</b>		
Dragons vs. Rabbitohs	WIN Stadium	3:00pm
Knights vs. Raiders	McDonald Jones	5:30pm
Storm vs. Panthers	AAMI Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, August 1</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Titans	Bankwest	2:00pm
Sharks vs. Sea Eagles	Netstrata Jubilee	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 21</b>		
<b>Thursday, August 5</b>		
Knights vs. Broncos	McDonald Jones Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, August 6</b>		
Raiders vs. Dragons	GIO Stadium	6:00pm
Eels vs. Rabbitohs	Bankwest Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, August 7</b>		
Warriors vs. Sharks	Mt Smart Stadium	3:00pm
Roosters vs. Panthers	SCG	5:30pm
Sea Eagles vs. Storm	Lottoland	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, August 8</b>		
Bulldogs vs. Tigers	Belmore Sports Ground	2:00pm
Titans vs. Cowboys	Cbus Super Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 22</b>		
<b>Thursday, August 12</b>		
Storm vs. Raiders	AAMI Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, August 13</b>		
Dragons vs. Panthers	WIN Stadium	6:00pm
Broncos vs. Roosters	Suncorp Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, August 14</b>		
Rabbitohs vs. Titans	Central Coast Stadium	3:00pm
Cowboys vs. Tigers	QLD Country Bank	5:30pm
Sea Eagles vs. Eels	Lottoland	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, August 15</b>		
Warriors vs. Bulldogs	Mt Smart Stadium	2:00pm
Sharks vs. Knights	Netstrata Jubilee	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 23</b>		
<b>Thursday, August 19</b>		
Titans vs. Storm	Cbus Super Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, August 20</b>		
Raiders vs. Sea Eagles	GIO Stadium	6:00pm
Panthers vs. Rabbitohs	Panthers Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, August 21</b>		
Tigers vs. Sharks	Scully Park, Tamworth	3:00pm
Bulldogs vs. Knights	Stadium Australia	5:30pm
Eels vs. Cowboys	Bankwest Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, August 22</b>		
Dragons vs. Roosters	Netstrata Jubilee	2:00pm
Broncos vs. Warriors	Suncorp Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 24</b>		
<b>Thursday, August 26</b>		
Knights vs. Titans	McDonald Jones Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, August 27</b>		
Warriors vs. Raiders	Mt Smart Stadium	6:00pm
Roosters vs. Rabbitohs	SCG	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, August 28</b>		
Dragons vs. Cowboys	WIN Stadium	3:00pm
Sharks vs. Broncos	Netstrata Jubilee	5:30pm
Storm vs. Eels	AAMI Stadium	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, August 29</b>		
Sea Eagles vs. Bulldogs	Lottoland	2:00pm
Panthers vs. Tigers	Panthers Stadium	4:05pm

<b>ROUND 25</b>		
<b>Thursday, September 2</b>		
Raiders vs. Roosters	GIO Stadium	7:50pm
<b>Friday, September 3</b>		
Sharks vs. Storm	Netstrata Jubilee	6:00pm
Eels vs. Panthers	Bankwest Stadium	7:55pm
<b>Saturday, September 4</b>		
Broncos vs. Knights	Suncorp Stadium	3:00pm
Cowboys vs. Sea Eagles	QLD Country Bank	5:30pm
Rabbitohs vs. Dragons	Stadium Australia	7:35pm
<b>Sunday, September 5</b>		
Titans vs. Warriors	Cbus Super Stadium	2:00pm
Tigers vs. Bulldogs	Campbelltown Stadium	4:05pm

<b>WEEK 1 PLAY-OFFS</b>		September 10-12
<b>SEMI-FINALS</b>		September 17-18
<b>PRELIMINARY FINALS</b>		September 24-25
<b>GRAND FINAL</b>		October 3

\* Draw subject to change.



# CELEBRATING 150 ISSUES OF RUGBY LEAGUE REVIEW

**BYTERRY LIBEROPOULOS**  
Editor

As we reach 150 issues of the magazine, it is incredible to think that 'Rugby League Review' has outlasted 'Rugby League Week' and 'Big League' magazines.

I truly hope that *Big League* returns in some capacity during the season but the word on the street is that it will probably not see the light of day.

For me, losing *Rugby League Week* was a massive blow. From the late 1970s until it pulled up stumps in 2017, I would make sure that I had a copy every week.

My school years during the 1980s was when I was fully into *Rugby League Week*. Every Thursday (and then later Wednesdays), I couldn't wait to get to the newsagent and buy a copy. I would read it from cover to cover. Whether it was about the Sydney or Brisbane premiership, the features, NSW Country or Queensland Country, I was fascinated with anything about Rugby League.

I did my work experience at *Rugby League Week* and I went for a job interview at the same place but two days later, I was offered a full-time position to work with Super League.

When *Rugby League Week* moved to a smaller format in 1997, I made enquiries about buying the magazine. The reason for this was that the publication had moved away from articles on the bush, lower grades, other competitions and the world scene. It seemed to be all about the NRL.

But the asking price was too high. Despite this, it started the first steps of launching my own Rugby League magazine. Something that included other competitions than just the NRL and international Rugby League.

I had published my own magazine between 1992 and 1995, called *Rugby League Gazette*. It was a fair effort but struggled to make money. After nine issues, the decision was made to pull the pin but it did give me an inside into running a publication, dealing with printers and distributors.

While over in England for the 2000 Rugby League World Cup, I spoke to League Publications, who printed the weekly *League Express*, about setting up an Australian version of the magazine. The meeting was met mostly with negativity. They asked who would run the magazine in Australia and when I said that I would be the one, they didn't like the idea. Maybe they didn't like the idea of me running the ship but it did give them ideas.

After failing to get League Publications to go with my idea, after returning home to Australia in early 2001, I went looking at getting some good prices for printing my own Rugby League magazine. It would be done in a tabloid size, not because it was cheaper but it looked similar to that of *Rugby League Week* in the 1970s.

Together with a fellow journalist, the plan was for both of us to put in a certain amount of money to help the magazine get through the first six or so months. The first issue was scheduled to be published on March 19 following South Sydney's return to the game after two years in exile from the elite competition.

The plan was to publish *Rugby League Review* every fortnight with the long term aim being to go weekly if sales warranted it to do so. We wanted to publish it on Sunday night and have it ready to go out to the newsagents on the Monday morning. It was going to be a tight squeeze but we also wanted to add matches and news from England and France but they weren't played until Monday morning. It was then decided to have the magazine printed on Mondays and in the shops the following day. Still a day ahead of *Rugby League Week*.

Well, it never happened. My partner in the venture didn't come through. I know he had the money but he was having second thoughts. He wasn't pulling his weight and I was doing the majority of the work.

Everything was ready to go for the first issue. I had writers in place, photographers sorted, distributor and printers all sorted. But on the Friday afternoon, three days before it was going to go to print, I decided to halt production. I didn't want to print two or three issues and then go into hibernation.

A month earlier, League Publications had launched the Australian version of 'Rugby League World' – which was their monthly magazine they produced. In fact, they had purchased that in 1998 from Harry Edgar. That magazine was *Open Rugby*, which was first printed in 1976. After a couple of years of taking over, they changed the name to 'Rugby League World'.

I was involved heavily from the start because I had been working on the magazine for a number of years. I still helped out but I knew that my time would be limited with *Rugby League Review* about to commence.

Once I decided to stop *Rugby League Review*, I concentrated on *Rugby League World*. Between myself and the late Malcolm Andrews, we did about eighty per cent of the magazine. It had a decent circulation, maybe not enough to cover all the expenses but it was a publication that had plenty of potential.

The cost of running the magazine had built-up debts and the talk was that the August (seventh) 2002 issue could well be the last. At the time, editor Peter Rowe and myself were looking at all the invoices and were confident we could run this magazine

at a tidy profit.

We asked to take over the masthead but not only did we have to cover all the debts, League Publications wanted 20 per cent share. I didn't want to do that and at the same time, I didn't want to go into partnership again. With *Rugby League World* now gone in Australia, my mind cast back to *Rugby League Review*.

I decided that I would do it myself, make it a monthly in order to allow more time to produce it. It was the middle of September 2002 when I made that decision. And instead of waiting until the start of the 2003 season, I decided to bring out the first issue after the grand final in early October.

It was a massive two weeks but I rushed back to the printers and the distributors to set up everything. On that Tuesday following the Sydney Roosters grand final victory over the New Zealand Warriors, the first issue rolled off the press.

There were dramas early on with the printers going into liquidation and the same with the distributors. We got that sorted out but not after working throughout the whole night to make sure we got everything out on time.

Following the success of the 2008 Rugby League World Cup, it was time to add some glossy colour to the magazine.

In recent years, we have scaled it back to a bi-monthly simply because of the time it takes to produce one. With a young family and with other Rugby League commitments, it was the right decision in order to make sure that the magazine continues.

Following the outbreak of the covid-19 virus, we weren't sure that the magazine would continue. With everything shut, we didn't know if the printers and distributors would be operating. Luckily, they were and the decision was made to carry on.

The question that was regularly asked was 'but with no Rugby League being played, what are you going to report on'. Well that was simple, report on the history of the game and the players that made it such a great game.

The response to that was incredible. We decided that we would continue with that format, a mixture of old and new as we head into the start of the 2021 season.

Yes, we have reached 150 editions and our next target will be to reach the 200th issue. It is still a few years away. Who knows what will happen with Rugby League when the milestone is achieved.

I would personally like to thank our loyal readers and if you have only discovered the magazine recently, we hope you stick around for a little while longer.

The landscape is changing when it comes to magazines with everything moving online. Not really for the better is what I think because you are just looking at a small screen and not great for the eyes.

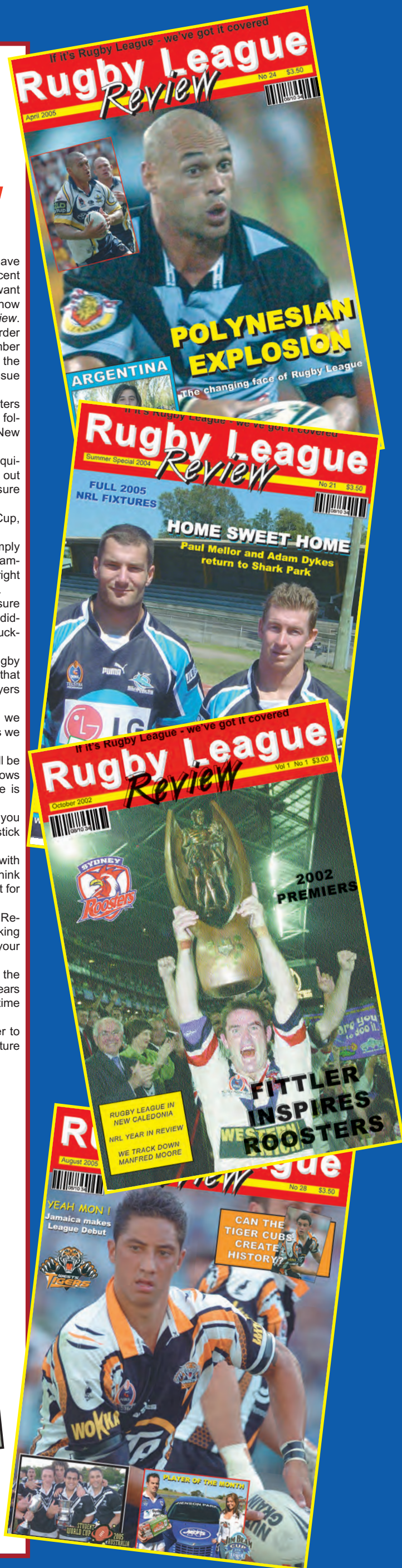
But we will still carry on thanks to our fantastic readers. Remember the best way to help *Rugby League Review* is by taking out a subscription. Maybe even send one as a gift to one of your family members, friends or work colleagues.

If you prefer to get it from your local newsagent, spread the word around that such a magazine is around. Even after 19 years of being published, we still get people reading us for the first time and asking us if we are a new magazine.

So sit back and enjoy the latest issue. Please remember to email us with any suggestions that you would like to see in future *Rugby League Review* editions.



The template for what was going to be the original front page for the first issue of 'Rugby League Review' on March 19, 2002. The photo was going to be changed to that of South Sydney's first game back after being kicked out of the competition.





## EDITORIAL

Photos: NRL Photos

Western Suburbs in action in the opening round of the 2020 NSW Cup before the competition was cancelled.

# The return of three grades must have the correct times

The recent news that NRL Chairman Peter V'landys would like to bring back three grades on the one day and venue was fantastic but it isn't as simple as it sounds.

I have mentioned the return of curtain-raisers for many, many years on these pages instead of going to some matches and only seeing the NRL.

A few seasons ago, I was at a game and the only curtain-raiser was a touch football match. Really? Touch football?

I have no issues with touch football but that should not be on the same card as the NRL. I want to watch players being tackled and maybe have the touch football on during the half-time break.

Most clubs can have two or three matches on the menu but it will mean nothing if we continue to have the massive 45 minute to an hour wait before the NRL match commences.

The NRL press release said *In a throw-back to Rugby League's halcyon days of the 1980s and 1990s, when fans could follow the development of a rookie from the lower grades into a star of first grade*, but many will not be watching the games if they are played hours earlier than the main match.

There is no point having the Jersey Flegg (Under 21s) game at 3pm and the NSW Cup (reserve grade) clash at 5pm when the NRL game kicks-off at 7.30pm.

I grew up watching the three grades, especially at Henson Park because I lived a couple of minutes away.

I would be at the ground just before 11.50am to watch the Under 23s run on. There wasn't that many people at those games.

If I had a dollar from every person that said they were there for the three grades, I would be comfortably retired by now.

The truth of the matter is that the fans started coming in when the reserve grade kicked-off, usually at 1.30pm. By half-time of the second grade, most of the crowd was at the game.

The second-half of the reserve grade was always fantastic with the crowd right behind the action and the players loved it. You did see the young players coming through and the regular first graders that had been dropped down.

But that will not happen if we have this huge gap between games. There will hardly

be anyone at the start of the Under 21s besides family and friends and only a few more for the NSW Cup.

Many are not going to sit around for an hour, scratching their head and looking at their phones. They can do that at home. What they want is to watch Rugby League.

My pet hate is watching the NRL players run on the field and do their warm-up. They have been training all week and don't need a another session on the field. They can simply do their warm-up in the dressing room.

Supporters want to see their stars for the first time when they run on the field to start the game. Not to do aerobic moves on the field.

The team lists are announced an hour before the game starts, so we know who will be playing. No point trying to look and see who is going to play when they do their warm-up.

And many of the NRL players I have spoken to, just want to get on the field and play.

I asked the NRL a few years back why there was so much gap between the curtain-raiser and the NRL match and I was told in case there is a serious injury, the NRL and the television station needs to be ready at kick-off.

I think we would have one or two serious injuries in a decade so I don't think that is a valid point.

For me, what makes sense is that the three grades should return for weekend matches. The Jersey Flegg should be played at 3.30pm and the NSW Cup at 5.30pm.

The NSW Cup would finish around 7.15pm, plenty of time before the NRL starts at 7.30pm or a few minutes later.

At least most fans would get to watch the NSW Cup because most of them would turn around 6-6.30pm.

It would be nice to have all the NRL teams have reserve grade teams but due to the current financial situation, clubs could struggle to field a team.

Maybe in the future that could happen but if that was the case, it would probably only apply to clubs based in New South Wales as well as Canberra.

I would have at least 12 teams and that would also include North Sydney and Newtown. Those two clubs could continue with their current arrangements or they could have new feeder relationship with Melbourne

Storm and the New Zealand Warriors.

The Storm (Sunshine Coast) and the Warriors (Redcliffe) already have arrangements with Qld Cup clubs but the NRL could direct them to align with NSW Cup clubs.

North Qld, Brisbane Broncos and Gold Coast could continue to farm out their players to Qld Cup clubs as they currently do.

Newtown, North Sydney and Western Suburbs is what makes the NSW Cup successful. Take those clubs away and most supporters will not care about it.

I have been to many NSW Cup games that don't feature these three clubs and I always count the crowd. Attendance figures such as 52, 74 and 102 are common.

Newtown, if they remained with Cronulla, should play all their home matches at Henson Park. Maybe they could have one match at Kogarah Jubilee Oval this year but the rest should remain at Henson Park.

The Sharks would just have the Under 21s as the curtain-raiser.

They attract good crowds at their home base and depend on those fans to keep their club going. North Sydney is the same and they should play their majority of games at North Sydney Oval. That venue could also host one or two NRL games.

The other issue is if Stadium Australia would allow three matches to be played.

Western Suburbs would be able to play their matches before the Wests Tigers. But if the Wests Tigers are playing on a Thursday or Friday night, the Magpies can play at Lidcombe Oval together with their Ron Massey Cup team.

And it would be great if most clubs included players in the top 29-30 in the NSW Cup side instead of just resting them.

It all sounds fantastic but we have to look at the logistics and make sure we do this right.

**We have reached 150 issues and I would like to thank all our wonderful, dedicated and loyal readers.**

Without you, there would be no *Rugby League Review*. Remember the best way to help the magazine is to subscribe.

**TERRY LIBEROPOULOS**  
Editor

*If it's Rugby League, we've got it covered*

## Rugby League Review

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COVER PHOTOS

Nick Cotric sporting his new Canterbury jersey  
and (inset) former South Sydney player from 1979,  
Paul Beauchamp.

THE INDEPENDENT RUGBY LEAGUE NEWSPAPER  
Rugby League Review 2021



## THEN & NOW

### KYLE FLANAGAN

CRONULLA  
Harold Matthews Cup 2014

CANTERBURY  
NRL 2021

FIRST GRADE DEBUT  
Round 24, Cronulla vs Newcastle at Southern Cross Stadium, June 8, 2018.

MATCHES: NRL - 29 matches. 9 matches for Cronulla and 20 matches for the Sydney Roosters.



## IN THE MOVIES



Will Smith is one of Hollywood's biggest actors having starred in many movies including 'Men in Black', 'I am Legend', 'Bad Boys', 'Concussion' and 'The Pursuit of Happyness'.

Parramatta's Will Smith has been a regular first grader since making his debut for the Penrith Panthers in 2014. He switched over to the Eels in 2017.





Some of the best and brightest names in the NRL have been named to play in the first ever NRL Harvey Norman All Stars in Townsville.

The NRL announced the teams for the showcase on February 20, featuring the likes of Latrell Mitchell, Josh Addo-Carr, Jack Wighton, Cody Walker, Jarome Luai, Brandon Smith and Benji Marshall.

Men's Indigenous All Stars Coach Laurie Daley and Men's Maori All Stars Coach David Kidwell have both named star-studded teams for the match, which will be the first major rugby league event at the new Queensland Country Bank Stadium.

Premiers Melbourne Storm are strongly represented in both teams with seven players selected to play in the historic fixture.

**MENS NRL ALL-STARS**

**Indigenous team**

- 1 Latrell Mitchell (South Sydney)
- 2 Blake Ferguson (Parramatta)
- 3 Jack Wighton (Canberra)
- 4 Jesse Ramien (Cronulla)
- 5 Josh Addo-Carr (Melbourne)
- 6 Cody Walker (South Sydney)
- 7 Jamal Fogarty (Gold Coast)
- 8 Andrew Fifita (Cronulla)
- 9 Reuben Cotter (North Qld)
- 10 Josh Kerr (St George Illawarra)
- 11 David Fifita (Gold Coast)
- 12 Wade Graham (Cronulla)
- 13 Tyrone Peachey (Gold Coast)
- 14 Alex Johnston (South Sydney)
- 15 Jamayne Taunua-Brown (Warriors)
- 16 Cade Cust (Manly)

- 17 Chris Smith (Canterbury)
- 18 Tyrell Fuimaono (St George Illawarra)
- 19 Josh Curran (Warriors)
- 20 Brian Kelly (Gold Coast)

**Maori All Stars**

- 1 Chamze Nicoll-Klokstad (Canberra)
- 2 Dallin Watene-Zelezniak (C'bury)
- 3 Joseph Manu (Sydney Roosters)
- 4 Dylan Walker (Manly)
- 5 Reimis Smith (Melbourne)
- 6 Jarome Luai (Penrith)
- 7 Jahrome Hughes (Melbourne)
- 8 Jesse Bromwich (Melbourne)
- 9 Brandon Smith (Melbourne)
- 10 James Fisher-Harris (Penrith)
- 11 Briton Nikora (Cronulla)
- 12 Kenneath Bromwich (Melbourne)
- 13 Joseph Tapine (Canberra)
- 14 Jeremy Marshall-King (Canterbury)
- 15 Kevin Proctor (Gold Coast)
- 16 Nelson Asofa-Solomona (Storm)
- 17 Jordan Riki (Brisbane)
- 18 Patrick Herbert (Gold Coast)
- 19 Bailey Simonsson (Canberra)
- 20 Benji Marshall (South Sydney)

**WOMEN'S NRL ALL STARS**

**Indigenous team**

- 1 Jaime Chapman
- 2 Taleena Simon
- 3 Monique Donovan
- 4 Jasmine Peters
- 5 Letica Quinlan
- 6 Talia Fuimaono
- 7 Akira Kelly
- 8 Kaitlyn Phillips
- 9 Quincey Dodd

- 10 Caitlan Johnston
- 11 Shaniah Power
- 12 Shaylee Bent
- 13 Tallisha Harden
- 14 Lailee Phillips
- 15 Keilee Joseph
- 16 Olivia Kernick
- 17 Abelee Stanley
- 18 Ngalika Barker

**Maori team**

- 1 Corban McGregor
- 2 Botille Vette-Welsh
- 3 Amy Turner
- 4 Hayley Tipene
- 5 Jodeci Nicholson
- 6 Zahara Tamara
- 7 Crystal Tamarua
- 8 Nita Maynard
- 9 Kennedy Cherrington
- 10 Maya Hill-Moana
- 11 Zali Eve Fay
- 12 Rona Peters
- 13 Lavinia Gould
- 14 Shannon Mato
- 15 Raecene McGregor
- 16 Roxy Murdoch
- 17 Page McGregor
- 18 Shanice Parker

**LEAGUE ON SUNDAY, WORK ON MONDAY BOOK (ANSWER WAS 1965-1995) BOOK WINNERS:** John Conomos, Oatley NSW; Rodney Patel, The Ponds NSW; Cathy Withers, Lismore NSW; Aaron Michaels, Miami QLD; Steve Andrews, Modbury Heights SA.

**NRL Trials 2021**

<b>Friday, February 12</b>		
Cronulla vs St George Illawarra	PointsBet Stadium	5.30pm
<b>Thursday, February 18</b>		
Parramatta vs St George Illawarra	Jubilee Stadium	5.30pm
<b>Saturday, February 20</b>		
West's Tigers vs Sydney Roosters	Kirkham Oval	6.30pm
NZ Warriors vs Melbourne	Dolphin Stadium	7.15pm
<b>Saturday, February 27</b>		
Melbourne vs Newcastle	Casey Fields	5.30pm
Sydney Roosters vs Canberra	Leichhardt Oval	5.30pm
Cronulla vs Canterbury	Jubilee Oval	6.00pm
Gold Coast vs NZ Warriors	Oakes Oval, Lismore	6.00pm
South Sydney vs St George Illawarra	Mudgee	6.00pm
Parramatta vs Penrith	Panthers Stadium	7.30pm
Brisbane vs North Qld	Dolphin Stadium	7.00pm
<b>Sunday, February 28</b>		
West's Tigers vs Manly	Leichhardt Oval	5.00pm

The Indigenous vs Maori match will be played at Qld Country Bank Stadium on Saturday, February 20 at 7.10pm. The curtain-raiser will be the Indigenous vs Maori Women's match, starting at 4.40pm.

**RULE CHANGES FOR 2021 SEASON**

**2 points for field goal outside the 40m line**

To encourage more unstructured play and increase the chances of a result changing in the final moments of a game, a 2-point field goal will be awarded for teams who kick a field goal from outside the 40m line. The new rule will provide an incentive to seek an additional point scoring opportunity at critical times of a match, particularly with limited time remaining on the clock in each half.

**Six again for 10 metre infringements**

To reduce stoppages in the game, 10 metre infringement penalties will be replaced with a "Six Again" ruling. Referees maintain the ability to blow a penalty and sin bin a player if a side has made repeated 10m infringements or in the case of professional fouls. The "Six Again" rule provided a sufficient deterrent for teams who purposely sought a penalty to slow the game down during previous years. This rule was trialled in two games during round 20 of last season. This will result in a fast game, less stoppages and more free-flowing action for fans.

**Scrum**

The Commission determined scrums are part of the game's DNA. To increase the integrity of scrums, the referee will call "BREAK" when he or she is satisfied the ball is out of a scrum. Players will not be permitted to break from a scrum until the referee makes the call. Where players break before the call of "BREAK", the referee will award a full penalty. The team receiving the penalty will also have the option of re-packing the scrum. If the scrum is re-packed and players again break early a further penalty will be awarded and one of the offending players will be sent to the sin bin.

**Play the ball restart after ball or player finds touch**

When the ball is kicked or carried into touch play will resume with a play the ball rather than a scrum.

**Handover for incorrect play the ball**

A handover will be ordered where players do not make a genuine attempt to play the ball with their foot. This will ensure greater compliance to the rule and integrity around the play the ball, without increasing penalty stoppages.

**Captain's challenge**

In cases where a Captain's Challenge review is inconclusive, the on-field decision will stand but the team will retain their challenge. Fans have expressed frustration with teams losing a challenge where replays prove inconclusive, this will ensure a greater opportunity for teams to have a challenge(s) available later in matches.

**SIMMO'S CLASSIC JERSEYS**

The Fortitude Valley club is the oldest and one of the most famous in Queensland.

The club was formed in 1909 and won the competition that same year. They went on to win the premiership in 1909, 1911, 1914, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1924, 1931, 1933, 1937, 1941, 1944, 1946, 1955, 1957, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1979, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

With the introduction of the Brisbane Broncos into the Sydney Rugby League in 1988, Valleys formed a short-lived joint venture with the Tweed Heads Seagulls playing under the name Seagulls-Diehards, winning the 1988 premiership. The joint venture broke soon after and Valleys returned to their old name in 1989.

Financial difficulties in the early 1990s took their toll on the club, leading Valleys to a short-lived merger with the Caboolture Snakes, calling themselves Caboolture Valleys, in 1995. However the club folded at season's end, preventing the foundation club from playing in the inaugural Queensland Cup in 1996.

These days they play in the Brisbane Rugby League.

- Mike Simpson



**RUGBY LEAGUE MEMORABILIA**

In 1989, the 'Daily Mirror' newspaper produced the League Autograph booklet which cost 50 cents in which you received a footy medal to put inside the back cover.

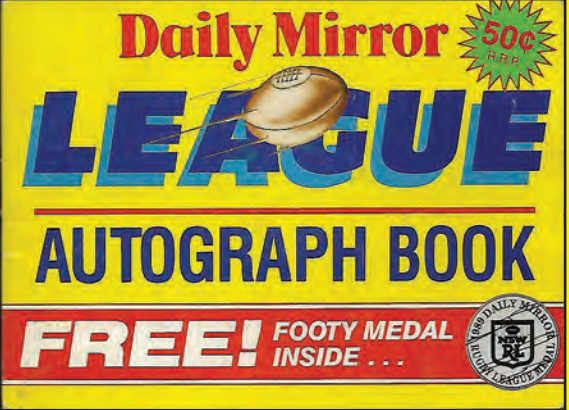
The 20-page book had 16 allocated spots for players photos and room underneath to collect their autograph. The coin was the same and featured the NSW Rugby League logo with the words '1989 Daily Mirror Rugby League Medal'.

You had to buy the newspaper to collect the player profiles. You would cut them out and glue them onto the book. All 16 clubs (Canterbury, Eastern Suburbs, Western Suburbs, St George, Souths, Manly, Parramatta, Cronulla, Balmain, North Sydney, Penrith, Illawarra, Canberra, Newcastle, Brisbane and Gold Coast) were featured and every club had 16 players included.

All up, there was a total of 256 players featured in the newspaper but you had to buy one booklet per team in order to have all the players.

Most supporters stuck with the one booklet in order to get autographs from players from their own team.

Players that were featured included Wayne Pearce (Balmain), Wally Lewis (Brisbane), Terry Lamb (Canterbury), Andrew Ettingshausen (Cronulla), Ron Gibbs (Gold Coast), Paul Vautin (Manly), Peter Sterling (Parramatta) and Royce Simmons (Penrith).





# NRL SEASON PREVIEW

## BRISBANE BRONCOS



**2020 OUTLOOK:** When Brisbane were humiliated in the first week of the 2019 finals series by Parramatta, little did anyone know at the time, that the wheels had fallen off the wagon. 2020 saw the Broncos open with hard fought back-to-back victories over North Queensland and Souths before things went pear-shaped in the worst way possible. They would win just one of their remaining 18 games, against fellow spoon-contender Canterbury.

The club was besieged by calls for coach Anthony Seibold to be sacked, which eventually were too loud for the club to ignore. After the side's Round 13 game against his former club Souths (being coached ironically by Wayne Bennett, who the Broncos dumped from his contract in order to sign Seibold), the club pulled the trigger and dumped Seibold.

The club is at a crossroads now. Do they panic and try and buy their way back to glory, which is often doomed to failure, or do they focus on building a cohesive unit with what they have. The club has no patience for failure given how little of it they've endured in their 33 year existence.

**BEST RECRUIT:** John Asiata. The former Cowboys middle forward and occasional half, is a reliable defender with some good ball skills for a big man, giving the Broncos an attacking option outside of the halves, while also helping to sure up their defence.

**STRENGTH:** Young roster. The Broncos have just 4 players in their 30's and a whopping 15 under the age of 24. Nearly all of those players are NRL quality too, but were not eased into the elite level, but rather rushed.

**WEAKNESS:** Spine. The club now has Andrew McCullough, Corey Paix and Jake Turpin as hooker options, yet none of them were able to tie down the role in 2020. Anthony Milford looks to be the five-eighth, but an underwhelming season by Brodie Croft at halfback has given the club some headaches. The retirement of Darius Boyd has also created a problem at fullback. Tesi Niu looks to be the long-term option, but he was sloppy at times at the back in 2020.

**KEY MAN:** Payne Haas. Much of the Broncos go-forward and attacking options come through the work of the big man. Anthony Milford needs to be trailing Haas as much as possible in 2021 to build on the opportunities he creates.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Kotoni Staggs. Staggs was one of the very few shining lights for the Broncos in 2020 and will be their go-to man out wide in 2021.

**YOUNG GUN:** Tom Dearden. Given that there's no certainty who the halfback is for the Broncos this year, Dearden could very well claim the spot. He played half of the Broncos games last year wearing the #7, pushing Croft to five-eighth for two games.

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** John Asiata (North Queensland), Dale Copley (Gold Coast), Andrew McCullough (Newcastle), David Mead (Catalans).

**LOSSES:** Jack Bird (St George-Illawarra), Darius Boyd (retired), David Fifita (Gold Coast), Matt Gillett (retired), Joe Ofahengaue (Wests Tigers), Sean O'Sullivan (Warriors).

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Brodie Croft. Signed essentially as the Broncos replacement for Ben Hunt, albeit a year later, Croft has failed to fire so far and is already under pressure to hold his place in the side with Dearden pushing for his spot.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Ben Te'o. Te'o made his return to Rugby League after five years playing Rugby Union and made very little impact. He couldn't force his way into the run-on side in a struggling team. He is capable of much better.

**THE COACH:** Kevin Walters has been given the reins of his former club and he has his work cut out for him. The former Maroons coach has to rebuild a team that is sporting little experience and an out-of-sorts spine.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Kevin Walters (Current)  
Peter Gentle (interim 2020)  
Anthony Seibold (2019-20)  
Wayne Bennett (1988-2008 & 2015-18)  
Anthony Griffin (2011-14)

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Jamayne Isaako
- 2 – Corey Oates
- 3 – Herbie Farnworth
- 4 – Kotoni Staggs
- 5 – Xavier Coates
- 6 – Anthony Milford
- 7 – Brodie Croft
- 8 – Payne Haas
- 9 – Andrew McCullough
- 10 – Tevita Pangai
- 11 – Alex Glenn
- 12 – Patrick Carrigan
- 13 – John Asiata
- 14 – Tom Dearden
- 15 – Thomas Flegler
- 16 – Rhys Kennedy
- 17 – Ben Te'o

## CRONULLA SHARKS



### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Luke Metcalf (Manly), Aiden Tolman (Canterbury).

**LOSSES:** Jayson Bukuya (retired), Cameron King (retired), Scott Sorensen (Penrith).

**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Sharks hung onto a top 8 spot in 2020 for dear life, but did enough to reach the finals, where they gave 2019 Grand Finalists Canberra a big scare. Injuries to spine players Shaun Johnson and Blayke Brailey ultimately made the task too big and they fell away in the second half.

2021 will see them start without Johnson, who had one of his best seasons in recent times last year before he was struck down with a tendon injury.

The Sharks also have some highly paid players coming off contract at the end of the year which means they could well be going on a big shopping spree for 2022. Aaron Woods, Matt Moylan, Josh Dugan, Shaun Johnson and banned centre Bronson Xerri are all on their last season at the Sharks in 2021.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Aiden Tolman. The Bulldogs front rower will add some experience as well as providing a consistently workhorse type performance every week, which will be great for the group of talented young forwards at the club to learn from.

**STRENGTH:** Forwards. The Sharks just have a knack for churning out a top quality bunch of forwards, providing them with some unique talents in the front and back row and on the bench. Go forward is something they do not struggle with.

**WEAKNESS:** Strong teams. The Sharks made the finals in 2020 despite not beating any of the 7 teams that finished above them at the end of the year. They aren't going to be a genuine title threat until they can overcome that big issue.

**KEY MAN:** Blayke Brailey. The young rake took a few games to warm to his role in the run on side, but boy did he kick on to become one of the most vital players in this Sharks side. His injury while scoring a try at halftime in their finals game against the Raiders, gave the Sharks a half time lead, but it also hurt their attack so much that they posed no threat to Canberra after the break.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Braydon Trindall. The young half looked right at home when he made it onto the field, taking control of the side and showing plenty of spark with the ball in hand. With Johnson missing the first half of 2021, Trindall could well be the chief playmaker to start the year.

**YOUNG GUN:** Jackson Ferris. The Kiwi centre is

likely to get plenty of game time in 2021 as he appears to be the front runner to replace Josh Dugan at the end of the year.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Andrew Fifita. The veteran prop has been battling several nagging injuries for a few years now, which have in turn, hampered his performance and consistency. He'll be keen for a big year so as to hold down his place in the run on side.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Chad Townsend. The premiership winning halfback had a very quiet year in 2020 and with both Trindall and Connor Tracey both vying for a place in the side, Townsend has to lift his game if he is to stay in the 17. It really is a make or break season for the halfback.

**THE COACH:** John Morris has done a tremendous job taking over this side as they've transitioned from the Flanagan-Gallen era. The side once known for its gritty low scoring contests and with a penchant for buying players instead of developing them, really have gone a full about turn. They are an entertaining outfit to watch and have brought in a number of good juniors, while resisting the urge to buy copious amounts of talent from other clubs.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
John Morris (2019-20)  
Shane Flanagan (2010-13, 2015-18)  
Jamie Shepherd (2014 interim)  
Peter Sharp (2013-14 interim)  
Ricky Stuart (2007-10)

### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – William Kennedy
- 2 – Sione Katoa
- 3 – Josh Dugan
- 4 – Jesse Ramien
- 5 – Ronaldo Mulitalo
- 6 – Shaun Johnson
- 7 – Chad Townsend
- 8 – Andrew Fifita
- 9 – Blayke Brailey
- 10 – Aiden Tolman
- 11 – Briton Nikora
- 12 – Wade Graham
- 13 – Aaron Woods
- 14 – Braden Hamlin-Uele
- 15 – Toby Rudolf
- 16 – Siosifa Talakai
- 17 – Matt Moylan

## MANLY SEA EAGLES



**2021 OUTLOOK:** After returning to finals football in 2019 after a few years in the wilderness, it appeared that Manly-Warringah had turned a corner.

The opening six rounds saw Manly record four wins, seemingly continuing their run of form, but a heavy loss to Cronulla, a side they have historically dominated, seemingly changed their season, as they only won three of their remaining 14 games.

Manly struggled to find a reliable halves

partner for captain Daly Cherry-Evans, while the loss of fullback Tom Trbojevic for over half the season proved to be a huge issue they could not rectify.

Manly will have a few new faces in the forwards, while also welcoming back five-eighth Kieran Foran in an attempt to improve on 2020. If they stay fit, they will be close to a top five side.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Josh Aloiai. The Strong running prop from the Wests Tigers is a great acquisition for Manly and he will rip in every minute in every game.

**STRENGTH:** Middle forwards. Aloiai, Martin Taupau and Jake Trbojevic make an immensely powerful and skilful trio of middle forwards that will be very tough to contain.

**WEAKNESS:** Injury prone spine players. Fullback Tom Trbojevic, five-eighth Kieran Foran and hooker Manase Fainu have all been struggling with injuries in recent times. The club is lacking depth in certain positions saw injuries will be the key.

**KEY MAN:** Daly Cherry-Evans. He's the glue. All the attack goes through him. The entire team structure relies on him. If he can have a side that is fully fit and not hit by injuries, Cherry-Evans could well spark the attack even more.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Josh Schuster. We got to see this talented playmaker in just 1 game last year, but he showed all of his promise and potential in a very impressive performance. If Foran's fitness fails him again, Schuster will more than cover for him.

**YOUNG GUN:** Ben Trbojevic. Yep, another Trbojevic brother. Ben is a very talented centre and could well make his debut in 2021 and will very quickly form a formidable combination with his brothers Tom and Jake.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Dylan Walker. Has largely underperformed at Manly, when he's been on the field. Another player who is playing for a contract in 2022 this year.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Manase Fainu. The young hooker didn't play in 2020 and with no other specialist hookers at the club, he needs to prove that he is the man for the job.

**THE COACH:** Des Hasler remarkably returned to Manly and got them back into the finals, but was bitten hard by injuries in 2020. He has made some good player signings, however they don't really address some of the issues he faced in 2020.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Des Hasler (2004-11, 2019-current)  
Trent Barrett (2016-18)  
Geoff Toovey (2012-15)  
Peter Sharp (1999, 2003)  
Bob Fulton (1983-88, 1993-99)

### GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Josh Aloiai (Wests Tigers), Andrew Davey (Parramatta), Kieran Foran (Canterbury), Jason Saab (St George-Illawarra), Christian Tupulotu (Sydney Roosters).

**LOSSES:** Jade Anderson (released), Addin Fonua-Blake (Warriors), Albert Hopoate (Canberra), Luke Metcalf (Cronulla), Joel Thompson (St Helens), Corey Waddell (Canterbury).


### BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Tom Trbojevic
- 2 – Jorge Taufua
- 3 – Brad Parker
- 4 – Moses Suli
- 5 – Reuben Garrick
- 6 – Kieran Foran
- 7 – Daly Cherry-Evans
- 8 – Josh Aloiai
- 9 – Manase Fainu
- 10 – Martin Taupau
- 11 – Jack Gosiewski
- 12 – Curtis Sironen
- 13 – Jake Trbojevic
- 14 – Andrew Davey
- 15 – Morgan Boyle
- 16 – Taniela Paseka
- 17 – Josh Schuster





# PENRITH PANTHERS



**2020 OUTLOOK:** The Panthers surprised many pundits in 2020 and now shape as one of the top Premiership outfits. Given the vast number of young players in key positions, they are also well placed now to be competition heavyweights for many years.

2020 saw them reach their 5th finals campaign in their last 7 years, a feat they've only managed once previously in their history (1985-91). And on that previous occasion, they had to lose a Grand Final before they won one.

Their 2020 Grand Final performance began with possibly their worst first half performance of the year, however they valiantly clawed their way back into the game in the second half, however they couldn't run down the Storm, eventually losing by 6 points.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Matt Eisenhuth. The Former Panther junior moved to the Wests Tigers and got his way into their 17. A very solid middle defender.

**STRENGTH:** Defence. Many people enjoyed the Panthers attack in 2020, however it was their impressive defence which saw them go on a 17 game winning streak and reach their first Grand Final in 17 years.

**WEAKNESS:** Young squad. It's not too much of a weakness, but could be the only real weakness the Panthers have, which to some extent, was exposed in the Grand Final. They will go into the 2021 season with just one player in their 30's – centre Dean Whare, who is 30 years old.

**KEY MAN:** Nathan Cleary. The star half is still only 23 years old but has now played 5 seasons, 3 of which saw him playing Origin. He is now one of the most experienced players in this Panthers side and the man that their attack flows through.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Charlie Staines. The impressive winger announced himself in his NRL debut last year, bagging 4 tries against the Sharks. 3 weeks later in his only other NRL game, he scored a brace of tries to give him 6 tries from just 2 games. The departure of Josh Mansour means he will now likely move into the starting side.

**YOUNG GUN:** Stephen Crichton. The young Panthers centre has that unique combination of speed, skill, power and confidence. His form was impressive all year, as he racked up 17 tries in 22 games. Still only 20 years old, he looks to be a superstar in the making.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Dean Whare. The oldest player at the club, could well find himself fighting for a spot in the 17, especially if he struggles for form, as the Panthers look to be overflowing with young backs all on the cusp of making their NRL debut.

## GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Matt Eisenhuth (Wests Tigers), Robert Jennings (Wests Tigers), Jaeman Salmon (Parramatta), Scott Sorensen (Cronulla), Paul Momirovski (Wests Tigers).

**LOSSES:** Caleb Aekins (Canberra), Jack Hetherington (Canterbury), Josh Mansour (Souths), James Tamou (Wests Tigers), Zane Tetevano (Leeds), Malakai Watene-Zelezniak (retired), Daine Laurie (Wests Tigers).

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Mitch Kenny. The young hooker is a very handy player, but is stuck behind Api Koroisau. He needs to lift his game another gear if he is a chance of making his way into the 17.

**THE COACH:** Ivan Cleary is in charge of one of the best organised clubs in the game, from cap management, to NRL roster, through to juniors and grassroots setup, giving him the best possible chance to not just win a title, but to build the sort of dynasty that the club has never before seen. Defensively his side was the best in the NRL, while in attack they were ranked second best. Impressive given how young his side was in 2020 and an indication of the direction the club is moving in.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Ivan Cleary (2012-15, 2019-current)  
Cameron Ciraldo (2018 interim)  
Anthony Griffin (2016-18)  
Steve Georgallis (2011 interim)  
Matthew Elliott (2007-11)

## BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

1 – Dylan Edwards

2 – Charlie Staines

3 – Dean Whare

4 – Stephen Crichton

5 – Brian To'o

6 – Jarome Luai

7 – Nathan Cleary

8 – James Fisher-Harris

9 – Apisai Koroisau

10 – Matt Eisenhuth

11 – Liam Martin

12 – Viliame Kikau

13 – Isaah Yeo


14 – Scott Sorensen

15 – Kurt Capewell

16 – Moses Leota

17 – Tyrone May

# ST GEORGE ILLAWARRA



**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Paul Vaughan. After a stellar stint since moving to the Dragons, Paul Vaughan had a year to forget in 2020. He is capable of more and has proven that for a number of years now.

**THE COACH:** Anthony Griffin has been largely successful throughout the entirety of his coaching career. His 4 years at the Broncos saw him win 53.5% of games, where he had to take over after the Ivan Henjak experiment went wrong. His 3 years at Penrith saw him reach the finals every year, winning 58.3% of games.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Anthony Griffin (current)  
Dean Young (2020 interim)  
Paul McGregor (2014-20)  
Steve Price (2012-14)  
Wayne Bennett (2009-11)

**2021 OUTLOOK:** 2020 was the year that the Dragons' patience officially ran out. The club had assembled a very competitive squad of players for the past few years, but had only reached the finals once since 2016.

Three-quarters of the way through the 2020 season, with the Dragons languishing in 12th place, the club decided to axe coach Paul McGregor. In 2021 they'll be under the tutelage of Anthony Griffin, who has set about bolstering the Dragons middle forwards.

The Dragons' biggest issue has been their pedestrian attack, something Griffin is capable of rectifying, although 2021 might be a year of transition for the club.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Poasa Faamausili. The powerful running prop could well lock in a place in the run-on side. Has served a good apprenticeship at the Roosters and still has some improving to do, making him a great prospect.

**STRENGTH:** Edge attack. The Dragons scored nearly 62% of their tries in 2020 through fullback Matt Dufty, centre Zac Lomax and winger Mikaele Ravalawa, each player crossing for 13 tries apiece. This gives them 3 key targets out the back when in the attacking zone.

**WEAKNESS:** Chance creation. Uncertainty in the halves combined with a one-dimensional attack, meant a lot of the Dragons' tries came about via individual brilliance by players outside the spine and not via playmakers.

**KEY MAN:** Cameron McInnes. The captain and hooker is the beating heart of this side. He rips in every week, even moved to Lock to help the side and still continued to be one of their best every week.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Zac Lomax. This kid had a fantastic 2020 season. If he continues that form and builds upon it, he will find himself in the conversation for an Origin call up.

**YOUNG GUN:** Jayden Sullivan. The teenage playmaker made his NRL debut last year, but could find himself getting more game time in 2021

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Corey Norman. Another NRL playmaker who is playing for a contract this year. Has been largely disappointing since arriving at the Dragons and that has impacted the Dragons' ability to score points.

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## BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

1 – Matt Dufty (pictured)

2 – Mikaele Ravalawa

3 – Jack Bird

4 – Zac Lomax

5 – Jordan Pereira

6 – Corey Norman

7 – Ben Hunt

8 – Poasa Faamausili

9 – Cameron McInnes

10 – Paul Vaughan

11 – Tariq Sims

12 – Jackson Ford

13 – Blake Lawrie

14 – Daniel Alvaro

15 – Trent Merrin

16 – Kaide Ellis

17 – Tyrell Fuimaono

# CANBERRA RAIDERS



**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Raiders have a very stable and solid roster, which has had very few changes for a few seasons now. That stability has seen them become one of the 5 top sides in the competition and there's no reason to suggest that will change in 2021.

The club has made some astute depth signings for the upcoming season, which have covered their departures nicely. They have a great mix of experience, youth and players in their prime, while having a very settled spine.

They also have some quality players to cover the spine if needed, making them arguably the most balanced roster in the NRL.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Ryan James. If the former Titan big man can stay injury free, he will be



one of the best signings in 2021. Can cover Lock, front row and back row, huge work rate and a genuine try scoring threat close to the line.

**STRENGTH:** Consistency. They are an ultra-consistent and reliable outfit. You have to be at your best to beat the Raiders, and even then, you have to hope they are off their game a little.

**WEAKNESS:** Finals. Canberra went within a game of a second consecutive Grand Final appearance in 2020, however their finals campaign saw them looking more vulnerable, especially in defence. 35% of their games in the regular season saw them concede 20 points or more. In the finals they conceded 20 against Cronulla, 18 against the Roosters and 30 against the Storm.

**KEY MAN:** Jack Wighton. The champion five-eighth had another strong season and started to form a very good halves pairing with Englishman George Williams (pictured left). With hooker Hodgson back on deck and fully fit, Wighton will be required to do a little less play-making and a bit more running, which is good news for him and the Raiders.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Tom Starling. The young hooker had a great year filling in for the injured Josh Hodgson. He's very fast out of

dummy half, has crisp passing and can hold his own defensively. He's very hard to keep out of the side.

**YOUNG GUN:** Semi Valemei. The Fijian winger could well become a mainstay on the Raiders' edge after making a great impression in his debut year last season.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Curtis Scott. After his drama-filled off-season prior to the 2020 season, Scott struggled to find any strong form and was well below his best. He needs to find some form and early if he is to tie down his place in the Raiders backline.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Josh Hodgson. The Raiders are at their best when the British rake is on the field. With the added pressure of Starling vying for his place in the side, Hodgson needs to be fully fit and in good form early if the Raiders are going to reach the Grand Final again.

**THE COACH:** Ricky Stuart has built a very strong, well-balanced side, across the park. He's bringing through some good depth players too. Last year he made back-to-back finals campaigns, something he hasn't done since his time at the Roosters.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Ricky Stuart (2014-current)  
Andrew Dunemann (2013 interim)  
David Furner (2009-13)  
Neil Henry (2007-08)  
Matthew Elliott (2002-06)

## GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Caleb Aekins (Penrith), Albert Hopoate (Manly), Ryan James (Gold Coast), Harry Rush-ton (Wigan).

**LOSSES:** John Bateman (Wigan), Nick Cotric (Canterbury), Michael Oldfield (Parramatta).

## BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

1 – Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad

2 – Caleb Aekins

3 – Jarrod Croker

4 – Curtis Scott

5 – Jordan Rapana

6 – Jack Wighton

7 – George Williams

8 – Josh Papalii

9 – Josh Hodgson

10 – Dunamis Lui

11 – Elliott Whitehead

12 – Ryan James

13 – Hudson Young

14 – Corey Horsburgh

15 – Joseph Tapine

16 – Tom Starling

17 – Corey Harawire-Naera



NRL SEASON PREVIEW

NORTH QLD COWBOYS



**2021 OUTLOOK:** After the Cowboys miraculous 2017 campaign saw them reach the Grand Final without Test stars and captains Johnathan Thurston and Matt Scott for most of the year, it looked like the future was bright for the Cowboys.

Three years of finishing in the bottom 4 has since followed, their Premiership winning coach Paul Green has been replaced, their star half and captain Michael Morgan has played in 37 of the sides 68 games since, slightly over 50%, as he has struggled with injuries.

On paper, the side looks competitive enough. 2021 shapes as a season where the Cowboys will start to shake up their roster and move into a new direction, while also looking to improve and threaten the top 8.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Lachlan Burr. The solid prop forward will help improve the Cowboys middle defence while also providing some support for Jason Taumalolo in attack.

**STRENGTH:** Lock Forward. Jason Taumalolo is their strength. He's a powerhouse running the ball, has a great step, offload and pace off the mark for a big man, while also being a quality defender. He has carried this side for a number of years since the retirement of Thurston.

**WEAKNESS:** Spine. Valentine Holmes is a genuine ball running fullback, but has been relied upon for playmaking duties, which saw him struggle for form in his first season back after his NFL campaign. Constant injuries to Michael Morgan has been disruptive to the Cowboys attack, while hooker Jake Granville has been down on form. The Cowboys have not locked in a halves partner yet either for Morgan.

**KEY MAN:** Jason Taumalolo. He's a leader in every aspect of the game and has been carrying this side for several years now. Cowboys are half as good without him.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow. The explosive speedster got plenty of opportunities at Fullback and on the wing in 2020 and did not disappoint. Expect him to improve further in 2021.

**YOUNG GUN:** Kane Bradley. Tall, athletic winger whose runs combine the speed of a winger and the power of a forward. Solid finisher too. His height makes him a target for attacking kicks.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Michael Morgan. When he plays at full fitness, he is a game winner. After 3 seasons of struggles, he'll be keen to hit the ground running in 2021 and see out the

GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Kane Bradley (Wests Tigers), Lachlan Burr (Warriors).

**LOSSES:** John Asiata (Brisbane), Gavin Cooper (retired), Tom Opacic (Parramatta), Tuki Simpkins (Wests Tigers).

year on the field.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Coen Hess. He exploded onto the scene, made his Origin debut but plateaued in form before starting to go backwards. His contract ends next year so he really needs a big 2 seasons if he is to stay at the club.

**THE COACH:** Todd Payten got a taste of being an NRL coach last year in the last 14 games of the New Zealand Warriors season, where he managed to turn around their performance very quickly, making them much better defensively while also seeing a consistent and improved performance in attack. He used to be on the coaching staff at the Cowboys, making the move so much easier for both coach and club.

LAST FIVE COACHES:

Todd Payten (Current)  
Josh Hannay (2020 interim)  
Paul Green (2014-20)  
Neil Henry (2009-13)  
Ian Millward (2008 interim)

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Valentine Holmes
- 2 – Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow
- 3 – Justin O'Neill
- 4 – Esan Marsters
- 5 – Kyle Feldt
- 6 – Scott Drinkwater
- 7 – Michael Morgan
- 8 – Jordan McLean
- 9 – Jake Granville
- 10 – Josh McGuire
- 11 – Mitchell Dunn
- 12 – Shane Wright
- 13 – Jason Taumalolo
- 14 – Lachlan Burr
- 15 – Coen Hess
- 16 – Francis Molo
- 17 – Reece Robson



GOLD COAST TITANS

**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Titans first 15 rounds of 2020 resembled their last few seasons, as they had just four wins, but things started to click and they won their last five games, albeit four of them were against sides out of finals contention, with their last game producing a brilliant 36-6 victory over the Knights.

The Titans recruitment drive for the 2021 season has been nothing short of brilliant. They've scored four very talented young forwards who they can build around, thanks to clearing up some space by getting rid of a number of players, some who had been hampered by injuries or were just not finding any form.

They could well be the surprise packet of 2021.

**BEST RECRUIT:** David Fifita. The supremely talented back rower was a massive coup for the club and allowed them to move on club legend

GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Herman Ese'ese (Newcastle), Tino Fa'asuamaleaui (Melbourne), David Fifita (Brisbane), Patrick Herbert (Warriors), Sam McIntyre (Wests Tigers).

**LOSSES:** Jai Arrow (Souths), Shannon Boyd (retired), Bryce Cartwright (Parramatta), Dale Copley (Brisbane), Keegan Hipgrave (Parramatta), Ryan James (Canberra), Nathan Peats (released), Young Tonumaiepa (Rugby Union).

Ryan James, who had struggled with injuries for his last two seasons. Fifita gives the side a huge attacking weapon outside of the spine.

**STRENGTH:** Forward rotation. The Titans have strengthened their forward pack immensely, and with many of them still relatively young, the club will be able to build around them for several years.

**WEAKNESS:** Spine. Coach Justin Holbrook tried many different options before finally locking in three of his four positions. The jury is still out on the highly paid but under-performing half Ash Taylor, whose contract ends in 2021.

**KEY MAN:** Jamal Fogarty. The talented half took over the halfback duties in 2020 from Taylor and really nailed the spot down. The Titans now have a halfback they can build around.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Sam McIntyre. The new recruit from the Wests Tigers is a very tough back rower and isn't afraid to rip into the dirty work. He will be a huge asset whether starting or coming off the bench.

**YOUNG GUN:** Tanah Boyd. The young half showed plenty of promise coming off the bench and has positioned himself to take over the five-eighth role beyond this year if Ash Taylor is unable to get a contract extension.

NZ WARRIORS



GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Euan Aitken (St.George-Illawarra), Kane Evans (Parramatta), Addin Fonua-Blake (Manly), Marcelo Montoya (Canterbury), Ben Murdoch-Masila (Warrington), Sean O'Sullivan (Brisbane), Iliesa Ratuva (Rugby Union), Bayley Sironen (Souths).

**LOSSES:** Gerard Beale (retired), Adam Blair (retired), Lachlan Burr (North Queensland), Patrick Herbert (Gold Coast), Adam Keighran (Sydney), Taane Milne (Souths), Agnatius Paasi (St.Helens), Isiah Papali'i (Parramatta), Nathaniel Roache (Parramatta).

**2021 OUTLOOK:** 2020 was a very tough year for the Warriors and thus, it is very tough to gauge how they fared and their prospects in 2021. They spent the entire season playing in Australia, away from their families and with guest players filling places in their squad. Their coach Stephen Kearney was dismissed after 6 games and replaced by assistant Todd Payten.

After a poor first half of the season, where the Warriors struggled to score points and defence, Payten managed to turn around the clubs fortunes, as the club won five of their last nine games, with their attack immensely improved and their defence becoming much more reliable.

They've focussed their recruitment for 2021 around forward depth mostly and already look to have the biggest pack in the competition. In attack they could well be hard to stop, but defensively they may struggle in the second half of games with tired forwards.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Ben Murdoch-Masila. This big mobile forward made his debut at the Wests Tigers, before one season at Penrith and then stints at Salford and Warrington in the Super League. He found some magnificent form in England and will hit the ground running at the Warriors. The 30-year-old will also help to fill the boots vacated by the retirement of Test forward Adam Blair.

**STRENGTH:** Back Three. No one is going to enjoy stopping the Warriors kick returns in 2021. The elusive brilliance of fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, the sheer power and speed of wingers David Fusitu'a and Ken Maumalo makes the Warriors a hard team to kick long against.

But they will only have one year to do so with Tuivasa-Sheck announcing he will be switching codes after signing a two-year deal to play with the Auckland Blues Rugby Union team.

**WEAKNESS:** Size. This Warriors size is beefy! A few years ago, this would've been an immense asset, but with the NRL's focus with rule changes being on speeding up the ruck, this size could mean the Warriors are out on their feet late in games.

**KEY MAN:** Wayne Egan. With their big forwards, the Warriors need to make sure that their forwards roll upfield constantly and with ease if they are to dominate games and pick up much needed wins. Egan is vital to this.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Bayley Sironen. The son of Test legend Paul Sironen, Bayley is a chip off the old block and could well become a starter in this side to add some mobility and endurance on the edges.

**YOUNG GUN:** Hayze Perham. This young back is an absolute talent but hasn't yet been able to play in a position best suited to his skillset, such as fullback or perhaps five-eighth. He has good hands and great speed off the mark.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Peta Hiku and Euan Aitken. Both centres have been at times up-and-down with their form. With a few young players waiting for an opportunity, the Warriors centres need to stay on top of their game and play well to ensure they don't lose their place in the 13.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Addin Fonua-Blake. The big front rower has everything in his arsenal to be a dominate force but needs to focus on making metres and tackling everything near him.

**THE COACH:** Nathan Brown makes his return to a head coaching role after ending his tenure at the Knights in 2019. Brown is starting to build a reputation as a culture changer, someone who comes in, shakes everything up, get things done. He will be ably assisted by Phil Gould, with a focus on not just fixing the team onfield, but also their junior pathways structure.

LAST FIVE COACHES:

Nathan Brown (Current)  
Todd Payten (2020 interim)  
Stephen Kearney (2017-2020)  
Andrew McFadden (2014-16)  
Matthew Elliott (2013-14)

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Roger Tuivasa-Sheck
- 2 – David Fusitu'a
- 3 – Peta Hiku
- 4 – Euan Aitken
- 5 – Ken Maumalo
- 6 – Kodi Nikorima
- 7 – Chanel Harris-Tavita
- 8 – Addin Fonua-Blake
- 9 – Wayne Egan
- 10 – Leeson Ah Mau
- 11 – Bayley Sironen
- 12 – Tohu Harris
- 13 – Jazz Tevaga
- 14 – Ben Murdoch-Masila
- 15 – Jamayne Taunua-Brown
- 16 – Kane Evans
- 17 – Hayze Perham

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Ash Taylor. On huge coin and has yet to prove why he deserves it. In his last season on the huge contract and with a younger, cheaper and seemingly better alternative already at the club in Tanah Boyd, Ash Taylor is literally playing for his career in 2021.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Tyrone Peachey. He's a class player that can play anywhere. Unfortunately though, anywhere isn't a position. He needs to cement a position in the side and nail it down.

**THE COACH:** Justin Holbrook made all the right moves at the struggling club in his first season. He tried out different combinations, learnt what did and didn't work and started to



build the side he wants, focussing on the forwards. Made a number of big signings which could see the Titans return to finals footy.

LAST FIVE COACHES:

Justin Holbrook (2020-Current)  
Luke Burt (2019 Interim)  
Craig Hodges (2017 & 2019 interim)  
Garth Brennan (2017-19)  
Terry Matterson (2017 interim)

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – AJ Brimson
- 2 – Anthony Don
- 3 – Tyrone Peachey
- 4 – Patrick Herbert
- 5 – Phillip Sami
- 6 – Ash Taylor
- 7 – Jamal Fogarty
- 8 – Moeaki Fotuauka
- 9 – Mitch Rein
- 10 – Tino Fa'asuamaleaui
- 11 – David Fifita
- 12 – Kevin Proctor
- 13 – Herman Ese'ese
- 14 – Sam McIntyre
- 15 – Sam Lisone
- 16 – Jarrod Wallace
- 17 – Corey Thompson



WESTS TIGERS



**2021 OUTLOOK:** The Tigers story in 2020 was all too familiar. Solid start, sneak into the top 8, massive form slump, just miss the finals. The club has been hampered for the last few seasons with big money tied up in players not on the field, but most of them were moved on in the off-season.

The club has added some star power to its backline but have yet to really focus on the two biggest problem areas the club: The spine and the defence.

After their 48-0 demolition of the last placed Broncos in Round 10, the Tigers reached 7th place – but then won just 2 of their next 8 games, conceding 26 points or more in a record 10 straight games.

2021 looks to be a final year of a rebuild before the club possibly makes a few additions in the 2021 off-season to genuinely focus on a finals tilt in 2022.

**BEST RECRUIT:** James Tamou. The club needed an experienced leader up front and they scored that in spades with the acquisition of Tamou. He will have to shoulder a big workload though, however that shouldn't be a problem for him.

**STRENGTH:** Three-quarters. The club has arguably the most explosive three-quarter line in the game, but only if they are all fit and in form. Speed, power, brute force, it's all there in spades.

**WEAKNESS:** Playmaking. The club looks like it will have a stand-in fullback, the injury-cursed but very skilled hooker in Jacob Liddle, another stand-in player at five-eighth and the rocks-and-diamonds Luke Brooks.

**KEY MAN:** Luke Brooks. Brooks has been living on his potential tag for several years and looked to turn a corner in 2018 when he finished third in the Dally M count and was named halfback of the year. That form needs to be his benchmark minimum in 2021 and beyond.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Shawn Blore. We saw what this kid was capable of in his debut last year when he squared off against Parramatta tyro Nathan Brown and decimated him in two consecutive tackles. He is a genuine talent and is set to have a big year.

**YOUNG GUN:** Stefano Utoikamanu. This 20 year old monster is 191 cms tall and tips the scales at 115kgs of raw power. He will likely be part of the bench rotation this year but don't be surprised if he becomes the club's leading front rower before the end of the season.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Moses Mbye. The high profile signing a few years ago is struggling to find his place in the side. He had been parked in the centres, but the club has better players ahead of him there, leaving him to play as a utility, either at full-back, five-eighth or hooker. He needs to find a position, stick with it and focus on it solely for his benefit and the clubs.

GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Joe Ofahengaue (Brisbane), James Roberts (Souths), Tuki Simpkins (North Queensland), James Tamou (Penrith), Stefano Utoikamanu (Parramatta), Daine Laurie (Penrith).  
**LOSSES:** Josh Aloiai (Manly), Kane Bradley (North Queensland), Matt Eisenhuth (Penrith), Harry Grant (Melbourne), Robert Jennings (Penrith), Chris Lawrence (retired), Benji Marshall (South Sydney), Sam McIntyre (Gold Coast), Chris McQueen (Huddersfield), Josh Reynolds (Hull FC), Elijah Taylor (Salford), Paul Momirovski (Penrith).

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Joe Ofahengaue. After a dismal year at the Broncos, Joe has moved to the Tigers where he will walk into their run-on side. He will though need to prove he deserves such an honour by ripping in every game, as the coach isn't one to tolerate poor form for too long.

**THE COACH:** Michael Maguire is a very strict coach and places high demands on his players. His focus in 2021 will be on making the club a defensively stronger unit, as they have attacking strike all across the field. If he can sure up their defence, the Tigers could well spring a surprise and sneak into the finals.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Michael Maguire (2019-current)  
Ivan Cleary (2017-18)  
Andrew Webster (2017 interim)  
Jason Taylor (2015-17)  
Michael Potter (2013-14)

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Moses Mbye
- 2 – David Nofoaluma
- 3 – James Roberts
- 4 – Joey Leilua
- 5 – Daine Laurie
- 6 – Adam Doueihy
- 7 – Luke Brooks
- 8 – James Tamou
- 9 – Jacob Liddle
- 10 – Joe Ofahengaue
- 11 – Shawn Blore
- 12 – Luciano Leilua
- 13 – Alex Twal
- 14 – Stefano Utoikamanu
- 15 – Thomas Mikaele
- 16 – Luke Garner
- 17 – Jake Simpkin

NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS



GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Tyson Frizell (St.George-Illawarra), Bailey Hodgson (Castleford), Jack Johns (Souths), Sauaso Sue (Canterbury), Dominic Young (Huddersfield).  
**LOSSES:** Herman Ese'ese (Gold Coast), Tim Glasby (retired), Aidan Guerra (retired), Mason Lino (Wakefield Trinity), Sione Mata'utia (St Helens), Andrew McCullough (Brisbane), Tau-tau Moga (Souths).

**2021 OUTLOOK:** After a six-year hiatus from finals football, a period which netted three wooden spoons, the Knights finally got back into the top eight in 2020, albeit briefly. The roster is well balanced and contains the X-factor that is Kalyn Ponga.

They've had a few players leave, freeing up places in the 17 and more importantly, cash in the salary cap. They still sport a very multi-purpose forward pack and will have a lot of players back from injury.

They have the potential to build and improve on their 2020 campaign, however they will need to perform better against the competition heavyweights in order to be a genuine threat.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Tyson Frizell. The Dragons, Origin and Test back rower is a very skilful big man who is also a powerful runner and stingy defender. He had a very disappointing 2020 season and will be looking to turn that around at his new club.

**STRENGTH:** Bending the defensive line. The Knights forwards know how to run hard and straight and that won't be changing in 2021. This powerful running pack provides second phase opportunities for the likes of Kalyn Ponga, while also giving the halves room to move and create.

**WEAKNESS:** Spine. Outside of superstar full-back Kalyn Ponga, the Knights spine is underwhelming. A lack of depth in the halves and at hooker was exposed last year through injuries to Jayden Brailey and Connor Watson. They've lost some of what depth they had in the off-season, making this more of an issue.

**KEY MAN:** Jayden Brailey. It's his job to turn those big metres from his forwards into attacking opportunities for his backs. He definitely has the skillset to do this, but didn't get a chance to show it after getting injured in just his second game for the Knights last year.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** David Klemmer. The big unit is a big reason why the Knights make huge metres up the middle. With a fully fit squad around him and the impact of Frizell on the edge will see opposition defences unable to gang up on Klemmer as much.

**YOUNG GUN:** Bailey Hodgson. The talented 19 year old from England has been snared by the Knights and could well fill the void left by Ponga if he earns an Origin/Test call ups or is injured..

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Mitchell Pearce. 2021 is the last year of his current contract with the Knights, and with a forgettable off-season resulting in him relinquishing the club captaincy, he will need a big year if he is to be picked up by another side.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Blake Green. His first season at the Warriors was impressive, but his form dropped off before being impacted by injuries. The 6 jumper is his to lose at this stage, but with Ponga in the side and the Knights having some players capable of filling the fullback role, Green really needs to capture some strong form from the outset.

**THE COACH:** Adam O'Brien had a very good debut season. Last year he worked to improve the Knights defence and succeeded. He's spent the offseason working on cleaning up the roster, making some good calls to help the club move forward.

**LAST FIVE COACHES:**  
Adam O'Brien (2020-current)  
Kristian Woolf (2019 interim)  
Nathan Brown (2016-19)  
Danny Buderus (2015 interim)  
Rick Stone (2009-11, 2015)

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Kalyn Ponga
- 2 – Tex Hoy
- 3 – Enari Tuala
- 4 – Bradman Best
- 5 – Starford To'a
- 6 – Blake Green
- 7 – Mitchell Pearce
- 8 – David Klemmer
- 9 – Jayden Brailey
- 10 – Daniel Saifiti
- 11 – Lachlan Fitzgibbon
- 12 – Tyson Frizell
- 13 – Mitchell Barnett
- 14 – Jacob Saifiti
- 15 – Sauaso Sue
- 16 – Josh King
- 17 – Kurt Mann

MELBOURNE STORM



**2021 OUTLOOK:** It's Melbourne. Their outlook for right on 15 years now is 'benchmark'. Unlike in recent seasons where some commentators have suggested the Cameron Smith's imminent departure and the loss of star players would see the Storm slide down the table, only for that to never happen, this year those factors are no longer issues.

The Storm have Origin debutant Harry Grant back after his 1 year loan to the Wests Tigers came to an end. Whether Smith retires or not is irrelevant now, because Grant is ready to step into the 9 jumper. And even if he wasn't, Kiwi Test rake Brandon Smith (pictured below) is.

They have a wealth of talent and have this



unbeatable knack to find new talent when they need it. They will be the team to beat again and they will take some beating.

**BEST RECRUIT:** Harry Grant. Not entirely a recruit, but his season as a starting 9 at the Tigers saw his game go to the next level, earning him an Origin call up at the end of the year, where he did not disappoint.

**STRENGTH:** Spine depth. Two quality full-backs in Ryan Papenhuyzen and Nicho Hynes, a pair of genuine halves in Cameron Munster and Jahrome Hughes and possibly 3 hookers in Cameron Smith, Harry Grant and Brandon Johns if they ever need more halves too.

**WEAKNESS:** Forward depth. Their forward rotation is very strong, but their depth is a bit sparse. It's not really that much of a weakness either. Trying to find a weakness in the Storm is like trying to find a needle in several haystacks.

**KEY MAN:** Cameron Munster. As much as stalwart Cameron Smith is still at the club, 2020 saw this team begin the transition to becoming Munster's side. A lot of play now goes through his hands and he looks right at home with that responsibility, which augers well for the club and its future.

**PLAYER TO WATCH:** Harry Grant. Look what

he did in a mid-table side like the Tigers in 2020. Watch him in a top class side with arguably the greatest coach and greatest hooker in the game right now to help take him to the next level.

**YOUNG GUN:** Nicho Hynes. We saw what this young utility back could do last year. He will be demanding a place in the 17 and will be near impossible to leave out.

**UNDER PRESSURE:** Jahrome Hughes. He and Ryley Jacks are both competing for the same position and both are off contract at the end of the year. Hughes at times would go missing during games while Jacks struggled for consistency. Both will be playing for a contract extension.

**NEEDS TO IMPROVE:** Reimis Smith. A talented threequarter who will get opportunities in 2021. Has had a mixed start to his career at the lowly Bulldogs. Won't get many excuses for a poor performance or season at the Storm though.

**THE COACH:** Craig Bellamy continues to keep his dynasty going. He's looking to be very close to the end of his tenure as coach at the Storm and it may come at the same time as the retirement of his captain Cam Smith. An absolute master in all aspects of the game.

**LAST THREE COACHES:**  
Craig Bellamy (2003-current)  
Mark Murray (2001-02)  
Chris Anderson (1998-2001)

GAINS & LOSSES

**GAINS:** Harry Grant (Wests Tigers), George Jennings (Parramatta), Reimis Smith (Canterbury.)  
**LOSSES:** Tino Fa'asuamaleaui (Gold Coast), Ricky Leatele (Huddersfield), Paul Momirovski (Wests Tigers), Albert Vete (Hull KR), Suliasi Vunivalu (Rugby Union).

BEST LINE-UP IN 2021

- 1 – Ryan Papenhuyzen
- 2 – Nicho Hynes
- 3 – Marion Seve
- 4 – Justin Olam
- 5 – Josh Addo-Carr
- 6 – Cameron Munster
- 7 – Jahrome Hughes
- 8 – Jesse Bromwich
- 9 – Harry Grant
- 10 – Tui Kamikamica
- 11 – Felise Kaufusi
- 12 – Kenny Bromwich
- 13 – Dale Finucane
- 14 – Brandon Smith
- 15 – Nelson Asofa-Solomona
- 16 – Christian Welch
- 17 – Brenko Lee



# THE DETECTIVE / SYDNEY SHIELD / RON MASSEY CUP



Even though an official announcement on the Rugby League World Cup will not be made until late in March, many of the pundits believe that pushing it back to 2022 is the best option.

The Covid death toll in the United Kingdom has risen to more than 100,000 and lockdown rules are in place until at least March. Restrictions could well remain for most of 2021.

With Australian travellers unlikely to be allowed to travel in 2021, that would affect many of the nations that have the majority of players based in Australia. That includes the likes of New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Greece, Italy and Lebanon. The World Cup only covers flights from your country of Origin.

With the New Zealand travel corridor expected to open for Australians, that could be another option.

But the Rugby League World Cup team are adamant that it will not be moved from the United Kingdom because plenty of money has been allocated from Sport England.

**A number of clubs would be interested in signing Israel Folau but will not because of the backlash they will receive from supporters and most importantly, sponsors.**

With the covid-19 situation making sponsorship even harder to attract and/or retain, every dollar counts.

**The mail keep getting stronger that Shane Flanagan will return as head coach for the Sharks in 2022 after his ban for violating the rules of a previous suspension over his role in the Sharks' supplements scandal finishes.**

Flanagan, who took the Sharks to their maiden premiership in 2016, is still held in high regard by a number of Cronulla players and officials.

Current Sharks coach John Morris is contracted until the end of the 2021 season and new signing Cameron McInnes (who commences his stint from next year) was told that the coach of the club in 2022 is still not confirmed.

**One Sydney-based NRL club is set for more dramas after a new addition to the coaching staff didn't go down well with a number of players and officials.**

The person in question only got the gig because of his close relationship with the head coach and not his credentials. Like all appointments, results will be the key but a number of losses could see this impact many people throughout the grades.

**The merger between the Brisbane Bombers and the rival Western Corridor bid team will probably be enough to give them the green light to become the 17th NRL team in 2023.**

The ARLC is due to make a mid-year decision on whether to expand the Telstra Premiership by admitting a second Brisbane club in 2023.

To be known as the Brisbane Jets, the merger of both will be seen as a strong bid alongside established clubs Redcliffe Dolphins and Brisbane Tigers (Easts Tigers), who themselves are keen on playing in the NRL.

What gives the Jets the advantage is that they will take in Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba. A new club, with a new name will help attract new supporters to the Jets

But the key thing is finance. If they can come up with a financial guarantee, they will be the favourites. Redcliffe and Brisbane Tigers have a long history and the money to make this a reality.

**CLAMPTON'S CORNER:** A man joins a Rugby League team and his new team mates inform him, "At your first team dinner as the new guy, you will have to give us a talk about sex."

The evening arrives and he gives a detailed, humorous account of his sex life. When he got home, his wife asked how the evening went and not wanting to lie, but also not wanting to explain exactly what happened, he said, "Oh, I had to make a talk about yachting," his wife thought this a little peculiar but said nothing more and went to sleep.

The next day she bumped into one of his new teammates at the supermarket and asked, "I heard my husband had to make a speech last night. How did it go?" His mate said smiling, "Oh, it was excellent! Your husband is clearly very experienced!."

The wife looked confused and replied to his mate, "Strange, he has only done it twice and the second time he was sick."



Ryde-Eastwood in action in last year's Sydney Shield grand final.

BY TERRY LIBEROPOULOS

**The 2021 Ron Massey Cup will continue with an 11-team competition with the opening round set to commence on March 13.**

Both Asquith and Guildford are missing from the competition with Ryde-Eastwood and Western Suburbs joining the competition.

The Magpies last played in the Ron Massey Cup in 2019 but decided against fielding a team in the 2020 season, even prior to covid-19.

The Hawks joined the Sydney Shield competition in 2019, capping off a great season by winning the grand final when they beat Cabramatta 22-12.

Ryde-Eastwood will continue to play in the Sydney Shield but have decided to also field a side in the Ron Massey Cup and will be coached by Jared Farlow.

The Ryde-Eastwood Hawks were part of the original Jim Beam Cup when it kicked-off in 2003 but left the competition at the end of the following year.

Ryde-Eastwood will take on Western Suburbs in a trial match at Lidcombe Oval on February 20.

There will be a total of 23 rounds with Round 10 deemed to be weekend off. Each team will play 20 matches with two byes and two weekends off during the season. The finals will now consist of a top six, instead of a top eight. The finals series will be played over three weeks with the grand final expected to be played on September 12.

The top two sides will have the bye in the opening week of the finals with team number three playing the sixth-placed team while fourth will do battle with the club finishing in fifth spot.

The lowest ranked winner will then take on the minor premiers in the preliminary final while the second-placed team will play the other winner from week one.

The opening round is expected to see Blacktown Workers take on Wentworthville while Cabramatta will entertain Mounties.

In other matches, the Fiji Silktails will do battle with Glebe Burwood, Ryde-Eastwood will lock horns with Hills District and Western Suburbs will play St Marys. Windsor will have the bye.

Western Suburbs will be coached by the experienced and very popular Leo Epifania, who himself is also the national coach of Italy.

Kieran Wyld returns to the club after spending last season with Sydney University.

Former NSW Cup and Qld Cup player Dane Francis, who played with Thirroul last year, is with the Magpies as is Serbian Rugby League international James Mirceski.

Greek Rugby League players Mitchell Zampetides, Sam Stratis and Jonny Mitsias are also at the Magpies with the latter expected to push for a spot in the NSW Cup squad.

Western Suburbs will return to Lidcombe Oval on a regular basis for the first time since 1986.

They are hoping at stage six curtain-raisers together with the Magpies NSW Cup team but that will be determined by the NSW Rugby League.

The Kaiviti Silktails will be based in Sydney due to covid travel restrictions and will be coached by Wes Naiqama.

The Silktails have been boosted with a partnership deal with the Sydney Roosters NRL team.

The Silktails' debut in New South Wales' Ron Massey Cup competition in 2020 was successful but brief before the COVID-19 pandemic commenced. They played just one game but it was a big win, 40-16, over the Windsor Wolves in Lautoka.

While state borders may be opening up in Australia, its international border is likely to be shut until late 2021.

That prompted the Silktails' management to set up camp in Sydney to guarantee they can take a full part in the 2021 season.

Mounties have formed an alliance with Canterbury after having been previously with the Canberra Raiders.

Brock Sheppard, who previously was with Western Suburbs SG Ball Cup, will coach Mounties.

St Marys will have the same coaches they had in 2019 with Shane Elford (Ron Massey Cup) and Shane Rodney (Sydney Shield) in charge.

The inspirational Aaron Nyke Zammit will continue as coach of the Glebe Burwood Dirty Reds.

They will continue their relationship with the Newtown Jets and play a number of their matches as curtain-raisers to Bluebags matches at Henson Park.

Wentworthville Magpies will once again see Brett Cook in charge of the Ron Massey Cup team.

The Hills District Bulls, who will be coached by ex-first grader Michael Withers, have been boosted by the signing of Parramatta Eels forward David Gower.

The 35-year-old played more than 121 NRL matches for Wests Tigers, St George Illawarra, Manly and Parramatta between 2009 and 2020.

The Ron Massey Cup will be part of the Central Division of the Presidents Cup with Newcastle/Central Coast forming the North Division and Illawarra/South Coast the South Division.

The winners of the three competitions and a wild card (best placed loser) will do battle in the semi-finals of the Presidents

Cup. The winners will then advance to the final on September 26.

## SYDNEY SHIELD

The Sydney Shield competition will only feature 10 teams in 2021, down from the 14 that participated in the opening round last season before Covid-19 put a stop to proceedings.

Asquith, Guildford, Blacktown Workers and Sydney University will all be missing from the competition that commenced the season last year thus leaving Belrose, Cabramatta, East Campbelltown, Hills District, Moorebank, Penrith Brothers, Ryde-Eastwood, St Marys, Windsor and Wentworthville to fight it out.

Helensburgh are returning to the Illawarra competition after playing in the revamped and shortened Sydney Shield competition while 2020 Sydney Shield premiers Cronulla-Caringbah will play in the Sharks junior league.

Cronulla-Caringbah at one point were set to play in the Cronulla-Caringbah and even act as a feeder club for Ron Massey Cup side Glebe-Burwood.

They also looked at being part of the Illawarra Rugby League competition to make it an even six-teams.

East Campbelltown will once again be coached by Richard Barnes but have lost key players in Mason Talolua and Shannon Gallant to retirement.

Former Wests NSW Cup player Luke Williams has returned to the club while Jesse Lacey has joined the club from Penrith Brothers.

Brothers will once again be coached by Jake Foster and are set to have a feeder relation with Blacktown Workers. Both sides have committed for three years which will allow Brothers players a pathway to the Ron Massey Cup, NSW Cup and NRL.

Wentworthville United have a new coach for the Sydney Shield with Glenn Jones taking over from James Boustani.

The Hills District Bulls will be coached by Gary Burgess while the Belrose Eagles will once again see John Ahkam back in charge.

The Sydney Shield will feature 18 rounds with a full home and away system. There will be a top-five finals series with the grand final on September 4/5.

**New rules will apply in both the Ron Massey Cup and Sydney Shield competitions in 2021.**

The main one will be the six again rule that was implemented in the NRL last season.

Field goals kicked successfully from behind the 40-metre line will count as two points, the same will apply in the NRL.

## DID YOU KNOW ?

The smallest man ever to play first-grade was George McGowan. He played eight seasons between 1915 and 1922 for Eastern Suburbs, South Sydney and Western Suburbs. He weighed just 7 stone 7 pounds in the old Imperial measure (the equivalent of just 47.6kg).



Newtown's Braydon Trindall gets a kick away during the 2019 grand final against Wentworthville.  
Photos: John Bonanno

# NSW CUP PREVIEW 2021



The NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) have announced 11 teams will be involved in the state's premier Rugby League competition, the NSW Cup for the 2021 season, including the Canberra Raiders under their own logo for the first time in 14 years.

The competition was cancelled after the opening round in 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic which had an impact on sporting competitions across the globe.

The teams involved this season include Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles, Canberra Raiders, Mounties, Newcastle Knights, Newtown Jets, North Sydney Bears, Parramatta Eels, Penrith Panthers, South Sydney Rabbitohs, St George Illawarra Dragons and the Western Suburbs Magpies.

"The NSW Cup is a competition steeped in history and has thrown up plenty of memorable moments over the years," NSWRL Chief Executive David Trodden said.

"It's great to see the competition return in 2021. I'm sure the players are all looking forward to it and will be ready to go from the opening game."

It is the first time Canberra has returned to the NSW Cup under the Raiders logo since 2007 having previously been aligned with Mounties. Canterbury-Bankstown have played under the Bulldogs logo in the NSW

Cup but will now align with Mounties.

The move to the NSW Cup will see the Raiders drop out of the Jersey Flegg (Under 21s) competition for the 2021 season, with a view to possibly re-entering a team at this level in 2022.

The Raiders NSW Cup squad will be made up of a mixture of NRL squad members and players who have been training for the Raiders Jersey Flegg Cup team so far this pre-season.

Jersey Flegg Coach Peter Marapodi will also step up to the role of Raiders NSW Cup Coach.

The Raiders will still field teams in the SG Ball (Under 19s), Harold Matthews Cup (Under 17s) and the Tarsha Gale Cup (Women's under 18s) in 2021.

The NSWRL has already announced it is looking at ways for players to move freely between the NRL and the NSW Cup this season including regular COVID-19 tests. The draw for the NSW Cup is yet to be finalised but the opening round has been scheduled for 13 March.

West's Magpies will have former New Zealand Kiwis Assistant Coach Ben Gardiner as head coach.

Gardiner has featured as the assistant to West's Tigers Head Coach Michael Maguire in the New Zealand national side having also previously worked alongside Maguire as an

NRL Assistant Coach in South Sydney's 2014 NRL Premiership victory.

Gardiner joins the club with a vast array of coaching experience having held numerous roles within the Sydney Roosters, South Sydney Rabbitohs, Cronulla Sharks, North Sydney Bears, New Zealand Maori, City Origin and New South Wales U/20's sides.

The Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles have appointed two-time premiership-winning Manly Warringah Sea Eagles hooker Matt Ballin as their head coach.

The 36-year-old has 220 NRL games to his name and rediscovered his roots at Manly in 2018 when he became part of the Wellbeing and Education team. Manly coach Des Hasler coached Ballin in 2008 and 2011 when the Sea Eagles claimed two premierships.

Ballin was appointed as the Sea Eagles' Jersey Flegg coach in 2019 and also assisted Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles coach Steven Hales. After the NSW Cup season was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ballin is keen to get things back on track for the upcoming season.

Former Raiders and Bulldogs Assistant Coach and Mounties Head Coach, Steve Antonelli, will be joining the Rabbitohs as Head Coach of the NSW Cup squad for Season

2021.

Antonelli brings with him vast experience in coaching at the NSW Cup and Pathways level, as well as recently being part of the Bulldogs' and Raiders' NRL coaching teams as an NRL Assistant Coach.

Antonelli has been involved in Rugby League for over 35 years as a player and coach. He coached Mounties, the feeder club to the Canberra Raiders, in the NSW Cup between 2013 and 2017, winning two minor premierships, as well as being part of Ricky Stuart's NRL coaching team as an Assistant Coach at the Raiders between 2014 and 2017.

In 2018, he moved to the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs with Head Coach Dean Pay to take up a Senior Assistant Coaching role at Belmore, spending three years with the Bulldogs' NRL set up.

The North Sydney Bears will once again have Jason Taylor in charge as they enter their 114th year of existence.

The Bears were involved in the Presidents Cup last season after Covid-19 put a stop to the Canterbury Cup.

Norths finished third on the competition table but were beaten in the semi-finals.

North Sydney Bears have announced Pat Weisner as the new Head of Recruitment and Canterbury Cup assistant coach.

Weisner coached Asquith Magpies for the past three years after being in charge of the Blacktown Workers NSW Cup team in 2016.

The Newtown Jets will continue with the popular Greg Matterson as their coach.

Matterson, who is 60 years old this year, has been in charge of the Bluebags since the NSW Cup was established in 2018.

He has been in charge of close to 300 matches and steered Newtown to premiership success in 2012 and 2019.

Former Penrith player Peter Wallace will be in charge of the Panthers and they will continue their feeder relationship with the St Marys club.

Parramatta will continue with Ryan

Carr as their head coach and are expected to play most of their home matches at Bankwest Stadium.

Andrew Ryan is the new coach at the Knights after having a successful season with local club South Newcastle last season.

The former Parramatta and Canterbury NRL player will also take up the NRL Development Coach position as well as assisting Matthew Morris in delivering the Club's Well-being program.

Ex-Cronulla and Melbourne Storm NRL player Russell Aitken is coaching the St George Illawarra Dragons this season.

**The NSWRL launched the NSWRL TV which saw Rugby League fans across the state treated to a live stream of all the action.**

The dedicated channel for all NSWRL matches and content will be housed on the NSWRL Facebook page and will live stream games which commenced with the opening round of Junior Representatives on 6 February.

The competitions to be live streamed include the Harold Matthews Cup, Andrew Johns Cup, SG Ball Cup, Harvey Norman Tarsha Gale Cup, Laurie Daley Cup, Harvey Norman NSW Women's Premiership, NSW Cup as well as Group competitions in regional NSW.

The NSWRL trialled live streaming games in 2020 to provide another service to NSW Rugby League fans when the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the number of people who could attend matches.

The results were strong with 45,000 fans tuning in on average for the Presidents Cup competition in 2020, a unique competition involving teams from regional NSW and the Sydney metropolitan area.

One of the most popular live streams saw 85,000 viewers tune in for the Group 9 Preliminary Final between the Tumut Blues and Young Cherrypickers which reflects the appetite for all NSWRL competitions.

Fans are able to catch all the action this season on <https://www.facebook.com/NSWRL>



Mounties, feeder club for Canterbury in 2021.



# QUEENSLAND INTRUST SUPER CUP

## BURLEIGH BEARS

**Coach:** Rick Stone  
**Colours:** Maroon and white  
**Home ground:** Pizze Park  
**Joined comp:** 1997



**History:** 1997 - 5th, 1998 - 8th, 1999 - 1st, 2000 - 4th, 2001 - 3rd, 2002 - 5th, 2003 - 2nd, 2004 - 1st, 2005 - 2nd, 2006 - 6th, 2007 - 7th, 2008 - 6th, 2009 - 7th, 2010 - 7th, 2011 - 7th, 2012 - 9th, 2013 - 11th, 2014 - 7th, 2015 - 9th, 2016 - 1st, 2017 - 9th, 2018 - 3rd, 2019 - 1st.

## CENTRAL QLD CAPRAS

**Coach:** Guy Williams  
**Colours:** Navy blue and white  
**Home ground:** Browne Park, Rockhampton  
**Joined comp:** 1996



**History:** 1996 - 11th, 1997 - 6th, 1998 - 11th, 1999 - 11th, 2000 - 8th, 2001 - 7th, 2002 - 9th, 2003 - 10th, 2004 - 9th, 2005 - 11th, 2006 - 9th, 2007 - 11th, 2008 - 10th, 2009 - equal 3rd, 2010 - 10th, 2011 - 11th, 2012 - 10th, 2013 - 10th, 2014 - 12th, 2015 - 14th (Last), 2016 - 12th, 2017 - 14th (Last), 2018 - 13th, 2019 - 14th (Last).



## BRISBANE TIGERS

**Coach:** Terry Matterson  
**Colours:** Black and gold  
**Home ground:** Langlands Park  
**Joined comp:** 1996

**History:** 1996 - 5th, 1997 - 2nd, 1998 - 9th, 1999 - 5th, 2000 - 3rd, 2001 - 4th, 2002 - 4th, 2003 - 9th, 2004 - 2nd, 2005 - 8th, 2006 - 3rd, 2007 - 5th, 2008 - 7th, 2009 - 9th, 2010 - 11th, 2011 - 8th, 2012 - 6th, 2013 - 2nd, 2014 - 2nd, 2015 - 4th, 2016 - 6th, 2017 - 3rd, 2018 - 2nd, 2019 - 8th (semi-finals)



## IPSWICH JETS

**Coaches:** Keiron Lander  
**Colours:** Green, white and gold  
**Home ground:** North Ipswich Reserve  
**Joined comp:** 1996

**History:** 1996 - 16th, 1997 - 13th, 1998 - 13th, 1999 - 10th, 2000 - 6th, 2001 - 8th, 2002 - 2nd, 2003 - 4th, 2004 - 10th, 2005 - 9th, 2006 - 11th, 2007 - 4th, 2008 - 2nd, 2009 - 8th, 2010 - 12th, 2011 - Equal 5th, 2012 - 4th, 2013 - 4th, 2014 - 4th, 2015 - 1st, 2016 - 9th, 2017 - 7th, 2018 - 4th, 2019 - 9th.

## MACKAY CUTTERS

**Coach:** Michael Crawley  
**Colours:** Maroon, blue and white.  
**Home ground:** Mackay Stadium  
**Joined comp:** 2008



**History:** 2008 - 9th, 2009 - 12th, 2010 - Equal third, 2011 - 9th, 2012 - 8th, 2013 - 1st, 2014 - 9th, 2015 - 8th, 2016 - 14th (last), 2017 - 8th, 2018 - 14th (last), 2019 - 11th.

## NORTHERN PRIDE

**Coach:** Ty Williams  
**Colours:** Teal and gold  
**Home ground:** Barlow Park, Cairns  
**Joined comp:** 2008



**History:** 2008 - 3rd, 2009 - 2nd, 2010 - 1st, 2011 - Equal third, 2012 - 7th, 2013 - 3rd, 2014 - 1st, 2015 - 6th, 2016 - 8th, 2017 - 12th, 2018 - 6th, 2019 - 12th.

## NORTHS DEVILS

**Coach:** Rohan Smith  
**Colours:** Sky blue, navy blue and gold  
**Home ground:** Bishop Park  
**Joined comp:** 1996



**History:** 1996 - 9th, 1997 - 7th, 1998 - 1st, 1999 - 3rd, 2000 - 5th, 2001 - 5th, 2002 - 3rd, 2003 - 8th, 2004 - 4th, 2005 - 4th, 2006 - 7th, 2007 - 8th, 2008 - 11th, 2009 - 5th, 2010 - 2nd, 2011 - 10th, 2012 - 5th, 2013 - 6th, 2014 - 8th, 2015 - 13th, 2016 - 11th, 2017 - 11th, 2018 - 8th, 2019 - 5th.

## PNG HUNTERS

**Coach:** Matt Church  
**Colours:** Red, yellow and black.  
**Home ground:** National Stadium, Port Moresby.  
**Joined comp:** 2014  
**History:** 2014 - 6th, 2015 - 3rd, 2016 - 5th, 2017 - 1st, 2018 - 7th, 2019 - 13th.



## REDCLIFFE DOLPHINS

**Coach:** Adam Mogg  
**Colours:** Red and white  
**Home ground:** Dolphin Oval  
**Joined comp:** 1996  
**History:** 1996 - 2nd, 1997 - 1st, 1998 - 3rd, 1999 - 2nd, 2000 - 1st, 2001 - 2nd, 2002 - 1st,



2003 - 1st, 2004 - 6th, 2005 - 3rd, 2006 - 1st, 2007 - 2nd, 2008 - 4th, 2009 - 11th, 2010 - 8th, 2011 - Equal third, 2012 - 2nd, 2013 - 7th, 2014 - 11th, 2015 - 7th, 2016 - 2nd, 2017 - 3rd, 2018 - 1st, 2019 - 7th (Semi-finals)

## SOUTHS LOGAN MAGPIES

**Coach:** Steven Bretherton  
**Colours:** Black and white  
**Home ground:** Davies Park  
**Joined comp:** 2003



**History:** 2003 - 11th, 2004 - 11th, 2005 - 10th, 2006 - 10th, 2007 - 10th, 2008 - 1st, 2009 - Equal 3rd, 2010 - Equal 3rd, 2011 - Equal 5th, 2012 - 12th (last), 2013 - 9th, 2014 - 10th, 2015 - 11th, 2016 - 7th, 2017 - 5th, 2018 - 9th, 2019 - 10th.

## SUNSHINE COAST FALCONS

**Coach:** Sam Mawhinney  
**Colours:** Yellow, black and white  
**Home ground:** Sunshine Coast Stadium  
**Joined comp:** 2009



**History:** 2009 - 1st, 2010 - Equal 5th, 2011 - 12th, 2012 - 11th, 2013 - 12th (last), 2014 - 13th (last), 2015 - 12th, 2016 - 3rd, 2017 - 2nd, 2018 - 10th, 2019 - Equal 3rd.

## TWEED SEAGULLS

**Coach:** Ben Woolf  
**Colours:** Black and white  
**Home ground:** Piggabeen Sports Complex  
**Joined comp:** 2003



**History:** 2003 - 5th, 2004 - 8th, 2005 - 7th, 2006 - 5th, 2007 - 1st, 2008 - 8th, 2009 - 6th, 2010 - 9th, 2011 - 2nd, 2012 - 1st, 2013 - 8th, 2014 - 5th, 2015 - 10th, 2016 - 13th, 2017 - 13th, 2018 - 11th, 2019 - 6th.

## WYNNUM MANLY SEAGULLS

**Coach:** Adam Brideson  
**Colours:** Red and green  
**Home ground:** Kougari Oval  
**Joined comp:** 1996



**History:** 1996 - 8th, 1997 - 4th, 1998 - 6th, 1999 - 9th, 2000 - 11th, 2001 - 6th, 2002 - 8th, 2003 - 3rd, 2004 - 3rd, 2005 - 6th, 2006 - 9th, 2007 - 9th, 2008 - 5th, 2009 - 10th, 2010 - Equal 5th, 2011 - 1st, 2012 - 1st, 2013 - 5th, 2014 - 3rd, 2015 - 5th, 2016 - 10th, 2017 - 10th, 2018 - 12th, 2019 - 2nd.

## TOWNSVILLE BLACKHAWKS

**Coach:** Aaron Payne  
**Colours:** Black and green  
**Home ground:** Jack Manski Oval  
**Joined comp:** 2015  
**History:** 2015 - 2nd, 2016 - 4th, 2017 - 6th, 2018 - 5th, 2019 - Equal 3rd.



## INTRUST CUP PREMIERS

1996: Toowoomba Clydesdales  
1997: Redcliffe Dolphins  
1998: Norths Devils  
1999: Burleigh Bears  
2000: Redcliffe Dolphins  
2001: Toowoomba Clydesdales  
2002: Redcliffe Dolphins  
2003: Redcliffe Dolphins  
2004: Burleigh Bears  
2005: North Queensland Young Guns  
2006: Redcliffe Dolphins  
2007: Tweed Heads Seagulls  
2008: Souths Logan Magpies  
2009: Sunshine Coast Sea Eagles  
2010: Northern Pride  
2011: Wynnum Manly  
2012: Wynnum Manly  
2013: Mackay Cutters  
2014: Northern Pride  
2015: Ipswich Jets  
2016: Burleigh Bears  
2017: PNG Hunters  
2018: Redcliffe Dolphins  
2019: Burleigh Bears  
2020: Not staged due to covid

**Most premierships:** Redcliffe 6, Burleigh Bears 4, Toowoomba 2, Northern Pride 2, Wynnum Manly 2.

**Former Newcastle Knights halfback Jarrod Mullen has moved a step closer to playing again in the NRL after signing a deal with the Sunshine Coast Falcons in the Queensland Cup.**

The 33-year-old has been banned from all competitive forms of the sport since testing positive to anabolic steroids in 2017.

With his four-year ban expiring last month,



Mullen signed a one-year deal with the Falcons who are a feeder side for current reigning NRL premiers the Melbourne Storm.

Mullen avoided jail time and was instead sentenced to 300 hours of community service.

Mullen played 211 NRL games over 12 seasons for the Knights after making his first-grade debut as a teenager in 2005.

He made one appearance for the NSW Blues in the 2007 interstate series against the Queensland Maroons.

The Melbourne Storm will align players with both Sunshine Coast and the newly named Brisbane Tigers (formerly Easts).

The North Qld Cowboys have announced that they will allocate players not involved with the NRL outfit evenly to Townsville Blackhawks, Mackay Cutters and Northern Pride.

**Adam Mogg returns as head coach of the Redcliffe Dolphins and has added some highly experienced names to assist him in the coaching staff.**

Former international Scott Hill is joined by fellow former Kangaroo and Queensland Maroons star Justin Hodges, who returned to the playing field with Albany Creek Crushers in 2020.

Two players from Canberra Raiders have moved north, with Jarrett Subloo and Daniel Keir joining the club.

**Brisbane Tigers have signed experienced halfback Darren Nicholls for the 2021 Intrust Super Cup season.**

Nicholls made his NRL debut with St George Illawarra Dragons in 2018 and has also represented both the Queensland and New South Wales representative residents teams during his career.

**The Intrust Super Cup, after an unprecedented hiatus due to the public health emergency, will commence on March 20, with six 'Super Saturday' matches to welcome in the new season.**

The QRL has been able to maintain its statewide and international footprint, with all 14 clubs who commenced the 2020 season before its suspension already back in training for the new year.

This includes the Papua New Guinea Hunters, who will be based in Queensland for the duration of the competition.

They will open the season with a 'home' match against Wynnum-Manly but the venue was still to be confirmed at the time of printing.

Sunshine Coast will host Northern Pride, Tweed Seagulls entertain Central Capras while Ipswich will welcome Townsville Blackhawks to their ground. Mackay play Redcliffe, Tigers are at home to Norths and Souths Logan meet Burleigh at Pizze Park.

The 2021 Intrust Super Cup season will be played over 19 rounds (with a split round in Round 8). The top eight clubs will contest the finals series throughout September in a battle to win through to the grand final at Dolphin Stadium on Sunday, September 26.

The premiership winner will take on the best from the NSWRL Canterbury Cup the following weekend.

Once again, the QRL and clubs have worked collaboratively to adopt a community-focused approach to the new season.

Examples of this include the following themed rounds and initiatives: Rivalry Round (Round 4 and Round 13), BHP Indigenous Round (Round 8 played over two weekends), 'Get in the Game' Country Week (Round 14) and Turn to Me Round (Round 19).





Photos: Bryden Sharp

# JUNIOR REPS



Manly SG Ball Cup centre James Malauulu takes on the Parramatta defence.  
(Left) Parramatta Harold Matthews Cup winger Josh Lealaialoto takes the ball up towards Manly's Mitchell Taotua.



## HAROLD MATTHEWS CUP (Under 17s)

Manly came from 14-6 down with 10 minutes remaining to beat Parramatta 22-14 in the opening round match played at Cabramatta's New Era Stadium.

The scores were locked at 6-all at half-time before a try and two goals from Ethan Sanders saw the Eels in control.

But tries from Latu Fainu, Josh Feledy and Lehi Hopoate saw the Sea Eagles snatch the two competition points.

Western Suburbs scored two tries in three minutes late in the game from Jordan Miller and Solomon Saukuru to beat North Sydney 24-18 at Kirkham Oval in Camden.

A late try from Brent Hawkins gave Sydney Roosters the win over Canterbury 12-6 at Belmore Sports Ground.

Osca Catton scored two tries for the Cronulla Sharks to defeat Canberra 28-4 at Bruce Oval after they led 10-4 at the interval.

The Central Coast Roosters were too strong for Balmain 38-16 with Noah Goodman and Kalem Surya each scoring two tries.

Newcastle got the points against St George, winning 24-12 after they led 12-0 at the half-time break.

**Round 1 (February 6):** Manly d. Parramatta 22-14, Western Suburbs d. North Sydney 24-18, Sydney Roosters d. Canterbury 12-6, Newcastle d. St George 24-12, Penrith d. South Sydney 28-4, Central Coast d. Balmain 38-16, Cronulla d. Canberra 28-4. Illawarra bye.

## SG BALL CUP (Under 19s)

Western Suburbs had no trouble in thrashing North Sydney 38-4 at Kirkham Oval after they led 20-0 at the break.

Tries from Justin Matamua, Kitone Kautoga, Alex Soakai and Lomi Saukuru saw the Magpies lead 20-0 after the completion of the first

half.

Zane Camroux scored a personal tally of 16 points from a try and six goals as Newcastle outclassed St George 44-6 at Mascot Oval.

The Balmain Tigers and Victoria Thunderbolts drew 28-all at Leichhardt Oval while two late tries from Paul Alamoti saw Canterbury defeat Sydney Roosters 24-16 at Belmore Sports Ground.

A late try from Jayden Clarkson, converted by Sione Moala saw Canberra edge out Cronulla 28-24.

South Sydney winger Evan Manning scored three tries to help his side defeat Penrith 32-20 at Panthers Stadium.

Two tries from Jamie Humphreys in the 60th and 66th minute, both converted by the try scorer himself, saw Manly beat Parramatta 30-20 at New Era Stadium.

**Round 1 (February 6):** Manly d. Parramatta 30-20, Western Suburbs d. North Sydney 38-4, Canterbury d. Sydney Roosters 24-16, Newcastle d. St George Illawarra 44-6, South Sydney d. Penrith 32-20, Balmain drew with Victoria Thunderbolts 28-all, Canberra d. Cronulla 28-24. Illawarra bye.

## ANDREW JOHNS CUP (Under 16s)

**Round 1 (February 6-7):** Monaro Colts d. Riverina 18-6, North Coast Bulldogs d. Northern Tigers 28-12, Central Coast d. Newcastle/Maitland Region 8-4, Macarthur Wests Tigers d. Northern Rivers Titans 22-4,

## LAURIE DALEY CUP (Under 18s)

**Round 1 (February 6-7):** Monaro Colts d. Riverina Bulls 34-14, Northern Tigers d. North Coast Bulldogs 30-22, Central Coast Roosters d. Newcastle/Maitland Region 24-4, Northern Rivers d. Macarthur Wests Tigers 30-12,

## TARSHA GALE CUP

**Round 1 (February 6):** Sydney Roosters Indigenous Academy d. Canterbury 42-0, Newcastle d. St George 10-4, Wests Tigers d. Parramatta 22-12, Cronulla d. Canberra 16-12. Illawarra bye.

**Competition points:** Sydney Roosters Indigenous Academy 2, Wests Tigers 2, Newcastle Knights 2, Cronulla Sharks 2, Illawarra Steelers 2, Canberra Raiders 0, St George Dragons 0, Parramatta Eels 0, Canterbury Bulldogs 0.



Photos Steve Montgomery

## HAROLD MATTHEWS CUP COMPETITION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	PTS
Cronulla	1	1	0	0	0	28	4	2
Penrith	1	1	0	0	0	28	4	2
Central Coast	1	1	0	0	0	38	16	2
Newcastle	1	1	0	0	0	24	12	2
Manly	1	1	0	0	0	22	14	2
Syd Roosters	1	1	0	0	0	12	6	2
Wests	1	1	0	0	0	24	18	2
Illawarra	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
North Sydney	1	0	0	1	0	18	24	0
Canterbury	1	0	0	1	0	6	12	0
Parramatta	1	0	0	1	0	14	22	0
St George	1	0	0	1	0	12	24	0
Balmain	1	0	0	1	0	16	38	0
South Sydney	1	0	0	1	0	4	28	0
Canberra	1	0	0	1	0	4	28	0



Cronulla's Lachlan Crossle tries to evade the Canberra defence in the Harold Matthews Cup.

## SG BALL CUP COMPETITION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	PTS
Newcastle	1	1	0	0	0	44	6	2
Wests	1	1	0	0	0	38	4	2
South Sydney	1	1	0	0	0	32	20	2
Manly	1	1	0	0	0	30	20	2
Canterbury	1	1	0	0	0	24	16	2
Canberra	1	1	0	0	0	28	24	2
Illawarra	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Balmain	1	0	1	0	0	28	28	1
Victoria	1	0	1	0	0	28	28	1
Cronulla	1	0	0	1	0	24	28	0
Syd Roosters	1	0	0	1	0	16	24	0
Parramatta	1	0	0	1	0	20	30	0
Penrith	1	0	0	1	0	20	32	0
North Sydney	1	0	0	1	0	4	38	0
St George	1	0	0	1	0	6	44	0



# CARD HEROES / RETRO RUGBY LEAGUE

## FOOTY CARD Heroes

### PAUL BEAUCHAMP

#### (1979 Scanlens Rugby League Card)

BY TERRY LIBEROPOULOS

He only played seven first grade matches for South Sydney in 1979 but Paul Beauchamp managed to get himself on the popular Scanlens Rugby League card.

A key signing at the start of that season from Brisbane, Beauchamp was chosen as one of the 13 players to be on the cards. Others included the likes of Darrell Bampton, Terry Fahey, Paul Sait, Robert Laurie and Charlie Frith.

"They just decided to throw me on the card. We were training early on in the season and they turned up to take some photos of us," said Beauchamp, now 63 years of age.

"I still get people ringing me out of the blue and asking me if I can sign the footy card."

Beauchamp grew up in Toowoomba and began playing Rugby League in Grade 3 for Holy Name Principal School.

His older brother Ron represented Queensland at senior level in five matches against New South Wales between 1969 and 1971.

Paul began playing Rugby League for the Toowoomba All Whites (these days called Brothers) in 1970 and was one of the first players to play for the club.

"There wasn't a junior Rugby League competition until 1970 with the formation of an Under 10s, 12s and 14s competition," said Beauchamp.

"It was only from Under 16s before that and if you wanted to play Rugby League under that age, it was through your school."

In 1975, Beauchamp moved to Brisbane to work at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

"Even though my brother was playing for Brothers in Brisbane, I only joined up because a mate of mine was at the club," said Beauchamp.

"I lived on the other side of Brisbane so it took a while to get to Grange on the north side where Brothers were based."

He played in the lower grades as centre at Brothers in 1975 before making his top grade debut the following year under the coaching of John Lohman.

"I didn't find the competition in Brisbane that much different. Toowoomba was very strong back then," said Beauchamp.

"So for me, I was able to fit into the competition quite easily."

Beauchamp represented Brisbane against Central Queensland and the touring French side in 1977 as well as against New Zealand in 1978. That same year, he also captained Brothers.

In 1978, Beauchamp was one of two Brisbane players to be part of

Rugby League New Faces. He went on the show and ending up winning with his rendition of Cat Stevens' 'Longer Boats'.

"The other Brisbane guy sang better than me but because it took seven hours to film and there was plenty of free alcohol, he was that drunk by the time it was his turn to sing," said Beauchamp.

"I won a trip to travel to England and France to watch the 1978 Kangaroos but I just ended up travelling all over Europe and didn't watch one game."

His form saw him catch the eye of South Sydney and he signed a \$10,000 deal to go to Sydney to play under Jack Gibson at Redfern.

Beauchamp had also started working in the insurance industry with National Mutual and got a transfer to their Bondi Junction branch.

He played in all three pre-season matches before making his premiership debut in the opening round of the 1979 season against Newtown at Redfern Oval.

"I was petrified. I had to mark Ted Goodwin and I remember everything was so fast," recalled Beauchamp.

"It was much quicker, they were bigger. Everyone was talented and there weren't any weak links."

The Rabbitohs ended up losing 7-6 against the Jets and Beauchamp was dropped.

"Jack (Gibson) wanted to take the ball up from dummy-half. We just wanted you to cover ground and also make a tackle after a tackle. I was too busy running back into the line," said Beauchamp.

"I was used to racing back into the defensive line when I was playing in Brisbane. But Jack didn't want me to do that."

After playing reserve grade, Beauchamp rang Gibson and asked him why Souths brought him all the way down from Brisbane to play second grade.

Beauchamp was recalled and he scored what turned out to be his only try for the Bunnies when they beat Western Suburbs 16-14 at Lidcombe Oval.

Beauchamp is a teetotaler and when he went out to celebrate with his team-mates at the bar, he preferred milk to beer.

"I remember asking for a glass of milk and was told they don't serve milk. Rocky (Laurie) asked the barman if he has Tia Maria and milk and he said sure. He said I will have one of those without the Tia Maria," said Beauchamp.

He played in the first grade against Penrith (Round 16), Cronulla (Round 17) and Parramatta (Round 20).

By the end of the season, Beauchamp only played seven first grade matches while 18 games were



in reserve grade. South Sydney decided not to take up the second year option.

"In hindsight, I should have been concentrating full-time on football. I did let myself down," said Beauchamp.

"I was on commission as an insurance agent and all my time was spent on trying to make the sales."

"Jack got the sack from Souths and he recommended me to Newtown and their secretary Frank Farnington offered me a contract."

But Beauchamp decided to head back to Brisbane after Brothers rang him up about re-joining them.

He played under coach Wayne Bennett in 1980-81-82 but a number of injuries saw him miss plenty of action. A knee injury in 1981 meant he missed the entire season.

"I wanted to play with Wally Lewis at Valleys but they said they had no money to pay me. I told them I would play for free," said Beauchamp.

"But I injured my other knee and hardly played that year. I went back to Brothers because I didn't want to finish my Rugby League career like this."

Under coach Tom Raudonikis, he finished his playing career at the end of the 1984 season and retired at the age of 27.

Aside from coaching his son for a couple of seasons at Brothers, Beauchamp then concentrated on his business.

He became a director at Templeton's in 1985, he went into partnership with Diarmid Mackieham in 1993. He merged his business with his friend Garry Moore in 2005 to form Beauchamp Moore Financial Services.

Since 2014, he has been Managing Director at Beaulife Group - who are Insurance advisors and Financial Planners.

Beauchamp, who has six children and nine grandchildren (with one on the way!), spends his time with his lovely partner Rocio.

"I loved the game, I was an average player but made some good friends out of it. I'm best friends with Rod McGregor," said Beauchamp.

"We only spent the one year together at South Sydney but we have remained friends ever since."

#### PICTURED:

Left: With South Sydney in 1979 under coach Jack Gibson.

Below: Paul Beauchamp today.



## RETRO MAGAZINE

### RUGBY LEAGUE: The greatest game of all

After the demise of the popular EE Christensen Yearbook in 1978, journalist Malcolm Andrews produced a magazine-style encyclopedia called 'Rugby League - The Greatest Game of All'.

The first edition was published in 1980 and new updated editions were printed in 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Containing almost 150 pages, the magazine was filled with plenty of information on clubs, players, touring sides, Test results and statistics.

Every year, an update on the previous would be included. That would include all the Test matches played with match reports, team lists and scorers.

That included Test matches from around the world played by Great Britain, France, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

State of Origin and interstate matches were also recorded as well as the Australian season.

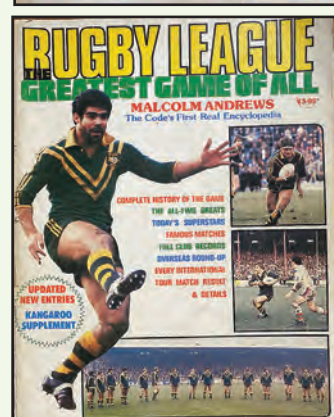
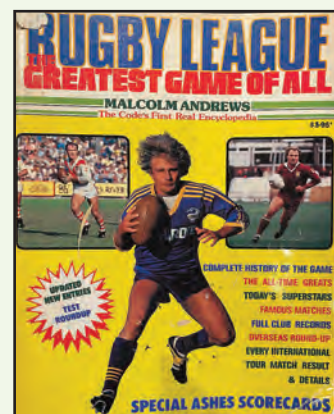
The Sydney premiership was recorded in details with competition tables, finals matches, mid-week cup and individual awards.

NSW Country, Qld Country and Brisbane competitions were also included.

A world round-up was also one of the additions which included the local competition tables in England and France.

It was produced by Horwitz Gra-hame Books but after the 1984 edition, it wasn't produced again.

Andrews did produce a book form of the magazine in 1992 and again in 1995.



## JERSEYS THROUGH THE YEARS Canberra Raiders



1982



1989



1997



2010





# THE STATMAN

WITH IAN COLLIS

THE ONE CLUB PLAYERS

With the one club career player slowly disappearing from the Rugby League landscape it's interesting if we take a look which players have played for the most clubs.

For eight decades from 1908 to the 1980's the majority of players were one club players, but as the game has evolved into the current model we have seen a seismic shift.

The sport has developed into much more of a business with instant success chased by all clubs, made even more complicated by manoeuvring by player managers who are more than happy to see their clients regularly shopped around to chase a better deal.

However with all the player movement we now witness both during the actual season and at season end as we head into the 115th season which one has played for the most clubs? And as you can see below they comprise players only from the 1980's onwards.

SEVEN CLUBS

**Blake Green 2007-2020** (Parramatta, Cronulla, Canterbury, Melbourne, Manly, Warriors, Newcastle).

**Tyran Smith 1993-2005** (South Sydney, Hunter Mariners, Nth Qld, Warriors, Balmain, Wests Tigers, Canberra).

**Darren Doherty 1990-2000** (Penrith, Western Suburbs, Canterbury, Illawarra, Hunter Mariners, Adelaide, Nth Qld).

SIX CLUBS

**Phil Blake 1982-1997** (Manly, South Sydney, North Sydney, Canberra, St George, Warriors).

**Scott Wilson 1988-1998** (South Sydney, North Sydney, Canterbury, Gold Coast, Western Reds, Nth Qld).

**Richard Fa'aooso 2004-2015** (Penrith, Sydney Roosters, Parramatta, Newcastle, Melbourne, Manly).

**John Carlaw 1997-2004** (Hunter Mariners, Melbourne, Balmain, Wests Tigers, Warriors, St George Illawarra).

**Dale Shearer 1985-1998** (Manly, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sth Qld, Sydney Roosters, Nth Qld).

**Graham Mackay 1988-1999** (Western Suburbs, Penrith, Sydney Roosters, Sth Qld, Gold Coast, Manly).

**Chris Walker 1999-2011** (Brisbane, South Sydney, Sydney Roosters, Melbourne, Gold Coast, Parramatta).

**Kevin Campion 1993-2004** (Gold Coast, St George, Adelaide, Brisbane, Warriors, Nth Qld).

**Adam Peek 1997-2008** (Adelaide, Canterbury, South Sydney, Parramatta, St George Illawarra, Cronulla).

**John Elias 1983-1994** (Newtown, South Sydney, Western Suburbs, Canterbury, Sydney Roosters, Balmain).

**Brett Kimmorley 1995-2010** (Newcastle, Hunter Mariners, Melbourne, Northern Eagles, Cronulla, Canterbury).

**Luke MacDougall 2002-2012** (Cronulla, South Sydney, St George Illawarra, Newcastle, Melbourne, Canterbury).

**Craig Stapleton 1998-2010** (St George, St George Illawarra, Parramatta, Penrith, Cronulla, South Sydney).



CAMERON SMITH

As we're about to kick-off a new season and while there is still no news if Cameron Smith plays on this year to prolong his hugely successful career, let's take a look at the current list of top 10 players holding the majority of the individual records.



MOST GAMES

Cameron Smith (2002-2020) - 430 (pictured above)

Cooper Cronk (2004-2019) - 372

Darren Lockyer (1995-2011) - 355

Terry Lamb (1980-1996) - 350

Steve Menzies (1993-2008) - 349

Paul Gallen (2001-2019) - 348

Corey Parker (2001-2016) - 347

Chris Heighington (2003-2018) - 338

Darius Boyd (2006-2020) - 337

Brad Fittler (1989-2004) - 336

John Sutton (2004-2019) - 336

MOST POINTS

Cameron Smith (2002-2020) - 2786

Hazem El Masri (1996-2009) - 2418

Johnathan Thurston (2002-2018) - 2222

Andrew Johns (1993-2007) - 2176

Jarrod Croker (2009-2020) - 2158

Jason Taylor (1990-2001) - 2107

Daryl Halligan (1991-2000) - 2034

Michael Cronin (1977-1986) - 1971

Graham Eadie (1971-1983) - 1917

Eric Simms (1965-1975) - 1841

MOST TRIES

Ken Irvine (1958-1973) - 212 (pictured below)

Billy Slater (2003-2018) - 190

Steve Menzies (1993-2008) - 180

Brett Morris (2006-2020) - 165

Andrew Ettingshausen (1983-2000) - 165

Terry Lamb (1980-1996) - 164

Brett Stewart (2003-2016) - 163

Matt Sing (1993-2006) - 159

Hazem El Masri (1996-2009) - 159

Nathan Merritt (2002-2014) - 154

Michael Jennings (2007-2020) - 154



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# UNSUNG HEROES

TYRAN SMITH

Tyran Smith is one of three players to have played with seven NSWRL/ARL/NRL clubs, the others being Darren Doherty and Blake Green.

Smith made his first grade debut in 1993 while playing for South Sydney. He came off the bench for the game against Manly at the Sydney Football Stadium.

He made his international debut for New Zealand in 1996, scoring a try on debut against Papua New Guinea at Rotorua. It was the first of eight Test matches for the Kiwis.

After 52 matches for the Rabbitohs, Smith linked up with North Qld after signing up with Super League. After nine matches with the Cowboys, he finished the season with the Hunter Mariners.

In 1998, he had a season with Auckland before returning to Sydney to play with the Balmain Tigers. He was part of the Wests Tigers squad in 2000 and played lock in the club's inaugural match, a 24-all draw with the Brisbane Broncos at Campbelltown Stadium.

That year, he played in all three matches for New Zealand Maori in the 2000 World Cup held in the United Kingdom and France. It was the only time to date that the Maori had featured in the World Cup.

After 42 top grade matches with the Tigers, he linked with the Canberra Raiders but retired due to a neck injury in 2006. All up, he played 188 first grade matches.

Following retirement, Smith moved into player management and is now director at Sports Player Management.

His son Reimis Smith has joined Melbourne Storm this year after having played a number of years at the Canterbury Bulldogs.



ROBBIE McCORMACK

Originally from Inverell, McCormack joined the Newcastle Knights when they entered the NSW Rugby League competition in 1998.

He didn't make his first grade debut until round six, when he started at five-eighth for the match against Brisbane at the Newcastle International Sports Centre.

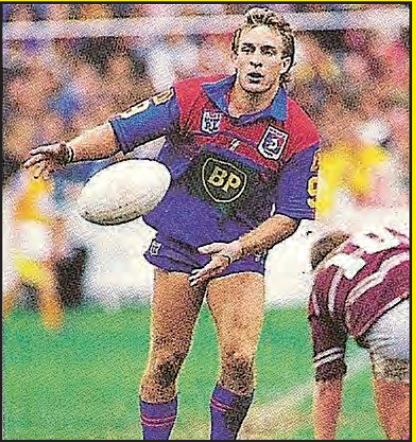
A leg fracture saw McCormack miss most of the 1989 season but he returned the following year, playing mostly in the centres.

It wasn't until his switch to the hooker position in 1992 saw him selected for New South Wales in that same year. He also played another State of Origin in 1993.

With the signing of English international hooker Lee Jackson in 1996, McCormack's top grade appearances were limited and he joined up with the Hunter Mariners in the 1997 Super League competition.

He captained the Mariners in what would be their only season as a club. He steered them to the final of the World Club Challenge, losing 36-12 to the Brisbane Broncos at Ericsson Stadium.

He signed up with English club Wigan for the 1998 season, appearing in 29 out of the 30 matches played. He was hooker for the Challenge Cup, in which Sheffield caused one of the biggest upsets in the history of the tournament to win 17-8 at Wembley Stadium. But he was able to collect a winner's medal after Wigan held off Leeds to win 10-4 in the inaugural Super League grand final played before a crowd of 43,553 at Old Trafford.



SHANE McKELLAR

A Dapto Canaries junior, McKellar joined St George in 1980, making his top grade appearance in the opening round loss to South Sydney. The following week, he scored two tries in the 36-12 win over Penrith at Kogarah Jubilee Oval.

In 1981, he switched to Newtown and came off the bench in the 20-11 grand final loss to Parramatta at Sydney Cricket Ground.

The winger, nick-named the Fox, returned home to be part of the Illawarra Steelers and was part of the historic inaugural side that went down to Penrith 17-7 at the Wollongong Showground.

McKellar played 22 matches for the Steelers in 1982 and 25 the following season before joining Eastern Suburbs in 1984. He retired at the end of the 1985 season.

McKellar was an Illawarra board member from 1997 to 2011 and Illawarra Division chairman from 1998 to 2011. In 2012, McKellar was awarded life membership at the club. He is now retired and living in Harden.



# HISTORY OF CLUB EMBLEMS - SOUTH SYDNEY



1959-1977



1978-2006



2007 -



2007 -







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# WORLD CUP / SERIES 1975

The World Cup moved away from a tournament format to one that was played on a home-and-away basis in both hemispheres.

The World Cup went by a variety of names in 1975 with World Cup, World Series, World Championships and International Championship all used throughout the series that stretched from March until November.

For the first time in the history of the World Cup, there were five nations involved with Great Britain breaking up into England and Wales. They joined France, Australia and New Zealand.

After France, Wales and England staged two matches in March, the teams then travelled Down Under. In one of the most vicious internationals, Wales edged out England 12-7 before just 6000 spectators at Lang Park. It was a crucial loss for England, the loss meant Australia would win the World Cup by one competition point.

England drew with Australia and New Zealand to be sitting in third spot after the first part of the series. The final leg, played in the United Kingdom and France saw England take charge with wins over Wales 22-16, France 48-2, Australia 16-13 and New Zealand 27-12.

But the loss to Wales and the two draws saw England finish on 12 competition points, one behind winners Australia.

The match between Australia and England didn't matter as much as the Aussies had a three-point advantage with each playing their final match. After the English had

beaten Aussies at Wigan, the trophy was handed to Australia. At the start of the competition, the winner would be declared the nation that finished first past the post with no final needed.

The English Rugby Football League weren't happy and quickly issued a challenge at Headingley. England claimed that Australia had failed to beat them in both matches during the campaign (10-all draw at the Sydney Cricket Ground and the 16-13 loss at Central Park).

Australia agreed and after playing a warm-up match against Oldham (winning 20-10) and York (45-4), the match was held in front of just 7727.

Both Australia's Tom Raudonikis and England's Roger Millward were sent off for fighting early in the match. The Aussies then settled down to play some good Rugby League and showed why they are the champions of the world when they emerged victorious 25-0.

The new format was a financial disaster and made a huge loss. In total, there were 20 matches staged compared to the seven games played in the 1972 tournament.

Crowds averaged just 10,245 and that was largely helped by the 25,386 and 33,858 that attended the matches at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

With the amount of travel and accommodation, it failed to pay its way. However, the crowd average was still higher than that of the 1972 World Cup held in France (average of 8992) and the 1970 World Cup in England (average of 9721).



ABOVE: Australia's captain-coach Graeme Langlands is tackled by the Welsh defence at the Sydney Cricket Ground as Paul Sait looks on in the background.  
LEFT: Australia's Mick Cronin tries to escape from the Welsh defence. The other Aussie players in the photo are Lew Platz and Terry Randall.

## 1975 WORLD CUP SCOREBOARD

### MARCH 2

**France 14** (Rene Terrats, Bernard Curt tries; Victor Serrano 3 goals, Jean-Pierre Lacoste, Jean-Marie Imbert field goals) d. **Wales 7** (Frank Wilson try; Kel Coslett 2 goals) at Toulouse. Crowd: 7563. Referee: Fred Lindop (England).

### MARCH 16

**England 20** (Keith Fielding 2, Roger Millward, Mick Morgan tries; Phil Jackson 4 goals) d. **France 2** (Victor Serrano goal) at Headingley, Leeds. Crowd: 10,842. Referee: Keith Page (Australia). Page was replaced by Harry Hunt (England) after 25 minutes due to illness.

### JUNE 1

**Australia 36** (Mick Cronin 2, Graeme Langlands 2, Bob Fulton, Lew Platz, Terry Randall, Branighan tries; Cronin 6 goals) d. **New Zealand 8** (Ken Stirling, John Whittaker tries; Warren Collicot goal) at Lang Park, Brisbane. Crowd: 10,000. Referee: Francois Escande (France).

### JUNE 10

**Wales 12** (Clive Sullivan, David Treasure tries; David Watkins 3 goals) d. **England 7** (Tommy Martyn try; George Fairbairn 2 goals) at Lang Park, Brisbane. Crowd: 6000. Referee: Don Lancashire (Australia).

### JUNE 14

**Australia 30** (Mark Harris, Graeme Langlands, Tom Raudonikis, Bob Fulton tries; Mick Cronin 9 goals) d. **Wales 13** (Tony Fisher try; David Watkins 5 goals) at Sydney Cricket Ground. Crowd: 25,386. Referee: Francois Escande (France).

### JUNE 15

**New Zealand 27** (Bob Jarvis 2, Ken Stirling, Tom Conroy, Murray Eade tries; Dane Sorensen 6 goals) d. **France 0** at Christchurch. Crowd: 2500. Referee: Laurie Bruyeres (Australia).

### JUNE 21

**New Zealand 17** (Dennis Williams 2, Phil Orchard tries; Dane Sorensen 4 goals) drew with **England 17** (George Fairbairn 2, John Atkinson tries; George Fairbairn 4 goals) at Carlaw Park Auckland. Crowd: 12,000. Referee: Laurie Bruyeres (Australia).

### JUNE 22

**Australia 26** (Mark Harris 2, Bob Fulton 2, Tim Pickup, Mick Cronin tries; Cronin 4 goals) d. **France 6** (Jose Calle 3 goals) at Lang Park, Brisbane. Crowd: 9000. Referee: John Percival (New Zealand).

### JUNE 28

**Australia 10** (Ron Coote, Chris Anderson tries; Mick Cronin 2 goals) drew with **England 10** (Ged Dunn, Ken Gill tries; George Fairbairn 2 goals) at Sydney Cricket Ground. Crowd: 33,858. Referee: John Percival (New Zealand).

**New Zealand 13** (Phil Orchard try; Warren Collicot 5 goals) d. **Wales 8** (Bill Francis, Jim Mills tries; David Watkins goal) at Carlaw Park Auckland. Crowd: 9368. Referee: Laurie Bruyeres (Australia).

### SEPTEMBER 20

**England 22** (Keith Fielding, Eric Hughes, John Holmes tries; George Fairbairn 6 goals, John Bridges field goal) d. **Wales 16** (Peter Banner, Kel Coslett tries; David Watkins 5 goals) at Wilderspool, Warrington. Crowd: 5034. Referee: Marcel Caillot (France).

### SEPTEMBER 28

**Australia 24** (John Quayle, Ray Higgs, Mick Cronin, Ian Schubert tries; Cronin 6 goals) d. **New Zealand 8** (Warren Collicot 4 goals) at Carlaw Park, Auckland. Crowd: 20,000. Referee: Fred Lindop (England).

### OCTOBER 11

**England 48** (Keith Fielding 4, John Holmes 2, Ged Dunn 2, Eric Hughes, Ken Gill, Brian Hogan, Colin Forsyth tries; George Fairbairn 4, Roger Millward 2 goals) d. **France 2** (Jose Calle goal) at Bordeaux. Crowd: 1581. Referee: John Percival (New Zealand).

### OCTOBER 17

**France 12** (Patrick Chauvet 2 tries; Bernard Guilhem 3 goals) drew with **New Zealand 12** (Bob Jarvis, Lindsay Proctor tries; Warren Collicot 3 goals) at Stade Veleldrome, Marseilles. Crowd: 10,000. Referee: Bill Thompson (England).

### OCTOBER 19

**Australia 18** (Ian Schubert 3, John Peard tries; Mick Cronin 3 goals) d. **Wales 6** (David Watkins 3 goals) at St Helen's Ground, Swansea. Crowd: 11,112. Referee: John Percival (New Zealand).

### OCTOBER 25

**England 27** (Ken Gill 3, Stuart Wright, Eric Hughes, Ged Dunn, Steve Norton tries; George Fairbairn 3 goals) d. **New Zealand 12** (John Smith, Tony Gordon tries; Warren Collicot 2, Gordon goals) at Odsal Stadium, Bradford. Crowd: 5937. Referee: Andre Lacaze (France).

### OCTOBER 26

**Australia 41** (Steve Rogers 2, John Rhodes, John Peard, Lew Platz, Ray Higgs, Terry Randall, Tom Raudonikis, Graham Eadie tries; Eadie 7 goals) d. **France 2** (Bernard Guilhem goal) at Stade Gilbert Brutus, Perpignan. Crowd: 10,440. Referee: Bill Thompson (England).

### NOVEMBER 1

**England 16** (John Holmes, Jeff Grayshon tries; George Fairbairn 5 goals) d. **Australia 13** (Ian Schubert 3 tries; Mick Cronin 2 goals) at Central Park, Wigan. Crowd: 9393. Referee: John Percival (New Zealand).

### NOVEMBER 2

**Wales 25** (Bill Francis 2, David Willicombe, John Bevan, John Mantle tries; David Watkins 5 goals) d. **New Zealand 24** (Phil Orchard, Tony Gordon, John Greengrass, Tony Coll tries; Gordon 5, Warren Collicot goals) at Vetch Field, Swansea. Crowd: 2645. Referee: Georges Jarneau (France).

### NOVEMBER 6

**Wales 23** (David Willicombe, John Bevan, Bill Francis, Peter Banner, Brian Gregory tries; David Watkins 4 goals) d. **France 2** (Bernard Guilhem goal) at The Willows, Salford. Crowd: 2247. Referee: Fred Lindop (England).

### FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	PTS
Australia	8	6	1	1	198	69	129	13
England	8	5	2	1	167	84	83	12
Wales	8	3	0	5	110	130	-20	6
New Zealand	8	2	2	4	121	149	-28	6
France	8	1	1	6	40	204	-164	3

### CHALLENGE MATCH - NOVEMBER 12 (Held after World Series)

**Australia 25** (John Lang 2, John Peard, Terry Randall, Mick Cronin tries; Graham Eadie 5 goals) d. **England 0** at Headingley, Leeds. Referee: Fred Lindop (England), Crowd: 7727.

**Australia:** Graham Eadie, John Rhodes, Mick Cronin, Steve Rogers, Ian Schubert, John Peard, Tom Raudonikis, Greg Viewers, John Lang, Arthur Beeton (c), Terry Randall, Ray Higgs, Greg Pierce.

**England:** Ray Dutton, Mike Smith, Nigel Stephenson, Eric Hughes, Ged Dunn, Ken Gill, Roger Millward, Harry Beverley, Keith Bridges, Jimmy Thompson, Jeff Grayshon, Mick Adams, Stanley Feamely.  
Replacements: David Topliss, Richard Stone

### SQUADS

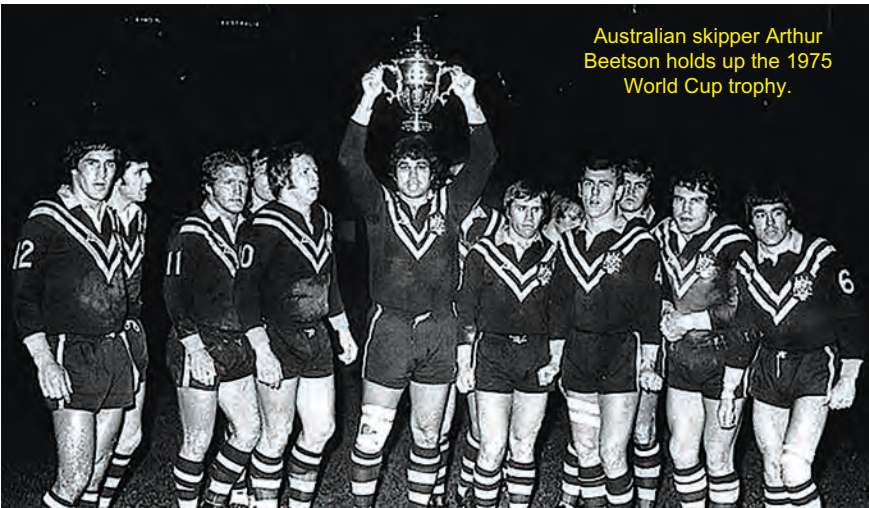
**AUSTRALIA:** Chris Anderson (Canterbury), Arthur Beeton (Eastern Suburbs), Ray Branighan (Manly), John Brass (Eastern Suburbs), Ron Coote (Eastern Suburbs), Mick Cronin (Gerrington), John Donnelly (Western Suburbs), Graham Eadie (Manly), Terry Fahey (Wellington), Denis Fitzgerald (Parramatta), Bob Fulton (Manly), Mark Harris (Eastern Suburbs), Ray Higgs (Parramatta), John Lang (Brisbane Easts), Graeme Langlands (St George), Ian Mackay (Eastern Suburbs), Allan McMahon (Balmain), John Mayes (Eastern Suburbs), John O'Neill (South Sydney), John Peard (Eastern Suburbs), Tim Pickup (Canterbury), Greg Pierce (Cronulla), George Piggins (South Sydney), Lew Platz (Wynnum-Manly), Jim Porter (Parramatta), John Quayle (Parramatta), Terry Randall (Manly), Tom Raudonikis (Western Suburbs), John Rhodes (Wynnum-Manly), Steve Rogers (Cronulla), Paul Sait (South Sydney), Ian Schubert (Eastern Suburbs), Gary Stevens (South Sydney), Ross Strudwick (Valleys), Greg Veivers (Brisbane Souths), David Wright (Brisbane Brothers).  
Not used: John Payne (Brisbane Easts).  
Coach: Graeme Langlands.

**ENGLAND:** Mick Adams (Widnes), John Atkinson (Leeds), John Bridges (Featherstone Rovers), Paul Charlton (Salford), Dave Chisnall (St Helens), Eric Chisnall (St Helens), Phil Cookson (Leeds), Mike Coulman (Salford), Ged Dunn (Hull Kingston Rovers), Les Dyl (Leeds), Dave Eckersley (St Helens), George Fairbairn (Wigan), Keith Fielding (Salford), Colin Forsyth (Bradford Northern), Ken Gill (Salford), Parry Gordon (Warrington), John Gray (Wigan), Brian Hogan (Wigan), John Holmes (Leeds), Eric Hughes (Widnes), Bob Irving (Wigan), Jeff Grayshon (Dewsbury), Phil Jackson (Bradford Northern), Tommy Martyn (Warrington), Roger Millward (Hull Kingston Rovers), Mick Morgan (Wakefield Trinity), Steve Nash (Featherstone Rovers), George Nicholls (St Helens), Derek Noonan (Warrington), Steve Norton (Castleford), Barry Philbin (Warrington), Dave Redfean (Bradford Northern), Jimmy Thompson (Featherstone Rovers), John Walsh (St Helens), Stuart Wright (Wigan).  
Coach: Alex Murphy.

**FRANCE:** Yves Alvernhe (Albi), Michel Anglade (St Gaudens), Elie Bonal (Carcassonne), Jean-Marie Bosc (St Esteve), Guy Buchi (Marseille), Jose Calle (St Esteve), Michel Cassins (Tonneins), Jean-Louis Castel (Albi), Patrick Chauvert (Carcassonne), Philippe Clergeau (Bordeaux), Bernard Curt (Bordeaux), Maurice de Matos (Toulouse), Francois de Nadai (Limoux), Andre Dumas (Lezignan), Francis Duthill (Bordeaux), Guy Garcia (Carcassonne), Serge Gleyzes (Carcassonne), Antoine Gonzales (Pamiers), Michel Gonzales (Pamiers), Jean-Francois Grechi (Limoux), Bernard Guilhem (Carcassonne), Didier Hermet (Villeneuve), Jean-Marie Imbert (Avignon), Fernand Kaminski (Albi), Jean-Pierre Lacoste (Villeneuve), Michel Laffargue (Tonneins), Michel Maigre (Lezignan), Jean-Claude Mayorgas (Toulouse), Michel Molinier (St Gaudens), Michel Moussard (Albi), Marcel Pillon (St Esteve), Andre Ruiz (Pau), Jean-Pierre Saurent (XIII Catalan), Victor Serrano (St Gaudens), Rene Terrats (St Esteve), Charles Thenegal (Toulouse), Francis Tranier (Villefranche), Jean-Pierre Tremouille (Tonneins), Guy Vigoroux (Tonneins), Charles Zalduendo (Toulouse).  
Not used: Gabriel Laskawieck (Albi).  
Coach: Puig Aubert.

**NEW ZEALAND:** Fred Ah Kuoi (Auckland), Ray Baxendale (West Coast), Micky Brereton (Auckland), Tony Coll (West Coast), Warren Collicot (Auckland), Tom Conroy (Auckland), Bruce Dickinson (Canterbury), Murray Eade (Auckland), Tony Gordon (Auckland), John Greengrass (Canterbury), Peter Gurnick (Canterbury), John Hibbs (Wellington), Bob Jarvis (Auckland), Paul Matele (Auckland), Don Munro (Wellington), Phil Orchard (Wellington), John O'Sullivan (Auckland), Lindsay Proctor (Auckland), John Smith (Auckland), Dane Sorensen (Auckland), Kurt Sorensen (Auckland), Ken Stirling (Auckland), Graeme West (Taranaki), John Whitaker (Wellington), Dennis Williams (Auckland).  
Coach: Georger Menzies.

**WALES:** Peter Banner (Salford), John Bevan (Warrington), Brian Butler (Swinton), Kel Coslett (St Helens), Eddie Cunningham (St Helens), Colin Dixon (Salford), Richard Evans (Swinton), Tony Fisher (Leeds), Bill Francis (Wigan), Stuart Gallagher (Keighley), Brian Gregory (Wigan), Mel James (St Helens), Clive Jones (Leigh), John Mantle (St Helens), Roy Mathias (St Helens), Jim Mills (Widnes), Mick Murphy (Bradford Northern), Mike Nicholas (Warrington), Maurice Richards (Salford), Peter Rowe (Blackpool Borough), Clive Sullivan (Hull Kingston Rovers), David Treasure (Oldham), Glyn Turner (Hull Kingston Rovers), Richard Wallace (York), Bobby Wanbon (Warrington), David Watkins (Salford), David Willicombe (Wigan), Frank Wilson (St Helens).  
Coach: Les Pearce.



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## NSW COUNTRY

Photo: John Bonanno

Flashback to 2016 when the last open-age Country Championships was staged. Illawarra's Martin Bullock is wrapped up by the Newcastle defence.

# The return of open age for Country Championship

NSW Rugby League has announced the return of the men's and women's Country Championships Open Age competitions in 2021, with the Northern Rivers Titans and North Coast Bulldogs keen to light up the field.

NSWRL Head of Football Robert Lowrie said the tournaments were another chance for regional NSW to continue its proud tradition of supplying future Rugby League stars.

"There have been plenty of champion players from regional NSW who have played Rugby League and I'm confident that trend will always be the case," Lowrie said.

"The Men's Country Championships and Women's Country Championships are strong competitions which offer players another important pathway to their dream of pursuing Rugby League careers.

"We had a disrupted season in 2020 because of coronavirus so I'm really looking forward to the action this season and I can't wait for kick-off."

The Men's Country Championships has been an Under 23s competition since 2017 but will revert to an Open Age competition in 2021 to provide additional opportunities for players after last season was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Women's Country Championships started in 2019 and has boasted some of the biggest names in women's Rugby League with Harvey Norman NSW Women's Origin

captain Kezie Apps, Jess Sergis and Keeley Davis all playing for the Illawarra South Coast Dragons in the inaugural season.

Both competitions will feature 10 teams including Northern Rivers Titans, North Coast Bulldogs, Northern Tigers, Western Rams, Newcastle and Maitland Region Knights, Central Coast Roosters, Macarthur Wests Tigers, Illawarra South Coast Dragons, Monaro Colts and Riverina Bulls.

The teams have been split into two pools of five with the opening round scheduled for Saturday 27 February. There will be two rounds of competition with the matches to mirror the final two rounds of the Laurie Daley Cup (Under 18s) and the Andrew Johns Cup (Under 16s).

The top four teams from either group (which will be based purely on competition points and for and against) will progress through to the Semi-Finals before the Grand Final on Sunday 28 March at a venue yet to be announced.

**Former NRL player Ben Jeffery is part of the Riverina Bulls side that will contest the Country Championships.**

The 33-year-old played first grade with Wests Tigers in 2006 and Gold Coast in 2008 before returning home to Griffith.

The Bulls face a tough draw, playing Macarthur Wests Tigers at Camden on Sunday, February 28 and Illawarra-South Coast on Sunday, March 7.

## COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021 DRAW

### ROUND 1

**Saturday, February 27**

Newcastle/Maitland	vs	Northern Tigers	Cessnock Sportsground	1.00pm
Northern Rivers	vs	Central Coast	Oakes Oval, Lismore	12.30pm
North Coast	vs	Illawarra Sth Coast	Harry Elliott Oval, Forster	1.00pm

**Sunday, February 28**

Monaro	vs	Western Rams	Raiders Ground, Belconnen	11.10am
Macarthur Wests Tigers	vs	Riverina	Kirkham Oval, Camden	1.00pm

### ROUND 2

**Saturday, March 6**

Central Coast	vs	North Coast	Morry Breen Oval, Wyong	1.00pm
Newcastle/Maitland	vs	Northern Rivers	Lakeside, Raymond Terrace	1.00pm
Northern Tigers	vs	Western Rams	John Simpson Oval, Tamworth	1.00pm

**Sunday, March 7**

Macarthur Wests Tigers	vs	Monaro	Kirkham Oval, Camden	1.00pm
Illawarra South Coast	vs	Riverina	Ron Costello Oval, Shellharbour	1.00pm

### SEMI-FINALS (March 20-21)

1st place Northern Pool	vs	2nd Place Southern Pool
1st place Southern Pool	vs	2nd Place Northern Pool

### FINAL (March 27/28)

Winners of the two semi-finals.

## Illawarra comp still undecided

**The format of the Illawarra Rugby League competition is still undecided with just five clubs confirmed at the time of printing.**

In what will be known as the Illawarra Presidents Cup, only Collegians, Western Suburbs, Thirroul, Dapto and Corrimal are guaranteed starters in first grade.

Financial issues caused by Covid have seen both Helensburgh and Berkeley not involved in first grade and they will look at fielding teams in the lower grades with a view of returning in 2022.

Port Kembla is undecided if they will field a team in the second grade (now called First Division), Second Division or simply sit out the year to sort out matters and start fresh for 2022.

A draft draw featuring a six-team format has been circulated with the final team probably coming from the Cronulla or St George Junior Rugby League.

Prior to Christmas, a team from the Cronulla-Sutherland area was set to be announced as playing in the Illawarra competition but that has fallen through.

The Illawarra Presidents Cup is set to commence in mid-April with the grand final set down for Sunday, September 5. The winners of the decider will move into the semi-finals of the NSW Rugby League Presidents Cup competition.

**The Murray Cup will commence in early May with Tumbarumba returning to play in the competition.**

Seven teams, including the Wodonga Wombats, Wodonga Storm, Corowa Cougars, Benalla Wolf Pack, CSU Mud Dogs and Tumbarumba Greens have put their hand up to contest the 2021 competition, with only the Murray River Warriors not playing this season.

**The Group 11 competition will start on May 2 with seven teams to do battle over 14 rounds.**

The teams are Narromine, Dubbo Macquarie, Forbes, Wellington, Nyngan, Dubbo CYMS and Parkes. Missing are the Nyngan Tigers, who withdrew last season.

**The Group 19 Rugby League competition could well include up to 10 teams this season but final numbers are still to be confirmed.**

Armidale, Guyra, Narwan, Glen Innes, Moree Boomerangs, Bundarra, Tingha and Bingara are expected to play. Inverell and Walcha were hoping to have enough numbers to play while Warialda is unlikely to play.

Tenterfield Tigers have asked to play in the nearby Queensland Border Rugby League competition.

Meanwhile, Group 19 will be introducing a Women's tackle competition this season.

**The structure of last year's successful Group 10 Midwest Rugby League competition, sponsored for the first time by Wallerawang Landscaping Supplies, will basically remain in place for the 2021 season (writes John Fitzgerald).**

At the recent first meeting for the year, seven clubs' nominations were accepted, the same as last year, except that Portland Colts re-engage, and the Cargo club will return to the Woodbridge Cup.

Blackheath were again unable to nominate due to low numbers.

Oberon's president, former Country player Dallas Booth, was re-elected as president of the group, re-joined by Craig Parsons, with the addition of new committee members Callum Flanagan from CSU and Tammy Handley from Portland Colts.

No decision was made on the start of the competition which will be decided at the next meeting in early March.

**The Group 4 Rugby League is expected to start on April 24 with eight teams set to be part of the competition.**

The Moree Boars will join North Tamworth, Werris Creek, Kootingal-Moonbi, Gunnedah, Dungowan Cowboys, Narrabri Blues and Boggabri Kangaroos.

Manilla and Barraba will play in the reserve grade competition with a view of playing in the top grade in 2022.

The Bulls squad that will be captain-coached by Luke Berkely is Kodie Charles, Daniel Foley, Jake Goodwin, Derek Hay, Cody Hodge, Ben Jeffery, Uafu Lavaka, James Luff, Jack Lyons, Zac Masters, Kyle McCarthy, Connor McCauley, Dane O'Hehir, Jed Pearce, Hayden Philp, Tom Sellers, Robbie Simpson, James Smart and Royce Tout.

**The Group Three Rugby League season will kick-off on April 10 with Camden Haven set to field an Under 18s team.**

The Eagles, who won back-to-back titles in 2005 and 2006 withdrew from the competition in 2007 due to a lack of players. It is hoped that this will be the first steps for the club with hopes of a return to the top grade in the future.

The opening round will see two local derbies being staged with Taree City entertaining Old Bar Pirates while Port City will do battle with the Port Macquarie Sharks.

Wauchope will play Macleay Valley at home while Wingham will welcome Forster-Tuncurry.

The season will have 17 rounds with finals commencing on August 28. The grand final is set down for Sunday, September 19.

**The Group Nine Rugby League season will get underway on April 10 with Tumut taking on Gundagai in a grand final replay at Twickenham.**

The match will also serve as part of 100 years of Rugby League with both clubs first playing the 13-a-side game in 1921.

The match will also be broadcast across the country by NSWRL as they celebrate the temporary revival of the Maher Cup, the first time the competition will be played in 50 years.

The season will stretch over 18-rounds while Temora Dragons have returned after sitting out the 2020 campaign. They play Junee in their first match.

Temora will be coached by former NRL and Super League player Josh McCrone, who has returned home after being away for 16 years.

The nine-team competition will also see former NRL player and ex-Huddersfield Super League coach Simon Woolford coaching Wagga Kangaroos.

The 2021 grand final is set down for Sunday, September 26.

**The Group 10 Bathurst Panthers Knockout has been locked in for the earlier time slot of March 12 and 13 at Carrington Park.**

Meanwhile, the same eight clubs as last year are set to do battle in the Group 10 Rugby League competition.



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**James Fisher-Harris (pictured above) and Krystal Rota have been named the 2020 New Zealand Rugby League Players of the Year for the first time in their careers, while Dylan Brown earned Young Kiwi Player of the Year for the second year running and Autumn-Rain Stephens Dally took home Kiwi Ferns Rookie of the Year.**

In a season that saw no Kiwi Internationals due to the ongoing implications of Covid-19, the 2020 Kiwis High-Performance Awards were judged solely on NRL performance. The Kiwi Ferns Awards have been credited on international merit due to their clash against Fetu Samoa Invitational which was the only New Zealand Rugby League International for the year.

2020 Kiwis Player of the year, James Fisher-Harris (Kiwi #801), was named 2020 Dally M Prop of the year and earned recognition as one of the NRL's best and most hardworking forwards. Passing the 100-game milestone for the Panthers, he led the competition in post-contact metres, was the top forward in terms of total run metres and played an integral role in the Panthers' drive to their first grand final in 17 years.

**New Zealand Rugby League will kick off its inaugural National 20s Competition on Saturday 27 February 2021.**

The round-robin competition will play over five consecutive weeks with the two top placed teams set to face off in the final

the weekend of April 2.

The NZRL National 20s Competition involves six teams from across New Zealand with Zones and appropriate Districts represented.

Auckland hosts two teams as Auckland Rugby League, Akarana and Counties Manukau join forces to create an Auckland Blue and Auckland White team.

Other teams represented include Northland; Wai-Coa Bay, with the inclusion of Waikato, Hauraki, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Coastline Districts; Central Districts, including Manawatu, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Wellington; and South Island, including Tasman, Canterbury, West Coast, Aoraki, Southland and Otago Districts.

All games will be televised live on Sky Sport, Sky Sport Now and for Australian viewers, Kayo and Fox Sports.

**This year the NZRL National Youth Tournament will move to a 16s and 18s age group format as opposed to its previous 15s and 17s structure to coincide with both Sport NZ's 'Balance is Better' philosophy, as well as the NSW and QLD age group competitions.**

With this shift in age categories, NZRL will provide an additional three years of growth and development opportunities for players in New Zealand with 16s, 18s and now 20s pathways. NZRL will take this a step further come 2022 by entering an NZRL U19 team into the NSW SG Ball competition.

Meanwhile, no draws have yet to be made official but the Fox Memorial Rugby League in Auckland is expected to start on March 31.

**The New Zealand Warriors are hopeful they will be able to play some home matches at Mt Smart Stadium this season.**

The Warriors are currently based in Tamworth and will be looking at returning to New Zealand to play at Mt Smart for the first time since 2019 in round five.

The NRL will approach the federal government with a request for players to jump the Covid-19 vaccine queue to give the New Zealand Warriors the best chance of hosting home games this season.

ARL Commissioner Peter V'landys confirmed the NRL would be putting a case to the government for players to be vaccinated after health workers and at-risk individuals.

**STUDENT RUGBY LEAGUE:** Major changes are coming for the Student Rugby League with a new competition to be called the Sydney Metro Amateur League.

Supported by the NSW Rugby League, the competition will expand to include clubs outside of Tertiary involvement that would be interested in playing on an amateur level on Saturday's. A Nines tournament will be staged on April 17.

## POLICE RUGBY LEAGUE

The Queensland Police Services Rugby League has been announced as hosts of the annual Australian Police Rugby League Tri-Series.

Queensland retained the hosting rights for the tournament after the 2020 Tri-Series was cancelled due to COVID.

The event, which will run from July 16 – 18, will again feature the Queensland, New South Wales and Affiliated States and Territories teams, each battling it out for the national title and will take part on the Gold Coast, between Cbus Super Stadium in Robina and Pizzy Park in Burleigh.

The Queensland Police Services team won the 2019 tournament after defeating both NSW and the Affiliated States and Territories teams in Darwin.

### MEN'S TRI-SERIES

**Friday 16 July 2020 – 4:00pm**

Queensland Police Service Rugby League v NSW Police Rugby League at Cbus Super Stadium, Robina

**Saturday 17 July 2020 – 3:00pm**

NSW Police Rugby League v Affiliated States and Territories Storm Police Rugby League at Pizzy Park, Burleigh

**Sunday 18 July 2020 – 3:30pm**

Queensland Police Service Rugby League v Affiliated States and Territories

Storm Police Rugby League  
Pizzy Park, Burleigh

### WOMEN'S INTERSTATE SERIES

**Saturday 17 July 2020 – 1:30pm**

Queensland Police Service Rugby League v NSW Police Rugby League  
Pizzy Park, Burleigh

The Tri-Series will also serve as a selection trial for the Australian Police Rugby League team which will host the Great Britain Rugby League team in Sydney in September.

The annual New South Wales Police Rugby League carnival will be played at the Scully Park, Tamworth between 29th March and 1st April. The NSW team will be selected following the tournament.

## Qld Country

**After not staging a competition in 2020 because of Covid-19, the Toowoomba Rugby League will get underway on April 11 with Valleys hosting Warwick and Wattles entertaining Dalby.**

In other Round One matches, Gatton takes on Goodiwindi, Pittsworth host Highfields, Souths plays Brothers while Newtown travel to Oakey.

The finals are set to get underway on the last weekend of August, culminating in the grand final at the Toowoomba Sports Ground on September 19. There will be a top five play-off system in operation.

**The Moranbah Miners are expected to be the team to beat in the Mackay Rugby League this season.**

After sitting out of last year's Covid-19 affected competition, former Mackay Cutters skipper Cooper Bambling has joined the club.

Former CQ Capras and Easts Tigers second-rower Bill Cullen and outside back Sam Smith – also formerly of the Capras, and most recently part of the Manly Sea Eagles' senior NRL squad – will join him.

Former Gold Coast Titans and St George Illawarra backrower Will Matthews has again committed to play for the club, after previously signing on for the abandoned 2020 campaign.

The 32-year-old played 111 NRL matches, his last at the top level was in 2019.

**Mackay Rugby League clubs will pay lower premiums in 2021 as the Queensland Rugby League works to rebuild its grassroots base following a challenging season.**

Under the new structure, all junior clubs will rollover 80 per cent of the 2020 personal accident and injury premiums into 2021.

Senior clubs that did not return to play, including Intrust Super Cup clubs, will also rollover 80 per cent of their personal accident and injury premiums.

Senior clubs that did return to play will also be able to rollover 30 per cent of their personal accident and injury premium into 2021.

The rollover is only available to clubs that paid full premiums in 2020 and for teams that nominated in their respective 2020 competitions.

Rugby League Mackay and District was one of only a handful of community competitions to run a competitive season in 2020.

**The Ipswich Jets are set to field a team in the local competition but it will be separate to the one that plays in the Qld Cup.**

The second Jets clubs would also field a reserve grade, C-grade and Under 19s teams in the Rugby League Ipswich competition.

They will join Goodna, Swifts, Norths, West End, Brothers, Redbank Plains and Fassifern to make it an eight-team competition.

**Season 2021 will see the Hastings Deering Colts competition contested over 16 rounds and cater for players aged Under 21.**

Defending champions Sunshine Coast Falcons will face off against Ipswich Jets in their Round 1 opening clash, with Mackay Cutters and Western Mustangs launching the season at BB Print Stadium on Saturday, April 10.

The Mal Meninga Cup under 18 competition will feature 15 teams playing six rounds within four regional conferences with state semi-finals and finals also held.

Tweed Seagulls, who won the under 18 national title in 2019, will host Ipswich Jets at Piggabeen Sports Complex on Saturday, March 6 to open Round 1 with Burleigh Bears and Souths Logan Magpies also playing a Saturday game.

The under 16 Cyril Connell Challenge has been introduced for the 2021 season and will align to the under 18 competitions, except that teams will play three matches with no finals.

All Intrust Super Cup clubs, excluding the PNG Hunters, will have teams contesting the under 16 competition in addition to Western Mustangs and Wide Bay Bulls.

Also, the statewide competitions will also feature the Harvey Norman Under 19 competition which will be played within regional conferences in 2021 to complement the BHP Women's Premiership that launched in 2020.

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# THE COLLECTORS / RUGBY LEAGUE OF YESTERYEAR



## THE COLLECTORS – NICK PEZIKIAN

Nick Pezikian was born in 1959 in Cairo, Egypt to Armenian parents and by the age of three was heading to Australia.

Nick began following St George in 1971 as his dad's name is George and his relatives were members of St George Leagues Club and lived in Kogarah, in the heart of Saints territory.

"I started to go to games around 1974 and we would camp outside of the SCG (Sydney Cricket Ground) for the grand final," said Pezikian.

"Back then it was unreserved seating so it was first in. We used to seat on the seats in front of the old hill."

"I sat there watching St George lose to Eastern Suburbs in the 1975 grand final. It was 5-0 at half-time and I thought we're okay but then I had to witness all the Easts tries which were scored right in front of me." Easts ended up winning 38-0.

Nick missed out on watching St George in the 1977 grand final because he was studying for the HSC.

"But the game ended in a draw and a replay was required for the following week," recalled Pezikian.

"I said stuff it. I'm going and we ended up winning. It was fantastic. We also won again in 1979."

These days he supports St George Illawarra and is happy with the merger because he feels that if that didn't happen, there might be no Dragons.

"Teams were being wiped out after Super League. North Sydney went, others merged and Souths were kicked out," said Pezikian.

"The best option was to merge even though I'm a traditionalist."

Originally a stamp collector for many years, Nick got bored of that but the collecting bug saw him going through eBay.

"I saw a St George Leagues Club member badge and I ended up buying a couple," said Pezikian.

That was in 2004 and he was soon seriously into collecting badges. These days he has thousands of them.

But it was with the help of other collectors that he began to gain knowledge when the first badges were issued by clubs.

"One of the hardest badges to get is the 1963 and 1964 St George members badge," said Pezikian.

"Before then, they would have a member card, similar to a business card but it was poor quality and it would crumble or people would lose it."

"That is why the badge was created with a hole

so you can put on your keys."

After getting the Dragons full collection of badges, he started getting all the other 11 clubs and then started working on clubs like Guildford, Wentworthville and Ryde-Eastwood.

"A member badge are always slightly different in design to others. For a collector it is very affordable," said Pezikian.

"The Leagues Club ones are the most collectable and popular. But back in the 1970s, they started issuing associate members badges that were originally for ladies and non-voting members. They were cheaper and different in design."

Pezikian says there are about half a dozen serious badge collectors and they have helped him with vital information.

"You ring the club up and they have no idea when the first and last badges were issued so you had no idea if you have the full collection," said Pezikian.

With such a huge collection of lapel bins and badges, Pezikian began to accumulate many spare items so started up his own website called Victory Badges (victorybadges.com) in 2012 that has many badges from the AFL, NRL, Cricket and the Melbourne Cup.

After writing a book of Melbourne Cup badges, Pezikian is working on doing a book on Rugby League badges.

"It will take the whole year to compile and will concentrate on member badges and pin badges that were part of a club set," said Pezikian, who has been married for 34 years to the lovely Anne and they have two children.

"I'm very appreciative and grateful of the support of my family and other badge collectors who have both assisted me."

Pezikian, who is known as 'Nick The Badge-man', is normally seen around the Collectors Fair circuit.

"Covid put a stop to many of those fairs but hopefully I will get the chance to set up shop at many of them this year," said Pezikian.

Pezikian also is keen for any collectors of vintage badges and pins to get in touch with him by emailing him at [badges@victorybadges.com](mailto:badges@victorybadges.com) in order to help him with his upcoming book.

"These collectors might have items that I don't know about and they should be recorded in the book," said Pezikian.

**Are you a keen collector ? Get in touch with us at [info@rugbyleagueview.com](mailto:info@rugbyleagueview.com) if you want to appear in Rugby League Review.**

## MAKING THE GRADE... PLAYERS THAT HAVE PLAYED NINE FIRST GRADE GAMES OR LESS

### BRIAN BEVAN

#### 7 first grade matches

Brian Bevan played seven first grade matches for Eastern Suburbs during the second world war but it was while playing in England that he became a legend.

He left Easts to serve in the Navy during the war and arrived in England aboard HMAS Australia in 1946. Armed with a letter of recommendation from former Easts' Test winger Bill Shankland, he sought a trial with Leeds but the club refused to sign the frail-looking winger.

Shankland also recommended he try Hunslet if Leeds refused to sign him, but once again he was turned down. He then decided to try his luck with the Warrington club. Warrington decided to give him an 'A' team trial in November in which he scored a try. The club were impressed with his first performance and decided to play him in the first team a week later. The club then decided to sign him on a permanent basis on a £300 contract. He then returned home to Australia for several months in order to complete his Navy service, before returning to Warrington.

In all he scored 796 tries in his career in Britain in competitive matches, a world record by a rugby player of either code. He scored 740 tries for Warrington, in 620 appearances (both club records). In 1961 he returned to Australia to play for an Eastern Suburbs seven-a-side competition for Keith Holman's testimonial. He finished his career with Blackpool.

Bevan played most of his career in Britain, and was never selected to represent Australia in a Test match. He represented Other Nationalities in 16 matches.

In 1988 Brian Bevan was inducted into the British Rugby League Hall of Fame. The 'wing wizard', as he is commonly referred, died in Southport, England in 1991, aged 67.

In February 2008, despite playing just seven top grade matches in Australia Bevan was named in a list of Australia's 100 Greatest Players (1908–2007) which was commissioned by the National Rugby League and the Australian Rugby League to celebrate the code's centenary year in Australia.



Brian Bevan is given a huge farewell from his Warrington team-mates.

## How things were...

Those were the days when, come August, the grounds were rock hard and the dust would be scattered across the field.

And to make matters worse, if there was any rain, the venue would quickly turn to mud and thus it would restrict the way the game was played.

These days, grounds have the best playing surfaces in the world and feel like a mattress. Years ago, the back end of the season especially was like playing on cement. In fact, North Sydney Oval was nick-named 'Concrete Park' because most of the field was rock solid.

Even the showcase of Rugby League grounds, the Sydney Cricket Ground, was like concrete by the time the finals rolled around in September.



Plenty of dust on Belmore Sports Ground as Manly's Marty Gurr goes for a run in this premiership match in 1985. Parramatta's Mick Cronin has his arm around Tony Melrose while the other Sea Eagles players in the photo are Paul Vautin, Englishman Andy Goodway and Phil Daley. The Eels player on the ground is Michael Moseley.





FORMER  
TOP GRADE  
CLUBS  
NEWTOWN

**Years active:** 76 (1908-1983)  
**Playing record:** Played 1305, won 583, lost 663, drew 59, byes 22, for 18,834, against 20,231.  
**Biggest win:** 51-0 vs Illawarra at Henson Park, May 2, 1982.  
**Biggest loss:** 65-9 vs St George at Kogarah Jubilee Oval, July 30, 1961.  
**Colours:** Royal Blue and white.  
**Home grounds:** Metters Ground, Erskineville (1910-12), Erskineville Oval (1913-18, 1947-53), Marrickville Oval (1920-23, 1925-35), Henson Park (1936-46, 1954-93), Orana Park (1983).  
**First grade premierships:** (3) 1910, 1933, 1943.  
**Most first grade matches:** Frank Farrell 204, Brian Moore 173, Bob Whitton 171, Bob Keyes 163, Ken Wilson 150, Tommy Nevin 142, Kevin Considine 133, Tom Ellis 128, Graham Wilson 128, Felix Ryan 125, Les Bull 124.  
**Club internationals:** (34) Jack Barnett, Tony Brown, Frank Cheadle, Gordon Clifford, Tedda Courtney, Bill Farnsworth, Viv Farnsworth, Frank Farrell, Arthur Folwell, Keith Froome, Col Geelan, Henry Holloway, Jack Holmes, Frank Johnson, Albert Johnston, Paddy McCue, Brian Moore, Noel Mulligan, Joel Murray, Herb Narvo, William 'Webby' Neill, Bill Noble, Dick Poole, Paul Quinn, Tom Radonikis, Charlie 'Boxer' Russell, Felix Ryan, Phil Sigsworth, Len Smith, Gary Sullivan, Dick Townsend, Jack Troy, Lionel Williamson, Graham Wilson.



NEWTOWN  
One of the most famous clubs that was born on January 8, 1908 and were part of the inaugural season of the New South Wales Rugby League is Newtown.

Newtown won their first premiership in 1910 even though they drew 4-all with South Sydney in the final played before 15,000 spectators at the Agricultural Ground. Because Newtown finished one competition point ahead of South Sydney on the competition table, they were awarded the premiership. Newtown reached the final in 1929 but were beaten 30-10 by a strong South Sydney outfit. But Newtown broke a 23-year drought to capture their second premiership after beating St George 18-5 before a crowd of 18,080 at the Sydney Sports Ground. The Bluebags, as they were known back then, won their third and final first grade competition in 1943 when they outclassed North Sydney 34-7 before a then record crowd of 60,922 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Newtown finished as minor premiers in 1943 but went down 19-16 to Balmain in the final. The rules in those days was the minor premiers had the right to a challenge if they lost the final - hence the birth of the grand final. But Balmain still proved too strong, winning 12-8 with Joe Jorgenson's three goals proving the difference. In 1954, grand finals were made mandatory and Newtown finished as minor premiers. However, they went down 23-15 to South Sydney in the grand final and the same two

clubs met a year later in the decider. Newtown led 11-10 late in the game before South Sydney hit the front with a goal from Bernie Purcell. Newtown full-back Gordon Clifford failed with a last minute shot at goal, thus leaving Souths with a 12-11 win. Under coach Jack Gibson, Newtown won the 1973 pre-season and finished one game short of a grand final appearance. They officially became known as the Jets in 1978 even though the name had been used for a few seasons. These days, many remember the 1981 grand final when Newtown took on Parramatta. The Jets led 11-7 before the Eels hit back with three tries in the second half to win 20-11. Financial troubles saw Newtown prepare to move to Campbelltown and they even played five matches at Orana Park in 1983. But they were axed from the competition at the end of the 1983 season with plans to return as Newtown-Campbelltown in 1985. That never eventuated but the Jets did return to play in the old Metropolitan Cup in 1991. Despite operating on a shoestring budget, Newtown was the dominant club in the 1990s, winning first grade Premiership titles in 1992, 1995, 1996 and 1997. In 2000 Newtown sought and was granted admission to the NSWRL First Division competition, whereby the Jets acted as the feeder team to the NRL's Auckland Warriors. They continue to play in the second-tier NSW Cup, winning the premiership in 2012 and 2019.

YOUR CLUB'S LOGO



CANTERBURY  
BULLDOGS

When Canterbury-Bankstown joined the competition, their nick-name was the 'Cantabs' and even Country Bumpkins. They were also called the CBs because those letters appeared on their original logo. Following the second world war, many of their supporters began calling them the 'Berries', which came from the last four letters of Canterbury. By the 1960s, Canterbury began marketing their club as the Berries. All Scanlens cards had the word Berries on them until the 1977 series. With many of the clubs adopting their own logos that featured animals, Rugby League Week editor at the time Geoff Prenter suggested Canterbury be called the Bulldogs. That was in the mid-1970s and when the New South Wales Rugby League established a marketing division prior to the start of the 1978 season, they asked Canterbury and Newtown (who were then called Bluebags) to come up with new logos in order to make them more marketable. The Canterbury club asked their members what they would prefer and with Bulldogs being mentioned for a couple of years, it was the obvious choice.



REMEMBER WHEN  
with Ian Collis

In the 1970s and '80s Canterbury were well known as the family club. And that came as little surprise with two sets of triple brothers regularly selected together in first grade, comprising the talented trio of Hughes' (Graeme, Gary and Mark) and the Mortimer's (Steve, Chris and Peter). They were also dubbed the 'entertainers' and little wonder as the teamwork, skill and determination to advance the ball at all costs had crowds packing the grounds to watch their exciting play. And with that came success with grand final appearances in 1974 and 1979 and finally a premiership in 1980. The question then has to be asked has any team had more sets of brothers all playing for a club at one time? And the surprising answer is a most definite yes. Their neighbours, Western Suburbs, while not quite getting to those levels of success during that period, in 1983 had six sets of brothers graded while another brother was the coach of the third grade team! And to kick off the season in '83 all 12 brothers played in their opening round matches against Eastern Suburbs. Pictured right (left to right) are Steve Ghosn (coach 3rd grade), Tony Ghosn (3rd grade winger), George Ghosn (2nd grade fullback), Mark Beaven (1st grade centre), Paul Bevan (2nd grade centre), Terry Lamb (1st grade five-eighth), Peter Lamb (3rd grade second-rower), Brett Gale (1st grade second-rower), Scott Gale (1st grade centre), Trevor Cogger (2nd grade halfback), John Cogger (3rd grade second-rower), Michael Neil (2nd grade five-eighth), Craig Neil (3rd grade halfback).....at Lidcombe Oval during training.



In previous decades there was very little early morning team tactics discussed on game day. Players were left mainly to their own devices and would turn up by their own steam to the ground and be ready to play. This was never better evidenced than by Manly second-rower John 'Pogo' Morgan on the morning of his team's final against Manly. He thought why not get out at the front of his Collaroy home before he drove to the SCG and start polishing his car. For the record Manly lost and Balmain progressed to the grand final. Probably shouldn't have polished the car! Staying with the 1969 season and for those older Cronulla supporters you would probably recognise John Maguire on the bottom left while a relatively unknown Mark Doran is by his side. So what you might ask! It just so happened John Maguire was a maths teach at Endeavour High School and the 17-year-old six-foot plus Doran was one of his students. But on weekends it was a different matter when teacher and student both represented the Cronulla teams, each as second-rowers, Maguire in the top grade and the up and coming Doran in third grade. For the record, Doran was the only schoolboy in any grade in 1969.

For many years Australian players were lost to the Sydney premiership as they plied their trade in the English competition, with an especially strong influx of Aussie talent after the end of WW2. While Albert Rosenfeld and Vic Hey headed over to 'The Old Dart' in the earlier decades, Arthur Clues, Lionel Cooper, Brian Bevan, Tony Paskins, Harry Bath, Pat Devery and co were all lost to our game in the 1940s. However by the early sixties the trend was completely reversed as the NSWRL attracted some big names to our shores. And those players have now woven their names into the history of our great game. Their names read like a who's who of Englishmen who have played in the competition.....Derek Hallas, Dick Huddart, Ken Noble, Dave Bolton, Len Killeen (via UK), Tom Bishop, Mal Reilly, Cliff Watson, Graham Williams, Phil Lowe, Mike Stephenson, Bill Ashurst, Vince Farrar, Jim Fiddler, John Gray, John Cunningham, Gary Stephens, Roger Millward, Steve Norton, Brian Noble, Gary Schofield, Lee Crooks, Tony Myler, Andy Gregory and Steve Hampson, Dave Topliss, Kevin Ward, Ellery Hanley, Shaun Edwards, Andy Goodway, Martin Offiah, Canterbury centre Gary Connolly, Adrian Morley, Gareth Ellis and in recent times Gareth Widdop, Sam Burgess, James Graham, Josh Hodgson and Luke Bateman. Pictured left: Cronulla-Sutherland's second-rower school-teacher John Maguire (left) with fellow player and one of his students at school, Mark Doran.



Above: The Wests family in 1983 - six sets of brothers at training at Lidcombe Oval. Below: John Morgan polishes his car before driving to the SCG to play for Manly.



PHOTOS - Visit 'Rugby League Photos - Remember When' Facebook Page



STEVE MASCORD / OBITUARY



THE STEVE MASCORD COLUMN

ON the day I wrote this column, a new sponsor was announced for the Challenge Cup.

It's the 'old' sponsor for everything else in British Rugby League, Betfred. I'm somewhat anti-gambling so it's not my favourite form of sponsorship but you've got to give it to Betfred boss Fred Done, a clear Rugby League enthusiast.

But what is to actually become of the Challenge Cup, a knockout competition that features amateur and armed forces sides right up to the likes of Wigan, Leeds and Warrington? Personally, I can't see much of a place for it in the modern world.

We saw three years ago how incompatible it is with the commercial realities of sport today when two teams, Catalans and Toronto, were asked to insure the Rugby Football League against the possibility they might make the final and the crowd would be down!



Catalans' skipper Remi Casty holds up the Challenge Cup trophy in 2018.

At the time, Catalans Dragons were the holders!

Last year, lower division teams still alive in the Cup pulled out because it made more sense for their players to remain on furlough, where the government was paying them.

And in 2021, it's back with only three League 1 teams - Barrow, Keighley and West Wales Raiders - taking part, and no amateur teams. A year on, and furlough remains an issue.

But even in healthier times, what is the way forward for the Challenge Cup? The RFL's position around Toronto and Catalans strongly indicates it needs two of eight or nine Super League teams (or perhaps Bradford) to make the final or else it can't sell enough tickets to pay the rent on the stadium?

In my experience there is a fear on the part of administrators that they don't want to be remembered as the person who took the Challenge Cup final away from Wembley, never mind that doing so may be in the best interests of the sport.

Never mind that a Challenge Cup semi-final could once draw a big crowd to Old Trafford and now a double-header is played each year at Bolton and considered a commercial success. Then there's the fact that Challenge Cup games are not included in clubs' season tickets and so people won't go.

The problems of the Challenge Cup are many, so much so that boxing promoter Eddie Hearn was approached by the Rugby Football League to take it over. Hearn, understandably, wanted to own the property (perhaps after paying a fee) - not just promote it. Talks led nowhere.

Instead of blue sky planning, let's

remember Covid. It's grey style planning.

If the split between the RFL and Super League is healed by a marriage of convenience in coming months, one of the first things done is that the Magic Weekend should become a Challenge Cup round.

It just makes too much sense - people don't go to watch Challenge Cup home games and the extra fixture distorts the Super League draw.

The objective with the Challenge Cup is to create more interest in the early rounds while ending up with two big grossing Super League teams in the finals.

Brian McDermott has indicated a willingness to assemble a Barbarians-style Toronto Wolfpack team. They should be in the Challenge Cup next year. The 2020 draw was supposed to be in New York, who have similar plans. They should be in the Challenge Cup next year.

Dead clubs, overseas clubs, foreign clubs. The aim needs to be to make the opening rounds 'different' enough for people to take an interest but - frankly - for none of these clubs to be good enough to make the final.

In the old days, it was a Dewsbury or a Blackpool Borough who caught people's imaginations with a Cup run. It's hard to imagine that happening now.

But a Red Star Belgrade or a Jack-sonville Axemen can generate just as much publicity without winning a single game - just by competing.

And perhaps while British Rugby League can keep having a big event at Wembley every year, it no longer has to be the Challenge Cup final. It used to be 'Northern Pride' day in the capital - now it's just 12 hours on the motorway.

OBITUARY



David Bolton (pictured) is one of the few Rugby League players to win major trophies in both England and Australia.

He played 300 games and scored 386 points with the Wigan club in 11 seasons from 1954 to 1964 and then in Australia, he made 78 appearances for the Balmain Tigers, scoring 71 points in six seasons from 1965.

With Wigan, Bolton was a member of two Challenge Cup winning teams (1958 and 1959), as well as the championship winning side of 1960. In Sydney with the Tigers, he played strongly with the 1969 team which beat South Sydney 11-2 in the Grand Final.

After retiring, Bolton coached the Parramatta Eels in 1973 and 1974, while in the 1980s, was an assistant coach to Tim Sheens at Penrith. He passed away in a Penrith nursing home in the early hours of Wednesday morning, 21 January, aged 83.

Former Penrith and Wests Tigers hooker Masada Iosefa passed away after a quad-bike accident near Darwin.

He suffered fatal injuries after crashing in the Northern Territory rural township of Herbert, the day before his 33rd birthday.

The Samoan-born hooker made his NRL debut for the Panthers in 2008, aged 20, and played 43 matches for the club before switching to the Wests Tigers in 2012. He made a further 14 NRL appearances at the Tigers. He also represented Samoa in four Tests from 2009-13.

In recent years he played in Queensland for the Capras in the State Cup and turned out for the Rockhampton Brothers Rugby Club in 2020, winning a premiership.

Former Australian Test player Gary Parcell passed away on November 30, aged 87. He played eight Tests for Australia, including a tour to England and France with the 1959-60 Kangaroos and the 1960 World Cup.

Former South Sydney player Steve Little passed away recently at Port Macquarie at the age of 67.

Little was born in Moree in 1953. He played junior football with Moree and Zetland United before South Sydney graded him in 1972. He played for the club until 1978, playing mainly as a winger in a total of 137 grade games (scoring 39 tries and 129 goals).

He later played for West Tamworth and in 1983 represented Northern Division in the Caltex Country Divisional Championship.

Former Canterbury first grader Jack Stewart passed away at the age of 99. He played 36 games for the club from 1941-42, 1944 and 1946-47, with his career split after serving in PNG during the Second World War.

Stewart was one of the most influential administrators in the history of the Cronulla club and a man who held the position of Leagues Club President for an unmatched period of 19 years.

Former New South Wales Rugby League Life Member Ross Hamilton died after dedicating more than half a century to Rugby League in the Inverell area.

He served as Inverell Rugby League secretary from 1959-1979 and a committee member from 1980. He was a lifetime member of the Inverell Rugby League Club, Group 4, Group 5, Northern Division and Country Rugby League.

Ex-Newtown player Mark O'Brien also passed away at the age of 61 after playing 55 first grade matches for the Jets between 1977 and 1983.

Tony Smith, who played one Test for the Kiwis in 1962, passed away at the age of 81 after a short illness.

The Kiwis test proved his last game of Rugby League in New Zealand. He married in 1963 and went to farm at Waiau, where the local rugby club's case to have him reinstated was flatly refused by higher authorities.

Another Kiwi international, Gerard Stokes, died at the age of 65 after battling brain cancer. He broke into the senior Canterbury (NZ) team in 1980. By now with Eastern Suburbs in Canterbury, he used a strong showing for South Island as a springboard to selection in the 1982 Kiwis squad to tour Australia and Papua New Guinea, featuring in four matches.

After spending time with Workington, he returned to play in Canterbury. He later turned to coaching. He was a Kiwis selector and assistant coach under Gary Freeman and New Zealand A coach in the early-2000s, while he coached Wellington in the 2002 and '03 Bartercard Cups before returning to Workington Town as head coach - the start of a seven-year stretch as a coach in the Old Dart that ultimately led to Christchurch-born son Ben becoming a superstar all-rounder with the England cricket team.

Stokes left Workington Town for neighbouring archrivals Whitehaven in 2008, coaching the club for three seasons - a period that also saw him coach Serbia's national team.

York Hall of Famer Geoff Pryce lost his battle against COVID-19 at the age of 59. Pryce was a one-club man, lining up for York between 1980 and 1993, making 286 appearances.

The uncle of former Bradford Bulls players, Leon and Karl Pryce, he was part of the promotion-winning campaigns of 1980-81 and 1985-86.

He earned Yorkshire selection in 1982, and scored a hat-trick on his debut in a 22-21 win over Lancashire at Leigh.

Former Widnes, Blackpool, Liverpool City and Huyton back-rower Brian Winstanley passed away at the age of 80 while another Liverpool City and Huyton player in John McGrath died at the age of 85.

Former South Sydney player John 'Mick' Fella passed away at the age of 83 after playing 63 first grade games for the club between 1961 and 1966. He worked in many different administrative roles for the Rabbitohs and was also a City, News South Wales State of Origin and Australian selector for many years.

Wallace John Houn, who passed away recently at the age of 79 in Hervey Bay in Queensland, was born in 1941 in Lismore and played for Souths as a winger in 1962, playing in nine grade games, scoring eight tries in total.

David Rose, a member of the Great Britain team which won the first Rugby League World Cup in France in 1954 - passed away in Scotland at the age of 89.

He had earlier won seven caps for Scotland while playing Rugby Union before switching codes. Rose joined Huddersfield in 1953 before moving on to Leeds.

Former Test player Ken McCaffery passed away at the age of 91. He represented Australia in eight Test matches and 16 tour matches between 1952 and 1957. He played 50 matches for Easts (1948-50) before heading to Toowoomba and Brisbane. He returned to Sydney to play 30 games for North Sydney 1957-59. He later was the secretary at the Bears.

GROUND OF YESTERYEAR

Drummoyne Oval was originally a small ground on William Wright's estate and was used for rugby games as early as 1882 by the Glebe and Balmain clubs.

In 1931, as a depression project from the unemployment relief fund, Drummoyne Oval was constructed on the site of a small ground.

The new ground was quickly used by the Balmain Rugby League club. They played their first match at the ground on June 25 when they edged out Eastern Suburbs 7-5.

Balmain played four matches at the ground in 1932 with a further seven games the following season.

The final season at the venue was in 1934 when they hosted five matches, the last against South Sydney in which a crowd of 4000 was present.

Balmain began using Leichhardt Oval as well in 1934 after a new oval was updated on what was part of Leichhardt Park. They made their move on a permanent basis from 1935.

Balmain did play one more game at Drummoyne Oval when they defeated Eastern Suburbs 20-11 on April 25, 1950. It was the last time any first grade Rugby League matches would be played at the ground.

The Sydney Cricket Club, formerly known as UTS Balmain, and Balmain, uses Drummoyne Oval as its home ground.

The ground is currently used mostly for cricket matches during the summer; and during winter it is home to Drummoyne Rugby Club and the Drummoyne Power Junior Australian Football Club. The Balmain Australian Football Club in the Sydney AFL competition formerly used the ground, prior to moving to Henson Park, Marrickville, for their home games. It was used for four games in the 2019-20 Women's Big Bash League season.



Above: Drummoyne Oval, in the early 1900s, featuring a crowd at a Rugby Union game with the old grandstand. Below: Drummoyne Oval, with a capacity of 6000, hosting a recent cricket match.



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RUGBY LEAGUE NOSTALGIA



BY MIKE SIMPSON

The Welsh Wonder.

Regarded as one of the sport's greatest ever players, Welsh born Billy Boston, is arguably one of the finest Rugby League players to have ever played the game anywhere in the world.

Boston scored a jaw dropping 571 tries in his career, making him the second highest all-time try scorer in the history of the game behind Australian-born Warrington legend Brian Bevan.

He is an original inductee of the British Rugby League Hall of Fame, Welsh Sports Hall of Fame and Wigan Warriors Hall of Fame and fittingly was awarded an MBE in 1986.

William John Boston MBE (born 6 August 1934) was one of Wales' finest code breakers who picked up the game of Rugby League with ease.

Born in Cardiff, Wales, Boston started his career as a rugby union player before joining powerhouses Wigan RLFC in 1953.

He spent the next 15 years at Wigan, where he scored a club-record 478 tries in his 488 appearances for the club, making him into one of the finest players the club has ever seen.

The Welshman finished his career at ambitious Blackpool Borough, before hanging up his boots in the summer of 1970.

Boston represented Great Britain in an astonishing 31 Test matches and was also part of the team that won the 1960 Rugby League World Cup.

Born at Angelina Street, Bute-town, Cardiff, Boston was the sixth of eleven children born to John Boston (a merchant seaman from Sierra Leone) and his mother Nellie who came from Cardiff's Irish community.

Boston began his rugby union career with the Cardiff International Athletic Club where from an early

age he caught the eye of his coaches.

CIACS (pronounced "kayaks") represented Grangetown, Cardiff Bay Butetown and the Docks areas of the city, and the team's makeup reflected the multinational nature of those communities.

The young Boston was an integral part of the CIACS "invincible" season of 1951-52, where the team won all their 32 games.

Boston was already attracting attention and was given opportunities at two famous Welsh clubs, representing Neath RFC in 1950 and Pontypridd RFC in 1952.

The lack of an offer from Cardiff remains a contentious issue even to this day amongst the many supporters.

Boston was called up for the National Service with the Royal Signals at Catterick, North Yorkshire, and was scouted by several Rugby League clubs given his athletic prowess.

On 13 March, 1953, Wigan chairman Joe Taylor and vice-chairman Billy Gore travelled to Boston's home in Cardiff and offered him £1,000 to sign for the club.

Although that was an exceptionally large offer at the time, Boston's mother rejected it on his behalf.

A second offer of £1,500 was made in cash, and the money was spread out on the table in five-pound notes to show the family how much money it was.

Boston later stated that he still didn't want to sign the contract and his mother told him "Don't worry son, I'll get rid of them for you."

I'll ask them for so much that they'll go home."

Boston's mother told the delegation that Billy would only sign for £3,000, double the increased offer. Within a minute the delegation agreed to the terms.

Boston stated that he still did not want to sign, but his mother had given their word, and Boston signed the contract right there on the

BILLY BOSTON

kitchen table.

Boston made his 'A' team debut when a crowd of 8,000 assembled inside Central Park Wigan and made his first team debut against Barrow in November 1953 scoring a superb try.

For the next 15 seasons he was a living legend and played his final game in 1968.

Boston had an astonishing turn of speed for a big man and had the ultimate sidestep and was also able to hand off opponents with apparent ease.

The Welshman played 31 games for Great Britain and was the first player to score four tries in a game against New Zealand.

He was the first non-white player to be selected to tour Australia and New Zealand in 1954, on which he set a record of 36 tries in 18 games.

Boston also played in the 1962 tour, scoring a further 22 tries.

With BBC television coverage increasing in the late-1950s, armchair fans as well as terrace supporters were able to witness Billy Boston in action.

He beat Johnny Ring's record of 368 tries and went on to score a record 478 for Wigan, a record that will probably never be broken.

Billy Boston played left centre in Wigan's 13-9 victory over Workington Town in the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley Stadium, London on Saturday 10 May 1958, in front of a crowd of 66,109.

He played right wing and scored two tries in the 30-13 victory over Hull FC in the final at Wembley Stadium on Saturday 9 May 1959, in front of a crowd of 79,811, and was a handful for the opposition in the 20-16 victory over Hunslet in the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley Stadium on Saturday 8 May 1965, in front of a crowd of 89,016.

The Welsh try scoring enigma also represented Other Nationalities (RL) and whilst he was at Wigan, played right centre in the 2-19 defeat by St Helens at Knowsley Road St Helens on Wednesday 27 January 1965, to mark the switching-on of new floodlights.

Towards the end of his career, Boston signed for ambitious Blackpool Borough, making his final appearance on British Rugby League soil in 1970.

He became one of fewer than 25 Welshmen to have scored more than 1,000-points in their Rugby League career making him one of the most recognisable players around the world.

William John Boston was and still is one of the most enigmatic players in Rugby League history.

A prophet with honour in his own land, Boston will go down as one of the most influential code switchers to have ever played the 13 and 15 a side game.

YouTube RUGBY LEAGUE VIDEOS

We have hand-picked some YouTube Rugby League videos for you to enjoy. Simply type in the bold words in the search box.

Kiwis vs Kangaroos Game 1 1980 Carlaw Park

Full coverage of the opening Test match between Australia and New Zealand at Auckland's Carlaw Park.

1998 Super League Grand Final - Wigan Warriors Vs Leeds Rhinos

The 1998 JJB Super League Grand Final was the first staging of the Super League Grand Final and the conclusive and championship-deciding game of 1998's Super League III, and the first Grand Final of the Super League era.

Combined Brisbane vs Manly KB Cup Semi Final 1983

Full coverage of the mid-week KB Cup semi-final match between Combined Brisbane and Manly at Lang Park.

1987 Brothers v Redcliffe BRL Grand Final

1987 Brisbane Rugby League Grand Final Past Brothers v Redcliffe Dolphins at Lang Park. It was the last major BRL Grand Final before the inclusion of the Brisbane Broncos into the Sydney and eventually the NRL premiership.

London Broncos v Canberra Raiders 1997

Relive the fantastic World Club Challenge win from 1997 as the Broncos came from behind for a memorable victory over the Canberra Raiders.

Souths V Penrith Under 23s Grand Final 1986

Action from the Rabbitohs vs The Panthers in the 1986 Under 23s Grand Final at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

TELEVISION FREEZE-FRAME



While New Zealand and many of the Pacific Island nations perform their haka or war dance prior to commencing their matches, Australia is not known for being one to normally perform this ritual.

However, Australia used to perform their own war cry until about the end of the 1960s. From 1908 to 1967, the Australian team performed a war cry before Tests played in Great Britain and France. The war cry was first performed when the Kangaroos arrived at Tilbury Docks near London. It was developed after war cries had been performed on tours of Britain by the New Zealand All Blacks in 1905, the South African Springboks in 1906 and the New Zealand All Blacks in 1907. It is believed that the war cry is derived from an Indigenous chant on Stradbroke Island, Queensland, Australia.

The English translation is as follows:

We are a race of fighters, descended from the War Gods - Beware! Beware! Beware! Beware!

Where we fight there will be great bloodshed- Go! Go! Go! Go!

We are powerful, but merciful. Are you friends? Good! Good!

The Kangaroo is dangerous when at bay. Come on. Come on, Death.



RUGBY LEAGUE MOVIES

Chasing Comets is a 2018 Australian comedy drama film directed by Jason Perini and written by Jason Stevens and the lead actors are Dan Ewing and Isabel Lucas.

Chase Daylight's dream to play in the NRL is falling by the wayside, just like his relationship with Brooke. At his lowest point, Chase takes a leap of faith to sort out his life. But living this out is a far greater challenge than he imagined, especially among team mates who won't let him give up his partying ways without a fight. Chase's leap of faith might possibly be the worst decision he has ever made.

It is set in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, a town divided by the Australian Football League and the NRL. The film was released to Australian theatres on 23 August 2018.

Chasing Comets was filmed in Victoria and New South Wales in 2017 and Director Jason Stevens is a former Australian Test player that played first grade with St George and the Cronulla Sharks.

One of the stars of the movie is another former NRL player and now TV personality, Beau Ryan. He played 126 first grade matches for the Wests Tigers and Cronulla.

Newtown Jets identity John Trad, better known as the guy that rides his penny-farthing around Henson Park every time that the Bluebags score a try, also makes a few appearances in the movie.



Billy Boston in action for Wigan against Hull in the 1959 Challenge Cup final at Wembley Stadium.





Photos: rphotos.com

The incredible scenes after Jack Welsby (far left) scored after the siren to give St Helens the grand final win last season. He is seen here celebrating with teammates James Bentley and Zeb Taia.



BY TERRY HOLMES

**The Betfred Super League season will start on March 25, later than originally planned.**

The 2021 campaign was scheduled to begin on March 11 but following discussions with Sky Sports, Super League clubs agreed to move the season back by two weeks to increase the chances of kicking off the new season in front of fans.

New lockdown rules in England means that no crowds can attend the matches. A decision on whether there is an easing of the rules will be made in late February.

Super League will continue to review the fixture schedule, details of which will be released at a later date. It can confirm that there is no change to the season end date, with the Betfred Super League Grand Final to be played on October 9 at Old Trafford.

**Championship and League 1 clubs have targeted the weekend of March 21 as the return date for professional Rugby League outside the Super League – which will be one year and one week since they were last in action.**

Just as the last Rugby League played before the first National Lockdown in March 2020 was in the Challenge Cup, the game is due to return with the First Round of the 2021 Challenge Cup featuring all 13 UK clubs from the Championship, plus three from League 1 (Keighley, West Wales and Barrow).



Kevin Sinfield (left) during one of his marathons. He is running alongside former team-mate Jamie Peacock.

That will be followed by the Second Round the following weekend, with the winners of those four ties earning a double reward – a place in the Third Round of the Challenge Cup when the 12 Betfred Super League clubs join the competition on the weekend of April 10-11, and also in the semi finals of the AB Sundecks 1895 Cup in June, meaning they will be 80 minutes away from a place at Wembley on July 17.

**Scrummings will still be missing at the start of the Rugby League season, but could be re-introduced later in the year if coronavirus restrictions allow.**

Scrummings were replaced with a handover of possession when the 2020 Super League campaign restarted last August.

The change was made in an effort to reduce close contact and minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmissions.

It is hoped scrumming will return at Super League level to help players prepare for October's Rugby League World Cup.

**The Championship will kick off from April 2-4 – the Easter weekend – and run until a Top Six Play-Off Series in September and October.**

Each team will play nine of the other 13 teams twice, and the other four once, in the 22-round formula that has been agreed with the clubs – with a decision to be made on a possible 23rd round in the Summer Bash

in the coming weeks.

Clubs have already agreed that games played behind closed doors will be streamed live on the RFL's Our League platforms (app & website) on a pay per view basis, allowing supporters to watch fixtures even if they cannot attend in person – with home season ticket holders given free access to the live stream packages for their club's league games.

The Championship had been due to kick off on the last weekend in February, but following a short pause in training after the announcement of the latest Lockdown, the clubs agreed with the RFL that delaying the start of the season would be a sensible step given the current public health situation, and a desire to minimise the number of fixtures played behind closed doors before the return of fans to grounds.

**Former Leeds Rhinos captain Kevin Sinfield finished a mammoth challenge of running seven marathons in seven days just before Christmas.**

The 40-year-old, who is the director of rugby at the Super League outfit, has raised over £1 million for the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

He took on the almighty task after seeing former teammate and close friend Rob Burrow diagnosed with the untreatable nerve condition 12 months ago.

**George Burgess has left Wigan Warriors by mutual consent on medical grounds.**

Burgess faces a major operation and the prospect of many months rehabilitating his hip and has therefore – along with the full agreement of the Wigan Warriors management – decided to focus on a return to normal physical health as his top priority.

Burgess joined Wigan ahead of the 2020 Betfred Super League season and made eight appearances, scoring one try in a disrupted season for the 28-year-old.

**Leeds Rhinos had to shut down their training ground after more positive Covid-19 cases at the club.**

The Rhinos closed their Kirkstall Road last month after six players and a member of staff were said to have contracted the virus.

### SUPER LEAGUE COMING & GOINGS 2021

#### CATALANS DRAGONS

**Coming:** Gil Dudson (Salford), Mike McMeeken (Castleford).  
**Going:** David Mead (Brisbane Broncos), Lewis Tierney (Leigh), Rémi Casty (Toulouse Olympique XIII), Sam Moa (released), Mickael Simon (released), Antoni Maria (Lezignan), Lucas Albert (Carcassonne).

#### CASTLEFORD TIGERS

**Coming:** Niall Evalds (Salford), Gareth O'Brien (Toronto Wolfpack), Jordan Turner (Huddersfield), Lewis Bienek (Hull FC) and Suaia Matagi (Huddersfield, loan).  
**Going:** Mike McMeeken (Catalans Dragons), Junior Moors (released), Matt Cook (Widnes), Calum Turner (Newcastle Thunder), Bailey Hodgson, Jack Sanderson, Robbie Storey, Joe Summers (Featherstone) and Lewis Carr (Dewsbury).

#### HUDDERSFIELD GIANTS

**Coming:** Josh Jones (Hull FC), Ricky Leutete (Melbourne Storm), Jack Ashworth (St Helens), Jack Cogger (Canterbury), Olly Ashall-Bott (unattached), Joe Greenwood (Wigan), Luke Yates (Salford), George Roby (Warrington), James Cunningham (Toronto Wolfpack).  
**Going:** Jordan Turner (Castleford Tigers), Suaia Matagi (Castleford Tigers, Matagi on loan), Reiss Butterworth (Dewsbury Rams), Adam Walne (Barrow Raiders), Akula Uate (retired), Ukuma Ta'ai (released), Aaron Murphy (Bradford).

#### HULL FC

**Coming:** Josh Reynolds (Wests Tigers).  
**Going:** Josh Jones (Huddersfield), Albert Kelly (released), Liam Harris (Halifax Panthers), Lewis Bienek (Castleford Tigers), Gareth Ellis (retired), Ratu Naulago (Bristol Bears RU), Kieran Buchanan (Batley).

#### HULL KR

**Coming:** Luis Johnson (Warrington), Ryan Hall (Sydney Roosters), Muizz Mustapha (Leeds, loan), Korbin Sims (St George Illawarra), Albert Vete (Melbourne), Brad Takairangi (Parramatta).  
**Going:** Kyle Trout (released), Dan Murray (Halifax Panthers), Ryan Brierley (Leigh Centurions), Nathaniel Peteru (Leigh), Matty Gee (Leigh), Jamie Ellis (Leigh), Mitch Garbutt (Toulouse), Weller Hauraki (released), Adam Rooks (Bradford), Will Oakes (Dewsbury Rams).

#### LEEDS RHINOS

**Coming:** Zane Tetevano (Penrith), Bodene Thompson (Toronto), King Vuniyayawa (New Zealand Warriors).  
**Going:** Ava Seumanufagai (released), Stevie Ward (retired), Adam Cuthbertson (York), Dom Crosby (retired), Rhys Evans (Bradford), Muizz Mustapha (season loan to Hull KR).

#### LEIGH CENTURIONS

**Coming:** Blake Wallace, Matty Russell, Joe Mellor, Adam Sidlow (all Toronto Wolfpack); James Bell (Toulouse), Lewis Tierney (Catalans Dragons), Keanan Brand

(Warrington – season long loan), Nathaniel Peteru, Ryan Brierley, Jamie Ellis, Matty Gee (all Hull KR), Ben Flower, Craig Mullen (Wigan).

**Going:** Martyn Ridyard, Liam Forsyth, Sam Brooks (all Swinton), Callum Field (Featherstone), Gregg McNally (Whitehaven), Ryan Ince (Oldham), Jarrod Sammut (London Broncos), Adam Higson (not attached), Ben Reynolds (Toulouse), Danny Addy (Salford), Nick Glohe (not attached), Ryan Shaw (Barrow), Brad Holroyd (Workington).

#### SALFORD RED DEVILS

**Coming:** Joe Burgess (Wigan), Morgan Escare, Harvey Livett (Hull KR), Danny Addy (Leigh), Elijah Taylor (Wests Tigers), Darcy Lussick (Toronto), Jack Wells (Wigan), Matty Costello (St Helens), Sam Luckley (Newcastle Thunder).  
**Going:** Mark Flanagan, Niall Evalds (Castleford), Luis Roberts (Swinton), Kris Welham (Featherstone), Gil Dudson (Catalans), Joey Lussick (Parramatta), Connor Jones (Featherstone), Tyrone McCarthy (released), Luke Yates (Huddersfield).

#### ST HELENS

**Coming:** Joel Thompson (Manly), Agnati Paasi (New Zealand Warriors), Sione Mata'utia (Newcastle Knights), Dan Norman (London Broncos).  
**Going:** Zeb Taia (retired), Dom Peyroux (Toulouse), Joseph Paulo (Toulouse), James Graham (retired), Matty Costello (Salford), Jack Ashworth (Huddersfield), Callum Hazzard (North Wales Crusaders), Richard Marshall (Coach) (Salford Red Devils).

#### WAKEFIELD TRINITY

**Coming:** Mason Lino (Newcastle Knights), Innes Senior (Huddersfield, loan), Eddie Battye (London Broncos).  
**Going:** Ben Jones-Bishop (released), Tony Gigot (released), Danny Brough (Bradford), Danny Kirmond (York City), Craig Kopczak (Featherstone), Titus Gwaze (released), Romain Navarrete (loan expired).

#### WARRINGTON WOLVES

**Coming:** Greg Inglis (unattached), Robbie Mulhern (Hull KR), Rob Butler (London Broncos).  
**Going:** Anthony Gelling (released), Ben Murdoch-Masila (New Zealand Warriors), Luis Johnson (Hull KR), Luther Burrell (Newcastle Falcons, RU), Keanan Brand (Loan, Leigh), Samy Kibula (Loan, Newcastle), Harvey Livett (Salford), Declan Patton (released).

#### WIGAN WARRIORS

**Coming:** John Bateman (Canberra Raiders), Jai Field (Parramatta Eels).  
**Going:** Sean O'Loughlin (Retired), Joe Burgess (Salford), Jack Wells (Salford), Ben Flower (Leigh), Harry Rushton (Canberra), Joe Greenwood (Huddersfield), Jake Shorrocks (Newcastle Thunder), Josh Woods (Newcastle Thunder), Chris Hankinson (loan to London Broncos).





**THE Annual Rugby League Cabramatta International Nines tournament will continue in 2020 under a new name.**

Now re-branded the Sydney Nines, the tournament will still be held at Cabramatta's New Era Ground as well as the adjoining fields on February 20.

The Nines tournament was first held in 2008 after beginning life as a Sevens event. Many nations have been involved in its history including the likes of Cook Islands, Japan, Fiji, American Samoa, Portugal, Tonga, Niue, Vanuatu, Philippines, Italy, Greece, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Canada, Ireland, Latin Heat, Malta, El Salvador, Chile, Serbia, Hungary, Poland, Sudan, USA and Colombia.

Vietnam were scheduled to make their debut in the 2020 International Nines but that was cancelled due to excessive heat that saw temperatures reach 45 degrees on the day.

Vietnam are returning this year and are keen to play their first match of Rugby League as a stand-alone nation.

They will be joined by other nations including Philippines, Sudan, Ireland, Malta, Niue, Uruguay, Ozzy Cooks as well as Cabramatta and the Campbelltown City Kangaroos.

It is expected that 16 teams will be involved with four pools or four. The winners will advance to the Cup with the other placed side to feature in the Trophy, Plate and Bowl sections.

**The Sydney Nines will also feature a Women's Rugby League tournament with eight teams set to play.**

Some of the sides that will be playing are Lebanon, Greece, Malta, Philippines, two from Cook Islands as well as Glebe Burwood and Cabramatta.

The Greek women's side will be involved for the first time in Australia. They will be coached by Stuart McClennan, who himself was in charge of the inaugural Women's team that played Turkey in their first international in 2019 in Edirne.

The Greeks are hoping to play a 13-a-side international with Vanuatu later this year and plan to take a number of girls to Greece to help train and play with the local women that are involved in Rugby League.

**The newest Rugby League club in Japan, the Abiko Ducks, are set to join an expanded Japan National Cup in 2021 as Rugby League activities return to the Asian nation.**

The Ducks are the first club based out of Chiba, east of Tokyo on the Island of Honshu, and become just the third club based outside of the National Capital.

The Japanese National Cup has been played since 1998, with the last iteration of the competition taking place in 2019. The last season of the competition featured five teams, with the Tokyo-Shinjuku Giants, South Ikebukuro Rabbitohs and Tokyo Warriors representing the national capital, and the Kansai Kaminari and West Mix base around Osaka.

Other clubs in the mix include the

Tokyo Gaijin Bulldogs who have returned to the code after almost a decade away from Rugby League.

The Abiko Ducks were formed in 2020 and have already started introducing Rugby League into the region through a series of training and development events and a regular Tag Football competition. The club will be based out of Teganuma Park and their first player signing is Yosuke Morita from the NEC Green Rockets (Top League).

**English Southern Conference side, Gloucestershire-based All Golds, has helped ensure the re-start of the Russian rugby league season.**

In the first match to be played since lockdown, in snowy Moscow, two selection sides from the capital, "Sparta" and "Grand" played an exhibition match under the organisation of ARLC president Aleksandr Kolikov.

The teams wore kits donated by the All Golds. "The jerseys and equipment provided will be of huge help for the nation, this is a great step forward for the game as the sport rebuilds itself," said Kolikov.

"We didn't announce the score on purpose as it was an exhibition game but both teams fought on equal terms and the standard of rugby was good. This will help us to continue to build interest and momentum for the coming season."

**The Board of International Rugby League (IRL) has announced that the mid-season international window for 2021 will be the weekend of 26/27 June.**

The official window is a dedicated period when international matches can be arranged and take precedence over domestic matches. It is primarily arranged to assist the major professional leagues in the release of players and does not stop any members from arranging games outside of the window.

**Morocco is set to become the fourth African nation to be granted affiliate member status, after their application was accepted by the Rugby League European Federation.**

It has now been forwarded to the board of International Rugby League for their formal accreditation.

Should they be elevated from observer status, Morocco will join Nigeria and Ghana and, most recently, Cameroon whose request for an upgrade is also currently with the IRL.

Morocco RL president, Yamina Abdessellem said: "We are very happy to receive this confirmation that our affiliate member application has been approved by the RLEF. It will give another dimension to our domestic competition and legitimize our existence within the Moroccan Sport Ministry."

Abdsellem added: "The FMRL projects and objectives are multiple, our priority is to work as a national showcase via our girls and boys teams, as well as our university clubs and our XIII Moroccan wheelchair side. All the hard work and ef-

fort is starting to pay off at last, and today is where the real development work begins. It starts with preparing for future Middle East Africa Cup competitions and aiming to be part of the qualification process for the 2025 World Cup."

**With significant increased Rugby League activity - and more nations than ever before established and playing - the first steps have been taken to set up a federation for the sport in the Middle East and Africa region.**

A five person steering group has been elected, which has been tasked with implementing a road map for the MEA to establish its own governance structures, administration currently being part of the Rugby League European Federation's mandate.

As full members of International Rugby League (IRL), Lebanon's Nayef Abi Said and South Africa's Dr Frans Erasmus received automatic nominations, and they have been joined by Cameroon's Carol Manga and Yamina Abdessellem from Morocco, alongside Remond Safi, the MEA regional director at the RLEF, who will act as chair for the next 12 months.

Delegates from Burundi, DR Congo, Ghana, Libya, Nigeria and Palestine were involved in the election process.

Alongside the steering group, the region has also established its first women's working group which will comprise of Yamina Abdessellem as chair, Lebanon's Rouba Tamim, Rachel Ankamah from Ghana, Cameroon's Gaelle Anzong and Ihezhahira Ishatse from Burundi. Rouba Tamim and Rachel Ankamah will also sit as representatives on a similar panel with the IRL.

**Rugby League Norge (Norway) has set a return to play date for their domestic men's competition as the 29th of May.**

The 2021 season will operate with two regional divisions, in the South West and North East. The respective winners will meet in the Grand Final for the right to be known as champions.

There will be three teams in each division; Lillestrom Lions, Oslo Capitals and Trondheim in the North East, and Stavanger, Sandnes Raiders and newcomers Haugesund Sea Eagles in the South West.

**The first America's Rugby League steering committee meeting has taken place, with the group tasked to establish an agreed road map for the region to become a confederation in its own right.**

Currently North America, Central America and the Caribbean come under the jurisdiction of the Rugby League European Federation, whilst the Asia Pacific Rugby League Confederation takes responsibility for South America.

The committee is made up of representatives from the six full, affiliate and observer members in the Americas, plus Monteith and RLEF general manager David Butler.

# Bengalury beat Kolkata in India

**The Bengaluru (Bangalore) Broncos have won Rugby League India's first piece of silverware on offer in 2021 after defeating the Kolkata based Jaguars 18-6 in the Final.**

The Jaguars, who won Rugby League India's inaugural mini-tournament last December, travelled over 1,800km to take part in the second leg held at the SPT Sports Academy in Sarjapur.

Joining the Jaguars at the event were three teams from the state of Karnataka, including eventual Champions, the Broncos.

Rugby League India was established in early 2020 to help with the development of Rugby League across the nation. The Federation has established regional associations in West Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir.

**The Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers have won the 2021 Cook Islands 'League in Paradise' Nines held at the National Stadium in Nikao after defeating the Avatiu Eels in the tournament Final.**

Tupapa Maraerenga progressed through the tournament losing only one match, to the Arorangi Bears, in the group stages to claim their first Nines title since 2018.

The reformed Aitutaki Sharks finished the tournament in third, defeating last year's Nines Champions, the Arorangi Bears, in the third Place Play-Off.

## RESULTS

**Day 1:** Avatiu Eels d. Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers (2) 30-6, Titikaveka d. Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles 21-4, Aitutaki Sharks d. Arorangi Bears 22-10, Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Tupapa Panthers (2) 51-10, Avatiu Eels d. Aitutaki Sharks 17-14, Arorangi d. Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles 22-6, Tupapa Maraerenga d. Titikaveka Bulldogs 35-6, Aitutaki d. Tupapa Maraerenga (2) 27-12, Avatiu Eels d. Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles 29-8, Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Aitutaki 39-25, Titikaveka d. Arorangi 10-8, Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles d. Tupapa Panthers (2) 40-12.

**Day 2:** Arorangi d. Tupapa Maraerenga 15-9, Aitutaki d. Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles 25-20, Avatiu Eels d. Titikaveka 16-8, Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Ngatangia-Matavera Sea Eagles 43-17, Avatiu d. Arorangi 23-0, Titikaveka d. Tupapa Maraerenga (2) 39-20, Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Avatiu 16-13, Arorangi d. Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers (2) 44-16, Titikaveka Bulldogs drew with Aitutaki Sharks 12-all.

**Semi-Finals:** Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Arorangi Bears 29-17, Avatiu Eels d. Aitutaki Sharks 29-14.

**Third-Place Play-Off:** Aitutaki Sharks d. Arorangi Bears 20-19. **Grand Final:** Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers d. Avatiu Eels 34-26.

**Women's Grand Final:** Rarotonga d. Tupapa Maraerenga Panthers 11-8.

**The Tarangau Rugby League club has held off a fast finishing Butterflies to win the 71st Port Moresby Rugby Football League Men's Grand Final 22-18 at the National Football Stadium.**

Despite scoring five tries to three, the Butterflies stayed in the hunt with Tarangau thanks to their superior goal kicking to set up a thrilling final quarter in the match, where Tarangau were forced to defend an onslaught of attack.

## FRANCE

**Round 5 (December 5-6):** Villeneuve d. Albi 24-22, Limoux d. Avignon 16-10, Lezignan d. Toulouse 40-8, Carcassonne d. Palau 42-34, St Esteve-XIII Catalan d. St Gaudens 50-14.

**Round 6 (December 12-13):** Lezignan d. Carcassonne 20-16, St Gaudens d. Palau 14-10, Avignon d. Toulouse 36-10. St Esteve-XIII Catalan vs Albi, Limoux vs Villeneuve postponed.

**Round 7 (December 19-20):** Albi d. Limoux 20-12, Carcassonne d. Avignon 36-12, Lezignan d. St Gaudens 46-6, St Esteve-XIII Catalan d. Palau 30-22, Villeneuve d. Toulouse 42-16.

**Round 8 (January 9-10):** St Esteve-XIII Catalan d. Lezignan 14-8, Toulouse d. Limoux 26-14, Carcassonne d. Villeneuve 37-12. Palau vs Albi postponed, St Gaudens vs Avignon postponed.

**Round 9 (January 17):** St Esteve-XIII Catalan d. Avignon 20-14, Lezignan d. Palau Broncos 54-6, Carcassonne Canaries d. Limoux 28-26, Albi d. Toulouse 26-16, Villeneuve d. St Gaudens 36-30.

**Round 10 (January 30-31):** Lezignan d. Albi 34-22, Avignon d. Palau 24-22, Limoux d. St Gaudens 34-14.

**Round 11 (February 6-7):** Lezignan d. Avignon 28-22, Villeneuve d. Palau 34-32, St Esteve-XIII Catalan d. Limoux 46-24, St Gaudens d. Toulouse 24-12. Albi vs Carcassonne postponed.

## COMPETITION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	PTS
Lezignan	10	8	0	2	322	177	145	25
Carcassonne	8	7	0	1	254	158	96	22
Villeneuve	7	6	0	1	211	165	46	18
St Esteve XIII Cat.	8	5	0	3	184	182	2	17
Limoux	9	4	0	5	218	218	0	16
St Gaudens	9	4	0	5	212	224	-12	15
Avignon	9	3	0	6	195	234	-39	13
Toulouse	9	3	0	6	168	254	-86	12
Albi	7	2	0	5	130	172	-42	10
Palau	8	0	0	8	164	274	-110	5





# ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

BY TERRY LIBEROPOULOS

And so we see the demise of another long running and established Rugby League publication.

The English-based *League Weekly* put a halt to its newspaper on March 23, 2020 because the game in England stopped and their wasn't much to report every week as no games were being played.

The plan was to put everything on pause and then re-commence once things started to get back to normal.

But with the Covid-19 situation getting worse, the decision was recently made that *League Weekly* would cease publishing.

In the end, the final issue was cover dated March 23, 2020 which was the 922nd edition that was published since it was first printed back in 2002.

I have read and have every issue of those and it is a shame that I will not be getting my English Rugby League fix every week.

*League Weekly* was born after another English weekly newspaper 'Rugby Leaguer' was bought out by arch-rivals *League Express*. The 'Rugby Leaguer' was first published in 1949 and was usually out on a Thursday.

When *League Express* came out in 1990, it was in direct competition with 'Rugby Leaguer' but they had one advantage - they came out on Monday, four days earlier and focused on all the match reports where 'Rugby Leaguer' would only have the team results and scorers every week.

'Rugby Leaguer' eventually made the move to Monday but struggled to keep up with the popular 'League Express'.

Ray French and David Parker that worked at 'Rugby Leaguer' wanted an alternative say to that of 'League Express' and convinced publisher Danny Lockwood to start a new weekly newspaper.

I remember talking to French when he was in Australia and telling him how disappointed I was about 'Rugby Leaguer' not being around any more. In reality, *League Express* added the words to the title but two Rugby League newspapers became one.

French let me in on a secret. A new publication was being created and the early issues were actually called 'The New League Weekly'.

I enjoyed reading the articles and opinions but like most Rugby League publications, it has headed to the printed

graveyard.

And I thought that one of those was also going to be the *Rugby League Annual* produced magnificently by David Middleton.

When I read just before Christmas that the NRL annual would be moving online, I nearly choked on my breakfast.

I thought, maybe, it will be an online version of exactly how the printed book is. But alas, it wasn't.

Thankfully, David has told me that the annual will be produced in printed form very shortly. Music to my ears.

The *Rugby League Annual* has been part of the scene since 1987 and most importantly, is a vital part of history that helps record our history. Prior to that, the *EE Christensen Yearbooks* were a fantastic source of information. They were produced from 1947 until 1978.

The NRL must realise how important it is to have such a book that records the history of the game. Every game played, every game recorded, every player registered for generations to see.

It doesn't cost that much for a small amount of booklets to be printed but it will cost much more in the future if these records are not recorded.

It is all good to have things online but too much focus is put on having things online. The phone is a visual thing and video is king. Watching games is great for that but recording history should always have a book form.

If it is going to go online, it needs to be interactive but even that will cost money to produce.

The Yearbook becomes even more important now that it looks very likely that the weekly 'Big League' magazine will not be coming back.

It is incredible that the official program of the NRL will be no more. Having no team lists for the NSW Cup, Qld Cup, Jersey Flegg, Ron Massey Cup and Women's competition is a shame.

There is no better feeling for a player to seeing his or her name in the program. Now that is no more, just the like programs that were produced by the NSW and QLD Rugby League.

The *NSW Rugby League News* ran for 23 years from 1995 until the end of the 2017 season. It was originally called 'Sydney League News' before the name change in 2008.

Now you get the team lists and scorers on the Internet. There have been many times that the team lists have players missing and the times and scorers recorded are not always accurate.

Online site *League Unlimited* did a magnificent job in producing a weekly online magazine that was also available as a print magazine on a few occasions.

I hope they continue to produce one in 2021 but nothing has been confirmed yet.

However, the biggest loss was *Rugby League Week*. The bible of the game, it was part of every fan's life from 1970 until 2017. Quality writing went downhill the day the magazine died.

To me, *Rugby League Week* wasn't about breaking news, it was the articles on the players and clubs, the country features and stories on the little known competitions and players.

Both *Rugby League Week* and *Big League* were part of the Rugby League fabric for so many years, it is hard to imagine they are gone.

Only a few other magazines managed to print more than 30 issues in their history. *Rugby League World*, originally called *Rugby League Life*, was published from 1968 to 1974 with a total of 48 editions printed. The final 13 issues were actually put together by the team at *Rugby League Week*.

The other one was the Australian-based 'Rugby Leaguer' which was edited by Richard Fisk and Geoff Gerard, who at the time was playing for Parramatta.

It was similar to that of the 'Big League' magazine, with 31 weekly issues produced in 1978. It commenced again in 1979 but after just two issues, the decision was made to stop production.

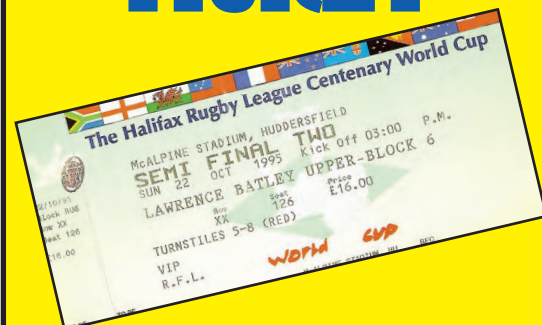
In the meantime, only a few printed Rugby League publications remain in the world. How long they will last is anyone's guess.

The new generation are being brought up with smart phones and tablets and are reading everything online.

Call me a dinosaur, but I embrace both but only if it is of benefit and helps keep the history of the game preserved.

Books and vinyl records have stopped the trend of decline and that leaves me with hope that Rugby League magazines and programs could still be around for a little while longer.

## VINTAGE TICKET



**WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL**  
Date: October 22, 1995

In one of the greatest matches played in World Cup history, Australia somehow managed to survive to get into the final.

Had the Aussies lost this game in 1995, it would have been the first time they had failed to reach the final of the World Cup since 1954.

The 1995 World Cup was staged to celebrate the centenary of Rugby League in England. It was the first tournament to be staged within a few weeks since 1977. And the English Rugby League took the chance to expand it to become the biggest ever participants at that time.

Prior to that, only Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, France and Papua New Guinea were playing internationally.

But the introduction of the World Sevens in 1992 changed all that with many new nations taking the opportunity to play Rugby League.

Hence the decision was made to add the like of Tonga, Western Samoa, Fiji and South Africa while Great Britain were split into England and Wales.

The outbreak of Super League had caused problems throughout the Rugby League world with the Australian Rugby League banning those players that aligned with the rebel organisation from playing any representative football.

In the end, the Australian team went over to the United Kingdom minus many of their international starts including Brett Mullins, Ricky Stuart, Laurie Daley, Steve Walters, Andrew Ettingshausen, Steve Renouf, Brad Clyde and Allan Langer.

Australia lost 20-16 to England in the opening match of the tournament but bounced back to thrash South Africa 86-6 and Fiji 66-0 to reach the semi-finals.

They took on New Zealand, who themselves were lucky to make the final four after they came from 24-12 down with 10 minutes remaining to beat Tonga 25-24.

In the semi-final played at Huddersfield's McAlpine Stadium, Australia looked in control as they led 20-6 with 20 minutes remaining.

On the back of eight penalties from referee Russell Smith, New Zealand hit back. Tries from Richie Barnett (61st minute) and Tony Iro (71st minute) saw the deficit reduced to just four points.

With two minutes remaining and Australia down to 12-men after Terry Hill was sin binned, the Kiwis kept the ball alive with Richard Blackmore delivering a short pass for Kevin Iro to score in the corner.

Matthew Ridge, one of the best goal-kickers at the time, kicked a shocker to leave the score at 20-all.

With seconds remaining, Ridge had another chance to put the Kiwis into the final but his field goal attempt just went wide.

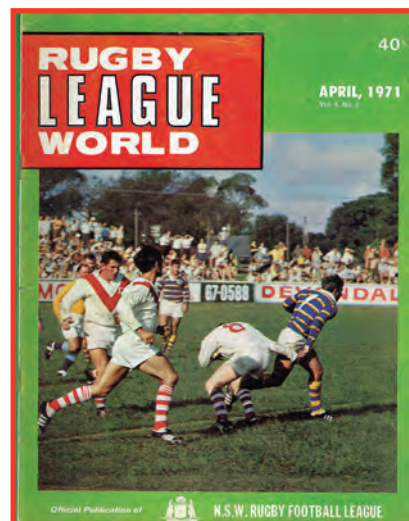
The match went into extra-time of 20 minutes with New Zealand having all the momentum.

Barnett and Andrew Johns both missed shots at a one-pointer before Hill returned from the sin-bin. Hill handled the ball twice before racing over to score wide out after a good pass from Jason Smith. Johns' missed his fifth kick at goal to make it 24-20.

Australia made sure of the win after Brad Fittler raced onto the ball and then produced a wonderful side-step to score with seven minutes remaining.

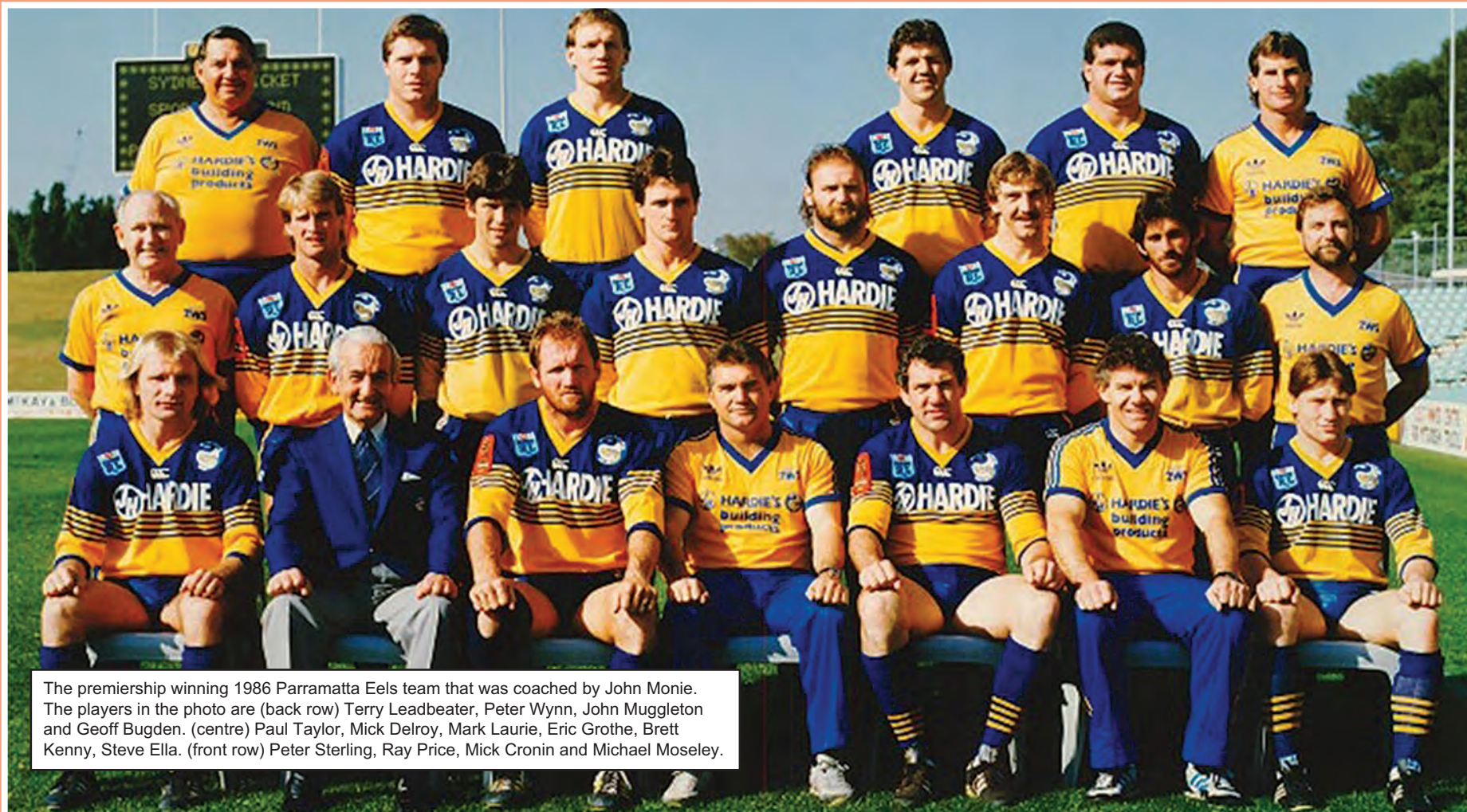


Matthew Ridge lines up for a goal-kick that would have taken New Zealand through to the 1995 World Cup final against England.





## FLASHBACK - THOSE WERE THE DAYS



The premiership winning 1986 Parramatta Eels team that was coached by John Monie. The players in the photo are (back row) Terry Leadbeater, Peter Wynn, John Muggleton and Geoff Bugden. (centre) Paul Taylor, Mick Delroy, Mark Laurie, Eric Grothe, Brett Kenny, Steve Ella. (front row) Peter Sterling, Ray Price, Mick Cronin and Michael Moseley.



**CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW:** Western Suburbs forward Scott Hardy takes the ball against Manly-Warringah at Brookvale Oval in 1993; Rick Bourke makes a break for South Sydney against Eastern Suburbs at the Sydney Sports Ground in 1983. The Souths players in the photo are Graham Murray and Gary Hambly. The Roosters players chasing Bourke are Kevin Hastings and Terry Regan; Mick Stephenson and Bill Ashurst get ready for a match for Penrith in 1994.







BY DANIEL PAIN

The Cinderella story of the 2002 season was the readmittance of the South Sydney Rabbitohs.

Their first game back was the intense Charity Shield match against the Dragons which, over the years has been a fiercely fought encounter. The match was highly anticipated by red and green supporters and Rugby League fans alike. The result was fantastic with a 20-all draw. Souths were back!

Round one was a different story for the Rabbitohs, suffering a 40-6 thrashing at the hands of the Roosters, clearly indicating that only half of the battle had been won with re-entering the NRL. They now had the gruelling week in, week out football to become competitive in the NRL. Speaking of thrashings, the Parramatta Eels continued as they had in the 2001 season, blowing the Panthers off the park 64-6.

State of Origin was the all too familiar Queensland series victory. Phil Gould coached the Blues and with initial success in Game 1, the media came out criticising the Maroons squad, labelling them "Dad's Army". Queensland turned Game 1 around to win the remaining two matches and take the series.

The British Lions travelled to play Australia only to suffer their most humiliating defeat ever. Australia dominated the 'Brits' 64-10 in an international embarrassment. Great Britain flew and played Australia without a lead up match, which could account for some of the humiliating score

line.

The Bulldogs who were leading the competition table were stripped of all their 37 points for serious salary cap breaches. Canterbury were hot favourites to take out the 2002 competition, only to be sent to the cellar. Canterbury finished with eight points after the deduction which means they would have finished the season on 45 points, well in front of second place.

The New Zealand Warriors were minor premiers for the 2002 season with 38 points. In week one of the semi finals, the Warriors won their first semi final in the club's history, defeating the Canberra Raiders by 36-20. The Warriors just hung on to beat Cronulla in the preliminary final to be the first non-Australian team to qualify for a grand final.

The Roosters finished in fourth spot and took on the Cronulla Sharks in the first week of the semi finals and came away with the win by 32-30. Week 2, the Roosters demolished the Newcastle Knights 38-12. It was a real showdown in the grand final qualifier between the Roosters and Brisbane, with the Roosters sneaking home 16-12 to enter the grand final against the Warriors.

The Warriors led the grand final 6 minutes after halftime with a try to Stacey Jones. It took some Brad Fittler magic to get the Roosters back on top with a 40-20. Fittler was later hit hard by Richard Villasanti, who was then treated on the ground. The Roosters forwards lifted a gear in retaliation to the hit on their captain and took control of the game. The Roosters ran out with the game, winning the 2002 grand final by 30-8.

In 2002, Select Australia again released the premium set of football cards, NRL Challenge. The common set comes with a logo card for each team as well as a Timeless Tribute.

The Timeless Tributes included Peter Sterling, Andrew Ettingshausen, Terry Lamb, Geoff Toovey, Laurie Daley, Greg Alexander and Mario Fenech to name a few. Challenge also had several low-end inserts which were Dally M Awards, Club Player of the Year and Team of 2001.

The popular Future Force was rolled out again as a series two with some bright young stars who went on in the NRL including Wade McKinnon, current referee Henry Perenara, Jason King, Brent Kite, Luke Lewis and Paul Gallen.

An All Star signature redemption set was extremely collectable with Darren Lockyer, Braith Anasta, Mathew Gidley and Craig Wing as the signers of these limited edition cards.

The Enforcer series which included Gordon Tallis, Jason Ryles, Mark O'Meley and more were inserted individually into the boxes of NRL

Challenge. The John Raper Legend signature card was the pick of the series which was also a redemption card. To top off the set, an Extreme Redemption card was inserted into some packets which redeemed the entire set including signature cards and there was also a Treasure Redemption which redeemed all the Future Force signature cards. Good luck finding anyone with these redemptions today.

The Daily Telegraph released a mammoth 240 card set along with a collectors album. The cards are slightly smaller in size than standard sized cards. Each team consisted of 16 cards, 14 of which were players and the other two being the club logos and the coach. Rather more expansive than the Select team cards.

A number of clubs also released their own footy cards during 2002. South Sydney along with sponsor MMA, Arrive Alive released a postcard sized set of 25 players cards. These were purchased as a set in shrink wrap with care to be taken not to damage the cards when slicing open the plastic.

The St George Illawarra Dragons 21 card, 'Bring It On' set was also released, which were slightly longer than standard cards. These cards are terribly hard to find individually, let alone as a full set. One of the more famous cards is Mark Riddell with his typical pose for goal.

The Brisbane Broncos along with Ergon Energy released a 4-card set with a green and blue border. Powering the Broncos set featured Ben Ikin, Darren Lockyer, Gordon Tallis and Shane Webcke. These cards also came as a set in plastic shrink wrap.

The first oval card set in existence was brought out by the Parramatta Eels along with numerous sponsors. The top 25 Eels players feature and a printed signature of each player is on each player card. The unique design of these cards makes them a novelty and favourite amongst Parramatta supporters.

There were several other postcard series and individual post cards released in 2002. The Telstra club post cards are one of note with each club having four top line players graphically represented as action silhouettes. The ARL Foundation had a similar postcard release with clubs associated with their junior areas.

These cards are more difficult to complete as a set as some clubs had a number of variations and mostly were handed out at the location of the junior clubs which included places like Cairns, Tamworth, Kempsey, Townsville, Melbourne, South East Queensland, Southern Highlands, Hunter region, South Australia, Western Australia.

Card collecting and producing was on the rise, collectors were becoming serious in the hobby.



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# RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 1977

BY TERRY LIBEROPOULOS

The 1977 World Cup was known as the World Series and held jointly by New Zealand and Australia.

It was the fifth tournament in just nine years and the 1977 version returned to being hosted over a few weeks instead of the financial flop that happened two years later when it was spread over nine months and two hemispheres.

Wales and England were brought back to play as Great Britain and they were joined by France, Australia and New Zealand.

The French began their campaign with a stopover in Port Moresby and were thrashed 37-6 by Papua New Guinea before almost 15,000 spectators. Their quest was a disaster, losing 19-12 by Newcastle and 14-10 by Toowoomba before cancelling their match against Wide Bay because they only had eight fit players.

Australia won all their three matches, including a 19-5 victory over Great Britain at Lang Park. The British finished in second spot, thus qualifying for the final that was reinstated after the disaster of 1975.

Prior to the final, the average crowd was just over 12,000 and only 24,457 turned up for the final at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Many pundits believed that the Aussies would easily win the match.

Australia were given a scare but held on to beat Great Britain 13-12 with the visitors unlucky to have a possible try from winger Stuart Wright not given by referee Billy Thompson. The whistle was blown for a penalty for obstruction from the Australians just as Wright intercepted a pass from Greg Pierce and was on his way to the try line.

Great Britain goal-kicker George Fairbairn also missed a simple penalty goal from in front of the posts and he also fumbled a kick from Mick Cronin which eventually resulted in a try from Australian half-back John Kolc.

Interest in the 1977 tournament was at its lowest it had ever been and the International Board quickly decided to impose a four-year ban on transfers of players between Britain, New Zealand and Australia.

They believed the exodus of English players to Australia was destroying the British side and this rule would allow them to be more competitive.

How wrong they were! Great Britain lost the 1978, 1979 and 1982 Ashes and the ban was finally over in time for Aussie players to play in England during the 1983-84 season.

Following the financial disaster of 1975 and 1977, it wasn't until 1985 that some form of World Cup would be staged. The last match of a Test series was deemed to be a World Cup match, which added more interest, especially if a nation had won the opening two matches.



PHOTOS: (Top to bottom): Australian skipper Arthur Beetson holds up the World Cup trophy after the Aussies beat Great Britain in the final; Beetson gets the ball away in the final; Australian winger Terry Fahey is tackled by the French defence in their clash at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

## RUGBY LEAGUE 1977 WORLD CUP SCOREBOARD

May 29

**Australia 27** (Allan McMahon 2, Mark Harris, Mark Thomas, John Peard tries; Mick Cronin 6 goals) d. **New Zealand 12** (John Smith, Alan Rushton tries; Warren Collicot 3 goals) at Carlaw Park, Auckland. Referee: Billy Thompson (England). Crowd: 20,019.

June 5

**Great Britain 23** (Stuart Wright, Roger Millward, Les Dyl tries; George Fairbairn 7 goals) d. **France 4** (Jose Calle 2 goals) at Carlaw Park, Auckland. Referee: Bob Cooper (New Zealand). Crowd: 10,000.

June 11

**Australia 21** (Graham Eadie 2, Allan McMahon, Denis Fitzgerald, Greg Viewers tries; Mick Cronin 3 goals) d. **France 9** (Jose Moyà try; Jose Calle 3 goals) at Sydney Cricket Ground. Referee: Billy Thompson (England). Crowd: 13, 231.

June 12

**Great Britain 30** (Stuart Wright 2, Bill Francis, George Nicholls, Eddie Bowman, Roger Millward tries; George Fairbairn 6 goals) d. **New Zealand 12** (Kevin Fisher, John Whittaker tries; Warren Collicot 3 goals) at Addington Showgrounds, Christchurch. Referee: Marcel Caillo (France). Crowd: 5342.

June 18

**Australia 19** (Graham Eadie 2, Terry Randall tries; Mick Cronin 5 goals) d. **Great Britain 5** (Roger Millward try; George Fairbairn goal) at Lang Park, Brisbane. Referee: Marcel Caillol (France). Crowd: 25,200.

June 19

**New Zealand 28** (Kevin Fisher, Chris Jordan, John Smith, Mark Graham tries; Jordan 8 goals) d. **France 20** (Jean-Jacques Cologni 2, Joel Roosebrouck, Jacques Guigue tries; Jose Moyà 4 goals) at Carlaw Park, Auckland. Referee: Billy Thompson (England). Crowd: 8000.

### FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Australia	3	3	0	0	67	26	6
Great Britain	3	2	0	1	58	35	4
New Zealand	3	1	0	2	52	77	2
France	3	0	0	3	33	72	0

### FINAL

June 25

**Australia 13** (Allan McMahon, Russel Gartner, John Kolc tries; Mick Cronin 2 goals) d. **Great Britain 12** (Steve Pitchford, Ken Gill tries; George Fairbairn 3 goals) at Sydney Cricket Ground. Referee: Billy Thompson (England). Crowd: 24,457.

**Australia:** Graham Eadie, Mark Harris, Mick Cronin, Russel Gartner, Allan McMahon, John Peard, John Kolc, Terry Randall, Nick Geiger, Greg Veivers, Arthur Beetson (c), Ray Higgs, Greg Pierce.

Replacement: Denis Fitzgerald.

Coach: Terry Fearnley.

**Great Britain:** George Fairbairn, Bill Francis, John Holmes, Les Dyl, Stuart Wright, Roger Millward (c), Steve Nash, Steve Pitchford, Keith Elwell, Jim Thompson, Eddie Bowman, George Nicholls, Phil Hogan.

Replacements: Ken Gill, Len Casey.

Coach: David Watkins.

### SQUADS

**Australia:** Arthur Beetson (Eastern Suburbs) (c), Steve Crear (Brisbane Wests), Mick Cronin (Parramatta), Graham Eadie (Manly), Terry Fahey (South Sydney), Denis Fitzgerald (Parramatta), Russel Gartner (Manly), Nick Geiger (Brisbane Norths), Mark Harris (Eastern Suburbs), Ray Higgs (Parramatta), John Kolc (Parramatta), Allan McMahon (Balmain), Rod Morris (Brisbane Easts), Graham Olling (Parramatta), John Peard (Parramatta), Greg Pierce (Cronulla), Terry Randall (Manly), Tom Raudonikis (Western Suburbs), Rod Reddy (St George), Mark Thomas (Brisbane Brothers), Greg Veivers (Brisbane Souths).

Coach: Terry Fearnley.

**France:** Guy Alard (Carcassonne), Christian Baile (Carcassonne), Herve Bonnet (St Esteve), Jean-Marc Bourrett (XIII Catalan), Jean-Louis Brial (XIII Catalan), Jose Calle (St Esteve) (c), Manuel Caravaca (Carcassonne), Michel Cassin (Toulouse), Max Chantel (Villeneuve), Patrick Chauvet (Carcassonne), Jean-Jacques Cologni (XIII Catalan), Henri Daniel (XIII Catalan), Guy Garcia (Carcassonne), Jacques Guigue (Avignon), Jackie Imbert (Avignon), Jean-Marie Imbert (Avignon), Christian Laskawiec (Albi), Gerard Lepine (Bordeaux), Jean-Claude Mayorgas (Toulouse), Michel Moussard (Albi), Jose Moya (Carcassonne), Guy Rodriguez (Toulouse), Joel Roosebrouck (Villeneuve), Andre Ruiz (Carcassonne), Pierre Saboureau (XIII Catalan), Jean-Pierre Sauret (XIII Catalan), Rene Terrats (St Esteve).

Coach: Yves Begou.

**Great Britain:** Eddie Bowman (Workington), Len Casey (Hull KR), Les Dyl (Leeds), Keith Elwell (Widnes), George Fairbairn (Wigan), Keith Fielding (Salford), Bill Francis (Wigan), Ken Gill (Salford), Alan Hodgkinson (Rochdale), Phil Hogan (Barrow), John Holmes (Leeds), Sam Lloyd (Castleford), Roger Millward (Hull KR) (c), Steve Nash (Salford), George Nicholls (St Helens), Steve Pitchford (Leeds), Peter Smith (Featherstone), Jim Thompson (Featherstone), David Ward (Leeds), Stuart Wright (Widnes).

Coach: David Watkins.

**New Zealand:** Fred ah Kuoi (Auckland), Ray Baxendake (West Coast), Tony Coll (West Coast) (c), Warren Collicot (Wellington), Tom Conroy (Auckland), Olsen Filipaina (Auckland), Kevin Fisher (Waikato), Mark Graham (Auckland), Whare Henry (Wellington), Whetu Henry (Wellington), Chris Jordan (Auckland), Michael O'Donnell (Canterbury), Dane O'Hara (Auckland), Lindsay Proctor (Auckland), Alan Rushton (Canterbury), John Smith (Auckland), Dane Sorenson (Cronulla), Kurt Sorenson (Auckland), John Whittaker (Wellington), Dennis Williams (Auckland).

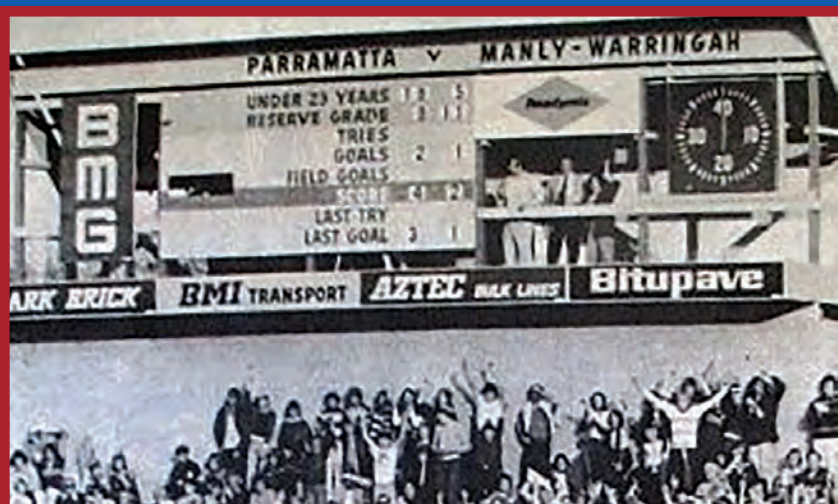
Coach: Ron Ackland.



# SCOREBOARDS FROM YESTERYEAR



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** The old scoreboard at Kogarah Jubilee Oval; Balmain and North Sydney in action in 1960 at the old Sydney Sports Ground; The Cumberland Oval scoreboard for the 1977 clash between Parramatta and Manly; Newtown taking on Penrith at Henson Park in 1976 with the old simple scoreboard in place at the top of the toilet and canteen block. The scoreboard attendant is sitting alone at the top; Balmain keep the ball alive in this match played in 1974 at Penrith Park. Safety is not on the cards as five children look after the scoreboard.







# Your guide to the French Rugby League

BY PIERRE CARCAU in France

For the Australian readers, French Rugby League is probably a strange thing.

They may have heard of it, it may sound familiar for them but how much do they really know about it? And moreover, doesn't French Rugby League belong to the past? Isn't it a sport relegated to those black and white pictures you can see in History books or in attics?

The two last encounters between France and Australia were easily won (that is of course an understatement) by the Kangaroos. And worse than that, it's the Australian Under 21 side who defeated France last time.

These days, journalists complain that today's France Rugby League team can't compete with the best League nations. Lack of commitment or seriousness in building a strong side are sometimes suspected. But to be fair, their international results haven't been much to crow about.

Right before this, when promoting the World Cup Nines on their internet site, the organisers didn't seem to regard France as a traditional RL nation any more.

So, finally, what's the difference today between France and some of these new emerging nations?

Well, make no mistake, France IS a traditional Rugby League nation and a well-structured one. Nowadays, there are four men's divisions, two women's ones, a Rugby League wheelchair's championship and a major knock out competition, la "Coupe de France Lord Derby". France Rugby League even managed to keep some presence in the three biggest French Metropolises; the Great Paris, Marseille and Lyon.

So, what's the problem with France?

Firstly, unlike the Australian Sport, the French does not receive much coverage from the media.

There is one king in the country, and this uncontested king is Football Association (Soccer). Everywhere.

With some seasonal interruptions in this medias' obsession; Tennis during the European spring ("the French Open"), Cycling in summer ("Tour de France").

The French public's interest is so high in Football that when they don't get enough just watching the domestic championship, they follow the foreign ones.... Having a "club de foot" in your own town, or having played soccer yourself, is not mandatory; there is always a great foreign club, (such as the "Barga", Manchester, Bayern...) to support somewhere, even if it is located hundreds of kilometres away. In France, we even say that the French Football national team has 60,000,000 head coaches. This figure is of course the population of the country.

Other sports have the scraps of the medias' attention, and Rugby Union is good at that. Their connection to the media and politicians allows them to have a presence in the spotlight. Union is indeed associated with the "valeurs" (social values and moral virtues) and offer to the French public a rewritten history of the Rugby codes. For instance, very few national Rugby journalists mention NRL or Super League and when they do so, it's not normally in a positive way.

So, French Rugby League have had a hard time finding some room in this over saturated, and a little bit biased, market.

It means many of their talented juniors head to Rugby Union because of the higher profile, and of course, more money.

Secondly, it's a question of scale as you will see with this presentation of Elite 1, the first tier of the French Men's championship.

If NRL is mainly the game of two states in Australia and a country, the Elite 1 championship takes places in three different French Regions. Smaller but as distinct as New South Wales, Queensland and Auckland are.

NRL and its French counterpart have also something in common; no relegation and no promotion. Despite the existence of three lower divisions, a French club have to meet a certain criteria to enter the Elite 1.



Above: Limoux Grizzlies celebrate winning the French Championship in 2017.

Below left: Carcassonne hold up the Lord Derby Cup after edging out Limoux 18-16 in the final.





## SOUTH WEST OF FRANCE (NOUVELLE AQUITAINE AND WEST OCCITANIE)

To give you a few landmarks for this area, Rugby is a way of life here.

But it's Rugby Union which dominates that area. And nothing to do with social classes: in many places, Union is the number one sport. So, farmers, blue or white collars workers often play in the same team. Don't count on a working-class for League; you're born into rugby place or not, period!

It's also a wealthy area where Union clubs who are known for getting more money they can from sponsors and from local governments, in order to remain in their 1st tier "Top 14". They are a serious threat to RL clubs by attracting their best players.

Weather in the south west of France (which could be compared to the climate in Tasmania) may have its influence on the game; wet grounds and sloppy balls may be usual for the "Treizistes".

### SAINT GAUDENS

Saint Gaudens (pronunciation Sain' Godens), is the most western club. This club, created in 1958, in a city of 11,000 inhabitants, has won the French championship four times and the Coupe de France three times. St Gaudens belongs to these clubs which are now overshadowed by the Dragons Catalans and Toulouse Olympique. But the "Saint Gaudinois" can still be the trouble makers of the Elite 1 championship. Their annual budget? Among one of the smallest ones, about \$417,000. Cyril Molinier (former player of Toulouse Olympique) the captain of the team and the Franco-New Zealander Kane Bentley, under the guidance of the head coach Julien Guérin, will do their best to avoid the bottom of the Elite 1's league table.



**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1970, 1974, 1991, 2004.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1973, 1991, 1992.

### VILLENEUVE

Villeneuve means "Newtown" in French. It's a funny coincidence that this pioneer club (founded in 1934) wears the same name as the oldest RL club in Australia. Yet the city of Villeneuve is a little bigger: with a population of 22,000, something similar to that of Goulburn. Villeneuve Leopards have won the championship and the Coupe de France nine times.



If this article was written 20 years ago, we would probably describe them as the best French team. Today with the top French teams playing in the British championships, getting most of the public interest, their main problem is, like Saint Gaudens, avoiding the last places of the championship, even if they manage to get to the play offs last season. They also avoided bankruptcy in 2014.

Villeneuve sur-lot had also been "bullied" by a strong nearby Union club, which was at the head of the anti-Rugby League fight in the past, especially the 70's; Agen. With some "dirty tricks" as preventing them from using the Agen city ground and not getting much support in the local press.

Fortunately, today both clubs have much better relations, sharing the same pitch for promotional training. The club has a \$770,000 annual budget. Rugby League remains such a passion in the city, a passion that neither Union nor Soccer could ever take away. With head coach Fabien Devecchi (former captain of the French national team, who also played in England), the club wish to be successful again as they were until the early 2000's. And try to get any title as the last one was won in 2003.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1935, 1959, 1964, 1980, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1937, 1958, 1964, 1979, 1984, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003.

### TOULOUSE

While the club was formed in 1937, this is Toulouse's reserve grade team, not the first team who plays in the English Championship, and who are a serious applicant for the British Super League in the near future. Unfortunately, this kind of experimental and training team have been used to getting the last places of the Elite 1. Which was the case until last season.

It seems that in the year of the pandemic, the "Toulousains" played better and finished in seventh position at the end of the 2020 year. Toulouse is the fourth largest city in France (almost as big as the Gold Coast). Such a strategic place because this home of the French aerospace industry is considered as the capital of rugby (both codes) in France.

Having Toulouse in Super League, and a competing side in Elite 1 as well, would probably make a media breakthrough and comfort decisively the place of Toulouse on the European Rugby League's map. What is sure is that this section plays its role well. It was a springboard for players such as Paul Marcon, who joined the Toulouse Olympique team and the French national team. And with Sébastien Raguin, a former Dragons Catalans' player, as their head coach, the Toulouse players could create a few surprises this season.



**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1965, 1973, 1975, 2000, 2014, 2015.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 2014

### ALBI

Albi is a Rugby stronghold in this beautiful historical city of 49,000 (comparable to the population of Bundaberg or Wagga Wagga).

If the Racing Club, created in 1934, was a pioneer club, the second to join French RL, they disappeared in



2008, due to a bankruptcy. Which illustrates perfectly the problem of the clubs of the area; struggling for surviving in a very competitive sport market, when you are ignored by the mainstream medias.

Fortunately, with the help of the local authorities, a club was relaunched in 2008. Step by step, the club started over in Elite 2, and managed to reach the Elite 1 in 2016. They also created a partnership with the Leeds Rhinos club (UK). All right, this team, coached by Joris Canton, and the back and Spanish international player Luc Franco, may look only decent on the paper for the observers, but their constant presence in Elite 1 since their refoundation is already a victory in itself.

Albi can also count on one of the two French journalists who comment NRL games on the French Television; Rodolphe Pirès. He was born in the city and every time he has a chance, he promotes the club of his home town. Let's hope that this year, with a \$800,000 annual budget, this club will do as well as last season where they reached the play-offs.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1938, 1956, 1958, 1962, 1977.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1974.

## SOUTH OF FRANCE (EAST OCCITANIE AND "FRENCH CATALONIA")

Here things are getting more balanced between League and Union, there are even some cities where Rugby League is the major and only sport.

Football (soccer) may not count on great local clubs but in the Catalan part of this area, Barcelona FC, even located at the south of the Franco-Spanish border, do have an influence. If you're Catalan (living in the south of the area) you support all Catalans teams in whatever the sport is and on both sides of the border. It's a matter of pride. On the contrary, if you're Audois, in the north of this area, the sole Rugby League epitomises the resistance and the passion of the "Cathares" (people who resisted the central power in the middle age).

Nevertheless, in this area beats the heart of French Rugby League. Especially when a team from Aude meet a Catalan team. Then, the intensity is similar in passion to a game between NSW and Queensland.

Weather is getting warmer in the north and in the south, in the Catalan country, it is getting closer to the climate of Perth or Adelaide, with colder winters.

And especially with variable and changing winds which can be confusing for even the best kickers. Ask James Maloney about his first game in Carcassonne!

### CARCASSONNE

Carcassonne is the best team in Elite 1 nowadays. The most famous of all French Rugby League clubs with XIII Catalan (see below). With 11 championship titles and with more cups (15) to their name than any other club. Funnily, this RL stronghold is also an actual fortress; with the old centre surrounded by ramparts. A must-see. As populated as Albi quoted above. Founded in 1938, (after being affiliated to Union for 39 years), it's quite a comeback for the club who had financial difficulties in the late nineties and owes its presence in Elite 1 to the fact that two clubs merged in 2001 and so left a place in the championship!

The club has been giving French national team some of its more talented players, the first of them being ... the famous Puig Aubert! With a \$ 1,113,000 annual budget, the guidance of the head coach Frédéric Camel and several international players such as Bastien Canet, Vincent Albert, Matthieu Khedimi, Carcassonne will be, as usual, one the favourites of the Elite 1.



**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1945, 1946, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1966, 1967, 1972, 1976, 1992, 2012.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1946, 1947, 1951, 1952, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1968, 1977, 1983, 1990, 2009, 2012, 2017, 2019.

### LIMOUX

Limoux (pronounced Leemoo) is the closest rival to Carcassonne, in geography and in the game as well. Even if the French public know more about the local speciality, la Blanquette (a sweet sparkling wine), Treizistes have learnt to live with this club since 1951, date of its foundation year and to fear it since the late sixties.

Based in a 10,000 inhabitants city, the club won three championship titles and the coupe de France twice. Limoux was famous for being the underdogs of the French game, but this period is over.

Most of their title were won recently and with a lower budget than most their dangerous rivals (\$730,000). Limoux are doing as good as the best clubs of the Elite 1. And this is no coincidence. Their head coach is Maxime Grèsèque (a former French international and player of Wakefield, UK).

They are serious contenders to any title.... If good fortune comes back; seven of their best players (Hérol, Mayans, Puso, Bourrel etc....) are in the club's sick bay by the time of writing.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1968, 2016, 2017.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1996, 2008.

### LÉZIGNAN

The festival of the clubs hosted in small cities continues! Lézignan, with it 10,000 inhabitants, have played Rugby League since 1938. Corbières being the name of the area, famous for its vineyards.

It may look as a minnow on a French administrative map but it is definitively among the greatest clubs in France. They won the



championship seven times and the Cup six times. And who is their head coach? Oh ! just a certain Aurélien Cologni, also the coach of the Chanticleers (national team)!

The team is not only made of local and national gifted players, but benefit from the presence of two Australasian players; Sam Moa (from Tonga) and the New Zealander Timothy Simona. Even if this club hasn't made a great start this season, they are contenders for the title. With a budget as big as the one of Carcassonne, they have the means winning more titles.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 1961, 1963, 1978, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1960, 1966, 1970, 2010, 2011, 2015.

### PALAU

This Catalan village (yes, it's only a village with only 3,000 inhabitants) is the symbol of a lively and an authentic French Rugby League, which is yet confined to the country. Twenty years ago, they played in the fourth division.



But make no mistake, passion for this game in this village is as strong as in Sydney. Sometimes, it even leads to some kind of fanaticism; Palau's fans are famous for being one of the most "enthusiast" ones of the French Championship.

Palau is close to the Spanish border, and so used to provide players (heritage players) to the nearby late Catalonia team and Spain afterwards. What is sure is that Palau, with one of the lowest budgets of the championship ( \$325,000 a year ) are not the mere sparring partner of the others. Their coach Olivier Elima (former international and former player of Castleford, Wakefield, Bradford and the Catalans dragons, no less! ) knows his job very well.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** None.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** None.

### SAINT ESTÈVE XIII CATALAN

Here things are a little bit complicated. The situation is similar to what is happening in Toulouse. This is technically the reserve squad of the Dragons Catalans. It's no coincidence that they are nicknamed the "Baby Dracs" ( the Babies Dragons in some mix of Catalan and English).



Similar only not identical. As Saint Estève and XIII Catalans are the clubs which merged to create the Dragons but which are still legally existing. And both teams are prestigious. Saint Estève won the championship and the Coupe de France six times. And XIII Catalan, the most famous name in French RL, won the championship 11 times and the Cup 10 times..

This structure was created in 2001 only, and already they have won two championship titles and five cups. So it's not a secondary team at all. The Baby Dracs are coached by a pair of Australians; Justin Murphy (former player of the Brisbane Broncos, the Canterbury Bulldogs and the New Zealand Warriors), and Greg Bird (who played with Cronulla and Gold Coast Titans). With the highest budget of the Elite 1 ( \$1,300,000 ), the 2019 champions will be favourites to defend their title.

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 2005, 2019.  
(As St Esteve - 1971, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1997, 1998. As XIII Catalan - 1936, 1940, 1957, 1969, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1994.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 2001, 2004, 2016, 2018.  
(As St Esteve - 1972, 1987, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998. As XIII Catalan - 1939, 1945, 1950, 1959, 1969, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1997)

## SOUTH EAST OF FRANCE (PROVENCE)

Who doesn't know Provence? This very touristic and picturesque French area, with its lavender fields. Its sunny weather (with a climate similar to the very south of Adelaide or Perth, only colder in winter).

Here, Soccer is in everyone's heart with the famous Olympique de Marseille. The sole French club who won the Champions' League.

Not a great "region" for Union who is desperately trying to settle in this area for good; They even tried to create a great team near Marseille with the New Zealander Jonah Lomu in 2009. The club disappeared only three years later.

League isn't doing badly in this area with several clubs, but they can only offer one club to Elite 1 nowadays - Avignon.

### AVIGNON

The city itself is as populated as Newcastle with 470,000 living in the area. It has a great importance for its world-wide known yearly Theatre festival and the Palace of the Popes.

The "SOA", one of the oldest Avignon sport clubs (created in 1916 as a Union club), won the championship once (in 2018) and the Lord Derby Cup five times. The Bisons (Buffaloes) are coached by a former French International and Catalan Dragon Renaud Guigue and can count on home-grown international players such as Olivier Arnaud, Joris Bissière to name only a few of them. Yet, with a \$560,000 annual budget, and no great international signings, the club can only be expected to be the present underdogs of the Elite 1 Rugby League championship.

Have the potentially to be a big city club and play in the English competition.



**CHAMPIONSHIP:** 2018.  
**LORD DERBY CUP:** 1955, 1956, 1982, 1989, 2013.

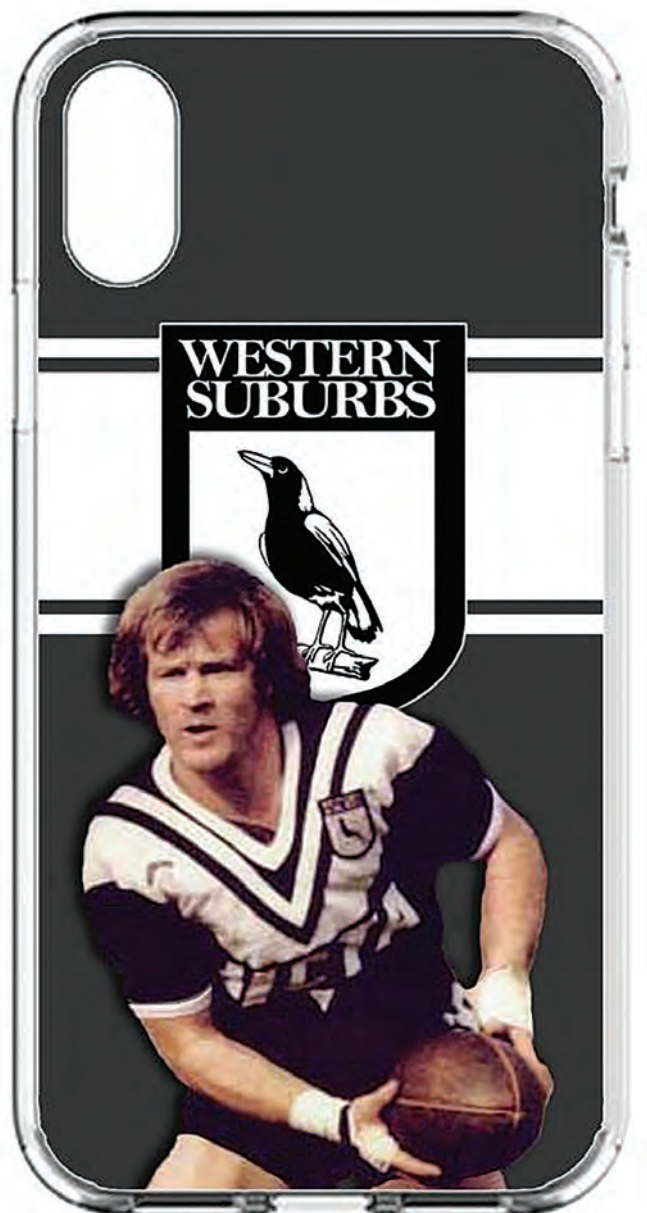
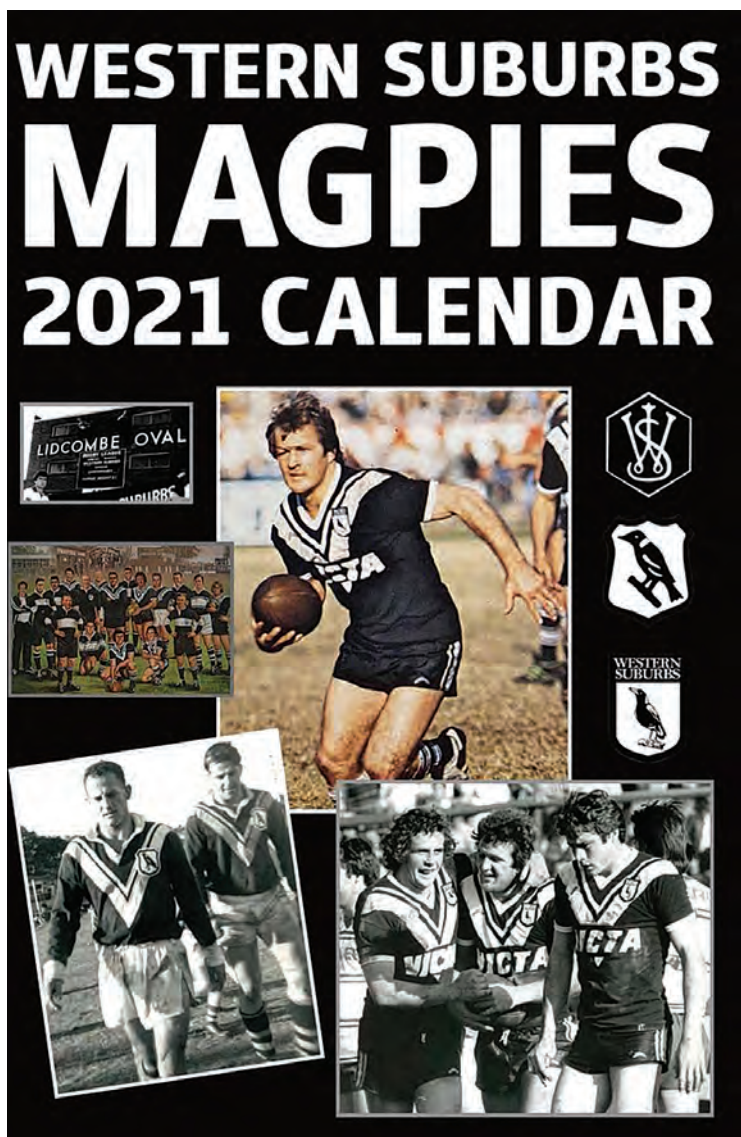




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