

Official Magazine of Queensland's Former Origin Greats

FOGS

QUEENSLAND
FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

QUEENSLANDER

MAGAZINE

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GUTS AND GLORY

Maroon legend grows after another remarkable year

FOGS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN



This edition of *Queenslander Magazine* acts as a bookmark for the Former Origin Greats, marking 2017 as the year a massive stake was put into the ground to build a future around.

THE successful completion of, and relocation to, our new headquarters on Castlemaine Street is without doubt one of the biggest accomplishments in our organisation's history.

It is also an achievement that fulfills the vision that our founder Dick "Tosser" Turner saw for the FOGS so many years ago.

Tosser always had grand plans for the FOGS.

While the chance to keep the bonds linking every FOG and pay respect to the past were important, the idea of using those traditions to build a better future was imperative.

Having our own base and our own source of income to do that work was the foundation stone of Tosser's dream, and our new building has made that a reality.

We have been operating out of the new building since September, but will have an official opening early in the new year to celebrate this major milestone for the organisation.

Aside from giving us a place to call home, the new building will also provide ongoing revenue streams for the organisation to help make FOGS financially self-sufficient.

We have two-and-a-half floors of office space now available to lease in one of

the most famous and desirable precincts in the state, just metres away from Queensland's most hallowed piece of turf, Suncorp Stadium.

While the new building begins an exciting next chapter for FOGS, we have been very fortunate to have called Suncorp Stadium our home for the past decade or more.

Through Harvey Lister, AEG Ogden and of course Alan Graham, Suncorp Stadium has always been very supportive of us, and tremendous landlords.

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to Harvey, Alan and everyone at AEG Ogden and Suncorp Stadium for their amazing support over the years.

Because of their support, we have been able to implement our various and very successful programs, which continued to grow and prosper in 2017.

As you will read inside the magazine, the difference that is being made to the lives of young Queenslanders through our ARTIE Academy continues to inspire.

Similarly, being able to support very worthwhile causes and charities through our donations and major fundraising events like the FOGS Annual Charity Lunch is something to be proud of.

There was also a change of era on the field this year with Queensland in State of

Origin, as Kevin Walters and his players conjured another miracle with one of the most inspired fightbacks we have ever seen to win the series.

There was plenty against the Maroons this year: a massive injury list, a transition period that saw some long-serving players make way for a new generation, and that awful drubbing in Origin I at Suncorp Stadium.

But Queenslanders produce their best under adversity, and especially when other people tell them something is impossible.

Kevvie and his Maroons not only came out the other side victorious, but just as incredibly, stronger than Queensland has ever been.

It was a lesson in how hard work and resilience are the building blocks of a successful future.

It is a template the FOGS will follow as we begin our new era in 2018.

My many thanks to all FOGS members, our staff, sponsors and supporters.

We hope you have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year, and join us again in 2018 for what will be another great year to be a Queenslanders.

Gene Miles

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN



FROM THE COACH'S DESK

WITH KEVIN WALTERS



Q Ueensland's State of Origin success has always been built on emotion. Right from the moment the great Arthur Beetson trundled down the tunnel in 1980, that emotion has always been what sets Origin apart, and what makes the special moments just so special.

This year's series win took us through just about every emotion you can think of, from the devastation of the loss in Game I to the joy and relief of Game III, the sadness at saying farewell to some loyal servants to the excitement and pride of handing so many talented young players their first Maroon jerseys.

It was a very exciting series for me.

I just love the challenge of what Origin brings from a coaching point of view, and I have to say all of my coaching staff should be commended for the terrific job they did this year, as well as the players.

It was certainly a lot tougher than last year's series.

Game I was tough, seeing as we were beaten so convincingly, which hadn't happened in my previous three games as coach.

Immediately after that game, we knew that we were going to have to make some tough decisions around the selection of the team for Game II.

While it was a real joy to be able to ring Billy Slater to tell him that he was back in the side, there were also the tough calls to make to the guys that had missed out.

These guys were serious Origin players – guys like Sam Thaiday, Jacob Lillyman, Nate Myles, Aidan Guerra – guys who had given so much to Queensland for so long.

That also includes a guy like Corey Oates, who I felt didn't do a hell of a lot wrong in Game I, but I had to ring him and explain why we had gone in a different direction for Game II.

We had to make those tough calls and bring in some fresh

“That emotion has always been what sets Origin apart, and what makes the special moments just so special.”

faces to rebuild around the nucleus of the squad.

Those fresh faces stood up to be counted, and kept the series alive for us in Game II in Sydney.

This year, we had eight players make their Origin debuts for Queensland: Anthony Milford, Dylan Napa, Valentine Holmes, Jarrod Wallace, Coen Hess, Tim Glasby, Cameron Munster and Ben Hunt, so the process of regenerating our team for the future is well and truly under way.

For me, the highlight of the entire series was Johnathan Thurston kicking that goal in Game II to get us into the decider.

We got so much momentum off the back of that kick to get us into a decider and put us in a position to win the series.

I have said this to John so many times, but I just can't thank him enough for what he did for the team and our state in Game II.

It was above and beyond. It was a little sad that injury

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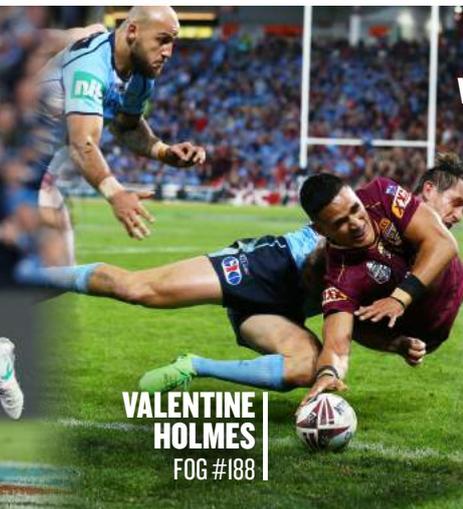
ANTHONY MILFORD
FOG #186



DYLAN NAPA
FOG #187



VALENTINE HOLMES
FOG #188



JARROD WALLACE
FOG #189





prevented John from playing in Game III, and getting a proper send-off at Suncorp Stadium.

But in a way, it was so fitting and representative of his whole Origin career that his last game for Queensland will be forever remembered for his bravery and his brilliance.

You get used to expecting it from these guys, from these elite players. But after seeing him at halftime in Sydney, and seeing how badly damaged his shoulder was, for him to

go back out there was just incredible.

There was no way anyone could have stopped him from going back out there, and he kept himself in the game. He wasn't hiding out wide or just making up the numbers.

He gave everything he had. And then, when the entire series was on the line, it comes down to him – and there is not any other person in the world you would want taking that kick but John.

It was a really special feeling watching him land that goal, in his final act as a Queensland player.

Next year, we will start all over again. For me, I am heading back to the Broncos as an assistant coach to continue my education and improvement as a rugby league coach.

To get better as a coach, I feel I have to coach, rather than just sit around thinking about it. The Broncos are allowing

me to do that by coaching with them every day, so I can keep learning and improving to help Queensland.

My main priority is still the Queensland Origin side and getting them to peak at the right time and to achieve that, I think I need to be coaching at NRL level on a more consistent basis.

After the year we have had, I can't wait to see what is in store for the Maroons in 2018.

Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland



COEN HESS
FOG #190

CAMERON MUNSTER
FOG #192

TIM GLASBY
FOG #191

BEN HUNT
FOG #193



WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER

Queensland spirit delivers another Origin Series Victory for the ages

IF RUGBY league was an American sport, Steven Spielberg would have already bought the movie rights to Queensland's incredible 2017 State of Origin series win.

With their 11th win in 12 years, it was easy to suspect we had seen everything from the Maroons since Origin's greatest dynasty began under Mal Meninga in 2006.

But under Kevin Walters this year, the Maroons somehow managed to go to their bag of tricks and not only conjure another series win, but one of the greatest series wins of them all.

Spielberg may have created movies like Jurassic Park and E.T., but it is unlikely even Hollywood's legendary director could have come up with a script as fanciful as the one that played out in the 2017 Origin series.

The emotional rollercoaster began before the teams had even had their first training session, with Walters fighting back tears as he spoke of the personal pain at having to leave the great Billy Slater out of the team.

The Maroons showed their traditional loyalty, standing by the men who had

got the job done in Walters' first series win in 2016.

But with Slater overlooked, and Johnathan Thurston, Matt Scott, and Greg Inglis already unavailable because of injury, the core of Queensland's decade of dominance was suddenly and worryingly missing.

In the game that was supposed to be a celebration of captain Cameron Smith becoming the first player in history to play 40 Origin matches, the Maroons imploded on the launchpad.

In front of a shocked Suncorp Stadium crowd, the Maroons were humiliated 28-4 by a rampant Blues side.

The result was unexpected. The reaction in NSW was not.

As usual, the Blue rhetoric flowed thick and fast, hailing the dawn of a new dynasty for a team that would dominate Origin for a decade, riding on the shoulders of man of the match Andrew Fifita, who was being compared to the great Arthur Beetson.

And as usual, the Queenslanders said nothing, but quietly picked up the pieces to begin rebuilding again.



Rebuild they did. For Origin II, Slater was back. Not only that, the brilliant Thurston, who had missed Game I with his troublesome shoulder, was back in the No.6.

Rookies Valentine Holmes, Jarrod Wallace, Coen Hess and Tim Glasby were handed Origin debuts and Gavin Cooper was recalled as the Maroons issued an SOS to the next generation that their time was now.

Even then, some of Queensland's new faces were derided – ridiculed even – in the Sydney media.

With the series on the line and the world against them, the Maroons had to go to Sydney to try to find a miracle.

The signs were not good. Queensland trailed 16-6 at halftime, and Thurston was



a passenger after a direct hit destroyed his injured shoulder, and meant he had to play out the game in pain.

Hope seemed lost. But just three minutes before NSW's coronation as series champions, Dane Gagai found his way to the line to level the scores.

Up stepped Thurston with a difficult kick to win the match, and save the series.

Despite his injured shoulder, made more painful with the realization that his season and Origin career were over, Thurston once more delivered when we needed him the most.

How fitting that Thurston's final act in a Maroon jersey was to deliver one last piece of brilliance under pressure with so much on the line.

While Queensland had avoided the knockout punch at ANZ Stadium, the Maroons were still very much against the ropes and on wobbly legs heading back to Suncorp Stadium for the series decider.

Incredibly, after being battered from pillar to post every step of the way, the Maroons were again forced to make changes with Thurston and Darius Boyd both ruled out with injury for Game III.

After Anthony Milford in Game I and Thurston in Game II, Queensland called in Melbourne rookie Cameron Munster to make his Origin debut as the Maroons' third five-eighth in three games.

Michael Morgan's shift to centre to replace Boyd saw Broncos utility Ben Hunt called onto the bench.

Hunt, adding to the drama, would be making his Origin debut just weeks after being dumped back to the Intrust Super Cup with Ipswich by Broncos coach Wayne Bennett.

And just like in the final act of a Hollywood blockbuster, the Maroons returned to Suncorp Stadium re-energised, and reborn.

They blew the Blues away on the scoreboard, but the mental scars will take a lot longer to heal.

NSW had gone into the series with a motto of "no excuses", knowing Queensland had been weakened with the loss of so many greats, and the bleeding of so many new faces.

But the Maroons proved their depth runs much deeper than a core group of champions, and more importantly, showed once again that the Queensland spirit burns brightest when times are toughest.

The Maroons never say die. Queenslanders are never beaten.



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NEW HOME SIGNALS A NEW ERA FOR THE FOGS



A new era for the Former Origin Greats will begin in early 2018 with the official opening of the organisation's new headquarters in Castlemaine St.

AFTER years of planning and construction, FOGS staff moved into the new building in September, and once the last of the final fit-out is completed a public unveiling will take place in the new year.

The new building is a significant step forward for the FOGS, finally having a home of their own after leasing office space at Suncorp Stadium for over a decade.

But the new building represents more than real estate. For the first time, the new office building will

give the FOGS a revenue stream to safeguard the organisation's future.

The building is the culmination of a vision dreamed up by the FOGS' inaugural Chairman Dick "Tosser" Turner, who could see from the very first days how great the organisation could become.

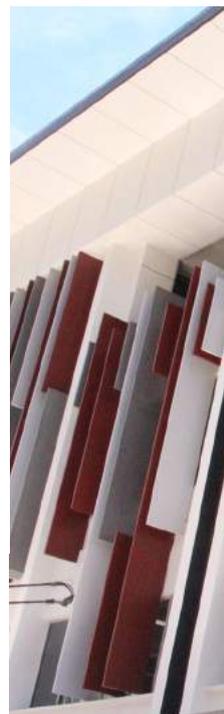
"That was always Tosser's dream for us to have a home of our own," said FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles.

"When we were first starting out at the FOGS, we looked around at a number of licensed clubs that were struggling at the time, as potential places for us to make a home.

"We just couldn't afford them at the time, or find the one that was exactly what we were after.

"So we ended up at Suncorp Stadium, and ended up staying there for a decade. Really, for us, there was no better place to be because the place means so much to all of us.

"But certainly the goal was to always have a place of our own.





“It has been a long road and a lot of work, but here we are now with our own building literally metres from the playing field at Suncorp Stadium.”

“This new building had been badly damaged in the floods of 2011, and it had sat dormant here for a number of years.

“When the chance came up for us to grab it, we made an offer and they accepted.

“It has been a long road and a lot of work, but here we are now with our own building literally metres from the playing field at Suncorp Stadium.

“We will officially open the building early in the new year, scheduled around a game at Suncorp Stadium across the road.

“We have our entertaining area here which we will be able to utilise, then walk our guests across the road to take in some footy.”

With three levels of space available in the new building, Gene said the opportunity to invite tenants to share the new building was a major part of the attraction in the location.

“It was always Tossler’s ambition that the FOGS should be able to fund itself, and leasing the rest of this building will ensure that there is a revenue stream coming in for the organisation for the years to come,” Gene said.

“We were heavily reliant on government funding up until about five years ago, and while we still do receive government funding with our Indigenous programs, this is a big step forward in the plan of owning our own building and having tenants to provide that regular revenue stream.

“We are only occupying half of one floor, so we will be looking to lease out the remaining two and a half floors.

“That has been difficult with the building not being completed and tenants wanting to know about time frames around when they could move in and take up residency.

“That hasn’t been possible until now, and we will up the ante on finding tenants now for what is around 2,000 sqm of office space.”

Gene said the support of Suncorp Stadium in helping the FOGS achieve this new milestone would never be forgotten.

“I’d like to pay tribute to Suncorp Stadium, for their many years looking after the FOGS as great landlords,” he said.

“Through Stadiums Queensland, Harvey Lister, AEG Ogden and of course Alan Graham, they have always been very supportive of us.

“What better place for us to be than at the best stadium in the world?

“Now we have a place to call our own, and we are a 10-metre walk from the front entrance to the stadium.”



THURSTON: FAREWELL TO A QUEENSLAND LEGEND



Johnathan Thurston celebrates his conversion to put the Maroons in front

JT's Origin career ended prematurely with injury, but not before one last act of brilliance to save the Maroons' series

JOHNATHAN Thurston admits he has shed a tear or two.

But amid the heartache and bittersweet emotions surrounding his State of Origin finale, Thurston has found peace.

On the night of June 21, 2017, Thurston became a Maroon hero – yet again – when he landed a booming sideline conversion with a battered shoulder to clinch an epic 18-16 victory for Queensland in Origin II at ANZ Stadium.

It kept the series alive, and reinforced Thurston's greatness in the Queensland jumper, but it wasn't the script the champion playmaker had envisaged.

He planned to exit a winner after Origin III, only for his busted shoulder to scupper his farewell to the Queensland faithful at Suncorp Stadium in the decider.

Thurston watched from the stands as the Maroons overcame the odds to seal an 11th series win in 12 years, aware he had been denied the Origin fairytale farewell enjoyed by his one-time teammates Darren Lockyer, Petero Civoniceva and Justin Hodges.

Maroons coach Kevin Walters, mindful this was not the ending Thurston had craved, had a simple solution.

If Thurston wanted to play on in 2018,

the Queensland No.6 jumper was his.

Walters opened the door for an Allan Langer-style comeback. But Thurston firmly closed it, content with his remarkable Origin story.

"It's obviously going to be sad," says Thurston of the reality he will never wear his cherished Maroon jumper again.

"There is no doubt it's going to be tough, but I'm at peace and at ease with the decision I've made.

"There were a few tears – it was just the reality of the situation, the injury and the fact I wouldn't play Origin again. But I had to face up to that.

"At the end of the day, each Queensland player is just a caretaker of the jersey. We've got a great crop of halves coming through that have been biding their time for a while.

"I have no regrets at all. I've been so lucky in my Origin career. It's their turn to take over in the Maroons jersey."

Thurston's 37th and final Origin game

will be firmly etched in the annals of interstate football.

For almost an hour, he soldiered on with an arm as limp as old lettuce after NSW forward Tyson Frizell cannoned into him on the Maroons' tryline.

At halftime, Thurston could barely lift his shoulder. But he returned for the second stanza and when Dane Gagai crashed over to level scores at 16-all with two minutes remaining, the stage was set for Thurston.

Bang. Through the pain of a shoulder that required season-ending surgery, Thurston was never going to miss.

"You just don't want to let your teammate down. That's the Queensland way," says Thurston as he recounts his



"I have no regrets at all. I've been so lucky in my Origin career"

match-winning kick and the ill-fated incident that would end his Origin career.

"Frizell was running the ball and it might have been an elbow that had direct contact with my shoulder.

"It felt like a dead arm... like I'd been punched in the arm. That's all it felt like.

"I could still lift my arm and pass. I got through the game, but once we got the scan back it wasn't good.

"When the surgeon went in there, he said it wasn't like a tear – it was like the joint had exploded.

"It (his shoulder ligament) was all frayed and not like a clean tear.

"The scary thing is, if the tear had have been any bigger, they wouldn't have been able to repair it.

"If I had have played on and done more damage to it, doing everyday things in life, like picking your kids up, would have been a struggle.

"It was a no-brainer to get the surgery done."

Thurston departs Camp Maroon in the same playmaking stratosphere as Queensland greats Lockyer and Wally Lewis.

Of his 37 games since his debut in 2005, he won 24, including five man-of-the-match awards.

He is the greatest point-scorer in Origin history with 220 from five tries and 99 goals.

Asked how he wishes to be remembered, Thurston says: "That's a hard one to answer.

"I guess that I always put the team first and did everything possible to win for the team and the state.

"When I started in 2005, I never thought I'd go on to have the career I've had in the Origin arena.

"I've been very blessed and lucky to play alongside some of the greats to have ever laced up a boot.

"It's always been a team-first mentality that we've had. None of the egos have ever been a problem. We have all gotten on.

"I'm most proud of the whitewash in 2010, and our series win in 2006. We were staring down the barrel of being the first team to lose four consecutive series and we turned it around to become the most dominant team in Origin history.

"To think I played a part in that, I'll remember it for the rest of my life."





CHARITY LUNCH DELIVERS AGAIN

for Queenslanders in need

Queenslanders hit by natural disasters and personal tragedies were the recipients of some much-needed heart-warming donations at this year's FOGS Annual State of Origin Charity Lunch.



A REGULAR and much-anticipated part of every Origin series, the FOGS Annual Charity Lunch combines celebrating everything that is great about Queensland, while helping to support Queenslanders in need of a bit of help.

It was a mandate created by the FOGS' founding father Dick "Tosser" Turner when he started the organisation.

Using the power of Queensland's passion for the Maroons, Tosser wanted the FOGS to strengthen rugby league in the state, and make a difference to the lives of everyday Queenslanders.

The money raised at every FOGS Charity Lunch does just that, and the funds collected from the 2016 lunch went to some very worthy causes this year.

Two donations were made to junior rugby league clubs in the Whitsundays that were devastated by Cyclone Debbie in March of this year.

Debbie was the most destructive cyclone to cross the Queensland coast since Yasi in 2011 when it made landfall near Airlie Beach, with sustained winds of 195km/h and gusts of up to 260km/h – resulting in 14 deaths and \$2.4 billion worth of damage.

While the north continues to rebuild, the FOGS are helping to ensure rugby league in the area remains strong.

LNP Member for the Whitsundays and former league commentator Jason Costigan accepted a \$7,500 donation on behalf of the Proserpine Whitsunday Junior Rugby League Club, while FOG #69 and Bowen local Mick McLean accepted a donation of \$7,500 on behalf of the Bowen Seagulls Junior Rugby League Club.

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles, who presented all of the donations at the lunch, said supporting junior clubs in need was a cause close to



Tosser's heart and continues his charter of helping the game at the grassroots.

"We will continue Tosser's legacy forever," Gene said. "Cyclone Debbie caused a huge amount of damage up north, and sometimes junior sport gets forgotten about in the big scheme of cleaning up after such an event.

"Mick McLean is involved with the local junior footy up there which is a great cause, and we were more than happy to help out there.

"Because of the support that the clubs in that area received they, and the game, were able to get back on their feet pretty quickly, which is great."

HeartKids, which helps children and their families dealing with congenital and childhood heart conditions, was another worthy recipient this year, with CEO Mark Brooke accepting a \$20,000 donation from FOGS.

As if that wasn't good enough, the team at Virgin Money then stepped in with a pledge to match every dollar donated by FOGS, meaning HeartKids accepted a total of \$40,000 to help young Queenslanders and their families.

The Lung Cancer Research Foundation received a \$10,000 donation, which resonated in a personal way with the FOGS.

Accepting the donation on behalf of the Foundation were Jackie Crane, wife of John, and Terry Butler's brother, Dwayne.

Both John and Terry were very close to the FOGS, and both sadly lost battles with lung cancer in recent years.

"Causes like lung cancer and brain cancer research are always deserving of any money we can raise for them so that we can do our part towards finding a cure for these rotten diseases," Gene said.

"Unfortunately, as the years go on, these diseases really start to hit home when we are losing people close to us, like we have done with Craney and Terry.

"I think at some stage everyone has known of someone who has lost the fight with cancer, but as we get older, the degrees of

"Once again, as a result of the proceeds from this year's event, we will be making some valuable donations to the charities that we identify come the lunch next year."

separation continue to reduce. "Once it was friends of friends dying from lung cancer. Now it is guys that you took the field with or worked alongside. It is a very sobering thought."

The success of the 2017 FOGS Charity Lunch means more worthy Queensland causes will be in line for donations next year.

"There was a lot of money given away this year, and the same thing will happen again next year too," Gene said.

"The simple formula we use is, whatever is raised on the day is donated to worthwhile charities the following year.

"This year was another very successful lunch. It was a fantastic day, a great atmosphere and terrific guests. Des Dowling was the comedian this year, who came highly recommended by Alfie Langer.

"Des is a Victorian and a former television journalist. But despite both of those things, he was a really funny guy and did a great job for us.

"Once again, as a result of the proceeds from this year's event, we will be making some valuable donations to the charities that we identify come the lunch next year."





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KING of the WING

Gagai makes history as first winger to win Origin's Wally Lewis medal

THE old adage suggests that nothing can prepare a rookie for the high-octane intensity of State of Origin.

Somebody should tell Dane Gagai.

For a man who is a relative newcomer to rugby league's toughest arena, the Maroons ace is making Origin football look as easy as a stroll in the park.

In just seven matches, Gagai has twice entered the interstate record books.

Last year, in his first full series, the flying winger equaled the record for most tries in an Origin game when he scored a hat-trick in Queensland's 26-16 victory in Game II at Suncorp Stadium.

And this season, Gagai stepped up again, becoming the first winger in Origin's 37-year history to win the Wally Lewis Medal as the player of the series.

In an arena in which playmakers and forward tough men tend to steal the newsprint, Gagai is bucking the trend, utilising his pace, energy and work rate to become a dominant force at Origin level.

When the Maroons were under the pump in an enthralling 2017 series, Gagai was invariably there to answer the call, fearlessly charging the ball deep out of Queensland territory.

Without him, it is fair to question whether the Maroons could have mustered the enthusiasm to overturn a 1-0 deficit and clinch an epic series victory.

"It was a bit of a surreal feeling," Gagai says of winning the Wally Lewis Medal.

"I didn't go into the series with the mindset of trying to get any individual accolades.

"I was going into each game as an outside back just trying to get my carries up. My mentality is if I do that, it takes the pressure off the forwards who are already doing most of the work in the middle.

"I just did whatever it takes

to get the win. You have to pull your weight for the man beside you. That's the Queensland way."

Statistics don't always paint a proper picture, but in Gagai's case they make compelling reading.

In 2017, he produced the most dominant performance by an Origin winger in almost two decades.

When the fulltime siren sounded on Queensland's 22-6 win in the Game III decider, Gagai had amassed 566 running metres – the most since former Maroons juggernaut Wendell Sailor charged for 550m in 1999.



Picture: Courtesy News Queensland

And while he fell short of Sailor's all-time record of 737 metres, set in 1998, it was Gagai's two-try heroics in Origin II, including his crucial 77th-minute effort which leveled scores at 16-all, that kept Queensland's series alive.

"I couldn't have been happier with how I played in the three games," said Gagai, who was rewarded for his Origin form with his maiden Australian jumper at the World Cup.

"You're never perfect, there's always something you can do better.

"I don't go into any game with the intention of making metres. I'm not motivated by statistics. But I don't like letting my teammates down, and I can't thank Kevin Walters (coach) enough for showing faith in picking me after we lost the first game."

Former Maroons coach Mal Meninga, now in charge of

Australia, was responsible for blooding Gagai in the Origin arena in 2015.

The kid from Mackay has responded by scoring seven tries from as many games and, at age 26, could be Queensland's No.1 winger for the next five years.

"Dane loves the game, he has a great passion for the game," Meninga said.

"I'm really proud of how far he has come.

"He is a great person, he does everything he possibly can to enhance the game which is fantastic. He is great around the group and plays damn good footy.

"He is fearless, he is a team player. All of the qualities you want in a player, Dane has got it.

"How hard is it to win the Wally Lewis Medal from the wing? That's an incredible achievement. But it doesn't surprise me because Dane is such a competitor.

"He hates letting the jersey down, and that's what I like about him."

"He is fearless, he is a team player. All of the qualities you want in a player, Dane has got it."



Picture: David Clark, AAP



BOYS IN GREEN SHOW TRUE MAROON SPIRIT

QUEENSLAND'S remarkable State of Origin series win this year ticked a lot of the boxes required in a rugby league fairytale.

But the Maroons may have been trumped in the feel-good footy story of the year by the outstanding success of the Pine Rivers Under-9s rugby league team.

These heroes wear emerald green instead of Maroon, but their story of perseverance, persistence and never giving up has all the hallmarks of some of Queensland's most famous Origin wins.

These boys have been playing alongside each other for three years, starting out in the Under-6s. For three long seasons they went without a single win.

Coming into 2017, the team needed some help, and reached out to the FOGS through Executive Chairman Gene Miles.

"I have known Geno for a while, I used to work at the Stadium and we gave them a hand when all the floods came

through their offices," says team trainer Mark Stokes.

"I knew about the work that the FOGS do helping out disadvantaged kids and helping them get a start in rugby league.

"We're not an Aspley or a Redcliffe. We don't have a leagues club, we don't have a poker machines, we don't have a bistro or anything like that, so it is always a struggle to come up with the money to help the kids.

"We didn't have any first aid kit or anything for our team, so I knew the right people to reach out to when we needed a bit of help.

"All of our water bottles were old and broken, you couldn't shut the lid on most of them and the straws were all chewed and broken.

"They looked about 10 years old. Geno and the FOGS not only donated a first aid kit for us, but kitted us out with new water bottles as well.

"Suncorp Stadium donated a couple of tickets as well which we were able to auction off to

"They hadn't won a game in three years, and this year they finally broke through for their first win."

raise money to give the kids a bit of a special day out at the end of the year, which was fantastic."

That small but significant donation from FOGS put a spring in the step of the team, and before they knew it, something special was beginning to unfold.

"This year has been unbelievable," Mark said. "They hadn't won a game in three years, and this year they finally broke through for their first win.

"They don't keep score at that age, because it is more about just getting out there and having some fun. But kids are kids – they know when they have won or lost. "They were very, very excited.

"They ended up winning six games this season, so they have gone from three years without one win to six wins in one season.

"FOGS have made an absolutely amazing contribution to our team and our little club. We can't thank them enough."



HAPPY TO BE OF SERVICE

FOGS help out as police and fires square off to honour the fallen

THERE are not many times when Queenslanders will cheer on a blue jersey, but exceptions can be made for a worthy cause.

And the annual 9-11 Memorial Rugby League Game played out between teams from the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service more than fits the bill for our support.

The match has been held every year since 2011 to pay tribute to the police, firefighters and emergency service personnel who lost their lives trying to save people in the World Trade Centre terrorist attack in New York on September 11, 2001.

Aside from honouring those that died in the line of duty, the day also raises money for the Children's Hospital Foundation, to finance research and equipment at the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital.

This year's event was held at Dolphin Oval at Redcliffe on September 9, and for the first time, women's teams from the QPS and QFES squared off on the field for bragging rights between the two forces.

But the girls in blue did have a fair dose of star power in their ranks, with Queensland legend and Jillaroo's World Cup co-captain Steph Hancock turning out for the QPS team.

QFES spokesperson Janine Taylor said the event had been a massive success.

"It was a great day. It was the first time that women have had teams in so that was a great occasion," she said.

"There is always a great rivalry between the two forces, and it was extra special that the women were able to be involved. The officials were all women as well, which added to the occasion, and we had a healthy crowd in attendance.

"The girls played first, then there was a game of rugby union masters, which the



"There is always a great rivalry between the two forces."

police also won. Then finally, there was the main game between the men's teams, which the fires won 18-16.

"One of the biggest efforts on the day was from one of our firefighters from Mt Isa who basically flew in for two days because she had the finals of her soccer tournament on the Friday.

"She came down on the Saturday to

play the game and flew back again on the Sunday, which was a huge effort."

The FOGS also played their part, and not just with Steph Hancock inheriting her rugby league ability from pro dad and FOG #11, Rohan Hancock.

"The FOGS made the very generous donation with a 'Decade of Dominance' football, which helped us a lot with our fundraising," Janine explained.

"The winner was just gobsmacked when he saw the prize. When his name was drawn, he came up looking like 'oh, I've won a football'.

"But when he was able to get up close and actually see what it was he was blown away. It was pretty amazing to see."

SHAUNE SHARES THE LOVE

QUEENSLAND State of Origin players are often held up as figures of inspiration for everyday Queenslanders.

But sometimes it is the everyday Queenslanders that are the most inspirational of all.

Shaune Watts is one such Queenslanders. Shaune was inspired to devote himself to raising funds for two terrific Queensland causes after coming through two harrowing events that changed his life forever.

The first was in 2008, when he almost lost his mother to leukaemia.

The second was in 2011, when his son Noah was born 10 weeks premature, weighing just 2.4lbs – or 1090g.

But that was just the start of Noah's battles.

As Shaun describes on his website: "Noah was born with Severe Chronic Lung Disease and spent five days on a ventilator.

"He was fed through a line through his belly button and then through a central line through his leg to his stomach. He developed a chest infection within two days of being born.

"He was connected to the CPAP machine for four weeks to support his breathing. We were not able to hold him until he was nine days old.

"He spent six weeks in special care. Then, just when we thought this journey was over, it was discovered that he had a hernia in his left groin.

"This required surgery and the doctors decided to operate on both sides by doing a bilateral hernia operation.

"He was finally released from hospital on 31 March 2011... however his lungs were not strong enough to support his



"I certainly believe we are one of the lucky ones"



breathing, so he had to go home on oxygen 24/7. He remained on oxygen until 15 September 2011."

It is the type of story that would knock the wind out of most people. Instead, it energised Shaun Watts to give something back.

Shaune's mother and son are now both doing well, but only thanks to the efforts of the Leukaemia Foundation and the Mater Little Miracles organisation – who gave Shaune and his family the help and support they needed in their most desperate hours.

"My mum is still alive today, and our third child may not have made it were it not for the support that we got from the Leukaemia Foundation and the Mater Little Miracles organisation, so for me it was a very easy decision to help out how I could," Shaune said.

"Not everyone makes that decision, because going through things like that affects people differently.

"But I certainly believe we are one of the lucky ones, so why not use that luck in a way that supports the charities that supported us through our difficult times? "Because of them, we were able to come out the other side of those things very well."

Shaune holds a golf day every year and an annual Charity High Tea to raise money for the organisations.

This year FOGS donated a commemorative piece of memorabilia; a limited edition Johnathan Thurston signed headgear, to help Shaune's cause.

The headgear raised \$2,000, part of an incredible \$45,471.81 raised at the high tea, with another \$34,000 raised at the golf day in March.

"The FOGS donated items for both days, which was just fantastic. I think the FOGS have been supporting us for a good six or seven years now," he said.

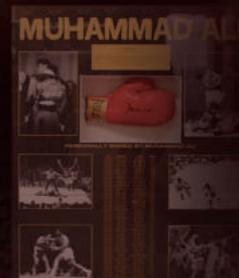
"Every year I reach out hoping they will help, and every year they deliver for us."





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ARTIE STUDENTS SHOW THAT *celebration* IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS



FORMER South African president Nelson Mandela understood the importance of celebrating your victories.

Mandela, one of history's greatest figures, overcame enormous adversity in his life to make a difference to the lives of millions of people in his own country and around the world.

Mandela spent 27 years in prison because he stood up for what he believed in.

On his release in 1990, Mandela oversaw the end of apartheid in South Africa and four years later became the country's first black president, unifying the country and becoming a champion of human rights around the world.

Mandela was responsible for many famous quotes during his time as one of the world's great spokesmen, but there is one in particular that should resonate this summer with more than 500 ARTIE Academy students: "Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead."

Business leaders, life coaches and sports psychologists all subscribe to the theory that celebrating victory is crucial to achieving and maintaining success because it reinforces the positive message that hard work and sacrifice are worth it when successes can be enjoyed.

The ARTIE Beeton Fun Days were created for just that purpose.

Each year, ARTIE Academy students who achieve a 90 per cent school attendance benchmark and maintain their academic

"It really helps us with coming to school knowing that there's support and great rewards like this available to us."

standards are rewarded with an invitation to celebrate their success at an exclusive Fun Day event.

This year in central Queensland, more than 200 students were invited to attend the Rockhampton ARTIE Beeton Fun Day, which included a day at Sizzler and the Rocky Bowl and Leisure Centre with special guests Corey Oates and Jharal Yow Yeh.

One of the ARTIE Academy students, Tennechiah from Rockhampton State High School, said the Fun Days helped to keep students motivated and to keep performing to their best so that they would be invited back again next year.

"I just want to thank ARTIE and all the staff for putting on this day," Tennechiah said.

"Not a lot of kids get to experience a day like this, and it really helps us with coming to school knowing that there's support and great rewards like this available to us."

In southeast Queensland, eligible ARTIE Academy students were invited to Dreamworld's WhiteWater World to celebrate their achievements.



Their day was shared with a host of Former Origin Greats: Darius Boyd, Corey Oates and Anthony Milford, and there was also a special address from Brad Beetson, who is continuing his famous father's tremendous legacy through the Arthur Beetson Foundation.

In Term 4 this year, the ARTIE Academy students had participated in a dance workshop delivered by the Yerongpan Aboriginal Dancers to learn the "Death Adder Snake" dance.

As a special treat to mark the day of celebration, the students then performed their dance at the ARTIE Beetson Fun Day, delivering their routine as a united force in front of their teachers, community members and special guests.

The ARTIE Academy is of course named in honour of the late Arthur Beetson, with the 2017 southeast Queensland ARTIE Fun Day marking six years to the date since the great man passed away.

On December 1, 2011, Arthur was due to enjoy lunch at WhiteWater World with

the students who had earned a spot at the Fun Day named in his honour.

Sadly, Arthur died while out on a morning bike ride, just hours before he was to be the guest of honour at the Fun Day.

Like Mandela, Beetson was a champion for his people, and an inspiration for everyone in the country he loved and represented with great pride.

A strong advocate for Indigenous education, Arthur spent his life teaching young Indigenous children about the importance of staying in school and getting an education.

While Arthur may no longer be with us, his legacy will carry on with the ARTIE Academy helping young Indigenous Queenslanders prepare for the road ahead with better education.

With the annual ARTIE Beetson Fun Days, those students will celebrate their milestones and achievements, and hopefully one day go on to inspire the people around them as well.



CONTINUING ARTHUR'S LEGACY

The FOGS ARTIE Academy will continue to deliver outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2018 with a continuation of the program funded by the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

The program will support over 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending schools from Rockhampton, Caboolture, Brisbane, Ipswich and Logan.

We thank the Australian Government for their continued investment in the next generation of First Nations youth.



FOGS AND QUT PUT ARTIE ACADEMY STUDENTS ON ROAD TO SUCCESS



Shaylah Grimmett

DRIVING Queensland students to new heights has always been the goal of the FOGS ARTIE Academy education program.

But in 2017, that drive for success became literal with a unique research collaboration between FOGS and the QUT School of Economics (QuBE).

QuBE and FOGS have received an Australian Research Council grant to undertake an Individualised Driver Licence program for eligible participants in the study.

Under the research program, participating students will undergo a learner licence test and 10 hours of driving lessons with a qualified instructor, with all associated costs covered by the ARC grant.

From there, the students have the option to transition to the PCYC "Breaking the Cycle" program, gaining extra driving experience with

PCYC volunteers to achieve the minimum driving hours required to get their driver's licence.

Azhar Potia, a PhD candidate at QUT, said the idea for the research program was born out of the years of success enjoyed by the ARTIE Academy, using a rewards program to generate improvement in school attendance and academic results.

"In previous years, there was a research project that took place where the team looked into the FOGS' ARTIE Academy program – which at that time was using smaller rewards like sports equipment to encourage greater attendance and performance at school," Azhar said.

"The discussion that came out of it was whether a highly valued reward could impact on how students perform.

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Students at Department of Transport and Main Roads obtaining their Learner Licences



Morayfield Students at Department of Transport and Main Roads



Successful students from Bundamba SSC who passed their Learner Licence test

"It is a very strong collaboration between the PCYC, FOGS and QUT. Even though it is a research project, it is also something that is highly practical because we are directly able to help these kids improve their lives.

"There are two stages to the project. The first will be to look at short-term outcomes like attendance rates. The second phase will look at longer-term outcomes, and could potentially take another two years to complete."

Over 50 students from Rockhampton and Rockhampton North State High Schools in central Queensland, and Morayfield State High School and Bundamba Secondary College in the south-east, are participating in the research.

Students who achieved their Challenge goal of 90 per cent Physical Attendance for Term 3 were eligible to take part in Stage 1 – the Learner Licence workshop and test – with a 100 per cent success rate of students passing.

The students will now



Students participating in the Community Driver's Licence Program Workshop

"Having a program like this helps me a lot because you don't have to go through everything alone."

take part in completing 10 hours of driving instruction before moving onto the PCYC "Breaking the Cycle" program to help them build up their 100 hours of experience behind the wheel before sitting for their driver's licence in 2018.

Shaylah Grimmett, one of the ARTIE Academy students participating in the research, said the students were happy to embrace the opportunity the collaboration between

FOGS and QUT had provided.

"It makes it a whole lot easier," Shaylah said. "Having a program like this helps me a lot because you don't have to go through everything alone.

"It is worth coming to school to get a reward like this and it means I have an opportunity now that I didn't have before.

"A lot more students would come to school more often if this program was always available."

LITTLE VISITORS HAVE A GREAT BIG ADVENTURE



There were wide eyes and even wider smiles when a group of young students from Aurukun State School in far north Queensland came to see the ARTIE Academy at work.

Nine Aurukun students from Year 1 to Year 4 who achieved a 100 per cent school attendance record were invited to attend a visit to Marsden State School.

They were joined by three of their teachers to see how the ARTIE Academy is making an impact on primary school students.

ARTIE Academy Program Manager Jess Cuthbertson said the Aurukun students, aged between five and nine-years of age, were blown away by the experience.

"It was a nice entry for FOGS and the ARTIE Academy into Aurukun State School as we look to expand the program to

remote communities," Jess said.

"Having that initial interaction with the students and staff will help open the discussion about how FOGS and the ARTIE Academy can work together with Indigenous students in remote communities and throughout Queensland.

"They were a little overwhelmed with the size and the number of students that went to the school.

"They really enjoyed playing on the playgrounds, and they were blown away by the size of the library and the number of books available inside.

"Students from both schools played some traditional games with one of our ARTIE Academy alumni, Jacob Johnson, while they were there and really got

involved with everything.

"They took to the Marsden State School students as well. There was plenty of hugging and swapping names in their notebooks at the end of the day."

Aside from an amazing experience that included lunch at Sizzler, each of the Aurukun students and staff went home with a gift bag from the ARTIE Academy and plenty of stories to tell their schoolmates when they got back home.



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ARTIE ACADEMY HELPS TAFE STUDENTS LEARN TO TEACH

The Former Origin Greats organisation has always been about Queenslanders helping Queenslanders.

NOW, with the ARTIE Academy's TAFE Tutor Partnership, we are seeing Queenslanders helping Queenslanders. Under the new partnership, TAFE students studying Community Service, Youth Work or Education Support are providing support in literacy and numeracy to ARTIE Academy students.

This not only helps the school students improve their academic performance, but helps the TAFE students enhance their skills for their future careers and work through their 100-120 hours of volunteer work required as part of their learning.

"We partner them with our schools, so they can go in there and improve their knowledge base and put the theory of what they are learning at TAFE into practice," said ARTIE Academy Program Manager Jess Cuthbertson.

"The program is the perfect way to ease yourself into working with children"

"It is a win-win for both organisations. The role that they do is very similar to the role that they will go on to do in their professional careers – especially in education support.

"Their role within the school is mentoring and assisting in class work. We are very fortunate we have been able to get this partnership. It has been a benefit to the program this year."

So far more than 100 students have been involved in the program, which equates to over 5000 hours of in-class support, and Jess said the response to the ARTIE Academy students had been phenomenal.

"We have had a wonderful reaction to the program from the students and the teachers," she said.

"There are always questions like: 'When are they coming back? Are we getting another tutor in class?'"



"As much as the TAFE students are there to build their own skill base, they connect with the students, building rapport. They are invested."

The impact on the TAFE students has been just as impressive.

Caroline Duncan, who has been tutoring in the program at Cavendish Road State High School, is studying youth work at TAFE and said working with the ARTIE Academy had been a perfect precursor to her future career.

"The program is totally amazing," Caroline said. "It is the perfect way to ease

yourself into working with children.

"The young people that I was dealing with were just so respectful, and had a laugh. But we also got the work done, and it helped to instill the work ethic that they should have and helped with their organisation.

"I found that they were loving coming to school while I was there, which was an awesome thing as well.

"It was really terrific to be able to support these young people while they were in such a stressful environment and to help them learn that education can be fun."



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NEW FRONTIER

JUSTIN HODGES IS AIMING HIGH IN HIS NEW CAREER AS A COACH – FOR HIMSELF, THE GAME, AND HIS PEOPLE

Picture: Courtesy News Queensland

JUSTIN Hodges can now appreciate the pain he once put his coaches through.

After so many years working his magic on the field for the Broncos, Roosters, Queensland and Australia, Hodges has turned his hand to coaching. And he's learning it's not easy.

"Look at all these grey hairs," Hodges laughs, pointing to the side of his head. "I might look like Wayne Bennett in five years."

It may come as a surprise to some, but Hodges, seen as a fun-loving larrikin during his decorated playing career, is dead serious about succeeding in the cut-throat world of top-level coaching.

Down the track, he dreams of emulating Bennett and coaching the Broncos. But right now, he is taking baby steps and learning on the run.

He has just completed his first year in the coaching realm holding dual roles.

There was an assistant's role at the Broncos, running water for the under-20s, and a more challenging task – coaching the next wave of Origin superstars in the Queensland under-20s.

With former Origin duo Lote Tuqiri and Scott Prince helping out, Hodges learned some harsh realities in charge of the young Maroons.

At age 35, Hodges found himself mentoring Storm sensation Brodie Croft, rated the next Cooper Cronk, and Tristan Sailor, the son of Origin and Test wing

"I don't want to walk away from the game. I want to stay involved and make a difference."

legend Wendell, whom Hodges played at the Broncos with.

It was a tough initiation. The Maroons were beaten 30-16 by their NSW under-20s counterparts. But rather than deter Hodges, the experience has only galvanised his desire to succeed in coaching.

"It's made me realise and appreciate how tough coaching can be," Hodges said.

"It was torture sitting there in the coaching box. As a player, you have

some control out on the field, but in the coaching box, you can be pretty helpless.

"You give the guys some advice, guidance and game plans, but once they kick off, there's not

much you can do.

"I was a nervous wreck. It has certainly been an eye-opener."

Ultimately, Hodges hopes to change the landscape of NRL coaching, admitting he is saddened by the dearth of Indigenous coaches at rugby league's highest echelons.

Two years after hanging up his boots, Hodges is determined to be a coaching poster boy for Aboriginal people.

The long-term vision is becoming the first Indigenous coach to win an NRL premiership, but his immediate focus is addressing the cultural inequities in the coaching sphere and proving Aboriginal people can be equally as gifted with the clipboard as a football.

Of Queensland's 193 Origin players, more than a third are Indigenous.

Twelve per cent of the NRL's registered players today possess Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, but the conversion rate from playing to coaching is alarmingly low.

Hodges believes it is time for change.

His journey is underway to cultivate a generation of Aboriginal NRL masterminds.

"I'd love to try and break the mould there," Hodges says.

"I spoke to the Broncos a while ago about my ambitions with coaching and what I want to achieve for my people.

"There has never been an Indigenous coach in the NRL. Why? We have so many great Indigenous players. They love the game. They play the game so well... but then they leave the game.

"I don't want to walk away from the game. I want to stay involved and make a difference. I want to show Indigenous players there is a pathway to coach at the highest levels in rugby league."

GOLD SMITH

2017 WAS THE
YEAR THAT KING
CAM CONQUERED
THE LOT



CAMERON Smith remembers his rookie season at Melbourne.

He was 18, an ill-disciplined teenager learning the hard way in AFL heartland. "My first winter at the Storm, I thought: 'What have I done? This is ridiculous,'" Smith recalls with his trademark disarming grin.

"When it got to five degrees and I was out on the training field, I thought: 'How long can I do this?'"

It turns out Smith has done it longer and better than anyone.

Fast forward 15 years and Smith is the Melbourne, Queensland and Australia captain who is basking in the glory of the 2017 season, which will be remembered as the finest campaign of his decorated career.

No-one in the NRL has the Midas touch quite like Smith.

In a head-spinning six-month period this season, Smith became the first man to play 40 Origin games, broke Darren Lockyer's record of 355 NRL matches, led Queensland to another series win, claimed his second Dally M Medal and skippered Melbourne to premiership glory.

Oh, and just for good measure, Smith was named captain of Australia's World Cup squad.

Earning his 52nd Test in the World Cup opener against England, Smith is closing in on another milestone owned by Lockyer, who amassed a remarkable 59 internationals in the green-and-gold.

When Smith chalked up his 40th game for Queensland in the series opener against NSW, many believed it was the moment that rubber-stamped him as a future Immortal.



“Being a 300-gamer at the Storm and going past Locky’s record, never ever did I think that in my wildest dreams”

But the Maroons genius truly treasures his NRL playing record.

“That (surpassing Lockyer) has to sit at the top doesn’t it?” muses Smith, who finished the 2017 NRL season with 358 games.

“To have the record for the most games played by any player in the history of the game, it’s a fairly significant milestone.

“It’s really hard to take in the significance of it entirely because I’m still playing. I’m contracted for next year as well, so I’d like to think I can play a few more games yet.

“I was very proud and humbled to go past someone like Locky. I played Origins and Tests with him and he was a guy I looked up to as a teenager.

“Looking back when I was a teenager, never did I think I would be playing in Melbourne. The team only came into the comp in 1998, and they were two years old when I signed.

“Being a 300-gamer at the Storm and going past Locky’s record, never ever did I think that in my wildest dreams.

“No-one thought the record would be broken by someone playing the game in an AFL city like Melbourne.”

While Smith will forever savour his personal record, Queensland’s epic come-from-behind series win in July will always resonate in terms of team achievements.

On the eve of Origin I, the Maroons were rocked by the loss of injured trio Johnathan Thurston, Matt Scott and Greg Inglis.

Smith labelled the series his greatest challenge as a leader, and when the Maroons were flogged 28-4 in the series opener at Suncorp, it was heralded as NSW’s time to celebrate a changing of the guard.

With the series on the line in the decider, Smith produced one of his most dominant displays at any level, tormenting NSW to orchestrate a 22-6 triumph.

It was Queensland’s 11th series win in 12 years. For Smith, it was his fifth series win from six attempts as skipper.

“It was truly special for me,” he said.

“There was no doubt that series tested me as a captain more than any other. We blooded eight new faces and ‘Kevvie’ (coach Kevin Walters) had to make some brave selection calls.

“But I was always confident in the group of men we had.

“There was talk (after Game I) that this was NSW’s time, which annoyed me a bit.

“I don’t ever talk about Origin in terms of domination or dynasties, I just want our players to be the best we can be each match, and play for the people of Queensland.

“To come from behind the way we did, it showed the character of this Queensland team and why I’m so proud to be their captain.”

Former Maroons coach Wayne Bennett, who handed Smith his Origin debut way back in 2003, explained why the champion hooker will be irreplaceable when he retires.

“He’s like an on-field coach,” Bennett said.

“I’ve never felt so comfortable in the coaching box than when Cameron is out there in charge.

“As a coach, you don’t have to send out messages because he’s already a step ahead. Cam is such a smart footballer, he is a dream to coach.”



GRAND DESIGNS

STORM AND COWBOYS FINAL HELPS BUILD FUTURE FOR MAROONS



INTERSTATE rivalry dictates that when there is no NSW team in the NRL grand final, Queensland wins.

Passionate Maroons never want to see NSW win anything.

Knowing Sydneysiders would be nursing wounded pride because none of their clubs made the "big dance" makes grand final day just that little bit more special for Queenslanders.

We saw it in 2015, when the Cowboys and Broncos played out the first-ever all-Queensland grand final.

The added bonus on that occasion was that North Queensland and Brisbane delivered an absolute epic – an extra-time thriller many declared to be the best grand final of all time.

This year's grand final between Melbourne and the Cowboys was not in the same class as the 2015 decider in terms of being a thriller.

But the "added bonuses" will be appreciated by Queenslanders for many years to come.

At the top of the list will be the continued evolution of Cowboys coach Paul Green

into one of the great NRL coaches.

Green's success in delivering the Cowboys their maiden title in 2015 was proof enough that FOG #113 had what it takes to be a successful coach, following an apprenticeship that delivered two premierships with Wynnum Manly in the Intrust Super Cup, and another as assistant coach at the Roosters.

But even without the silverware to show for it, 2017 may have been Green's best coaching performance yet.

Just getting the Cowboys to the grand final was considered a miracle, given North Queensland were without their two best players and co-captains in Johnathan Thurston and Matt Scott for most of the year.

The Cowboys only qualified for the finals by sneaking into eighth spot when the Bulldogs beat the Dragons in the last round of the NRL.

The Cowboys lost five of their final six games in the regular season, but Canterbury's victory allowed North Queensland to leapfrog the Red V into eighth spot.



That charmed run was not expected to last long, with the Cowboys meeting defending premiers Cronulla in a sudden-death final in the first week of the play-offs.

The Cowboys got home 15-14 in extra time, then beat the Eels 24-16 before meeting pre-season favourites the Roosters in the preliminary final.

With all the momentum now behind them, North Queensland steamrolled the Roosters 29-16, becoming the first team since Parramatta in 2009 to make the grand final from eighth spot.

Green being able to extract so much from his under-strength squad, and taking the performances and standards of some of his players to new highs, spoke volumes about his own performance and his connection to his playing group.

Michael Morgan, Scott Bolton and Ethan Lowe were among the players to stand up with impressive seasons when the Cowboys needed them to take more responsibility.

While Morgan has been a mainstay of recent Origin campaigns, the efforts of Lowe and Bolton during 2017 will remind Queensland selectors of the tremendous depth available should opportunity arise.

Similarly, Green has made no secret of the fact that he harbours ambitions to one day coach the Maroons in the Origin arena, having served Queensland as a player on seven occasions between 1999 and 2001.

On the other side of the grand final field, Melbourne too had a number of standout performances from Queenslanders on their way to another NRL premiership.

The mercurial Billy Slater shone again, winning the



“2017 may have been Green’s best coaching performance yet.”

Clive Churchill Medal to cap a remarkable comeback season after two years wrecked by injury.

Slater must have only beaten Cameron Smith in a photo finish for the Churchill, with the skipper sublime in everything he did, and Cooper Cronk as ruthlessly efficient as ever at halfback in his last game for Melbourne.

Maroons Will Chambers, Cameron Munster and Tim Glasby all played their roles for the Storm, while Felise Kaufusi was able to use his try-scoring performance against the Cowboys to vault into Mal Meninga’s World Cup squad.

Kaufusi was 18th man for the Maroons in Game III of this year’s Origin series, and will join Cowboys Lowe and Coen Hess as part of Queensland’s next wave of Origin forwards.

So while there is satisfaction to be had from the fact the Provan-Summons Trophy will live in Melbourne instead of Sydney for the next 12 months, Queensland’s real reward came with the experience and success gained by the men who will carry the Maroons into the next generation.





JUST FIN-TASTIC

Mighty effort from Redcliffe sees the Dolphins claim the FOGS Colts Challenge and FOGS State Cup double

REDCLIFFE coach Scott Murray said the Suncorp Stadium scoreboard did not tell the true story of his team's stunning victory in this year's FOGS Colts Challenge grand final.

The Dolphins thrashed Norths Devils 56-18 in a thrilling prelude to the Intrust Super Cup grand final on September 24.

To all who watched the game, it seemed like a stroll in the park for Redcliffe.

It is a massive effort to win a grand final, let alone to do so by 38 points.

But Murray said it is only now, months after the fulltime whistle, that the Dolphins have started to really appreciate the magnitude of their achievement in what he said was a truly tough match against the Devils.

"We can sit back now and think that, to put on 50-odd points in a grand final, it doesn't happen too often," Murray said.

"We were really confident without being too arrogant. We thought we were in a pretty good place before the game.

"We were fit and healthy, we weren't carrying any injuries which is quite uncommon at that stage of the year.

"It was a really hot day and we thought Norths being a bigger team may struggle in those conditions. We knew they would start well, which is what they did.

"So we had to wait for our opportunities. We converted them into the points."

What made the win even more satisfying however was that the Dolphins had also claimed the inaugural FOGS under-20s statewide final earlier in the year.

Murray, who was in his first season with Redcliffe after previously coaching with the Bulldogs, Roosters and Rabbitohs under-20s teams, said when they won the first title in May, they knew it would be a



tough feat to score the double.

But his side persevered and, while it was a long and tough season, they proved many of their doubters wrong.

"Winning those competitions... we went through that FOGS State Cup undefeated. It's not easy to keep consistent throughout the year but we did that pretty well," he said.

"We had a couple of losses (in the FOGS Colts Challenge) but we had to put that into perspective that it was going to happen.



Pictures: Dave Clark, AAP

"To keep the consistency we did, it was really pleasing."

Murray will next year join the Intrust Super Cup coaching ranks, as an assistant to Redcliffe coach Adam Mogg.

But he will still do what he can to develop the under-20s and younger players coming through the ranks at the Dolphins.

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said the Dolphins were deserving winners of the dual FOGS Colts titles because of the quality and consistency of their football.

"The FOGS are very proud of our long-term association with the colts

competition in the Queensland Rugby League, because it continues the vision of our founder Dick 'Tosser' Turner to do what we can to improve rugby league in Queensland," Miles said.

"The FOGS Colts Challenge and the FOGS State Cup help provide pathways for the next generation of players to reach their dreams of one day playing for Queensland at State of Origin level.

"We congratulate Redcliffe on their incredible success this season, and thank all teams for creating a quality competition to strengthen the foundations of rugby league in Queensland."



TRAIN FOR YOUR GAME

SAMMY BREMNER

#CommittedToTheGame

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Welcome to FOGS LEAGUE

New rugby league channel saw our Maroon experts shine

MAL Meninga never imagined he would swap a Steeden for a suit, but the Queensland Origin legend is relishing his new role in the rugby league media.

While he is not ready to give up his coaching role with the Australian side just yet, Meninga is at the vanguard of former stars who are bringing a unique Queensland flavour to the NRL commentating fraternity.

Indeed, Fox Sports' new Fox League channel, introduced this year, could have easily been coined "FOGS League" as Meninga led a squadron of no less than nine former Queensland Origin servants onto the pay-TV network.

Meninga, Ben Ikin, Corey Parker, Gorden

Tallis, Justin Hodges, Billy Moore, Gary Belcher, Brent Tate and current Maroons coach Kevin Walters were poster boys for Fox Sports' unprecedented 24-7 coverage of the NRL in 2017.

Whether it was anchoring NRL 360, providing cutting-edge comment on magazine-style shows or delivering blow-by-blow analysis at live NRL fixtures, Queensland's commentary crew brought another dimension to Fox's coverage.

Meninga was a popular and influential voice on the new Queenslanders Only show.

The 46-Test icon loved the role so much he had no problem slipping into all-Maroon garb, looking like a Queensland

Origin priest summoning the masses, to promote the show in daily advertisements.

"I've really enjoyed my role with Fox this year," Meninga says.

"I honestly think we knocked the wall down a bit this year when it comes to the importance of the Queensland market for the NRL.

"The *Queenslanders Only* show had good content and good fun. Queensland people are light-hearted by nature and I like the fact that we can have a good laugh.

"The Queensland guys bring some tongue-in-cheek, but also some normality to media commentary.

"While I like the banter and the light entertainment, I also think we bring some realism. Rugby league just isn't played down south (in New South Wales) and it's important to have that Queensland flavour."

For Walters, his media commitments are vital in keeping him at the coalface of the NRL's development.

While he is Maroons coach, he also

"It certainly keeps you in touch with the game, that's what I enjoy about it."

Kevin Walters speaks at an event in Mudgeeraba



sits on their three-man selection panel, meaning it is crucial for Walters to be aware of who is playing well and which Queenslanders are pressing their Origin claims.

When the drums were beating that Coen Hess was a possible bolter for Origin II this year, the Cowboys forward sensation produced a barnstorming effort against the Eels in Darwin.

Walters just happened to be in the Darwin commentary box with a bird's-eye view of Hess' destruction. Two days later, the Cowboys rookie was handed his maiden Queensland jumper.

"It certainly keeps you in touch with the game, that's what I enjoy about it," Walters says.

"Rugby league is a game I love anyway, so to be able to get paid to talk about it and assist me in my role as Queensland coach, it's a win-win situation really.

"It's not as easy as it might look. There's a lot of study and research that needs to be done away from the camera.

Rugby league fans know their stuff so it's important you treat the role with respect."

Growing up in Logan, Parker dreamed of one day being a Bronco, but never imagined his glittering career would steer him into commentary.

He is one of Fox's most versatile performers, featuring on panel shows as well as co-commentary and sideline-eye stints at NRL venues.

"The best way to learn is by doing it," Parker says.

"It's a bit like playing footy – you can do all the preparation, which you need, but the only way you get better is by doing things yourself.

"It's been challenging and it's obviously out of my comfort zone, but it helps to have played the game. There are moments in games where you know how players are feeling because you have been in that situation yourself."

Gorden Tallis, Kevin Walters and Billy Moore on the set of Fox League



Gorden Tallis and Yvonne Sampson



Queenslanders Corey Parker, Yvonne Sampson, Justin Hodges, Kevin Walters, Mal Meninga and Ben Ikin

A CHAMPION IN MAROON, BLACK AND RED

The unparalleled career of the great Brad Thorn has begun another incredible chapter, as the new coach of rugby union's Queensland Reds



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland

BRAD Thorn is in the unique position to compare just how tough it is at the coalface of an intense State of Origin battle and a full-blooded rugby union Test for the All Blacks.

Thorn would be a rich man with a dollar for every time that question has been asked, even before he finished his decorated top-tier career across two decades at the age of 40 in 2015.

"I'd put State of Origin in league on the same level as an All Blacks-South Africa Test in rugby union," Thorn said.

"They have the same ingredients with a natural enemy, capacity crowds that want blood and just a warzone mentality to the way the games are played."

Thorn's experiences in Origin, with the Kangaroos and in 200 games for the Brisbane Broncos shaped his view that "toughness" is not one shuddering hit, a trampling run or a flurry of fists that gets a player on the nightly news highlights.

"Just guys who show up every time to play and no quarter is given," Thorn, 42, said.

"They are not necessarily feisty but machine-like because it's always a hard day against them.

"Some of the toughest guys I know in league were smaller players like Dallas Johnson and Trevor Gillmeister, because every game they had to play tough to win the collisions

against bigger guys.

"In rugby, Richie McCaw was phenomenal for the All Blacks. For 15 years or more, he was over the ball giving opposition forwards of 110-115kg almost a free shot to do damage with head and shoulders to clean them out."

Thorn's journey from the Broncos to living his Kiwi childhood dream to represent the All Blacks will live on in folklore because he made the jump into the great unknown when code hops to rugby were rare and almost never attempted by someone as senior or with so little rugby experience.

No player had ever knocked back an All Blacks tour jersey, yet Thorn did because he did



BRAD THORN FOG #94

RUGBY LEAGUE

POSITION: Prop / second row

CLUB: Brisbane Broncos (1994-2000, 2005-2007)

PREMIERSHIPS: 3 (1998, 2000, 2006)

ORIGIN: 11 games for Qld (1996-2005)

SUPER LEAGUE TRI-SERIES: 3 games for Qld (1997)

TESTS: 3 Tests for Australia (1998)

SUPER LEAGUE TESTS: 5 Tests for Australia (1997)

RUGBY UNION

POSITION: Lock

CLUBS: Crusaders, Canterbury, Tasman, Sanix Blues, Leinster, Highlanders, Leicester, Queensland Country

PREMIERSHIPS: NPC with Canterbury 2001, 2004; Super 14 with Crusaders 2008; Heineken Cup with Leinster 2012

TESTS: 59 Tests for New Zealand

BLDISLOE CUP: 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

TRI-NATIONS: 2003, 2008, 2010

RUGBY WORLD CUP: 2011

not think he was ready.

It says everything about one of football's most principled figures that he did learn the tough arts of rucking, the rugby scrum and all the technical differences to become a 2011 Rugby World Cup winner.

A three-codes lunch in 2018 would be a treat.

The new coach of the Queensland Reds in Super Rugby played beside Maroons coach Kevvie Walters in the Broncos' 2000 premiership win over the Sydney Roosters and in numerous club and Origin battles.

Thorn still has a passion for rugby league and does appear in the stands at Suncorp Stadium with his sons to soak up NRL games when he can.

Thorn had the privilege to play with some of the greats, but the best playmaker he's

ever seen doesn't come down to the Darren Lockyer-Dan Carter grand final many might expect.

"I'd still say Alf," Thorn said of league's little big man Allan Langer.

"If he decided to score on his own, he would, or he'd do something special with a grubber, a pass or a step so someone else did.

"That was week after week, year after year, to win games.

"Dan was a bigger, stronger man than Locky and very strong defensively. Both were country guys.

"Dan was quieter, but didn't mind a party like Locky either."

Team culture can work wonders when it ferments the right way.

Thorn has felt it from the inside in the best teams he's played for and knows that strong bonds surface most of all in defence, not flashy attack.

Young Reds forwards talk of Thorn's standards to drag out better efforts in the gym, his accent on stretching and preparation and getting better every day as was his creed at the Broncos.

"I played in Broncos teams with a good culture, and it's what you want to build as a coach," Thorn said.



"If you care about the mate beside you, you are going to put your body on the line and do the extras.

"I'm massive on that, because talent is not enough."

Standards are important to Thorn. Disruptive off-field acts litter the codes, but Thorn also understands that players make mistakes.

"Standards are very important but you need to remember we were all young guys once who sometimes made poor decisions," Thorn said.

"I played in Broncos teams with a good culture, and it's what you want to build as a coach,"



"You have to want to make sacrifices to do things better though. I gave up alcohol for six years and it was good for me to man up socially.

"I compare it to Steve Waugh taking the hook shot out of his game. I got rid of drinking.

"Good teams have good senior players as a real strength."

You keep your standards in training and preparation wherever you end up – just like Thorn did late in 2011 when he dabbled in Japanese rugby with Sanix Blues, a world away from his Aspley upbringing in Brisbane and rugby league.

"It's a funny story. The Japanese couldn't get the 'Th' in my name right, so I was always 'Sorny' to them," Thorn recalled with his gravelly laugh.

After one of the greatest careers in Australian sports across two codes and reaching the pinnacle in both, everyone wishes Thorn well in his new career as coach of the Reds.

And thanks for the memories, Sorny.



TACKLE ONE

WITH TREVOR GILLMEISTER



Pictures: Courtesy News Queensland



FOOTY ALWAYS DELIVERS BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

RUGBY league is a bit like life. You have to make sure you keep your eye out for opportunity, and be ready to take it when it comes.

Sometimes opportunities come in the places you least expect them, and they can be hard to spot because you only realise they are opportunities with the benefit of hindsight.

I often tell people that the best thing that ever happened to me was getting sacked by the Broncos. But at the time, it was one of the hardest things I've had to cop.

We were a good side at the Broncos, we had won the competition in 1992 and 1993, and I felt like I was playing the part I was asked. Everything was going along well, and I was enjoying playing alongside my mates.

To then be told by the club that I was no longer wanted, it was tough to take. It hurt, and it was hard to see at the time

how it could possibly be a positive.

But here's the thing: If I hadn't been sacked from the Broncos, I would never have captained Queensland in 1995.

If I had seen out my playing career with Brisbane, I would have been just like the rest of the Broncos players and been ineligible to be selected for that series.

Well, every Broncos player except "Jed" Allen. But he's always been a bit different.

So what I thought was the worst moment of my playing career turned out to be something that needed to happen for me to experience the greatest moment of my career.

I was reminded of that life lesson a few times this year watching the footy with the Queensland team in Origin and with the Cowboys in the NRL.

Both of those teams went through some massive adversity this year, and not only came through it, but came out stronger on the other side.



We all knew Queensland was in big trouble after the first game of this year's series.

Already missing Johnathan Thurston, Matt Scott and Greg Inglis, the Maroons were thrashed at Suncorp Stadium and it was hard to find too many positives at the time.

There was unbelievable pressure on the team, and unfortunately, a number of changes had to be made.

We all know what happened next. The point is, because of going through that adversity, Queensland will go into next year's series stronger than ever.

Scotty and GI will be back, and so will Dylan Napa, Jarrod Wallace, Anthony Milford, Cameron Munster, Valentine Holmes, Tim Glasby, Coen Hess and Ben Hunt.

And next year, they all come with Origin experience, and knowing what is required to win in the Maroon jersey.

The Cowboys went through a similar process this year.

So often we have heard the phrase "no Thurston, no Cowboys".

Well, North Queensland coach Paul Green got the double-whammy this year with his co-captains Scott and Thurston



“In the tough times, all we have to do is keep fighting, keep moving forward, and wait for our chance to come.”



missing for most of the year with injury.

As far as the critics were concerned, the Cowboys were done. Their odds of winning the premiership blew out to 150-1 at one stage. No one gave them a hope.

So the Cowboys just worked harder. They believed in themselves and ignored everyone else.

Most importantly, Michael Morgan challenged himself to step up and lead the way for his team.

Now we all know Morgs is a good player. He's won a comp with the Cowboys, and played Origin and Test football.

But it was only when he was forced to get out of Thurston's shadow that we really got to see how good he could be.

Playing out of position at halfback instead of five-eighth, Morgan came into his own and evolved as a player and a person. He was suddenly a senior player, and he acted like one.

I saw it first-hand in camp with the Kangaroos before the first game against England. Captain Cameron Smith was

addressing the players in a meeting, and when he was done, Morgs took over and had a fair bit to say as well.

It was impressive to watch. He has thrived under the extra responsibility.

And we saw it on the field as well during the finals. Morgan played like it was his team, not like he was holding the fort until JT got back.

So, from the hard times, the Cowboys now go into 2018 with a team good enough to make the grand final, with the addition of Scott, Thurston, Jordan McLean and the bloke rated the best halfback in the NRL in 2017 - Morgan - on top.

Queenslanders always produce their best when their backs are to the wall. We know this.

But it doesn't hurt to occasionally see it in action like we did with the Maroons and Cowboys this year.

It's a reminder to all of us that, in the tough times, all we have to do is keep fighting, keep moving forward, and wait for our chance to come.

FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

1. ARTHUR BEETSON
2. COLIN SCOTT
3. KERRY BOUSTEAD
4. MAL MENINGA
5. CHRIS CLOSE
6. BRAD BACKER
7. ALLAN SMITH
8. GREG OLIPHANT
9. WALLY LEWIS
10. ROD REDDY
11. ROHAN HANCOCK
12. JOHN LANG
13. ROD MORRIS
14. NORM CARR
15. BRUCE ASTILL
16. MITCH BRENNAN
17. ROSS HENRICK
18. CHRIS PHELAN
19. PAUL MCCABE
20. PAUL KHAN
21. GREG CONESCU
22. MARK MURRAY
23. JOHN RIBOT
24. PAUL VAUTIN
25. BRUCE WALKER
26. JOHN DOWLING
27. BOB KELLAWAY
28. GENE MILES
29. GRAHAM QUINN
30. GREG HOLBEN
31. TONY CURRIE
32. STEVE STACEY
33. DAVE BROWN
34. BRYAN NIEBLING
35. DARRYL BROHMAN
36. BRAD TESSMANN
37. BRETT FRENCH
38. WALLY FULLERTON SMITH
39. TERRY BUTLER
40. GAVIN JONES
41. GREG DOWLING
42. BOB LINDNER
43. DALE SHEARER
44. PETER JACKSON
45. IAN FRENCH
46. CAVILL HEUGH
47. GARY BELCHER
48. LES KISS
49. GRANT RIX
50. ALLAN LANGER
51. TREVOR GILLMEISTER
52. MARTIN BELLA
53. GARY SMITH
54. ALAN MCINDOE
55. JOE KILROY
56. SAM BACKO
57. SCOTT TRONC
58. MICHAEL HANCOCK
59. DAN STAINS
60. KERROD WALTERS
61. MICHAEL HAGAN
62. GARY COYNE
63. KEVIN WALTERS
64. MARK COYNE
65. ANDREW GEE
66. WILLIE CARNE
67. STEVE JACKSON
68. PAUL HAUFF
69. MIKE MCLEAN
70. GARY LARSON
71. STEVE RENOUF
72. GAVIN ALLEN
73. STEVE WALTERS
74. ADRIAN BRUNKER
75. BILLY MOORE
76. DARREN SMITH
77. MARK HOHN
78. JULIAN O'NEILL
79. BRETT DALLAS
80. DARREN FRITZ
81. ADRIAN VOWLES
82. GORDEN TALLIS
83. ROBBIE O'DAVIS
84. DANNY MOORE
85. MATT SING
86. ADRIAN LAM
87. TONY HEARN
88. WAYNE BARTRIM
89. BEN IKIN
90. TERRY COOK
91. CRAIG TEEVAN
92. JASON SMITH
93. WENDELL SAILOR
94. BRAD THORN
95. ALAN CANN
96. CRAIG GREENHILL
97. OWEN CUNNINGHAM
98. CRAIG SMITH
99. JAMIE GODDARD
100. NEIL TIERNEY
101. JEREMY SCHLOSS
102. STUART KELLY
103. CLINTON O'BRIEN
104. DARREN LOCKYER
105. SHANE WEBCKE
106. JASON HETHERINGTON
107. PETER RYAN
108. STEVEN PRICE
109. MARTIN LANG
110. TONIE CARROLL
111. MAT ROGERS
112. CHRIS MCKENNA
113. PAUL GREEN
114. RUSSELL BAWDEN
115. PAUL BOWMAN
116. LOTE TUQIRI
117. DANIEL WAGON
118. JOHN DOYLE
119. JOHN BUTTIGIEG
120. PETERO CIVONICEVA
121. KEVIN CAMPION
122. CHRIS WALKER
123. CHRIS BEATTIE
124. CARL WEBB
125. BRADLEY MEYERS
126. NATHAN FIEN
127. DANE CARLAW
128. CLINTON SCHIFCOFSKE
129. SHAUN BERRIGAN
130. JUSTIN HODGES
131. PJ MARSH
132. TRAVIS NORTON
133. CHRIS FLANNERY
134. BRENT TATE
135. SHANNON HEGARTY
136. MICHAEL CROCKER
137. SCOTT SATTLER
138. MATT BOWEN
139. JOSH HANNAY
140. CAMERON SMITH
141. RHYS WESSER
142. BILLY SLATER
143. SCOTT PRINCE
144. BEN ROSS
145. WILLIE TONGA
146. COREY PARKER
147. TY WILLIAMS
148. JOHNATHAN THURSTON
149. CASEY MCGUIRE
150. DANNY NUTLEY
151. ASHLEY HARRISON
152. GREG INGLIS
153. STEVEN BELL
154. DAVID STAGG
155. MATTHEW SCOTT
156. DALLAS JOHNSON
157. SAM THAIDAY
158. NATE MYLES
159. KARMICHAEL HUNT
160. ADAM MOGG
161. JACOB LILLYMAN
162. NEVILLE COSTIGAN
163. ANTONIO KAUFUSI
164. ISRAEL FOLAU
165. BEN HANNANT
166. DARIUS BOYD
167. DAVE SHILLINGTON
168. COOPER CRONK
169. DAVE TAYLOR
170. MATT BALLIN
171. DANE NIELSEN
172. JHARAL YOW YEH
173. MATT GILLETT
174. BEN TE'O
175. CHRIS MCQUEEN
176. DALY CHERRY-EVANS
177. JOSH PAPALII
178. AIDAN GUERRA
179. WILL CHAMBERS
180. JOSH MCGUIRE
181. MICHAEL MORGAN
182. DANE GAGAI
183. COREY OATES
184. JUSTIN O'NEILL
185. GAVIN COOPER
186. ANTHONY MILFORD
187. DYLAN NAPA
188. VALENTINE HOLMES
189. JARROD WALLACE
190. COEN HESS
191. TIM GLASBY
192. CAMERON MUNSTER
193. BEN HUNT

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