

Official Magazine of Queensland's Former Origin Greats

FOGS

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FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

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MAGAZINE

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GRAND, DADDY

Thurston and the Cowboys cap a sensational year for Queensland,



Picture: News Queensland

FOGS

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Wally Lewis, Gavin Allen,
Chris Close, Andrew Gee,
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Greg Oliphant, Don Jackson,
Shane Webcke

CONTACT US

FOGS LTD

Locked Bag 3, Milton, Qld 4064

Ph: 07 3331 5062

Fax: (07) 3331 5051

Email: reception@fogs.com.au

Twitter: www.twitter.com/QLD_FOGS

Facebook:

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John Crane 0411 249 325

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E crystalorder@crystalmedia.com.au

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www.crystalmedia.com.au



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

AT this time of the year, we are normally thinking of all the fanciful things we want to put onto our Christmas wishlist.

But it is hard to imagine rugby league fans in Queensland could ask for much more than what was delivered in an incredible 2015 season.

Our ninth State of Origin series win in 10 years, a record-breaking win over the Blues in Game 3, the first all-Queensland grand final between the Cowboys and Broncos, North Queensland winning their first premiership, Johnathan Thurston winning a fourth Dally M Medal and the Clive Churchill Medal – the list goes on and on.

This year really was a celebration of our great game, and a reminder of how great it can be, and why we love it so much.

But the challenge in any endeavour is not in the initial victory, it is maintaining that success and building on it for the future.

That is why one of the most pleasing aspects of our State of Origin success this year was the work being put in for the future.

The scorelines and having the shield back in Queensland were great reasons to celebrate.

But the injection of more young talent into the Maroons set-up, like Josh McGuire, Michael Morgan, Dane Gagai, Ben Hunt, Dylan Napa, Korbin

Sims and Edrick Lee is what will help deliver us many more celebrations in the years to come.

Not all of those guys played Origin this year, but they all continued their education in the Queensland system to ensure they will be ready when they are called on in the next year or so.

Planning for the future has been a huge part of Queensland's success over the past decade, and it is what will ensure more success in the future.

It is that same dedication to planning for the future that continues to drive us at the Former Origin Greats, and underpins the success we continue to achieve in our own programs.

Once again this year, the Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE) Academy is making a massive impact on the lives of many young Queenslanders, by giving them the tools they need to create a better future for themselves and their families.

Our work as a charitable organisation has also been significant in 2015, with a large amount of money raised through our fundraising ventures to give assistance to Queenslanders who need a hand.

The hard work of our staff, volunteers, sponsors, supporters and FOGS members allows us to continue this work, and create positive change in the lives of so many Queenslanders.

Next year will be a watershed year for FOGS, with plans to move into our new

home on Castlemaine Street around the time of the 2016 Origin series.

It was the dream of our founder, the great Dick "Tosser" Turner, that the FOGS would one day have their own premises, and the fact we now have it is one of the great successes we can celebrate as an organisation.

While we have been very happy during our time at Suncorp Stadium, that we are now so close to moving into our new building, which we own, and fulfilling Tosser's dream is very exciting for us.

But again, the success we have delivered over the past few years and the landmark moment of moving into our own headquarters is not the destination, just the next steps on our journey.

The hard work and dedication from everyone involved in FOGS will need to continue, and improve as we challenge ourselves to perform even better.

I look forward to sharing the journey with you again in 2016.

My best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to everyone.

GENE MILES
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

FOGS wish all our members, staff, sponsors and supporters all the very best for a wonderful Christmas and exciting New Year!



ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

With the Maroons under siege from all angles in the lead-up to Origin III, the people of Queensland united behind their team and were rewarded with the most devastating performance in the history of rugby league

ORIGIN I

QLD 11 (Cronk, Chambers tries; Thurston goal; Cronk field goal) d NSW 10 (Morris, Scott tries; Hodgkinson goal)

ANZ Stadium, Sydney.

Crowd: 80,122.

Man of the match: Cameron Smith.

ORIGIN II

NSW 26 (Jennings, J Morris, Woods, Dugan tries; Hodgkinson 5 goals) d QLD 18 (Scott, Inglis, Gillett tries; Thurston 3 goals)

MCG, Melbourne.

Crowd: 91,513.

Man of the match: Michael Jennings.

ORIGIN III

QLD 52 (Gagai, Papalii, Inglis, Gillett, Morgan, Boyd, Chambers, Guerra tries; Thurston 9, Hodges goals) d NSW 6 (Jennings try, Hodgkinson goal)

Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane.

Crowd: 52,500.

Man of the match: Johnathan Thurston.

FORMER Test cricketer Greg Ritchie strides through the foyer of the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, and makes a beeline for Mal Meninga.

Meninga turns and offers a warm “g’day mate” and outstretches a hand in greeting.

Instead, he is engulfed by a Ritchie bearhug.

“Mal, 52-6,” Ritchie yells. “You bloody beauty!”

“As a Queenslander in Sydney, mate, I can’t tell you what that win meant.”

This meeting is not in the days after Queensland’s amazing win in Origin III that delivered a ninth series win in 10 years. It is mid-September at a Men of League function.

But if you needed any more proof of what the Maroons or that breath-taking win mean to the people of Queensland, then you have it right here.

Months on from the greatest win in Origin history, Meninga’s first word to describe it remains “surreal”.

The records speak for themselves: 52 points is the biggest Origin score ever by Queensland, passing the 43 points scored in Game 3 of 1983; Thurston’s nine goals from nine attempts is the most ever for a Maroon, and he also equalled Lote Tuqiri’s points record in one match with his haul of 18; the 46-point margin is the biggest win ever in Origin, beating the 40 points NSW won by in their 56-16 win in 2000; Greg Inglis set a new

Origin record for career linebreaks with 28.

It was also a new record crowd for Suncorp Stadium – with not a single seat left spare in a capacity 52,500 throng of Maroon faithful.

But statistics are a bit like a paint sample pot. They give you an idea of the colour, but never paint the full picture.

As impressive as Queensland’s records were – and there were plenty of them – the emotion and drama of the win were what told the real story.

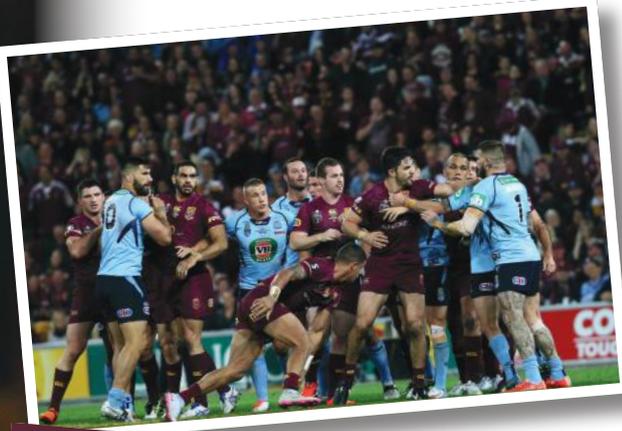
Defending the shield they won last year, NSW went into the game full of confidence after their solid performance in Game Two at the MCG, with their players being touted south of the border as Origin’s new kings on the cusp of an era of dominance.

Conversely, the Queenslanders were criticised - in some sections, ridiculed - for being a team on the wane, past its use-by-date and with old, tired legs not up to executing a game plan built on old ideas.

And then there was the shameful stitch-up on Maroons captain Cameron Smith just days before the game that could have rattled the Queenslanders to the core.

Instead the Queenslanders delivered what their coach calls “the perfect game”.

“It is still surreal,” Meninga said. “Those sorts of games



what made the game so special.

“I said to the players after the game, if you could bottle a rugby league game to show future generations what the game is about, that was it,” he said.

“It was the perfect illustration of what happens when you have 17 men who play to their potential when it mattered the most.

“It is not about playing well in a game. It is about a group of special men, plenty of whom had their form, their character and their integrity questioned before the game, collectively and individually giving everything they had to give when everything was on the line.

“It was an extraordinary effort from everyone.

The dramas that engulfed our captain before the game were not nice. I don’t think any player should have to go through that before such a big game, but particularly a guy like Smithy who is an ornament to the game.

“It was unnecessary. I know Cameron was hurt by it. Anybody with feelings would have been. But he handled it, compartmentalized it all, and the players rallied around him. It galvanized the team.

“The players play for the Queensland people. They love putting the Maroon jersey on and don’t want to let the Queensland people down.

“Everyone in Queensland – the media, the man in the street – rallied behind this team when they needed them. And the team responded.

“It was a real “one for all and all for one” feeling around this game.

“To hear that outpouring of emotion from the crowd at Suncorp Stadium – the joy, the relief, the pride and the passion – it was an incredibly special moment.”

happen to you once in a generation. For us, it has been once in 10 years. It was the performance we had been looking for for a decade.”

“To beat NSW and do it so comprehensively, emphatically, relentlessly and ruthlessly, was just fantastic.

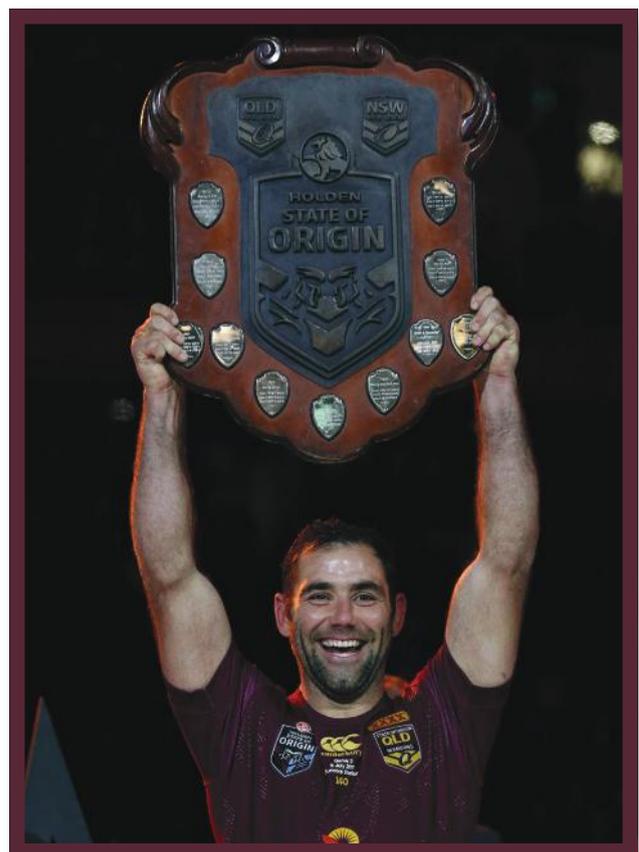
“I watched the game again, and I thought NSW’s performance was actually pretty good. Their start was just as good as ours.

“But our execution with the footy, and the way we controlled the ball and field position was near perfection. For mine, it was the perfect game of rugby league – just given the enormity of the situation, what was riding on the game with another series on the line, and also the expectations from the Queensland public that we could deliver something special for them.

“To produce that type of game under those circumstances, I can’t praise the players enough for the way they prepared and their attitude towards it all.

“They had an amazing willingness to take ownership of the game plan, and they went out there and executed it extremely well.”

Mal said the circumstances, more than the scoreline, were





FROM THE COACH'S DESK

With Queensland Coach Mal Meninga

THE performance of the Maroons in Game I of this year's Origin series was a clear message to the critics quick to dismiss these champion players as too old and too slow.

It seems like a lifetime ago now, but after we lost Origin II in Melbourne, the Sydney media were quick to start writing obituaries for some great players and great careers.

Thankfully, the team performance at Suncorp Stadium in winning 52-6 silenced those critics quickly and effectively, if only for another 12 months.



But while our faith in the men called upon to do a job for Queensland has never wavered, the results of this year's series should also remind us about the dangers of standing still.

A team as close-knit and successful as this one does need to stay fresh to remain at its peak, and that is one of the great challenges for me and the coaching staff.

I think things are heading in the right direction, but we still have to make our plans for the future, and we are still working our way through all that.

I had always planned for something of an overhaul to our off-field structures after we reached the 10-year mark, and I am determined to stay on that path.

It is important, something we have to get right, and something we therefore need to take our time on. But we need to get some fresh faces through.

I am not going to be around forever. The players are performing well enough at the moment to hold their spots. As long as they are playing well for Queensland,

they will be selected. That being the case, how do you freshen things up? Well, you need to freshen up your staff and the people around the team.

We have to have a look at all of it, and the off-season will be the time for that. Some people that we need to speak to have been heavily involved in the business end of the season, not just at NRL level but Intrust Super Cup level as well.

We will wait until the dust settles there and move forward. From the perspective of playing personnel, we are in good hands. Obviously next year we will be without Justin Hodges, and that will be a great loss for us.

But, like we have done over the past few seasons where we have farewelled senior guys like Locky, Petero, Steve Price and Brent Tate, we have been working on our succession planning to ease the blow.

To see both Will Chambers and Dane Gagai not only take their chances in Origin, but grow as players and deliver terrific performances means that losing Justin will not be as savage a disruption.

This year, Michael Morgan, Josh McGuire and Gagai were all given their Origin debuts and showed that they not only belong at this level, but intend to stay there for years to come.

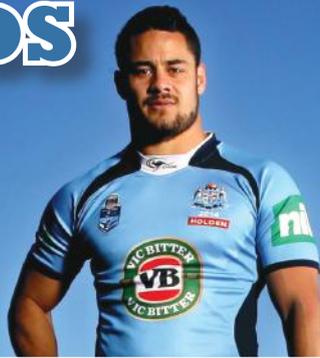
Also, guys like Dylan Napa, Korbin Sims and Edrick Lee were brought into camp this year as shadow players, to continue their Origin education and further prepare them for when Queensland call upon them.

So the wheels continue to turn for us. Our evolution will continue again next year, to stave off the need for revolution.



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

LEAGUE NEEDS TO RIDE ON THE HAYNE PLANE



WE used to hate him when he was wearing sky blue, but not even the harshest critic of NSW would begrudge the incredible success story of former Blues fullback Jarryd Hayne and his amazing transition to NFL with the San Francisco 49ers.

Hayne's burgeoning NFL career has captured the hearts and minds of fans both here and in the US, and Queensland coach Mal Meninga says the game should be looking to capitalise on its most famous US export to grow rugby league's profile in the world's biggest sporting market.

"We would be silly if we don't jump on the Hayne Plane," Mal said.

"We should be getting our best marketing and publicity minds together to work out how rugby league can ride on the back of Jarryd's success.

"Whether that means trial matches there or working out a more accessible broadcast agreement into the US, there is definitely scope to make people more aware of what our game is about because of the publicity that Jarryd is creating."

Mal though says a repeat of the 1987 experiment, where the game took a "fourth" Origin match to Long Beach, California, is not the right way to go.

"I think it would have to be an

exhibition type of game, not Origin."

"The Origin game that we took over there in 1987 was always classed as an exhibition game, right up until NSW won it.

"I think the sheer logistics involved with Origin and transporting it to the US would probably rule it out.

"But there is no reason why we can't have an exhibition game played over there. Whether it is a pre-season trial, or even having the Australian team play against a San Francisco invitational team.

"Obviously Parramatta was Jarryd's old club, so there would be a good tie in for them to go over and play there.

"Why not a game against Russell Crowe's Rabbitohs, to give the game even more profile?"

"The field dimensions are largely the same. What a coup it would be for Jarryd's old rugby league team to play an exhibition game as a curtain raiser to his new NFL club's game."

Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

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PARKER DESERVING WINNER OF THE WALLY LEWIS MEDAL

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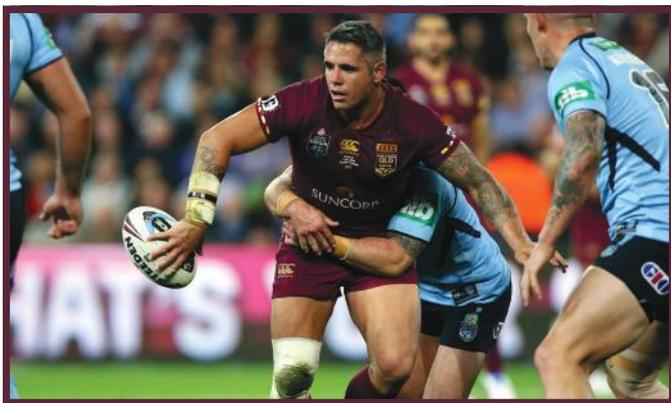


COREY Parker's hair may be salt and pepper, but his State of Origin performances for Queensland continue to mature like a fine red wine.

Parker was a popular choice for this year's Wally Lewis Medal winner as the player of the Origin series, and the perfect illustration of why critics targeting the age of the Maroons' players are way off target.

Parker first played for Queensland in 2004, and then again in the 2005 series.

It was then the winds of change swept through the Maroons set-up with the beginning of the Mal Meninga era, and Parker had to wait until 2011 to be called up again.



There is no question that Parker took the chance with both hands, but at the same time, there is also no doubt that the "second generation" Parker is a vastly superior model to the first incarnation.

Tough, durable, versatile, clever and creative, Parker has established himself as one of the Maroons' senior leaders, and along the way has evolved into the best lock

in world rugby league.

Paradoxically, while Parker's age has made him a target for critics south of the border, it has reinforced his value to his Maroons coach Meninga.

"A lot of people talk about age as a negative, like once a player turns 30 then suddenly they stop performing," Meninga said. "I think Corey is proof that the opposite is true – players become better as they mature, become leaders and devote themselves to professionalism.

"Corey was always a good player, but he has taken his game to a new level over the past couple of years.

"The old way of thinking used to be that a player would reach his peak at around 25 or 26. But I think in the modern era, it isn't until they turn 30 that we really see the best of some players.

"We have had some of our great players like Darren Lockyer and Petero Civoniceva, and even going back to Alfie Langer, perform at Origin level at the age of 36.

"Corey turned 33 this year, and was rightly considered the best player in the Origin series.

"His performance and desire say to me that he intends to continue playing well for Queensland for two or three years yet.

"And as Queensland coach, that makes me very happy.

"His work ethic, willingness to put the team first, and the way he plays make him a valuable member of our team.

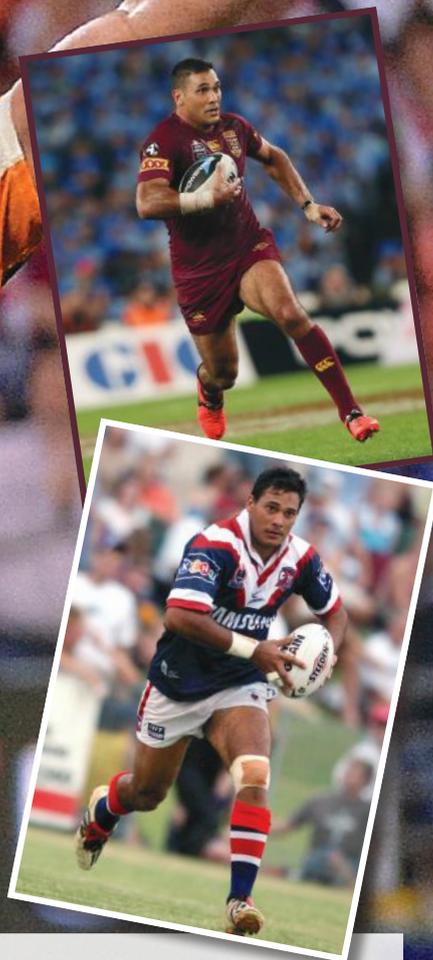
"But he also plays a very different style to a lot of the guys in our team, and that is very important to us as well.

"He is important for us in big games, because he can break a game apart with his off-loads."



JUSTIN'S TIME

The fairytale finish escaped him, but Hodges happy after his 'great ride'



JUSTIN Hodges wasn't about to get too self-indulgent. One fairytale in his swansong season was more than satisfying. A second would have been like winning Powerball.

Hodges may have been denied a victory lap in this year's NRL grand final, but the veteran centre walked into the sunset with fond memories of his dream finale with Queensland's Origin juggernaut.

In July, the 33-year-old celebrated one of the finest nights of his career when the Maroons thumped NSW 52-6 in the biggest drubbing in Origin history.

Farewell Hodgo, thanks for the memories.

A month later, he announced his impending retirement from the NRL.

Perhaps it was a decision inspired by his head-spinning Origin swansong. Perhaps his body screamed "no more".

Either way, the final weeks of Hodges' NRL career became a rolling tribute to one of Queensland's greatest

backline weapons.

And while his good mate Johnathan Thurston broke his heart in the NRL decider to seal North Queensland's first premiership, Hodges leaves the game truly at ease, knowing he left nothing in the tank.

"I can't complain, it's been a great ride," Hodges says.

"It would have been nice to go out with a premiership, but not everyone gets a fairytale ending. At least I had one in Origin with a Queensland side I felt lucky to be a part of.

"I was just a boy from Cairns with a big dream to play rugby league and I achieved that. I just wanted to go out on my terms and I feel I did that."

He may not appreciate it now, but the gravity of Hodges' NRL portfolio will sink in with each passing day in retirement.

His record is testimony to his brilliance and longevity: 16 seasons at the highest level, 251 first-grade games, 24 Origin matches for Queensland and 13 Tests for Australia.

He won two premierships, first with the Roosters in 2002 before his triumph with the Broncos four years later.

All up, he scored 99 NRL career tries, created countless more single-handedly with his trademark loping stride, lethal fend, raw strength and crisp footwork.

Such was Hodges' talent, Broncos coach Wayne Bennett was left devastated when his young backline star sensationally quit Brisbane at age 19 to join the Roosters in his quest to play fullback.

Bennett was so filthy he axed Hodges to reserve grade, sparking a feud with his mother. But when Hodges became homesick in Sydney, Bennett didn't hesitate to bring his footballing prodigal son home in 2005.

A decade later, the hatchet buried, their careers intertwined beautifully when Bennett returned to the Broncos and installed Hodges as his captain.

"I saw him change so much, he really matured, he earned the job," Bennett says.

"I knew Justin wouldn't survive in Sydney. It wasn't his place. And when he wanted to come home, I did what I did because it was the right thing to do.

"I have so much admiration for him as a person and a player.

"Pretty much the Broncos' motto in the '90s was always: 'Once you cross the white line, you do your absolute best for the club'.

"That's been what Hodg's lived by, regardless of where he's played, who he's played for.

"Sometimes, I'd see him the day before and think he's no chance of playing good tomorrow but he'll turn up on game day.

"He believed in that, not letting his teammates down. He lived it every day."

Hodges admits he saw the end a few times, most

notably in 2013, when he ruptured his Achilles for the second time in three years.

Along the way, he suffered shoulder injuries, knee problems, hamstring tears and ankle sprains, but every time Hodges' love for the game pulled him through.

"To be honest there were a couple of times I thought of retiring ... I would be lying if I said there wasn't," Hodges said.

"With my Achilles, there were times I thought, 'This is too hard'. But the passion of playing football always drove me to come back."

It was evident in 2002, when Hodges was axed by the Maroons after a nightmare debut in which he gifted NSW two tries with two wayward passes in his own in-goal.

That night would have broken lesser men. But Hodges learned and endured.

He went on to become a key member of Queensland's record-breaking dynasty under Mal Meninga.

"Justin is up with the best centres I've seen and that includes the Origin arena," Maroons coach Meninga said.

"People like to be judged by their peers in a positive way and Justin is as good as I've seen.

"He loved putting the Maroon jersey on and he just loves competing, which you need at Origin level.

"I'm proud of him and thrilled with what he's achieved. Hopefully he moves on to bigger and brighter things."

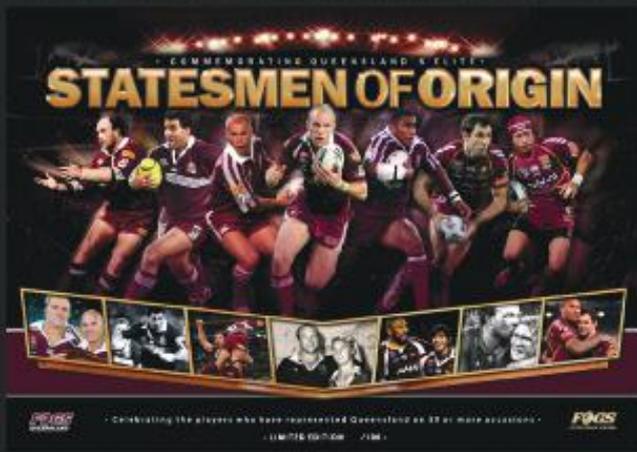
Bennett insists Hodges will not be lost to rugby league, outlining plans for him to work at the Broncos next season, possibly as a backs coach.

"Justin feared the future because he didn't know what it was," he said. "Like a lot of guys, he is institutionalised in rugby league and they have to start a new life without football.

"But Justin has a lot to offer and he will have a place at the Broncos ... we'll make sure of that."



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FAREWELL TO TWO GREAT RUGBY LEAGUE MEN

THIS year was one of great celebration for rugby league in Queensland, but there were also times of sadness, with the passing of two of the game's great servants.

Former Queensland State of Origin team manager Keith Walsh (73) and former Wynnum-Manly hooker Craig Farrugia (54) both passed away in September, leaving behind loved ones and a game grateful for their efforts.

"Keith had been battling ill-health for a while, but we had seen him a bit at reunions and luncheons," FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said.



Pictured above: Keith Walsh

"Tosser brought Keith into the Queensland system to help with the management of the team.

"In the old days, they had to be a club president or secretary to be a State of Origin manager. Tosser was of course filling that role with Redcliffe, but he brought Keith along to be his off-sider.

"He ended up being there for a good 15 years or so. He was someone

that the players really warmed to in camp. He was a good knock-around type of guy. The players loved him.

"Keith was a bloke who knew how to get the job done, and that was exactly why Tosser brought him into the fold.

"Toss, God love him, was never the most organised bloke in the world.

"As manager he did have to make a number of tough decisions, but he was able to do that so well because he had Keith there working with him and tidying up after him as well.

"We went to his funeral, a few of us were there like Trevor Gillmeister, Alan Graham and Greg Oliphant. It was a packed house, and very sad.

"There were a lot of people there that had lost someone very special in their lives."

Gene and Wally Lewis were among the hundreds of mourners who gathered to farewell their former Wynnum-Manly teammate and Tweed Heads Seagulls assistant coach Craig Farrugia.

Craig died of a heart attack while running the water for the Seagulls in a game at Tugun in September, and Gene said the game had lost one of its most passionate and loyal servants.

"I kept in reasonably close contact with Craig, and he always stayed involved in footy - had done since we left Wynnum. He just had a real love for the game," Gene said.

"The game was his passion.

"He was out on the field running water for the players, when he got

back to the sideline and told the people around him that he didn't feel too well. They sat him down and tried to make him comfortable.



Pictured above: Craig Farrugia

"A couple of minutes later, he was slumped in the chair. Just gone like that.

"He never smoked, never drank, and kept himself reasonably fit as well because he just loved the game so much and was always involved.

"He was a true little professional as a player when he joined us at Wynnum from the Roosters. He was about three-foot-seven, but he just used to cut them in half.

"And he never shut up. He talked the whole game, but it was always good constructive talk. He was a guy who could play the game too. He was a bloody good player."

Both men will be sincerely missed. The FOGS offer their condolences to the families of both great rugby league men.



FOGS CHARITY LUNCH CONTINUES TO DELIVER THE GOODS

THE FOGS' Eales Racing Annual Charity Lunch is a celebration about what is good in Queensland, and also a contribution towards making it even better.

Proudly sponsored and backed by Eales Racing, this year's event saw another capacity crowd from all walks of life come together to share their passion for rugby league, the Maroons and Queensland.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of these Queenslanders, the 2015 FOGS Eales Racing Annual Charity Lunch was once again able to raise more than \$100,000 for various charities, through our various raffles and prize auctions.

This money allows the FOGS to help fellow Queenslanders who might be doing it tough.

For example, the money raised from last year's luncheon was distributed to a number of worthy causes over the ensuing 12 months.

Among the recipients was Trevor Gillmeister's "Taking an Axe to Asbestos" fundraiser, where Gilly amazingly walked from Townsville to Brisbane to raise money and awareness for asbestos-related diseases.

Another of our FOGS members, Mat Rogers, was given assistance for his tremendous work in the community.

Mat and his wife Chloe started their own charity, 4 ASD Kids, which assists families with children battling with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

They provide access to early intervention treatment programs to help the families deal with the challenges they face, and for the kids to live normal lives.

Last year's money also helped in the establishment of a trust fund for James Ackerman, the young Sunshine Coast



Falcons player, who was tragically killed in an incident while playing our great game.

Rugby league was united in its grief at the loss of Ackerman, particularly because his wife Saraa and young children Olliver and Milly were robbed of their loving and devoted husband and father.

To help the young family through such a devastating time, a trust fund was established for people to make donations.

The FOGS, thanks to the money raised at last year's 2014 FOGS EA Hire Equipment Annual Charity Lunch, were able to get the ball rolling with a donation of \$10,000 to help the Ackerman family prepare for the road ahead.

But the reach of the FOGS' charitable donations extended beyond rugby league and into the wider Queensland community, with donations to the trust fund established for North Queensland firemen Joe Torrissi and Michael Beck.

Joe and Michael were serving their community when they were seriously injured in the Ravenshoe café explosion in June.

Both Joe and Michael were severely burnt in the incident, but they ignored the pain of their own injuries to help save the lives of their fellow Queenslanders.

Joe suffered burns to 50 per cent of his body, and Michael had burns to about 20 per cent of his body. The two men face a long road of recovery and rehabilitation.

Both men are heroes in every sense of the word, and epitomise the Queensland spirit that we all know and cherish.

So when a fundraising campaign was started to help Michael, Joe and their families, FOGS were happy to help.

The money raised at the 2015 FOGS Eales Racing Annual Charity Lunch allows us to lend a hand to these worthy causes.

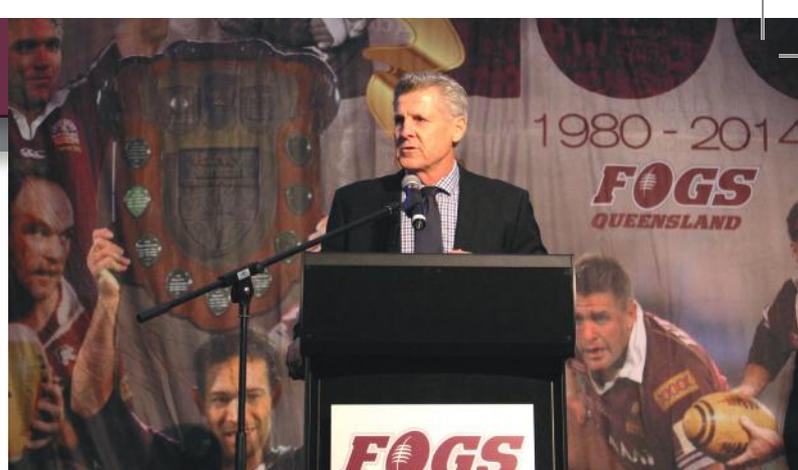
It also gives us an opportunity to celebrate rugby league in Queensland, and this year's luncheon was a special occasion, paying tribute to the select group of Maroons now part of a new elite club – the FOGS Statesmen.

These magnificent seven Maroons – Wally Lewis, Mal Meninga, Allan Langer, Darren Lockyer, Petero Civoniceva, Cameron Smith and Johnathan Thurston – were honoured for the incredible achievement of representing Queensland 30 or more times at Origin level since the concept began in 1980.

And of course, there is all the usual entertainment – with FOGS favourite, ventriloquist and comedian Darren Carr, having the audience in stitches, while our MC Gary Belcher conducted his usual insightful interview with Queensland coach Mal Meninga.

The FOGS would like to thank all of our wonderful sponsors, supporters, guests and those that donated their time and prizes for our fundraising raffles and auctions.

We can't wait to see you all again next year.





FOURTH TO BE RECKONED WITH

Dally M Medal puts JT among the greats

JOHNATHAN Thurston took another step towards rugby league Immortality in September when he won his fourth Dally M Medal for rugby league's best and fairest player.

Thurston passed the record of three medal wins set by the eighth Immortal, former NSW halfback Andrew Johns, putting beyond any doubt the Cowboys star's claim to a place in the pantheon of the game's greatest players.

By any barometer, 2015 was an extraordinary year for Thurston – inspiring every team he played in to dizzying heights.

And at the same time, this is not a man who plays in a dinner suit. His attacking brilliance is matched in equal measure by his toughness, resilience and durability that few in the game can match.

His abilities can make him a target for opposition defenders and unsavoury tactics.

He has been the victim of back-alley muggings, like against Newcastle earlier in the year, by opponents hoping to bash him out of the contest and give their team a better chance.

Yet Thurston keeps getting up, and keeps getting the job done.

Despite carrying such a massive target on his back, this year Thurston played his 33rd consecutive game for Queensland – a remarkable achievement in rugby league's toughest battlefield, where sometimes different rules apply.

And it is worth noting, in his 33rd straight game for Queensland, he won the man of the match award, kicked nine from nine shots at goal, and drove the

Maroons to their greatest performance on the Origin stage.

It has been some year.

But Thurston's influence on the game goes much deeper than kicking goals and winning games. He is also changing the perception of what it means to be a champion player.

He lifted the Cowboys into this year's grand final with an exhilarating performance against the Storm in Melbourne, but even then his on-field exploits were overshadowed by a simple gesture to a young fan at halftime.

Heading to the sheds, Thurston took off his trademark headgear and gave it to a little Melbourne fan sitting with his mother.

The expression on the faces of the starstruck boy and his mum reminded us all about what is good about our game, and what makes Thurston so great.

As former Blues coach Phil Gould noted after that game, Thurston was the first player to pick up his kicking tee after a shot at goal and hand it back to the ballboy or ballgirl, rather than just leaving it expecting the child to pick it up.

Now, Gould noted, every goal-kicker in the game does exactly the same.

It is leadership of the highest order: such a seemingly small action that makes such a massive difference both in the respect that it shows, and the respect it delivers.

For all the awards, titles and accolades that come Thurston's way, those small moments may be the defining moments of an extraordinary career.

THE 1980 INITIATIVE

THE TEAM BEHIND THE TEAM

THE Maroons know every time they take the field they have an entire state behind them.

But it doesn't hurt having some of Queensland's most powerful business leaders in their corner as well.

In 2010, the Queensland Rugby League and the Former Origin Greats formed a partnership to create a program that would help develop the Queensland team on and off the field.

To achieve this, the QRL and FOGS invited a group of high-profile Queensland business leaders to become supporters of an exclusive mentoring group.

From this, 'The 1980 Initiative' was born.

As well as providing financial support for aspects of every Origin campaign, The 1980 Initiative also lends their extensive business knowledge to current, potential or past Maroons, to help them in their day-to-day lives and deal with the pressures associated with being a Queensland Origin player.

Craig Davison from The Outdoor Furniture Specialists, BMD's Mick Power, Tony Williamson from Remax, Scott Wood from Action Formwork, Geoff Murphy from the JM Kelly Group, Joe Rissman from Partners Engineering, Scott Mackey from Mackey Enterprises; and hand and upper-limb surgical specialist Darren Marchant are the current members of the group.

The 1980 Initiative is expected to grow to 12 next year.

Mr Davison, who was also a former chairman of the Thoroughbreds organisation at the Broncos, said each of the



businessmen considered it a privilege to be involved in The 1980 Initiative.

"It is doubly rewarding for me, because I first saw a lot of these young guys like Ben Hunt and Josh McGuire as young guys coming through the Broncos, and they are now part of the Origin system," Mr Davison said.

"The 1980 Initiative is a great initiative, and it can only get better in terms of helping out where required. The money that we put in assists with a number of different things.

"In recent times, my favourite was a couple of years ago when the money we put in paid the playing fees for rugby league juniors who were affected by the floods.

"There are a lot of areas where you know the money is doing a lot of good in the rugby league community."

Mr Davison said it was a rewarding experience being involved with Mal Meninga's Maroons, and the unprecedented run of success that has seen them win nine series in the past 10 years.

"It is a wonderful experience for us guys that are privileged to be involved – and it is a privilege," he said. "All the hard work is done by Mal and the team. We are a small part of it, and it is great to be involved in our small way.

"We just add a bit of value to the players' experience by sitting down with them to talk about business, a property deal or even something in their personal life. "There is a level of trust there which is a wonderful thing."





ARTIE ACADEMY RECONCILIATION CHALLENGE SHOWS ART AND SOUL

THE innocent words of a delighted Year 6 student perfectly summed up the impact the ARTIE Academy is having in changing attitudes to learning among Queensland Students.

During this year's NAIDOC Week celebrations in July, the 16 schools across Queensland participating in the ARTIE Academy were invited to compete in the ARTIE Academy Reconciliation Challenge.

This art competition was an opportunity for young Queenslanders - whether Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous - to have their voices heard about what reconciliation means to them, and to show their school's dedication to reconciliation.



Reconciliation is about improving relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader Australian community.

All of the entries were judged by famed Aboriginal artist Chernée Sutton, and over 30 students from across Queensland took home prizes as Individual and Group Awards winners in each age group. Chernée said she was blown away by the quality of the entries.

"It was amazing actually to see so many young people and children's views on reconciliation and what they thought it meant to them," Chernée said.

"When it came to judging, the story that went with their painting was probably the most important thing, but I was also looking for things like the quality of their artwork, how much thought had gone into their work and how much of the concept of reconciliation that they had been able to incorporate into their piece.

"It was great to see the faces of the kids when they were up receiving their awards and prizes."

The major prize of the Challenge, the School Reconciliation Award, was awarded to Bundamba State School, which had the highest percentage of students participating in the Challenge with over 75% of students submitting an entry.

Bundamba State School was awarded a \$15,000 grant to continue reconciliation work at their school as well as an original art piece from Chernée - who not only attended the celebration ceremony but had Bundamba students contribute to the prize artwork.

"You get the kids involved, and it is something that means that much more to them," she said. "It also matched the story of the painting as well. All the handprints and dots that the children contributed to the painting represented everyone working together."

Bundamba State School Deputy Principal Belinda Grose said the school was very proud of its achievement, but even more proud of the efforts of the school's student body in working so hard for the Challenge.

"The competition was not just about including the kids involved in the ARTIE Academy, it was for all of the students so they can get a better understanding of what we do and are trying to achieve with the Academy,"

Belinda said.

"They discussed in their classes about what reconciliation was, and meant to them, as well as things like the Stolen Generation and how they felt about that.

"It was about having that emotional empathy with what had happened in the past, getting them to imagine how it would feel to have that happen to them, and why it is important and we need to recognise it.

"They were given those sorts of parameters, but they were then left up to their own devices about how they would interpret that in art form."

Belinda said there was a small moment during the celebration ceremony that showed that the ARTIE Academy's message on the importance of education was changing lives.

"It was such a significant prize, not just for the school, but on an individual level as well," she said.

"We had kids who won laptops, kids that won iPods – prizes that a lot of these kids might not have necessarily ever had the chance to own.

"We had one girl in Year 6 who was one of the winners, and she was allowed to come up and choose what she wanted as a prize.

"She said: 'I really like the headphones, but I am starting high school next year, and a laptop is really going to help me with my learning.'

"To be able to have a kid say that to you reflects that the message is getting through and what we are doing is making a difference.

"I was really pleased for the kids that won, because they weren't ungrateful and didn't take it for granted. It really meant something to them, and that was amazing to see."



The artwork created by Chern'ee and the students is now on display at the school's front desk, alongside the school's Welcome to Country message.

FOGS and the ARTIE Academy congratulate everyone who entered the Reconciliation Challenge, and a special well done to all of our winners.



ARTIE ACADEMY STUDENTS LEARN THE GOAL-DEN RULE

FAMOUS New York Yankees player, coach and manager Yogi Berra passed away in September aged 90, robbing the world of one of sport's greatest – and most quoted – characters.

Berra was almost as famous for his one-liners and quips as he was for his professional baseball career with his unique, sometimes slightly mangled, turns of phrase becoming the stuff of legend.



One of Berra's famous lines was one about setting goals: "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up somewhere else".

At first glance, it seems a nonsense. But when you look at the message, rather than the words, the lesson is there: If you haven't set a goal to aim for, where are you going?

It is a lesson well-learned by the students involved in the FOGS' ARTIE Academy.

In October, two ARTIE Fun Days were held to reward Academy members who reached their Term 3 goals of a 90 per cent school attendance record.

In Townsville, 174 students from Kirwan State High School achieved their

goal, and were rewarded with the Fun Day at the Barra Fun Park.

In Central Queensland, 206 students from Gladstone, Toolooa and Rockhampton State High Schools were successful in reaching their attendance goals, and celebrated at the Capricorn Resort at Yeppoon.

Bill Moloney, a teacher at Toolooa State High School, said the setting of goals and the offer of a fantastic reward like the ARTIE Fun Day was helping to shape the attitude and behaviour of students.

"We had about 40 students from Toolooa attend the ARTIE Fun Day, and the response is always fantastic – always very positive," Bill said.

"The students work hard every day to get where they are, so something like this shows them that their hard work really does pay off and that inspires them to continue to improve.

"The benchmark is 90 per cent attendance, which is a pretty high figure especially for some of the kids who in the past have found it tough to attend school.

"For them to reach the 90 per cent mark means that a lot of their behaviours and attitudes have been changed, and that is terrific to see.



"But having that goal of the ARTIE Fun Day to aim for helps keep them on track, and shows how they need to keep working to achieve their goals."

Bill said there was no doubt that the ARTIE Academy was having a positive change on the students at Toolooa.



"The lessons of the ARTIE Academy have been instilled in the kids, hopefully they are embedded in them now, and we will see them carry on."

Bill said once the kids experience the satisfaction of working hard to achieve a goal – like attending the ARTIE Fun Day – they can translate that into longer-term goals and brighter futures.

"The kids need goals to aspire to, it doesn't matter who the kid is – whether they are Indigenous or Non-Indigenous – they need to have those goals in place so they have something to strive for."

"They all know during the year that they are working towards the goal of the ARTIE Fun Day, and that is what keeps them on track to achieve their academic and attendance targets.

"That is when you see the improvement in them."

KRISPY KREME'S HOLE HEARTED SUPPORT FOR FOGS



THE partnership between the Former Origin Greats and the world famous Krispy Kreme Doughnuts is a recipe for success.

Krispy Kreme is the biggest doughnut franchise in the world. Having started in 1930 in the US, they now have stores in 24 countries around the world.

A company with a dedication to philanthropy and community work, Krispy Kreme has been a huge supporter of the FOGS' programs and their initiatives since joining us as a partner.

Krispy Kreme supports the ARTIE Academy by supplying doughnuts at ARTIE events including launches, reward events and the ARTIE Fun Day.

Krispy Kreme even created our very own ARTIE Doughnut – which features a chocolate-glazed doughnut with black

and yellow sprinkles – for the Academy.

We all know Arthur Beetson was more of a pie fan, but we have no doubt the great man would approve of a doughnut being named in his honour.

Krispy Kreme's Queensland Manufacturing Manager Sharon Nannes said the company was pleased to be involved with FOGS, due to the organisation's ongoing work in making a better life for young Queenslanders.

"We think it is a really awesome charity that does a lot of terrific work,"

"The work that the FOGS do is amazing, and really reflects and supports our company values.

"We have been involved with the FOGS for about three years now, and we are very happy to be involved with a wonderful charity that is doing so much good work through its programs like the ARTIE Academy.

"The pictures that the girls from the FOGS office send through of the children enjoying their Krispy Kreme doughnuts at the ARTIE Fun Day are always great, and I love receiving them."



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www.artie.net.au

Fundraising available in selected areas only.

THREE years ago, Will Chambers feared his rugby league career was over.

Now, the revitalised Storm centre has been nominated by Maroons coach Mal Meninga as the front-runner to succeed retired Queensland centre Justin Hodges.

Meninga's clever succession planning will pay another dividend in 2016 when Chambers continues his ascension from Origin rookie to a leader of men in Camp Maroon.

The 27-year-old only made his Origin debut last year, but four games for Queensland has convinced Meninga that Chambers can move in-field to fill the enormous void left by Hodges.

It seems a logical fit. Both Hodges and Chambers are proud Indigenous products. Both stand 190cm and in Chambers, Meninga sees the raw strength and game-breaking instincts that made Hodges one of the most feared centres of his generation.

Maroons 2015 debutant Dane Gagai is another possible replacement for Hodges.

But Chambers' Test breakthrough against New Zealand in April, and a cameo in the centres for the reshuffled Maroons in Game 3 of this year's series, gives him the edge in experience.

"Will is certainly a special talent," Meninga said.

"I could go either way. Will could be right centre with Dane on the right wing, or they could swap around. It's a nice headache to have.

"They both play right centre for their clubs, so with Justin moving on, it's good to know our succession plan is working. I've been really impressed with Will, he's slotted into the Queensland set-up seamlessly."

Indeed, Chambers has come a long way from his ordeal in 2012, when the Storm centre was diagnosed with idiopathic thrombocytopenia (ITP), a rare disease in which the immune system destroys platelets needed for blood clotting.

After a game against the Warriors in Auckland, Chambers returned home covered in bruising. The Storm feared he had cancer, and sent the centre off for urgent tests.

The results revealed Chambers' platelet levels were so low he had to be quarantined from training sessions and needed ASADA-approved medication to restore healthy blood levels.



Thankfully, Chambers has made a full recovery from the disorder. The evidence was his first two games for Queensland, when he amassed a staggering 422 metres, 41 runs, seven tackle-busts, two line-breaks and one try.



The 242 metres in his Origin debut was the fourth highest compiled by a winger in Origin's 35-year history, placing him behind only Wendell Sailor (282m and 244m in the 1998 series) and Jarryd Hayne (281m in 2009).

"Will's Origin debut was one of the best I'd seen to be honest with you," Meninga said. "It was pleasing because Will has been sitting in the wings for a number of years.

"He's probably a late starter in terms of age, but he's become an important member of this group in a short space of time."

Chambers had to travel some 3700km to chase his NRL dream. Raised in Gove, a tiny mining town at the northern-most tip of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Chambers left his family behind to attend Nudgee College in Brisbane.

Within a few weeks, he was ready to pack his bags and go home. "It has been a journey," he said. "At times it was very hard. I missed home a lot, but my mum and dad said, 'Stick at it'.

"When I first came to Nudgee I just wanted to go home. It wasn't until rugby came around in second term that school became a bit easier. I wasn't very good at cricket and volleyball, which was the first term.

"Once rugby came around I learnt how to play rugby union and I really enjoyed my time there. "I had a great time at Nudgee. It was there that I was picked up by the Storm and I went through their program with Norths Devils."

Now Chambers is a fully-fledged Test and Origin star ready for the challenge of becoming the new Hodges.

"Mal (Meninga) makes my job pretty easy in the Queensland side," he said. "He just says make your tackles and run the ball hard, which is what I do at the Storm.

"Hodgo was a great player and just watching him at training teaches you a lot. I feel honoured to be part of this group of boys ... I just want to do the Queensland jumper proud every time I put it on."



**THERE IS
A WILL
ON HIS
WAY TO
THE TOP**

SUPER SONIC JETS TAKE GAME TO NEW HEIGHTS

THE rugby league revolution started by Ben and Shane Walker not only continues, but is gathering unstoppable momentum with the Ipswich Jets.

The Walker boys have broken the mould with their approach to footy tactics with the Jets, and have ridden the wave all the way to the Intrust Super Cup premiership, and the NRL State Championship title.

The Jets are winning a lot of fans, and converting the sceptics, with their unique attacking style of football that encourages keeping the ball in play, keeping the ball moving and being unpredictable.

It is the brand of footy we all grew up playing and watching, but a style that unfortunately has been choked out of the game at NRL level over the past decade, as fully professional teams focused on percentage plays, no-mistake football and wrestling in the ruck to gain advantage.

It worked well once, and was quickly adopted by just about every high-level coach who saw their job as more about winning and less about entertaining.

The Walker brothers have turned that thinking on its head, producing game plans that are not only successful, but a delight for fans to watch – and the number of fans is growing around the country.

The Walkers are a breath of fresh air in a game that can sometimes take itself too seriously, and get bogged

down in boredom because people are too afraid of being different.

The Jets won through to the State Championship final with a convincing 32-20 win in the ISC final against the Townsville Blackhawks.

Townsville, in their first season, had been the dominant force all year – losing only three games on their way to the grand final.

But the Jets could not be contained on a slippery Suncorp Stadium surface, and produced some terrific football to land the club's first premiership – a long wait after joining the Brisbane competition in 1982.

The Jets then backed up the following weekend to play Newcastle in the state championship, and again the Walkers showed they are anything but boring as rugby league coaches.

The clash with the Knights was a personal mission for the Walkers, who were considered but ultimately overlooked for the Newcastle NRL coaching position.

While most coaches would have been content to trot out tired clichés like “it’s just another game”, or “there’s no easy games at this level”, the Walkers agreed their mission was absolutely personal by declaring before kick-off “We want to win by 40!”

The Jets looked on track to meet that target when they led the Knights 20-6 at halftime, but after



COMMITTED TO QUEENSLAND

The Mighty Maroons are back on top after defeating the Blues in the 2015 series! We are celebrating a milestone that will never be done again with 9 series wins in 10 years with a once off XXXX Old Maroons Jersey, T-Shirt and Hat. Showcase your Queensland pride.

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weathering a second half fightback, Ipswich settled for a more conventional 26-12 win.

It means that Queensland teams have now won both NRL State Championships, with the Northern Pride winning the inaugural event last year.

In this year's FOGS Colts grand final, Burleigh held out Wynnum Manly to win 22-12 in very trying conditions.

A fierce electrical storm hit Brisbane just before kick-off, with the game actually delayed because of the heavy rain and lightning.

But Burleigh were better able to adjust to the waterlogged surface and scored a deserved win.





COWBOYS REIGN IN GRAND FINAL TO BEAT THEM ALL

IT IS not very often that the words of former Blues coach Phil Gould are quoted in this esteemed publication, but in reviewing the 2015 NRL grand final between the Cowboys and Broncos, we are willing to make an exception.

Wow.

While every rugby league fan north of the border would have been overjoyed at the prospect of an all-Queensland grand final, the fact that the two clubs turned on an absolute gem of a game – that many are already rating as the greatest grand final ever – sent everyone into delirium.

North Queensland's unforgettable 17-16 extra-time golden-point thriller over Brisbane was the stuff rugby league dreams – and legends – are made of.

At its peak, more than 4.48 million people around the country were tuned in to watch as the Cowboys somehow conjured a miracle to win the club's first premiership.

It was a massive haul considering the peak viewing figure for the previous day's lopsided AFL grand final between Hawthorn and West Coast was almost half a million less, at 3.99 million.

And it was compelling viewing. You want blockbuster reality TV? Here it is: an 83-minute season finale so gripping it made "who shot JR" look like Play School.

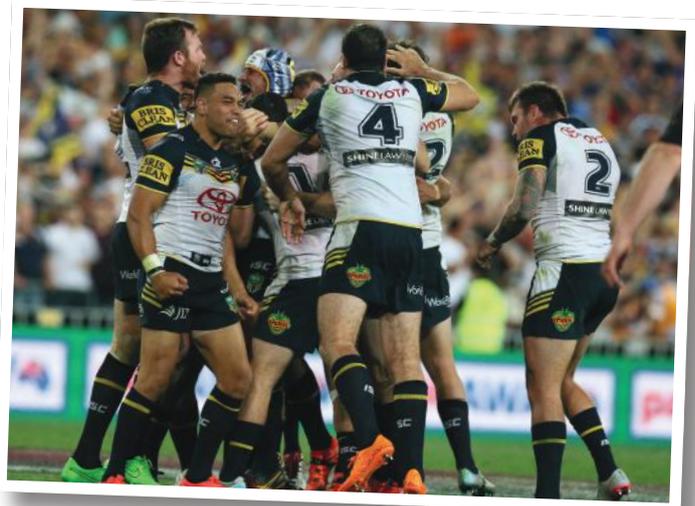
It was everything great about rugby league, wrapped

into a neat package and tied with a fairytale bow.

And at the centre was the incomparable, ever-brilliant Johnathan Thurston.

Brisbane were chasing their own fairytales of course, with the club's great leader Justin Hodges playing the final game of his career only days after it looked like the judiciary would deny him his farewell.

And then there is the master coach, Wayne Bennett, back at the helm of his beloved Broncos for the first season after six years away, who rebuilt the club and its culture in a remarkable 12 months.



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

And for bang-on 80 minutes, the Broncos had the game won, with their relentless defence turning the Cowboys away time and time again.

But not even the Broncos could stop the Cowboys when it mattered most.

With the game slipping away, Thurston threw the ball out to Michael Morgan, and the five-eighth took on the Brisbane defence hoping for something – anything – to come his way.

Brisbane only had to stop Morgan to win the game, so they all converged on the State of Origin playmaker to shut him down.

But their eagerness was their downfall. By descending on Morgan, they had left winger Kyle Feldt unmarked on the right flank.

As he was swamped by the defence, Morgan somehow squeezed a back-of-the-hand flick pass to Feldt, he scarpered over in the corner and touched down as the fulltime siren sounded.

Thurston then had the most high-pressure assignment imaginable – trying to land the conversion from the sideline, in front of a crowd of 82,758 and the other 4.48 million at home.

The kick started out as Thurston's always do, so wide it looked headed for the next suburb, before it began its traditional right-to-left curve towards the centre of the posts.

Incredibly, the ball cannoned into the right-hand upright, sending the game into extra time.

Thurston chose to kick-off in the golden point period, hoping to force an error from the Broncos.

He didn't have to wait long, with Ben Hunt – so brilliant in this game as he had been all season – inexplicably spilling Kyle Feldt's restart to give the Cowboys possession.

Four tackles later, the NRL premiership trophy was on its way to Townsville.

Thurston deservedly booted the Cowboys to victory, as he has done so many times, by landing the field goal that delivered North Queensland fans the scenes they thought they would never see.

The brilliant co-captain also won the Churchill Medal as best on ground in the grand final, forever ending any debate about his destiny to be named one of rugby league's Immortals.

The win was a triumph for North Queensland, and their hordes of fans spread across the NRL's biggest geographical footprint.

But there were also a number of personal triumphs, led by Thurston finally grabbing the premiership critics felt he needed to define his career.

There was also the heroics of his co-captain Matt Scott, who has not only battled bravely through the pain barrier with a neck injury that requires off-season surgery, but in the process regained his mantle as the best prop in the game.

Then there was their coach Paul Green, yet another FOG, who in just his second season as an NRL coach gave the Cowboys the prize they have waited 21 long years for.

It was a game and a moment that will live long in the minds of rugby league fans, and showed us once again why it is the greatest game of all.





FOGS
QUEENSLAND
FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

The Queensland Rugby League and Former Origin Greats wish to acknowledge the support of the following organisations as part of the **1980 Initiative**.



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Supporting the development of rugby league in Queensland

FOGS LEND A HAND IN TRAGIC TIMES



RUGBY league received a tragic wake up call in June with the death of Sunshine Coast Falcons player James Ackerman.

James was a 25-year-old father of two, playing the game he loved alongside his mates against Norths at Bishop Park, when the unthinkable happened.

Charging the ball up with a powerful run in the opening minutes of the game, James was hit in a strong tackle and collapsed to the ground.



The game was called off as medical officials spent 40 minutes on the ground fighting for James' life before he was taken to hospital. That was Saturday afternoon. By Monday afternoon, James had sadly passed away.

James' passing united rugby league in grief.

It was a jolting reminder that while rugby league is a game that we all love, it is also inherently dangerous given its very nature as a collision sport.

"James' death shook the game," says

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles. "To have a death on the footy field, I think it shocked us all and made us all stop and think.

"James was a guy who, from what I have been told, just played the game because he loved playing.

"He went at it 100 miles an hour, and in the game he was running it straight and hard just like all of us are taught to do."

As shocking and heartbreaking as Ackerman's death was, it was compounded by the ones who loved him that he left behind – especially wife Saraa, daughter Milly and son Olliver.

"It shocked us, so it was difficult to imagine the grief and despair that his wife, children and parents must have been going through at that time," Gene said. "We didn't want any fanfare or publicity out of it. But we rang the QRL and offered to help.

"The best way to do that with his young family left behind was to

donate money to The Ackerman Family Trust. We donated \$10,000 to get things happening for them.

"At that time, there was just so much for that family to deal with let alone thinking about the realities of the everyday world like mortgages or rent, groceries and bills."

The FOGS also stepped in to help in May when Andrew Grant – a 41-year-old father of six – fractured his C5 vertebrae while playing for Bribie Island in a Division 2 match.

Andrew was taken to the Princess Alexandra Hospital in a critical condition, but bravely fought his way back.

He lost the use of his legs, wrists and hands but Andrew was determined to stay positive for the future.

The FOGS donated \$10,000 to Andrew and his family to help support them on the long road of rehabilitation ahead.



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

RISING ROOKIES ON ORIGIN EXPRESS SERVICE

MELBOURNE'S man-of-the-moment Cameron Munster is determined to spearhead the next wave of Queensland young guns as coach Mal Meninga prepares to implement his Maroons succession plan.

Munster was a revelation filling in at fullback for the injured Billy Slater this year at the Storm, and it seems only a matter of time before the wonderboy from Rockhampton wears the Queensland No.1 jumper.

Meninga took great pride from Queensland's ninth series win in 10 years in 2015, but the record-breaking Origin coach has one eye on the future, mindful never to take the Maroons' success for granted.

When Meninga agreed to a three-year extension with the QRL this season, one of his primary objectives was to ensure a seamless transition between his champion team and the Generation Next Maroons who inherit a remarkable legacy.



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

Munster is at the vanguard of Queensland hopefuls ready to accept the baton. Just turned 21, Munster is starring in the NRL after a handful of games, prompting Broncos coach Wayne Bennett to suggest the rangy utility back is a shoo-in for next year's Queensland Emerging Origin squad.

As a kid, Munster idolised Maroons five-eighth great Darren Lockyer and says he would relish being added to Queensland's

development system.

"I love watching Origin, I bleed Maroon," Munster said.

"It would be the greatest dream of mine to play Origin, only a lucky few get to do it.

"I will be very lucky if I do get the chance. The Queensland jersey means a lot to me and to even make the Emerging Squad next year would be a massive thrill.

"If I get picked one day, it would be unreal, but I'm not getting ahead of myself. Being at Melbourne, you learn you have to keep working hard to be successful in this game."

Over the next three years, Meninga confronts the challenge that faced Australian cricket bosses following the mass exodus of retiring greats Glenn McGrath, Shane Warne and Justin Langer in 2007.

What happens when Queensland rugby league's holy trinity – Johnathan Thurston, Cameron Smith and Cooper Cronk – all depart, possibly in the same series?



Maroons legend Wally Lewis, the King of Origin, isn't reaching for the panic button.

With every week, the Maroons Immortal believes Ben Hunt and Anthony Milford are forging a lethal partnership at the Broncos that can be transferred to steering the Queensland machine in the code's toughest arena.

Then there's Daly Cherry-Evans, who despite his axing for this year's Origin decider remains a key plank in Meninga's blueprint for two decades of Origin domination.

"Their club combination can certainly translate to Origin," Lewis said recently of Milford and Hunt's Broncos union.

"I have no doubt it (Hunt and Milford playing together for Queensland) will happen at some point, when that is, no-one knows."

Meninga estimates the Maroons will feel some ructions in the next 12 months but the most seismic change in personnel will occur within three years.

Strike centre Justin Hodges announced his retirement this season, while veteran forwards Jacob Lillyman (31), Nate Myles (30) and Corey Parker (33) may follow in the next two years.

By the end of 2017, the Maroons will most likely farewell Thurston,



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

Cronk, Smith, Slater and Thaiday. That would leave just one player, Greg Inglis, with links to the famous 2006 squad which laid the first brick in the Meninga dynasty.

To his credit, Meninga is not glancing in the rear-view mirror.

In the past two series, he has introduced the likes of Hunt, Will Chambers, Jake Friend, Josh McGuire, Michael Morgan, Dylan Napa, Dane Gagai, Korbin Sims and Edrick Lee to Queensland's extended squad.

Bennett says the quality of the

Queensland Emerging Origin program, over which he presides, will ensure the Maroons avoid a return to the dark days of the early 2000s.

Hunt and Milford are among an estimated 154 players to have graduated from the QAS program since 2001.

Other NRL stars tipped for a Queensland baptism in the coming years include Munster, Broncos duo Andrew McCullough and Corey Oates, Souths pair Chris Grevsmuhl and Dave Tyrrell and Bulldogs sensation Moses Mbye.

"It's a huge gap to go from NRL to Origin. It's a daunting place," Bennett said.

"Our camp is run by Origin staff, so if an emerging squad member gets picked for Origin, he knows the staff, they have worked with him at the QAS system.

"In turn, the player feels comfortable and they feel part of something without going into the Queensland team feeling shy, withdrawn and taking days to acclimatise.

"It's the conduit between the Origin and club football and it works."





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Shown Above: Eales Racing
Reset x Fleecing, Yearling Colt
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MURPHY'S LAW

Our greatest women's player handed a special honour, and a new job protecting the game's image

THE two biggest calls of Karyn Murphy's career involved giving up a Maroon shirt, and giving up a blue shirt.

Murphy is a rugby league legend. Her trailblazing career not only put the women's game on the map, but delivered Queensland an incredible run of success that not even Mal Meninga's Maroons could match.

This year marked 17 consecutive series wins for the Queensland over New South Wales, a remarkable era of dominance that stretches right back to the concept's inception in 1999.

And at the forefront was Murphy, the sublimely talented playmaker who was frequently bestowed with the regal description of "the Wally Lewis of women's rugby league".

Murphy was involved in all but the last series of that incredible winning streak, having retired from the game in 2014 with one last run for her beloved Queensland.

She retired from the Australian team the previous year, having led the Jillaroos to victory at the 2013 World Cup.

Her contribution to the Queensland cause and the rise of women's rugby league were akin to the impact Arthur Beetson had on Origin's birth back in 1980.

It was only fitting then that Murphy should be honoured with the prestigious No.1 player number, the

same as Artie holds on the honour roll of Former Origin Greats, for her contribution to the game and to Queensland.

Murphy was presented with her framed jersey by NRL chief executive Dave Smith at the Queensland Rugby League Awards night in September, and Murphy said she was humbled to stand beside Beetson for their contribution to the cause.

"It was a huge honour obviously. Just playing for Queensland was a huge honour in itself," Murphy said. "I valued every game that I played for Queensland, and to be a part of that amazing run that we have had with the Queensland women over 17 years going back to 1999, it was very special for me to get the No.1.

"But the most important part is recognition for the girls. We spoke a few years ago about giving every girl that played their own Queensland number to recognise the part they played in Queensland's success."

Murphy said hanging up the boots after such a long and successful playing career was a wrenching experience.

"I love the game and would play the game forever if I could," she said. "But your date of birth catches up with you, and you realise that you can't play forever.

I wasn't too sure about finishing all at once. I finished in 2013 with the Australian team, and had one more year with the Queensland team in



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

2014. I am so glad I did, but it was still so hard to give it away."

The good news for Karyn and the game itself is that our most decorated women's player has been able to remain involved in rugby league, fittingly combining her backgrounds as a footy star and high-ranking police officer with her new role with the NRL's Integrity Unit.

"Policing is all I have known. I joined up from school at the age of 18, and did 26 years there," she said. "So it was a hard call to take a break from policing and then also move states.

"I am born and bred in Queensland so moving down to Sydney to do this job was a challenge.

VOWLES HAD ONE HELL OF A RIDE

ADRIAN VOWLES

FOG No.81

Clubs: Gold Coast Seagulls, North Qld Cowboys, Castleford Tigers, Leeds Rhinos, Wakefield Wildcats, Toowoomba Clydesdales, Burleigh Bears

Queensland: 1 Origin (Game 2, 1994)

Position: Lock, Centre

WHEN they retire, many rugby league players dream of being named a coach.

Adrian Vowles went one better: He had a coach named after him.

In 2009, British bus company Arriva Yorkshire unveiled a fleet of new buses named after the 13 greatest rugby league footballers to have played in Yorkshire, as chosen by a public vote and a panel of experts.

Alongside names like Neil Fox, Mal Reilly, Roger Millward, Gary Schofield and David Topliss was Queenslander Adrian Vowles.

“That was quite a humbling thing,” Vowles says. “The bus is still going strong apparently, and a really good ride I am told.”

Vowles is well placed to comment on what makes a decent ride. His rugby league career was one of the more eventful, eclectic and fascinating journeys we have seen in recent times.

Growing up in Cunnamulla and Charleville, Vowles made his first grade debut with the Gold Coast Seagulls

in 1993, and played his one Origin match for Queensland in 1994.

He signed with the Cowboys for their first season in 1995, was dramatically sent off in their first premiership game against Canterbury, was made captain of the club and then unceremoniously sacked by incoming coach Tim Sheens before the 1997 season started.

“I loved it in Townsville,” he says. “When I signed there, I planned on being there forever. They are just great people up there and I really loved it.

“Then Tim Sheens came in and gave me the flick.

“I know these things happen in footy clubs, but it was just the way he went about it. He rang me, and his exact words were: ‘You’re not big enough, you’re not strong enough, you’re not fast enough and you have limited ability’. They were his words. It was hard to take.

“But look, one door shuts and another one opens. Soon after, Darryl van de Velde rang me and asked if I was interested in going to Castleford.

The old saying goes that it is always darkest just before



the dawn. And for Vowles, it didn't seem like it could get much darker than Sheens' brutal and unfair analysis. But it did.

"It was a bit tough when I first went to Castleford," he recalls. "We lost 11 straight, and the fans wanted to kick me out of the country."

"It was pretty bad actually. Then (coach) Stuart Raper took over, and things came good."

"Good" is something of an understatement. When the new dawn finally broke on Vowles' career it was the start of a whole new era.

Vowles and Raper transformed Castleford from a club facing relegation into a powerhouse, with Vowles moving from centre to lock.

In 1999, he became just the second player from Castleford, the second Australian and first Queenslander to be named the "Man of Steel", Super League's player of the year.

"I loved it over there. I fell in love with footy again over there," Vowles says.

"I made so many good friends over there and had so many wonderful experiences."

"If it hadn't been for Sheens, I would never have got to experience what I did in England."

Vowles is still revered as royalty in Castleford, as you would expect with a bus named after him. He is a member of Castleford's Hall of Fame, and in 2004 – after he had returned to Australia – was flown back to help the club win the second division grand final and promotion back to Super League.

But for all his tremendous achievements in England with the Tigers, Wakefield and Leeds, it is when conversation turns to his one game in the Maroons jersey that you notice a discernable, reverent hush in his tone.

"I listened to the 1980 Origin game on the radio in Cunnamulla, and I said to myself that I wanted to play Origin one day," Vowles recalls.

"Ross Livermore rang me early one morning, I was still in bed, and he said Steve Renouf had to pass a fitness test and I was on standby to play for Queensland."

"It sounds bad, but I started praying he would fail his fitness test."

"About an hour later I got the call telling me I was in."

"The whole experience was great, but for me, it was more for what my Mum and Dad had done."

"Living in the bush, you have to travel a million miles just to do anything or get to a game of footy. That Queensland jersey was a payback for them."

"I had never made a Queensland side in my life, so that was even sweeter. To come into that environment and have Choppy, Wally, Mal, all those guys involved was quite surreal."

Vowles' ties to the game remain strong. He is a commentator, and entertaining blogger who analyses the game and its myriad issues with skilled and perceptive writing.

This year he was an assistant coach to Brad Donald with the Queensland Women's team, helping them to an incredible 17th straight series win over New South Wales.

Now he has just been appointed assistant coach to former Blues backrower Steve Folkes with the Australian Women's team, the Jillaroos.

Outside of rugby league, Vowles and his wife Camille created 'Live to Give Projects', a non-profit charity that provides essentials for disadvantaged children. He also created the 'Pink Day Out' charity drive, which has raised nearly \$100,000 for breast cancer research.

All of this on top of his 'day job' at AUSCOAL Super, where he is the senior business relationship manager.

Never mind the bus. For Adrian Vowles, it's been one hell of a ride.



TRADING PLACES

MAROONS are on the move in 2016, with a number of Queenslanders finding new homes in the NRL or further afield.

Not surprisingly after their season of turmoil, the Gold Coast Titans have been the most active in the transfer market – farewelling two Maroons in Nate Myles (Manly) and David Taylor (Catalans Dragons).

In their place, former Maroons prop David Shillington will join the Titans from the Canberra Raiders, along with a hot prospect good judges consider to be a Maroon-in-waiting – Broncos under-20s and junior rep star Ashley Taylor.

The Titans will also bring another Queensland home in hooker Nathan Friend, who is rejoining the Gold Coast after his stint at the Warriors.

Zeb Taia (Catalans) and Tyrone Roberts (Newcastle) round out the bulk of Gold Coast's recruitment for next year.

Up the road at the Broncos, the exit door will get more of a workout over the off-season than the entrance, with a host of

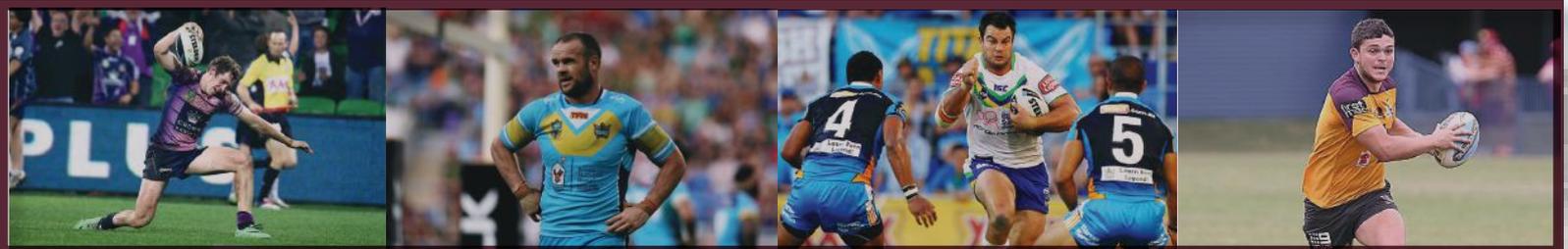
players – headlined by retiring skipper Justin Hodges – leaving Red Hill.

Hodges, Taylor, Todd Lowrie (Newcastle), Mitch Garbutt (Leeds), Matt Parcell (Manly) and Mitchell Dodds (Warrington) will all be missing from Brisbane's pre-season training next year.

So far, only exciting Ipswich product Carlin Anderson is listed as a new recruit for 2016.

North Queensland share similar stability in the roster, with Shaun Hudson joining them from the Titans next year, while Cameron Kings (Parramatta), Viliame Kikau (Penrith) and Glenn Hall (retiring) will depart.

Across the league, Myles' shift from the Titans to Manly and Kurt Mann leaving the Storm to join the Dragons are probably the most seismic shifts for Queenslanders on the transfer market.



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AROUND THE GROUNDS

WHO'S IN AND OUT AT YOUR CLUB IN 2016

BRONCOS

In: Carlin Anderson (Ipswich)

Out: Justin Hodges (retirement), Todd Lowrie (Newcastle), Ashley Taylor (Gold Coast), Mitch Garbutt (Leeds), Matt Parcell (Manly), Mitchell Dodds (Warrington)

RAIDERS

In: Aidan Sezer (Gold Coast), Elliot Whitehead (Catalan), Adam Clydesdale (Newcastle)

Out: David Shillington (Gold Coast), Andrew Heffernan (Penrith), Mitch Cornish (Parramatta), Josh McCrone (Dragons)

BULLDOGS

In: Bradley Abbey (Warriors)

Out: Trent Hodkinson (Newcastle), Frank Pritchard (Hull FC), Damien Cook (South Sydney)

SHARKS

In: Maloney (Roosters), Chad Townsend (Warriors), Jesse Sene-Lafao (Manly)

Out: Michael Gordon (Parramatta), Blake Ayshford (Warriors), Jeff Robson (Warriors)

TITANS

In: David Shillington (Canberra), Nathan Friend (Warriors), Zeb Taia (Catalan), Ashley Taylor (Brisbane), Tyrone Roberts

Out: Nate Myles (Manly), Aidan Sezer (Canberra), Dave Taylor (Catalan), Ben Ridge (retirement), Matthew White (Melbourne)

SEA EAGLES

In: Nate Myles (Gold Coast), Lewis Brown (Penrith), Apisai Koroisau (Penrith), Darcy Lussick (Parramatta), Tim Moltzen (Wests Tigers), Matt Parcell (Brisbane), Nathan Green (Dragons), John Walker (rugby union), Tom Wright (schoolboy rugby union)

Out: Kieran Foran (Parramatta), James Hasson (Parramatta), Justin Horo (Catalans), Jack Littlejohn (Wests Tigers), Ligi Sao (Warriors), Michael Chee-Kam (West Tigers), Dunamis Lui (Dragons) Jesse Sene-Lafao (Cronulla) Cheyse Blair (Melbourne)

STORM

In: Matthew White (Gold Coast), Cheyse Blair (Manly)

Out: Kurt Mann (Dragons), Ryan Hinchcliffe (Huddersfield), Mahe Fonua (Hull FC), Dayne Weston (Leigh), Matt Duffie (rugby)

KNIGHTS

In: Trent Hodkinson (Canterbury), Todd Lowrie (Brisbane)

Out: Kurt Gidley (Warrington), Beau Scott (Parramatta), Clint Newton (retirement), David Fa'alogo (retirement), Carlos Tuimavave (Hull FC), Tyrone Roberts (Gold Coast)

COWBOYS

In: Shaun Hudson (Gold Coast)

Out: Viliame Kikau (Penrith), Cameron King (Parramatta), Glenn Hall (retirement) Robert Lui (Salford)

EELS

In: Kieran Foran (Manly), Beau Scott (Newcastle), Michael Gordon (Cronulla), James Hasson (Manly), Cameron King (Nth Qld), Kieran Moss (Penrith), Rory O'Brien (Dragons)

Out: Darcy Lussick (Manly), Ryan Matterson (Roosters), Ben Crooks (Castleford), Zach Dockar-Clay (Penrith), Chris Sandow (Warrington), Beau Champion (retired)

PANTHERS

In: Trent Merrin (Dragons), Zach Dockar-Clay (Parramatta), Benjamin Garcia (Catalans), Andrew Heffernan (Canberra), Viliame Kikau (Nth Qld), Te Maire Martin (Wests Tigers)

Out: Lewis Brown (Manly), Brent Kite (retirement), Apisai Koroisau (Manly), Nigel Plum (retirement), Kieran Moss (Parramatta), Sika Manu (Hull), David Simmons (retirement)

RABBITOHS

In: Damien Cook (Canterbury), Sam Burgess (Bath, Rugby Union)

Out: Issac Luke (Warriors), Ben Lowe (retirement), Glenn Stewart (Catalans)

DRAGONS

In: Kurt Mann (Melbourne), Siliva Havili (Warriors), Mose Masoe (St Helens), Dunamis Lui (Manly)

Out: Dan Hunt (retirement), Trent Merrin (Penrith), Charly Runciman (Widnes), Nathan Green (Manly) Rory O'Brien (Parramatta), Eto Nabuli (Qld Reds), Justin Hunt (Wests Tigers)

ROOSTERS

In: Joe Burgess (Wigan), Mitchell Frei (Wynnum Manly), Ian Henderson (Catalans), Ryan Matterson (Parramatta)

Out: Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (Warriors), James Maloney (Cronulla), Nathan Stapleton (London)

WARRIORS

In: Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (Roosters), Issac Luke (South Sydney), Ligi Sao (Manly), Blake Ayshford (Cronulla)

Out: Nathan Friend (Gold Coast), Siliva Havili (Dragons), Dominique Peyroux (St Helens), Sam Rapira (Huddersfield), Sam Tomkins (Wigan), Chad Townsend (Cronulla), Bradley Abbey (Canterbury) Glen Fisiiahi (rugby union)

WESTS TIGERS

In: Jack Littlejohn (Manly), Michael Chee-Kam (Manly), Jesse Parahi (rugby union), Justin Hunt (Dragons), Jordan Rankin (Hull)

Out: Pat Richards (Catalans), Keith Galloway (Leeds), Shannon McDonnell (St Helens), Te Maire Martin (Penrith), Tim Moltzen (Manly)

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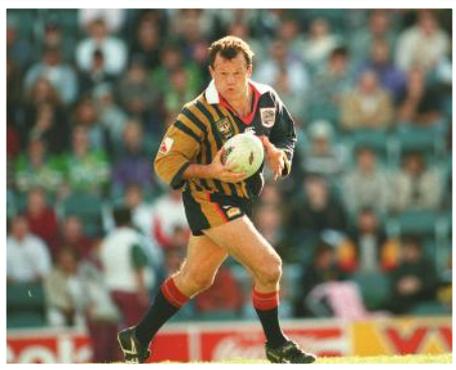
with Trevor Gillmeister

YOU are doing better than me if you can remember a time when rugby league in Queensland was stronger than in 2015.

An all-Queensland NRL Grand Final for the first time ever, the Maroons winning their ninth series in 10 years, Johnathan Thurston winning his fourth Dally M, and a cracking Intrust Super Cup grand final between Ipswich and Townsville.

It has been one hell of a year.

That is why I think the time is right for the game to make the most of league's immense popularity and accelerate expansion plans – and put another NRL team into Brisbane.



For me, it doesn't make sense that we don't have NRL being played at Suncorp Stadium every week. We know the audience and the appetite is there for it.

And, as popular as the Broncos are, we also know that there are a lot of league fans in Brisbane who aren't Broncos fans.

One of the key arguments against putting another team into Brisbane is making sure that the Titans are successful first, and that is very sensible thinking.

But I also think that now that the Titans have certainty over the club's future, they are finally on the right track to move forward.

Another ready-made argument is that we tried a second Brisbane team before with the Crushers, and it didn't work.

I have seen both sides of the fence here, having played with both the Broncos and the Crushers, and in my view there is no doubt that Brisbane can handle two teams.

What the Crushers really needed was time, and thanks to the Super League war, the club never got that chance.

It is easy to forget, but back in the Crushers' debut season in 1995, the club's average crowd at Suncorp Stadium was more than 30,000.

It is a figure even modern-day Sydney clubs would envy, and obviously didn't impact on the popularity of the Broncos.

But the Super League war took the ground from underneath the Crushers. Fans walked away from the game because of the fighting, and the Crushers had neither the history nor results to keep people coming through the gates.

The Cowboys, by comparison, were born in the same season, but because of their geography – being the only team within 1500km – had the luxury of time to walk before they ran.

North Queensland struggled for a lot of years before, inevitably, it all clicked into place.

Now, 20 years on, look what the Cowboys have achieved. What if the game had given up on them like it did the Crushers?



It would have been easy to walk away from the Cowboys after 1995 when they finished last – or even 1996 (third last), 1997 (last), 1998 (fourth last), 1999 (second last), 2000 (last) or 2001 (second last).

But they were worth persisting with, and now the sleeping giant has woken.

A second Brisbane team will also need patience, a luxury not afforded to the Crushers.

But there is no doubt that league's popularity and healthy bottom line thanks to massive television deals make the current environment far less hostile for starting a new club.

The time is right. As the famous line goes from the movie *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come".





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