

Official Magazine of Queensland's Former Origin Greats

FOGS

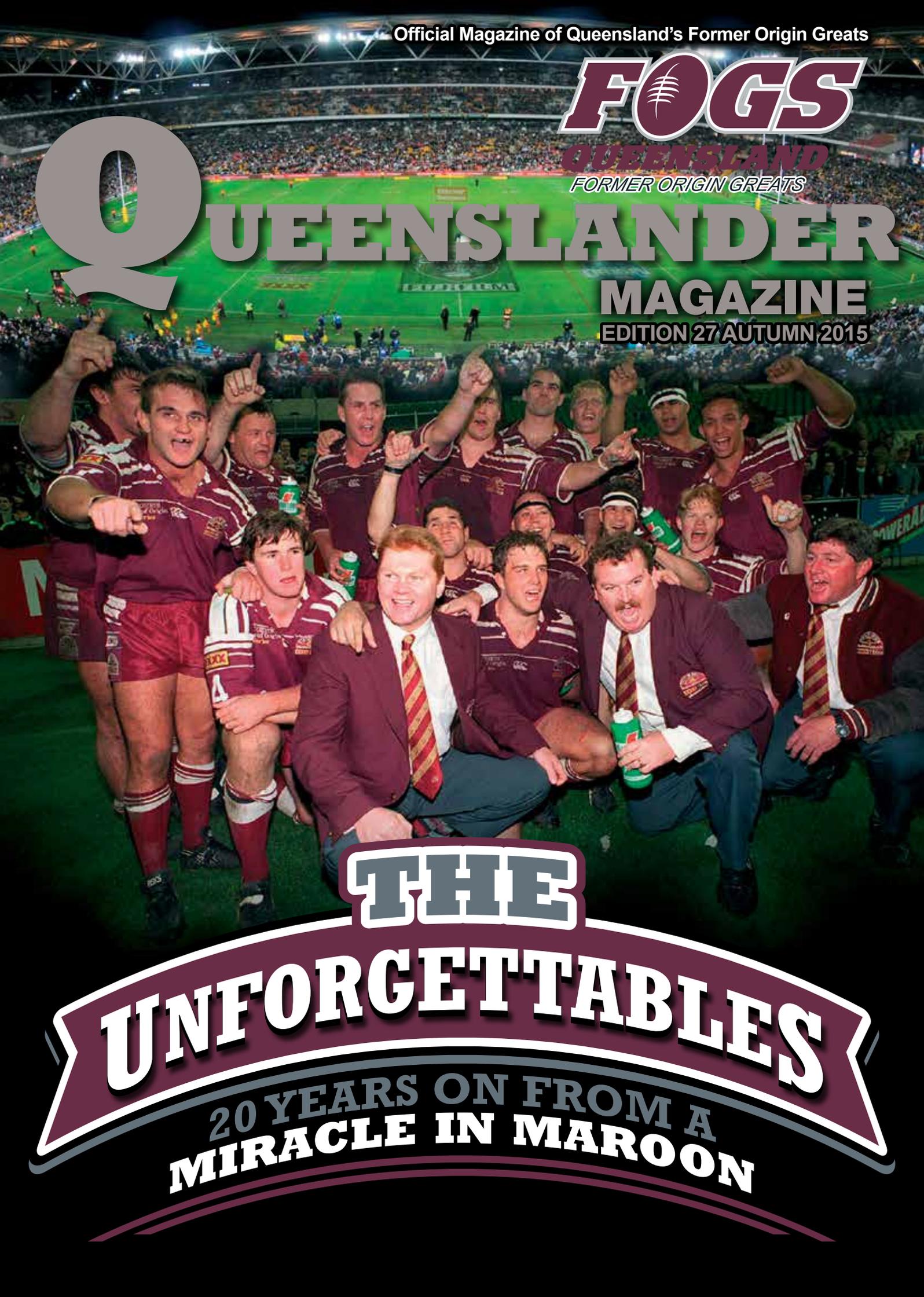
QUEENSLAND
FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

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QUEENSLANDER

MAGAZINE

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THE

UNFORGETTABLES

20 YEARS ON FROM A
MIRACLE IN MAROON

FOGS

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FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

RESILIENCE and perseverance are qualities we all sometimes could use more of.

In the movie Rocky Balboa, Rocky's son complains to his father that his job and his life have just become too hard.

The boxer replies with his famous line that "life is not about how many times you get hit. It's about how many times you can get hit and keep moving forward".

They are words that ring as true in rugby league as they do in boxing, particularly when it comes to Queenslanders at State of Origin time.

Queenslanders have always had the reputation for never giving in, for being able to find that little bit extra to give, to keep working hard and moving forward until somehow some hope is uncovered from hopelessness.

Being asked to pull on a Queensland jumper means you are being asked to look inside yourself and find a way to get the job done, even when it seems the odds, the odds and luck have all ganged up against you.

This edition of Queensland Magazine is a tribute to that fighting spirit – the Queensland spirit – by celebrating two significant milestones in our Origin history.

This year marks the 10th series of Mal Meninga's reign as Queensland coach, and an incredible 20 years since Paul Vautin's Maroons produced the greatest upset in Origin history with a series clean-sweep in 1995.

While the two eras are poles apart in many respects, there are also a number of parallels between the two, outside of their obvious passion for the Maroons jumper.

In both instances, Vautin and Meninga were rookie Origin coaches walking into situations most thought were hopeless.

In both instances, Queensland was staring at the indignity of a fourth successive series defeat against star-studded NSW teams.

And both teams had to stand strong as the heavy hits kept coming their way, moving forward inch by inch until finally the time was right for them to deliver the knock-out blows their opponents never saw coming.

In 1995, it was guys like Terry Cook, Craig Teevan, Ben Ikin, Matt Sing, Wayne Bartim, Tony Hearn and Danny Moore being asked to stand alongside a handful of veterans and deliver more for Queensland than they had to give.

In 2006, while names like Lockyer, Smith, Price, Civoniceva, Inglis, Tate, Thurston and Hodges are easy to recall for their roles, it should never be overlooked the contribution that guys like Steve Bell, Clinton Schifcofske, Rhys Wesser and Adam Mogg made to that series win that changed our Origin destiny.

Those guys answered when Queensland called, just like the guys in 1995 had done. They dug deep and got the job done.

A line from Fatty Vautin probably sums up Queensland's resilience and perseverance when faced with huge challenges like we faced in 1995 and 2006.

"It is never about who has the best players," Fatty says. "It's about who can get the best out of themselves."

Or, as Balboa might say, how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward.

Developing that persistence and perseverance is one of the key attributes of our successful ARTIE Academy program, which reinforces to kids the importance of education and attending school to young indigenous students.

The ARTIE Academy shows them that the easiest path is not often the best one, and how the greatest victories are the ones you have to fight hardest to get.

It may be easier to skip school and go hang out with your mates, but the victory of a better life built on the back of a good education is one that is worth fighting for.

I am pleased that our funding for the ARTIE Academy, while reduced, has been renewed again by the Federal Government.

At a time when a number of service providers have had their funding cut completely, we are fortunate that the government has been able to see the results and impact the ARTIE Academy has achieved are worthy of their backing.

The fight for us at FOGS is to build on that success and keep moving forward.

GENE MILES
Executive Chairman



FROM THE COACH'S DESK

With Queensland Coach Mal Meninga

OUR MISSION REMAINS THE SAME

Last year's State of Origin series result does not make our assignment in 2015 any easier, or any more difficult.

Beating the Blues, especially with only one game at home at Suncorp Stadium this year – in Game 3 – is going to take a lot of hard work, commitment and a fair share of luck as well.

There has been no knee-jerk reaction from us after our first series loss since 2005.



We were all obviously disappointed, but once again, I was very pleased and very comfortable with the effort and passion shown by the team in all three games of the series.

Ultimately, we were beaten by a very committed NSW team who executed their game plan better than us in the first two games.

Regardless of the result, we are always trying to improve the program, and have it continuously evolving. We don't want to be caught out standing still.

I think there is a fresh challenge ahead of our senior guys, with the opportunity to win back the shield and, for the first time in a long time, playing without the weight of expectation that naturally comes with a winning streak like they had.

That will help in their mental preparation. But at the same time, that is something that I would hope I don't have to push too much.

I would expect all of our players to be self-motivated by just performing to their best every time they wear the Queensland jersey.

Certainly for me as coach though, there are quite a few reasons to get excited about what lies ahead this series.

For a start, there is the rare opportunity of having our senior players coming into camp feeling fresher after a genuine off-season.

Through a variety of injuries, a number of our Test regulars were not available for last year's Four Nations, meaning they were given time to recuperate and refresh – and they will bring more energy to Origin than they have been able to muster in previous years.

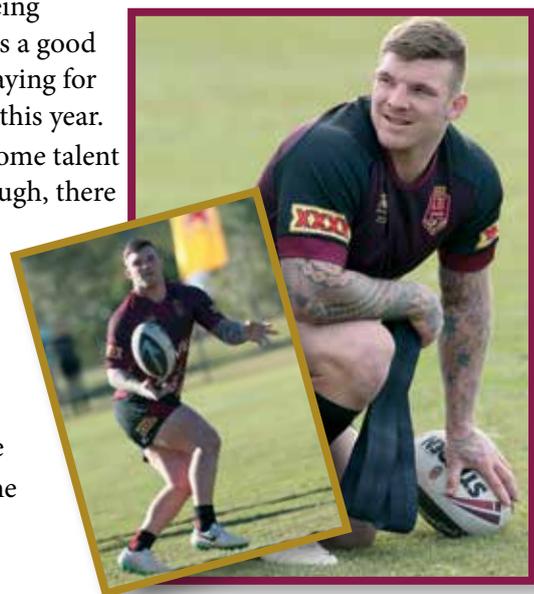
Secondly, our Emerging Origin squad members continue to push for selection, and it is always an enjoyable experience being able to hand a Queensland their first Maroon Origin jersey.

Guys like Dane Gagai, Dale Copley, Michael Morgan, Josh McGuire, Dylan Napa, Korbin Sims, Gavin Cooper and Dave Tyrrell are among the players I hope would be seeing themselves as a good chance of playing for Queensland this year.

We have some talent coming through, there is no doubt about it.

And I think recent years have shown that if guys like them are producing the quality and consistency required, then the opportunities will come their way.

I think back to last year and we had guys like Josh Papalii, Aiden Guerra and Will Chambers all step up and take their chances well when they arrived.



Those guys have taken the first step towards being the players that the Queensland team will be built around for years to come.

The challenge for me and the rest of the Queensland staff is to ensure that the players are given the best opportunity to prepare as well as they can and play to their ability.

That comes down to the environment we provide, and managing things like workloads, fatigue and mental freshness.

But at the end of the day, the players are the ones that run on field. They understand what their roles and responsibilities are. They just have to get stuck into it.



The excitement is already building. I can't wait for it to get started again.

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LAURENCE EALES

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL QUEENSLANDER

Laurence Eales, originally from North Queensland, owns and manages one of Australia's top national businesses, EA Hire and has been a racing enthusiast his entire life. Growing up with horses he started selecting his own thoroughbreds over a decade ago, hand selecting multiple Group 1 winner Whobegotyou and Melbourne Cup winner Shocking. Laurence has now turned his passion into a new business with Eales Racing Syndications which hosts a stable of pedigree yearlings and two year olds.

Shown Above: Eales Racing
Reset x Fleecing, Yearling Colt
Trainer | Danny O'Brien
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Greenland Crown are partnering with the FOGS to provide support for their ARTIE Academy which provides Indigenous students with ongoing tutoring support and encourages them to complete Year 12 and move into the workplace.



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China Eastern, a world top ten airline, supports the Greenland Crown proposal and will prioritise direct flights from Shanghai to Brisbane. Greenland owns 68 hotels and resorts around the world.

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With their global experience and proven results, Greenland Crown will deliver a landmark entertainment and tourism destination for Brisbane, Queensland and the World to enjoy.

Brisbane deserves not just better, but the best.

And with Greenland and Crown's track record, you know when they say they will deliver, they actually will.



MAL'S (ALMOST) PERFECT

10



HOW THE MAROONS WENT FROM DESPAIR TO GLORY!

THIS year marks Mal Meninga's 10th series as Maroons coach, and despite Queensland's astounding run of success since he took over in 2006, State of Origin's greatest mentor believes his team's finest hour is yet to come.

After shredding the Origin record books with a previously unthinkable eight successive series wins, Meninga hopes the true reflection of this mighty team's greatness will be felt 10 years down the track when they impart their understanding of the Queensland spirit to the next generation.

"That is what I want to happen," Mal says.

"Regardless of what they are doing in life, I want them to remain a part of the Origin program, and keep telling the stories and reinforcing the message about what it means to play for Queensland.

"Whether they be coaches or staff or mentors, I would like them all to be able to contribute to Queensland's Origin future

through the history they helped to create.

"Their legacy will be their history. Will eight years in a row ever be beaten? I don't think so. I don't think their achievement will ever be equalled.

"They have left their legacy now through their success, but I hope they will all contribute to Queensland's Origin future as well."

Meninga's own legacy of coach is assured.

Already one of the greatest players the game has ever seen, Meninga's unprecedented success as a coach is made even more remarkable by the circumstances surrounding how he got the job.

In 2005, the Maroons were in a very dark place. Having lost their third straight series, Queensland was staring down the barrel of becoming the first team in Origin history to lose four series in a row.

The Queensland family was coming apart. The misfiring Maroons were under siege from all quarters as frustration and the lack of success threatened to boil over.

Amid the maelstrom, Meninga quietly put up his hand and asked to help.

“I have never considered myself a coach. But I knew something had to be done,” Mal says.

“What really happened, as far as me putting my hand up to coach Queensland, was I sat in the box with all the ex-players and other people in Game 3 in 2005, and everyone was bagging them for the way they were playing.

“Internally for Queensland, for the first time ever, there was a lot of criticism. There was already a lot of criticism externally being directed at the team, but now

it was coming from the inside as well.

“The way that I am, if I am going to be critical about something, I have to come up with solutions on how to fix it.

“So rather than me just sitting there being critical, I thought I had better do something about trying to change it. That was my thinking.

“I talked to Wayne (Bennett), and to Tossler (Turner), to Geno (Miles) and to Ross Livermore at the QRL about it all.

“I had a bit of coaching experience, and I thought I had something to offer.

“I left the Raiders not wanting to coach anymore. So it wasn't about proving myself as a coach. I had no inhibitions.

“I just wanted to man-manage these kids to start believing in themselves and, as a group, take some pride and passion in that Maroon jersey.

“When I came on board and got to know them all, I found that they already had that pride and passion in the jersey. They just didn't know how to win.”

Meninga began rebuilding the Maroon wall brick by brick. But he was fortunate to be able to call on a couple of master builders to assist with the reconstruction.

“Tossler and Artie Beetson were so important for us in the early days, because they reinforced everything we all know about playing for Queensland,” he says.

“All of the players just had such enormous respect for them, they bought in to what we were doing straight away.

“It has always been about that respect. The team was bigger than anything else, bigger than any one person.

“That is still true today. While we have some of the best players the code has ever seen playing in this side, the team is still bigger than them – and they wouldn't have it any other way.”

Mal says while talent has taken the Maroons a long way over the previous nine series, it is attitude that has made the biggest difference.

“Every game that they have played over the previous nine years, I have never been unhappy with the attitude or commitment they have shown,” he says.

“We have not won every game, but the reason we have lost is because on occasions the other team has executed better and just played better than us.

“But we have never let ourselves down with attitude and effort. That has always been fantastic.

“You only have to look at them after a game to see that they have given their all – win or lose.

“THAT IS THE QUEENSLAND WAY.”



HETHERINGTONS' FIGHTING SPIRIT

Cancer has dealt the family of former Maroons hooker Jason Hetherington a double blow, with his wife Kym and sister Lindyl battling the disease.

**BUT THIS
FAMILY IS UP
FOR THE FIGHT.**

Jason Hetherington

FOG No.108

Clubs: Gold Coast Seagulls,
Canterbury Bulldogs

Queensland: 8 Origins
(1998 - 2000)

Position: Hooker



TWO months ago Jason Hetherington's world came crashing down.

"Breast cancer," the Origin hard nut says bluntly. "We did the body scan. They found a tumour on her kidney as well."

Jason's wife Kym and the Hetherington family are now in an enormous battle as she fights cancer. Kym has begun chemotherapy treatment after having a mastectomy in late March.

To complicate matters further, Jason's sister Lindyl has been battling cancer for the past 12 months. "My sister has bloody got it, too. We are dealing with both of them," Hetherington said.

"With Kym, it has been the last month and a bit since we found out.

"Lindyl has been 12 months."

Jason is trying his best to look after his family as well as coach Intrust Super Cup club the Central Capras, who had a shock Round 1 win over the Burleigh Bears.

However, Jason's fight to manage family support with coaching is nothing compared to his wife's battle.

When he speaks about her fight, he says "we".

One in eight women in Australia will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime and more than half of all breast cancers in Australia are discovered by the woman herself or her own doctor.

In 2014, it is estimated that more than 15,000 Australian women were diagnosed with breast cancer.

That equates to approximately 40 each day. There is silver lining to Kym's breast cancer diagnosis.

It was the cancer check that also revealed the kidney tumour. That is why Jason is urging men and women to take the time out to have regular check-ups.

"The outlook is positive, thankfully. We start chemo (in the first week of April)," Jason says.

"It is a 15-month program for Kym.

"She had a mastectomy. She had the kidney tumour removed.

"They were two primaries. We wouldn't have found the tumour if it wasn't for the breast.

"The lymph nodes were clean.

"The check-ups are important.

"It is tough. We will get through it. We have good support here."

Jason played eight Origin games but would have played a lot more were it not for the presence of the great Steve Walters.

Jason represented the Maroons in 1998, 1999 and 2000, and now – along side Walters – is a part of Mal Meninga's Queensland coaching team.

Born and raised in Baralaba, near Rockhampton, Jason became a star at the Canterbury Bulldogs in the 1990s.

In the Bulldogs' yearly magazine of 1999, his answers to a Q and A reveal all about the tough hooker's character.

Asked his favourite Spice Girl member he replied "Bush Spice".

Asked which movie character best represented him he replied "Mick Dundee".

His favourite book? "Rugby League Week".

When the Bulldogs media manager of that era, now ABC radio host Debbie Spillane, once mispronounced Baralaba's name at a function Hetherington quickly cut in "It's easy, Deb... every second letter's an A."

They don't make them like Hetherington these days. Even Corey Oates, a prodigious talent at the Broncos who hails from Biloela, just a few kilometres from Baralaba, has almost lost his country twang and as he swims through a sea of media management.



Not Jason.

Ask him about one of his giant props at the Capras and he quips: "It would take two days on horse to ride across his shoulders".

Jason and his family embody rugby league, which is why his wife Kym and sister Lindyl will – as is the Queensland way – always keep fighting.

Jason is now trying to manage coaching the Capras, one of the most under resourced sides in the Intrust Super Cup, while supporting his wife through this difficult period.

CROWN JEWEL

Crown Resorts Foundation gets behind ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program

THE Former Origin Greats are very pleased to announce a new partnership with the Crown Resorts Foundation.

The new partnership ensures that then FOGS' highly successful ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program will continue and expand in 2015.

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said the partnership with the Crown Resorts Foundation was a further validation of the success of the ARTIE Academy program, which continues to produce incredible results in helping indigenous Queensland students onto the path for a better life.

"We are all obviously extremely proud of what we have been able to achieve with the ARTIE Academy, and we are just as proud that the Crown Resorts Foundation recognises that success, and wanted to become involved as part of their community involvement program," Gene said.

"To have this new partnership with the Crown Resorts Foundation means that not only can the great work being done by our staff and tutors working in the ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program around the state continue, we can also begin to look ahead to ways we can reach even more Queensland students to offer them a helping hand in building a better life for themselves."

The Crown Resorts Foundation is "committed to creating and supporting opportunities across the community that inspire positive change," the Foundation says.

"As the philanthropic arm of Crown Resorts, the Crown Resorts Foundation provides engaged financial support to programs with demonstrated success in the areas of the arts, community welfare, education, health care and research, and the environment."

There can be no argument that the ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program absolutely meets the criteria of positive change and demonstrated success in the field of improving indigenous education in Queensland.

The ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program is a volunteer-based initiative of the ARTIE Academy that assists in "closing the gap" in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Academy-aligned schools across Queensland.

The aim of this program is to develop confidence and raise ability in numeracy and literacy, specifically with students in Years 7 and 8.

The program achieves these goals by supporting students in class and also tutoring students outside of the classroom, both individually and in group learning situations.

The program of course relies heavily on the hard work and dedication of our volunteer tutors,



who come to the ARTIE Academy program from Queensland's most prestigious universities and tertiary education providers.

This year, the universities participating in the ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program include James Cook University, Central Queensland University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland University of Technology, University of Queensland, Australian Catholic University, Griffith University, University of Southern Queensland and TAFE Queensland.



TIME TO CELEBRATE



THE 2014 ARTIE Fun Day was held in November, to mark another successful year of education, dedication and commemoration.

The ARTIE Fun Day was again held at White Water World at Dreamworld on the Gold Coast, to reward the Term Three Primary achievers and Secondary Gold and Silver achievers for their hard work and success within the ARTIE Academy program.

More than 400 students from around South-East Queensland attended the annual ARTIE celebration.

But this celebration is not open to everyone. Only students who achieve strict benchmarks in attendance and academic performance are eligible to attend this special occasion.

To attend, Primary students must not have recorded more than five days absent from school, while the Secondary students were only eligible to attend by achieving gold or silver status with an 85 per cent school attendance record.

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said the ARTIE Fun Day was a crucial part of the success of the ARTIE Academy program.

"In any walk of life, success should be celebrated, and that is what the ARTIE Fun Day is all about," Gene said.

"These students have all worked really hard to achieve the goals that were set for them to try to improve their performance at school, and the fact that they achieved them should be a cause for celebration.

"But there is also the element of reward for the students in the program. By working hard and being invited to the ARTIE Fun Day, the students begin to appreciate that good things can be achieved by applying themselves to the challenge in front of them.

"By rewarding them with the ARTIE Fun Day, they can see how good things are worth the effort of hard work. This will hopefully then become habit, and they will continue to aim high in their academic performance because of the rewards that it brings - with things like the ARTIE Fun Day, but also in setting themselves on the path to a brighter future."

Gene said the ARTIE Fun Day also served as an on-going tribute to the great Arthur Beetson, the man the ARTIE Academy is named after, and whose legacy and love for Queensland will continue to be felt for generations to come.

"The ARTIE Fun Day is a day of celebration for the students, but it is also a day where we can celebrate the life of Beetso, and the difference he made in the lives of so many Queenslanders," Gene said.

"It was on the day of the ARTIE Fun Day in 2011 that the great man passed away from a heart attack while riding his bike. He was supposed to be the guest of honour that day, and now every year this day is a celebration of his memory as well."

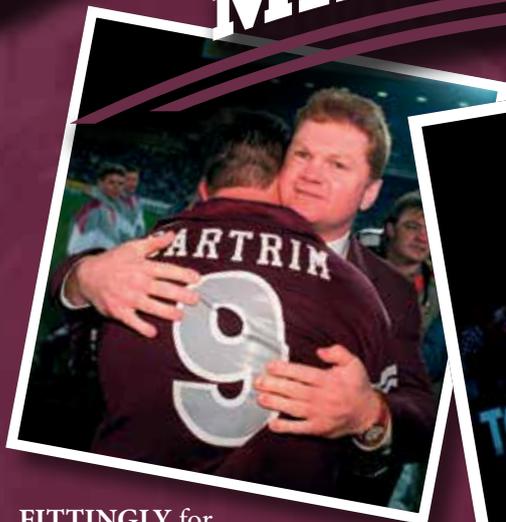
The FOGS would once again like to thank our incredible group of sponsors and supporters that help make the ARTIE Fun Day such a special part of the year.

Firstly, Dreamworld, White Water World and their staff for hosting the event, BoysTown for assisting in the preparation and serving of lunch, Alfred E Chave (supplier of fruit and salad), Ashcroft Meats (suppliers of meat), Streets (suppliers of icecream), Coca-Cola Amatil (supplier of beverages) and Krispy Kreme (supplier of doughnuts).



THE UNFORGETTABLES

20 YEARS ON FROM A MIRACLE IN MAROON



FITTINGLY for State of Origin's greatest romantic fairytale, the story of the 1995 miracle began with a set of high heels and lipstick.

But this was not 50 Shades of Grey. It was 50 Shades of Maroon. And also a tinge of red.

"I remember when Ross Livermore from the QRL rang me, asking if I wanted to coach Queensland," says Paul Vautin.

"I was in the carpark at Channel 9. I'd just finished a skit for The Footy Show, so I was busy trying to take off the lipstick and high heels I was wearing, and Ross rang and said: 'Wayne Bennett has pulled out of the Queensland coaching job. Do you want to do it?'"

"I just said 'Yep', and Ross said 'Do you need time to think about it?'. I said: 'Nup. The answer is yes. Let's do it. Let's go'.

"I don't know how many people Ross had called before they got down to me, but he didn't have to ask me twice.

It was a massive honour for me to be asked to coach Queensland. I'd help Queensland whichever way I could."

Incredible as it seems, this season marks 20 years since Fatty and his merry band of Nevilles caused the greatest upset Origin, and quite possibly rugby league, had ever seen.

A rag-tag bunch of players pitted against the might of a NSW team boasting 11 internationals and aiming for its fourth consecutive series win over the Maroons, all under the guidance of a rookie coach and set against the backdrop of the Super League war that had split the game in two.

"I remember our first team selection meeting, and we're all sitting around pencilling in names and Ross comes in with John McDonald and says: 'All the Super League blokes are out. You can't pick any of them'.

So all of a sudden our pool of players has been cut by 60 per cent," Fatty recalls.

"So we went back and started again. This is the dearest truth, and I don't mean this with any disrespect at all, but Benny Ikin got picked because we had no one else left to choose.

"We were one player short, and there was just no one.

Arthur Beetson says:

'There's this young kid from the Gold Coast we could pick. He's only played three first grade games, but he's good.'

"I said to Arthur: 'Never heard of him. Can he play?' Artie reckoned he was going to be a good player, so we went with him. So we had 17. But I will tell you this: I looked down at that list and I never had any doubt they would stand up.

"I looked at the team and I thought: 'We can win this.'"

Not that he needed convincing, but by the first night in camp, Vautin and his captain Trevor Gillmeister knew they were onto something special.

“We had a team meeting and Fatty spoke for about 20 minutes, and then he asked Choppy Close to stand up and tell the players what it meant to him to play for Queensland,” Gilly says. “Well he got up, said about three words and started to cry, so he apologised and sat down again because he couldn’t go on.

“Robbie O’Davis was sitting beside me, he leaned over and said: ‘Get me a bloody jersey. I’m ready to play now’. Everyone was on board straight away.”

The 1995 series has become such a part of Origin folklore, the old war stories have been told a thousand times or more.

But to hear the electricity and enthusiasm in the voices of Vautin and Gillmeister as they relive those incredible moments from 20 years ago gives hope that the same old stories will be told a thousand times more. Like Gilly being told he could die from his infected leg if he played in Game 3.

The advice from his mate and coach?

“I just said: ‘What better place to die than in the middle of Lang Park on Origin night,’” Vautin recalls. Gillmeister nodded, pulled the drips out of his arm, and made his way to Suncorp Stadium.

Or what about the infamous all-in brawl at the MCG in Origin II, which Vautin insists came from a tip from an insider in the Blues’ camp?

“I got a phone call from inside the Blues camp at about 5.30pm – it was true, I didn’t make it up and I have never revealed my source – but the bloke said: ‘I’m telling you what’s going to happen. The first bloke who calls out Queenslander is going to have his head knocked off’.

“I just thought: ‘Ripper’. I went into our team meeting, told the players what I’d heard and asked: ‘Who is going to be the first one to say it?’ ”

Gillmeister takes up the story: “Well, straight away, 20 hands go in the air. I know there were only 17 blokes in the team, but I looked over and bloody Choppy has his hand in the air, too.

“I’m sitting there thinking: ‘Where the bloody hell are we gonna find a jersey big enough to fit you?’ But that is what it was like. We were all great mates. We were ready to do anything for each other.”

The stories will again flow thick and fast this year as Queenslanders look back on the achievement of Fatty and Gilly’s Unthinkables – the little team that could.

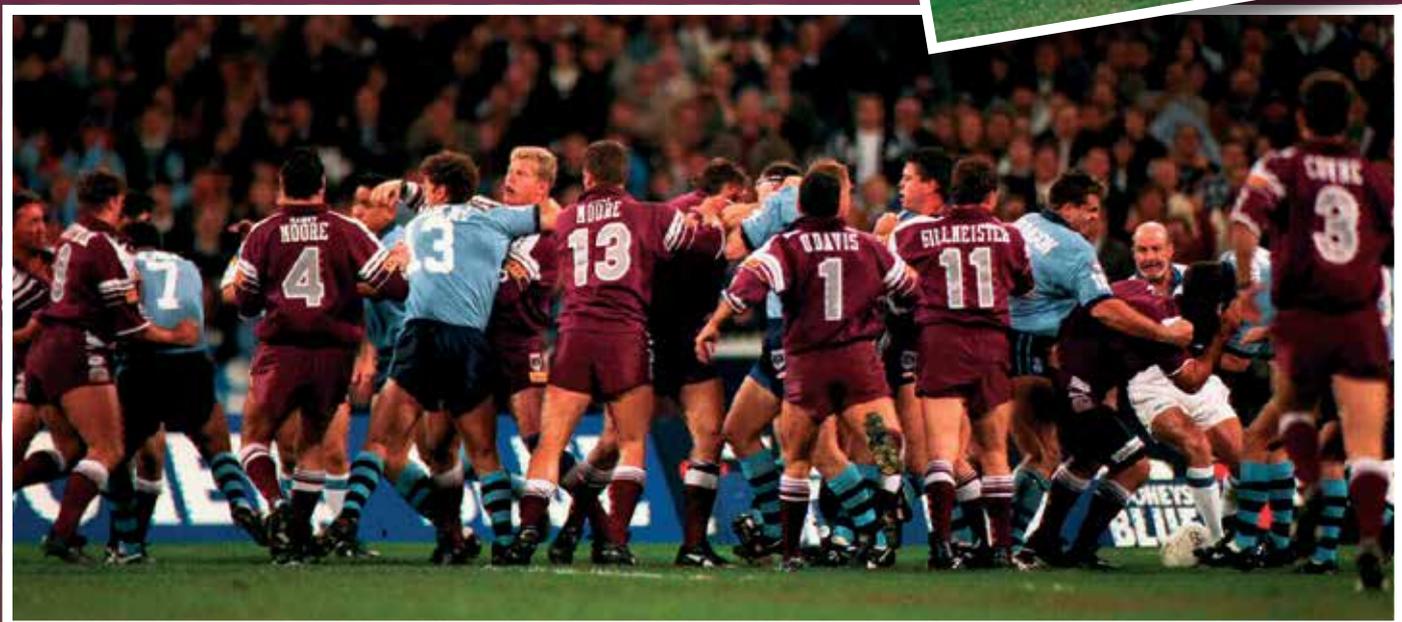
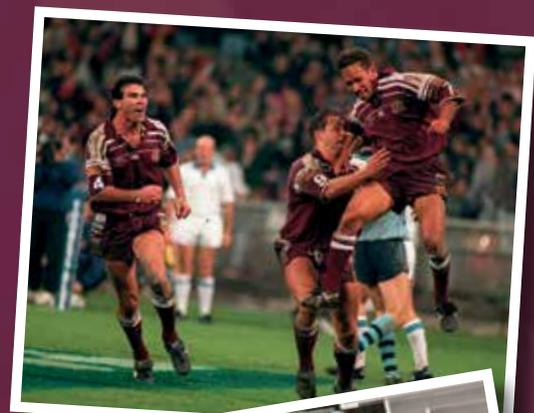
“I remember every minute of that series like it was yesterday,” Fatty says. “It doesn’t feel like 20 years I can tell you.

“The blokes in that team deserve to be recognised for the good they did for the game.

“Gary Burns, who is now at Fox Sports, was at Channel 9 at the time and he said to me: ‘Your team just saved Origin’.

“That is what it was like. Origin needed us to win. The game, in the middle of all the Super League war, needed something to remind us what makes the game so great.

“It is never about who has the best players. It’s about who can get the best out of themselves. Our guys did that.”



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

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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**.



Supporting the development of rugby league in Queensland

READY, STEADY, COOK

TERRY COOK

FOG No.90

Clubs: Gold Coast
Seagulls, South
Queensland Crushers

Queensland: 3 Origins
(1995)

Position: Lock,
Second Row, Centre



IN Queensland's most desperate hour, unheralded utility Terry Cook answered the Maroons' call – and earned himself a place in history

WHEN former Queensland coach Paul Vautin famously joked about his victorious 1995 Origin side featuring a pack of "Neville Nobodies", Terry Cook reckons he fitted the description to a tee.

Queensland's epic 3-0 victory in '95 remains one of the great narratives in Origin history, when a rag-tag bunch

of unheralded Maroons stunned the Blues after the Super League war robbed the state of its Broncos big guns.

And if anyone personified Queensland's underdog tag that year, it was none other than Cook, the Gold Coast and South Queensland utility who thought he was a better chance of winning Powerball than playing State of Origin.

Today, Cook is on the cusp of his 50th birthday.

He lives just south of the Tweed at Cabarita Beach, where wife Jane runs a Coffee Club franchise, and he works in the pub game, having owned the Jondaryan Hotel for the past 16 years after his departure from the Crushers in 1996.

Remarkably, he retired from rugby league just seven years ago, aged 43, after shattering his ankle in three places playing for Pittsworth Danes in the Darling Downs – in his 37th season of football.

“I was chosen out of nowhere, but I wasn’t going to knock it back. I lived the dream, every young kid who plays footy dreams of playing Origin and I did it.”

But two decades ago, Cook celebrated his coronation as an Origin player as Maroons selectors desperately cobbled together a side without Super League defectors such as Allan Langer, Kevin Walters and Wendell Sailor.

Aged 29, Cook was a revelation, playing a crucial utility role off the bench in all three games of Queensland’s series boilover.

The rangy centre or back-rower never again wore Maroon after his ’95 heroics, but will always savour his perfect record at Origin level.

“I was plucked from Neville Nobody-land,” laughs Cook, who has two children, daughter Miranda, 27, a journalist and son Harry, a 23-year-old pilot.

“It was one of the greatest six weeks of my life.

“Funny enough, my wife found out I was picked before I did.

“At the Crushers, we used to have what we called ‘Monday Club’, a day where we’d have a recovery session after the weekend game and then we’d get on the drink and have a punt.

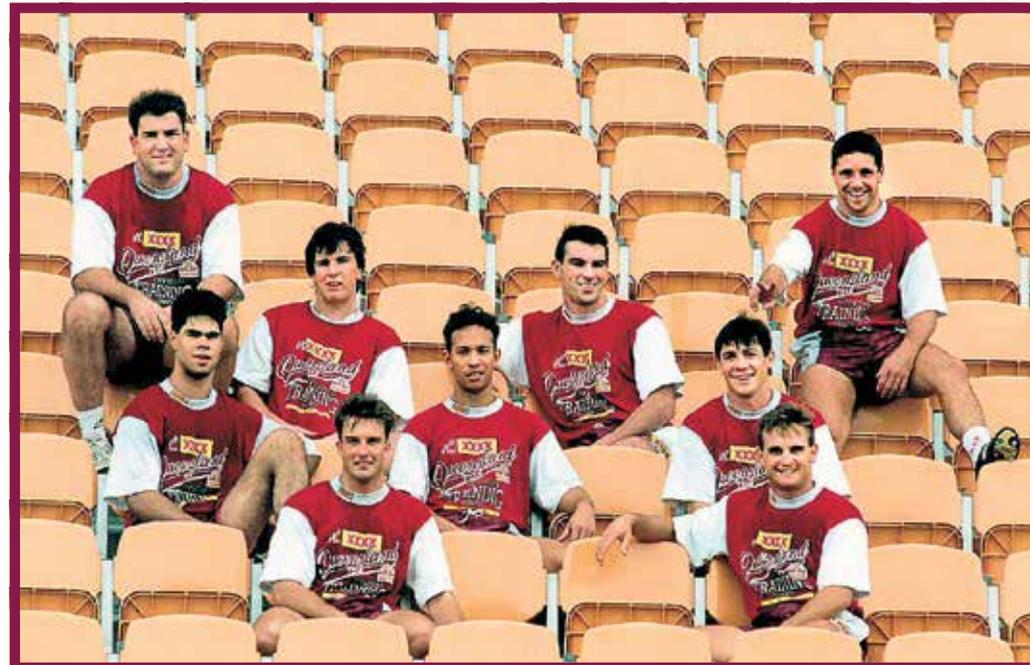


“I was at Crushers Leagues on the piss with Trevor Gillmeister and my missus was copping phone calls left, right and centre.

“Eventually, she rang me and said: ‘You bloody better get home Terry, you’ve made the State of Origin side.

“I was simply stunned ... I thought it was April Fools Day.”

Cook was so nervous before Origin I at the Sydney Football Stadium that he required a special pep talk from Gillmeister, his Maroons skipper.



“Gilly could see I was a little edgy, so he relayed a story of his own Origin debut,” Cook recalls with a chuckle.

“In his first series, he played at the SCG and he ran out with Paul Vautin as his back-row partner.

“Gilly said he was shitting himself, when Fatty said just before kick-off: ‘Hey Gilly, fair dinkum, look at all the good sorts in the Members Bar!’ ”

Buoyed by Queensland’s shock 2-0 win in Origin I, Cook then played the game of his life in the return bout at the MCG.

It was his pass which sent halfback Adrian Lam dashing across for the try which gave Queensland a vital 14-6 lead – they hung on to clinch a history-making 20-12 victory.

“After the Melbourne game, both Fatty and ‘Choppy’ (team manager Chris Close) came up to me and said:

‘Do you realise you just produced the play that won us the series?’” Cook said.

“To hear that from them, that I’d helped them win an Origin series, was my career highlight.

“I played one more season for the Crushers, but I was never going to top Origin.

“The Super League comp started in 1997, I was 31 and a stack of young blokes were coming through, so I had a year with Norths in the state league.

“I broke my arm halfway through

and thought: ‘It’s time to go, rugby league can’t pay me forever.’”

Cook finished with 81 top-grade games, scoring eight tries for Gold Coast and the Crushers between 1991-96.

Today, his Origin jumpers are in safe keeping at his mother-in-law’s home, and he relishes his spare time surfing and walking the family dog.

“I’m still involved in the game, I do some MC work for the Men of League which is great,” he says.

“I was blessed in my career. At the Gold Coast, I made my debut alongside Wally Lewis, who was our captain-coach, and I played my best football running off him.

“It was an honour to wear that mighty Maroon jumper, but I have to say no-one notices me these days, and that’s just fine.

“I’m still a Neville Nobody.”

COMMITTED TO THE GAME

Shaun Johnson

#CommittedToTheGame



TYRO TO TITAN

Lockyer says Gold Coast move will put Daly among the greats.

IT was the most talked about club transfer in recent memory.

And now the most-capped Maroon in Origin history believes Daly Cherry-Evans' looming return to the Sunshine State will be the perfect platform to take him to another level as a Queensland playmaker.

Darren Lockyer says the Gold Coast Titans weren't the only winners when Cherry-Evans announced he would leave Manly to begin a four-year term on the holiday strip starting in 2016.

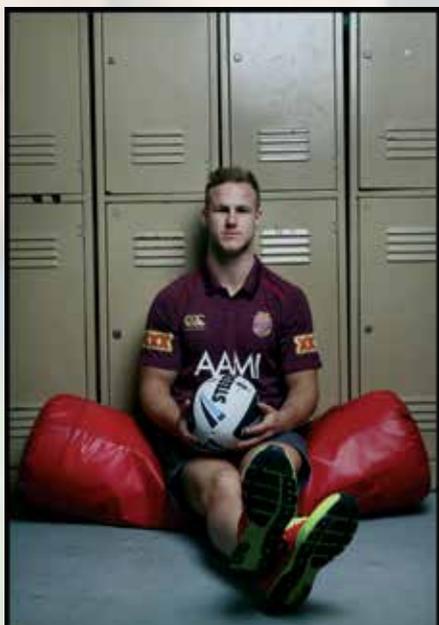
It was also a triumph for Queensland rugby league, which can celebrate the return of a grassroots product who fell in love with the sport as a kid growing up in Mackay.

Rugby league, and Maroon blood, courses through the Cherry-Evans' veins.

Daly's uncle, Steve Cherry, was a flint-hard Redcliffe stalwart who hit like a sledgehammer during his reign as one of the Brisbane State League's most admired players in the 1980s.

His father Troy played his junior rugby league with Norths in Rockhampton and spent his senior years plying his trade for the Yeppoon Seagulls and Railways.

A Queensland Country representative, Evans turned out for the Capras and Redcliffe and went close to winning a premiership as a tough, no-nonsense hooker with Norths in 1990.



Now Cherry-Evans is coming home – and Lockyer is adamant his increased responsibility at the Titans will only aid his development as a representative playmaker.

“There’s a number of positives for Daly coming back to Queensland,” Lockyer said.

“From a personal perspective, being closer to his family will be of benefit.

“It’s not always easy for a Queensland kid to try and make it on his own in the hustle-and-bustle of Sydney.

“It’s a cut-throat place for a young, aspiring NRL player and it’s why I chose to stay at the Broncos when I had a chance to go to Parramatta as a teenager in the 1990s.

“In five years, Daly has achieved a hell of a lot. He’s a great talent, but I honestly think he will get better at the Titans.”

There is a view Cherry-Evans has not quite delivered on his potential in the Origin arena. Since making his Queensland debut in 2013, the 26-year-old has played five games, but most of his game time has come as a utility or to answer an SOS following a mid-match injury.

Last year, Cherry-Evans was thrown into the fray after just 10 minutes of the Origin series opener when halfback Cooper Cronk broke his arm.

Cherry-Evans never quite settled with the Maroons’ structures in the 12-8 loss, then battled a knee injury in the return bout, which the Blues won 6-4 to clinch the Origin shield.

The Titans recruit will almost certainly be part of Camp Maroon in 2015 and

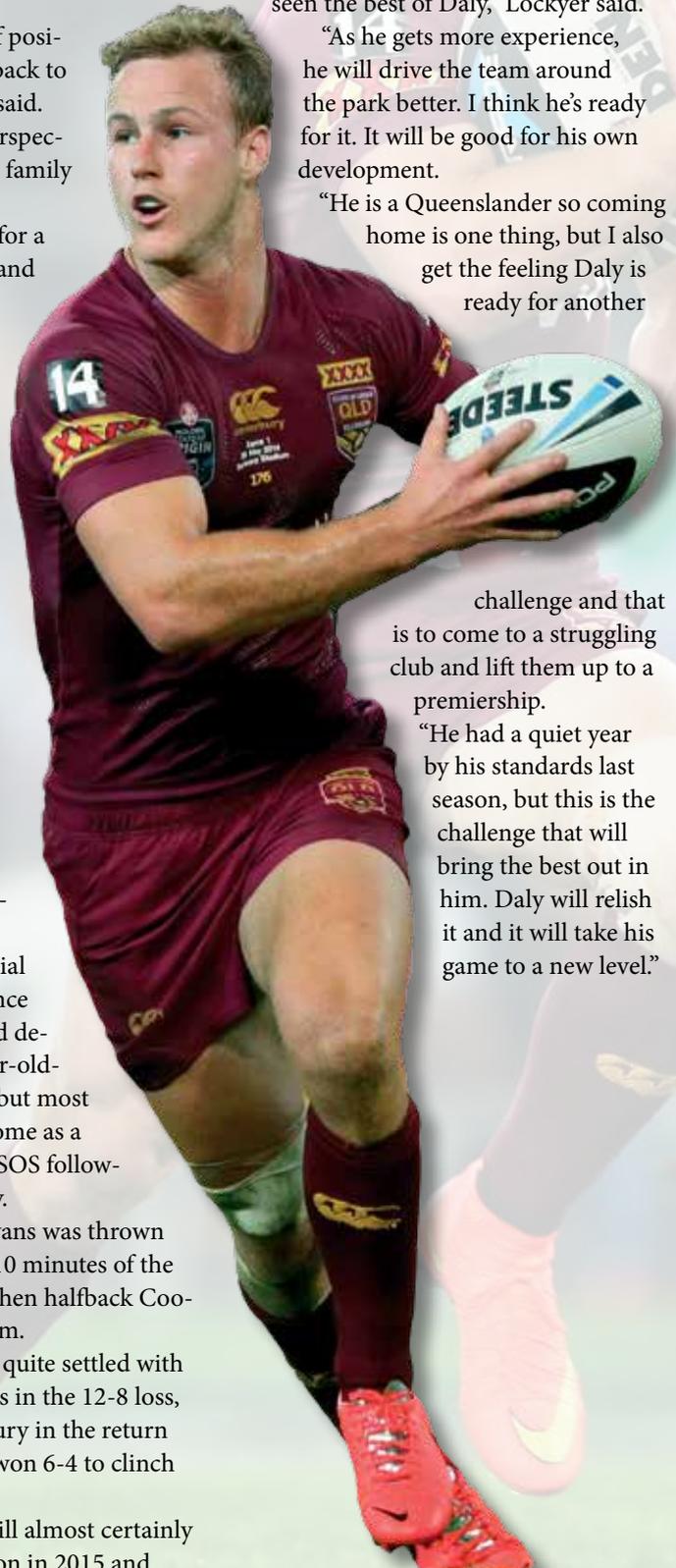
Lockyer has no doubt Cherry-Evans can develop into a superb Origin player. “From a football perspective, despite what he has achieved already, we haven’t seen the best of Daly,” Lockyer said.

“As he gets more experience, he will drive the team around the park better. I think he’s ready for it. It will be good for his own development.

“He is a Queenslander so coming home is one thing, but I also get the feeling Daly is ready for another

challenge and that is to come to a struggling club and lift them up to a premiership.

“He had a quiet year by his standards last season, but this is the challenge that will bring the best out in him. Daly will relish it and it will take his game to a new level.”



LEAGUE'S SUITS COME UP TRUMPS

with Trevor Gilmeister

FOR this edition of Queensland Magazine, I am going to use my column to do something I have rarely done in all my years in rugby league.

I want to give the people running the game an enormous wrap.

It is an easy thing to take shots at the powers that be, particularly when they make decisions affecting the game that just seem to fly in the face of common sense.

But recently they announced two major changes to the way the game will be played because they are trying to protect the integrity of the code that we all know and love – and I reckon they should be applauded for it.

First was their decision to crack down on the wrestling tactics in the ruck, to hopefully remove it from the game altogether.

It was a big challenge for them – from the game's administration right down to the referees who ultimately are the ones who must ensure the laws are policed.

But they did a great job, and I think the quality of the football we saw in the first few weeks was evidence of just how much wrestling tactics were holding the game back.

With the ruck cleaned up, some of the games we saw in the early part of the year – when teams are traditionally a bit rusty and finding their feet – were quite simply fantastic.

Wrestling was ruining the game, and the NRL have taken positive steps to stop it.

The other change which will be equally important for the game was the announcement of a reduction in the number of interchanges from next season.

Currently, teams are allowed to make a maximum of 10 changes during a game.

From next season, that number could drop as low as six.

This is something I have been crying out for in the NRL for at least 10 years.

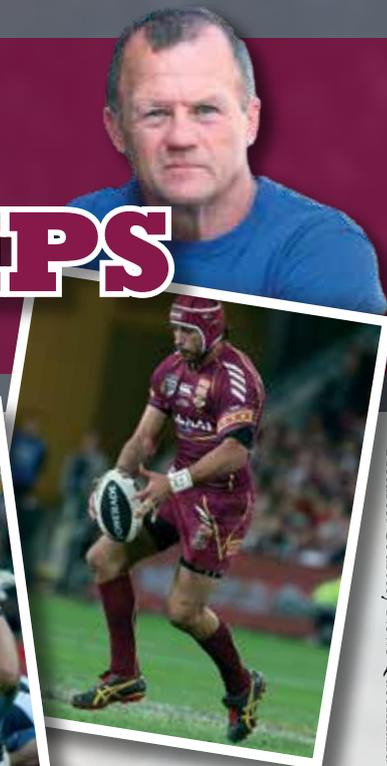
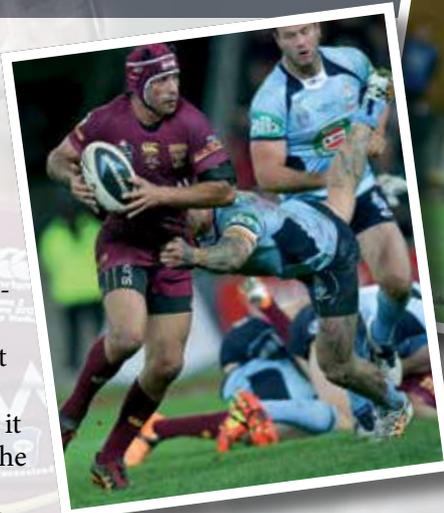
The change it will make to the way the game is played will be enormous – and all for the better.

Reducing the number of interchanges means that things like fatigue and stamina once again play an important role in how the game is won and lost.

It means the small, dynamic men like Johnathan Thurston, Chris Sandow and Billy Slater will now get more opportunities to break games open against players struggling under fatigue.

It means we will see the return of the true workhorse second-rowers, like blokes such as Gary Larson, who were so important to the performance of the team with their ability to get through 80 minutes of work.

It changes the way players approach a match, knowing they can't go like a bull at a gate in the first few minutes if the coach is banking on them to go the distance without a



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

pit-stop after 20 minutes.

Most importantly though, it will help clean the game up and make it not only more entertaining, but safer as well.

I was talking to Wayne Bennett a couple of years ago about the number of injuries in the NRL, and I suggested to him that the way to reduce it was to reduce the number of interchanges.

It is quite simple. When players are under massive fatigue, there is less likelihood of a 110kg prop coming in as the third man in on a gang tackle.

They are just not going to have the petrol.

Defenders just won't have the energy to waste on gang tackles or wrestling in the ruck anymore.

The importance of good one-on-one defending with proper technique will all of a sudden be worth its weight in gold.

With less bodies hammering attacking players and putting enormous stresses on their joints and limbs, I bet we will see a big drop in the number of serious knee injuries.

The administrators have got these two changes spot on. They are designed to improve the game as a spectacle, and at the same time make it a safer place for our best players to do their thing.

Well done to the NRL. You've got the thumbs up from me.

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