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Official Magazine of Queensland's Former Origin Greats

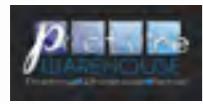
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FOGS
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FORMER ORIGIN GREATS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Chairman



Qualities like resilience, courage, persistence, teamwork, adaptability and dealing with adversity have been the cornerstone of many Queensland successes on the rugby league field.

But in 2020, those qualities became an essential part of our daily lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge and tragic disruption on a global scale, forcing us to change the way that we worked, played, interacted with those around us, and lived our lives.

It has been incredibly tough. But by adapting to the circumstances in front of us, we were able to ensure that life went on.

On the footy side of things, these changes were obvious – the suspension, restarting and then delayed end to the season; an Origin series played in November; matches played in empty stadiums; and players forced to leave their families and move into protected 'bubbles' to keep the competition going.

But sacrifices like these became the new normal as society adapted to life in a pandemic. Many people lost their jobs as businesses and industries fought for their survival.

Loved ones were separated by border closures and lockdowns, banned from visiting the sick in hospital and, even more tragically, prevented from farewelling those that were lost because of restrictions on crowds at funerals and other gatherings.

Thankfully in Queensland, the wonderful leadership of our government and the responsible community spirit of all Queenslanders allowed us to get back to almost normal earlier than most.

We still had to make sacrifices, and change the way we normally do things, but we were able to get on with life.

Our annual FOGS State of Origin Luncheon had to be cancelled.

But thanks to the dedication and adaptability of our staff, our other programs like the ARTIE Academy were able to continue making a difference to the lives of young Indigenous Queenslanders by

pivoting from face-to-face interaction to online program delivery for home-schooling students.

Mentoring and support was delivered by video conference call, and our staff even helped deliver books and resources to Indigenous students without access to a computer or the internet to ensure they did not fall behind in their study.

The changes to the way we operate, caused by the negative of COVID, allowed the ARTIE Academy to continue delivering positive changes to the academic careers and futures of these Indigenous students.

Change and crisis are not bad things if they are used as a driver of opportunity and a catalyst for new thinking.

The circumstances of this year's Origin campaign may have been challenging, but that in turn delivered one of our finest series wins, and the opportunity for 14 new Maroons to join our family as FOGS.

COVID protocols also meant that this year's Women's State of Origin match was played in Queensland for the first time, at Sunshine Coast Stadium.

Our girls lifted on their home turf and took their first win over the Blues in the Origin era.

At our three NRL clubs, some dark days have led to new directions, with the Broncos, Titans and Cowboys now all set on the path for brighter futures.

So while change can be a good thing, we can still take time to appreciate the familiar things as well – like spending time with family and friends, celebrating living in the 'lucky country', and never forgetting how great it is to be a Queenslander.

Gene Miles
Executive Chairman

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PIONEERS

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BIGGEST SURPRISE *We All Should Have Seen Coming*

What is it that they say about ‘2020 hindsight’?

In retrospect, Queensland’s stunning State of Origin series win was one we should have all seen coming.

Queenslanders always produce their best in the face of adversity.

History has shown us that some of our finest hours have arrived with our backs against the wall, when all hope seems lost.

Like in 1980, when Queensland needed a miracle in the very first Origin game to stop interstate football from disappearing completely beneath a Blue tide of NSW dominance.

Along came a 35-year-old reserve grader from Parramatta named Arthur Beetson, and a collection of fellow Queenslanders who thought their chance to wear the Maroon had passed them by.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Beetson was brilliant, using 80 minutes of football to create a template for the way interstate football would be played forever more.

Queensland got their miracle, and Origin was born.

It happened again in Game 2 of the 1989 series when the Maroons, with the series at their mercy, were struck with an injury curse not seen before or since.

Vautin, Lindner, Langer, and Hancock all went down

injured, and Queensland finished the game with 12 men.

History showed the Maroons, inspired by the great Wally Lewis, somehow prevailed.

In 1994, it was Mark Coyne’s try.

In 1995, it was Paul Vautin’s ‘Nevilles’ – the team of scrappers and spare parts put together from the players left available during the Super League war – who volunteered to be cannon-fodder for a Blues team dripping with Test stars.

The problem was, no one told them that was the script.

Led by Trevor Gillmeister, who climbed out of his hospital bed to play in Game 3, the Maroons delivered one of the great sporting fairytales with a 3-0 series whitewash.



In 1998, it was Kevin Walters’ kick, Ben Ikin’s regather and Tonie Carroll’s try.

In 2001, it was Wayne Bennett and another cast of misfits brought together to repair the damage of Queensland’s worst-ever series defeat the year before.

In need of that sprinkling of Maroon magic to get the job done in Game 3, Bennett made a telephone call to Allan Langer, playing 16,000km away in England.

“Coach,” Alfie answered down the phone, “what took you so long?”

More history.

In 2006, with Queensland being crushed beneath a blue avalanche, and facing a third-straight series defeat for the first time ever, the Maroons needed another miracle.

After 2005, it was not just the losses.

It was the feeling the Maroons had lost their way, the fabled Queensland spirit had deserted them and there seemed no end to the misery in sight against a dominant and ruthless NSW team.

Dick “Tosser” Turner turned to Mal Meninga, and said “You can do it”.

Out of a few old workhorses and a collection of kids no one knew too much about, Meninga somehow created, nurtured and crafted the greatest Origin dynasty of them all – winning nine out of the next ten series.

History rewritten again.

So when 2020 did its best to dig a dagger into Maroon hearts, we should have had some inkling of what was to come.

A year ruined by COVID-19. Origin’s birthday celebrations extinguished with the series shifted to November.

An injury crisis, all three Queensland clubs missing the finals and the Broncos winning the wooden spoon.

Kevin Walters standing down as coach on the eve of the series, replaced by the old staggers in Bennett and Meninga.



At their disposal, a squad that would see 14 players make their Origin debut – some playing out of position, many criticised for being out of their prime or out of their depth.

NSW again looking for that elusive third-successive victory. A Sydney media baying for blood, and hurling insults about this being the worst Queensland team ever chosen.

Yet despite all of these difficulties and setbacks, there was still the sense of elation and surprise when the Queenslanders of 2020 got the job done, and brought the shield back home.

With 2020 hindsight, we can see now that this year’s Origin series was tailor-made for the Maroons.

Just when the water reaches boiling point, and the pressure becomes unbearable, is when Queenslanders feel right at home.

On the 40th anniversary of Beetson’s night of magic, and the 25th anniversary of Vautin and Gillmeister’s miracle, we should have known that for the Maroons of 2020, another slice of history was there for the taking.

“On behalf of the worst-ever Queensland team,” Maroons skipper Daly Cherry-Evans said after the match, “thank you very much.”

The Maroons of 2020 are not the first team to wear the title of “worst ever”.

The good news for Queenslanders is, they also won’t be the last.

Because every time that a Queensland team is written off, our marvellous Maroons use it as a chance to write another chapter for the history books.



ROOKIES Show Their Class

CAMERON Munster may have won the Wally Lewis Medal as the 2020 Origin player of the series, but it was a band of uncapped Maroons that represented the heartbeat of Queensland's epic fightback to reclaim the shield from NSW.

When a raft of injuries to key incumbents such as Kalyn Ponga, David Fifita and Michael Morgan wiped them out of the historic November Origin series, the depleted Maroons were emphatically written off by bookmakers.

Eyeing a third consecutive series win, the Blues were raging favourites to wipe the floor with Queensland in a 3-0 whitewash.

But Queensland coach Wayne Bennett's faith in an army of first-time Maroons turned the 2020 series on its head as a staggering 14 debutants fired the Maroons to a famous 2-1 boilover of the Blues and became the latest members of the FOGS family.

In the series opener, Bennett bled no less than eight new caps, with AJ Brimson, Xavier Coates, Phillip Sami, Jake Friend, Tino Fa'asauamaleau, Lindsay Collins, Jaydn Su'A and Kurt Capewell all superb in Queensland's 18-14 upset at Adelaide Oval.

For Game Two, Bennett added more fresh blood, handing debuts to Dunamis Lui and Moeaki Fotuaika, who tried their hearts out in NSW's commanding 34-10 victory at ANZ Stadium.

And for the decider, the production line hit overdrive, with Corey Allan, cousins Edrick and Brenko Lee and hooking sensation Harry Grant donning Maroon for the first time as Bennett's Babes revelled

in the Suncorp cauldron to pull off a remarkable 20-14 victory.

The maligned motley crew of Maroons evoked images of Paul Vautin's 'Nevilles' from the 1995 series, but from the moment he began piecing together his squad, Bennett knew his rookies wouldn't crack under pressure.

"There were no egos in this group," Bennett said.

"At the end of the day, I pick players on what they do on the footy field, but there are other considerations.

"If there are two guys pretty equal, I look at what club he comes from. A club like the Melbourne Storm, for example, has great systems and their players come well prepared for Origin."

"Then, if there isn't much in it ability-wise, I will look into the personalities.

"I didn't want egos. Egos were all put on the shelf in this camp."

"I didn't know what other teams have been like, but this group of men were a pleasure to deal with."

At some point of the series, almost every one of Queensland's 14 debutants had a ball. They didn't just survive, they thrived in the code's toughest arena.

In Game One, Capewell had the game of his life, setting-up the sensational try for Brimson which kickstarted Queensland's fightback from 10-0 down.

Collins ran like a man possessed throughout the series, Su'A hurt blokes in defence on the edges, Coates scored a superb diving try in Game Two and Fa'asauamaleau provided the hard edge, punching on with Payne Haas at ANZ Stadium.

In the decider, the Lee cousins were flawless, Allan set-up the opening try for Valentine Holmes and Grant tore the Blues apart around the rucks, ultimately scoring the 63rd-minute try which proved the match-winner.

Then there was Jake Friend – the Roosters warrior who waited 12 years to make his Origin debut.

In Game One, he tackled like a demon, amassing 50 tackles. Fittingly, when the fulltime siren sounded in the decider at Suncorp, Friend was in possession of the ball.

"I admired a number of them enormously, but none more so than Jake," Bennett said.

"He is my type of player. He was our trench-warfare man. Jake was the ultimate pro, and his influence rubbed off on the rest of the younger blokes."

"On the park, I just knew he wouldn't let me down and I was so proud of the way the younger guys went with him."

Grant lauded the mateship and hunger of Queensland's rookies.

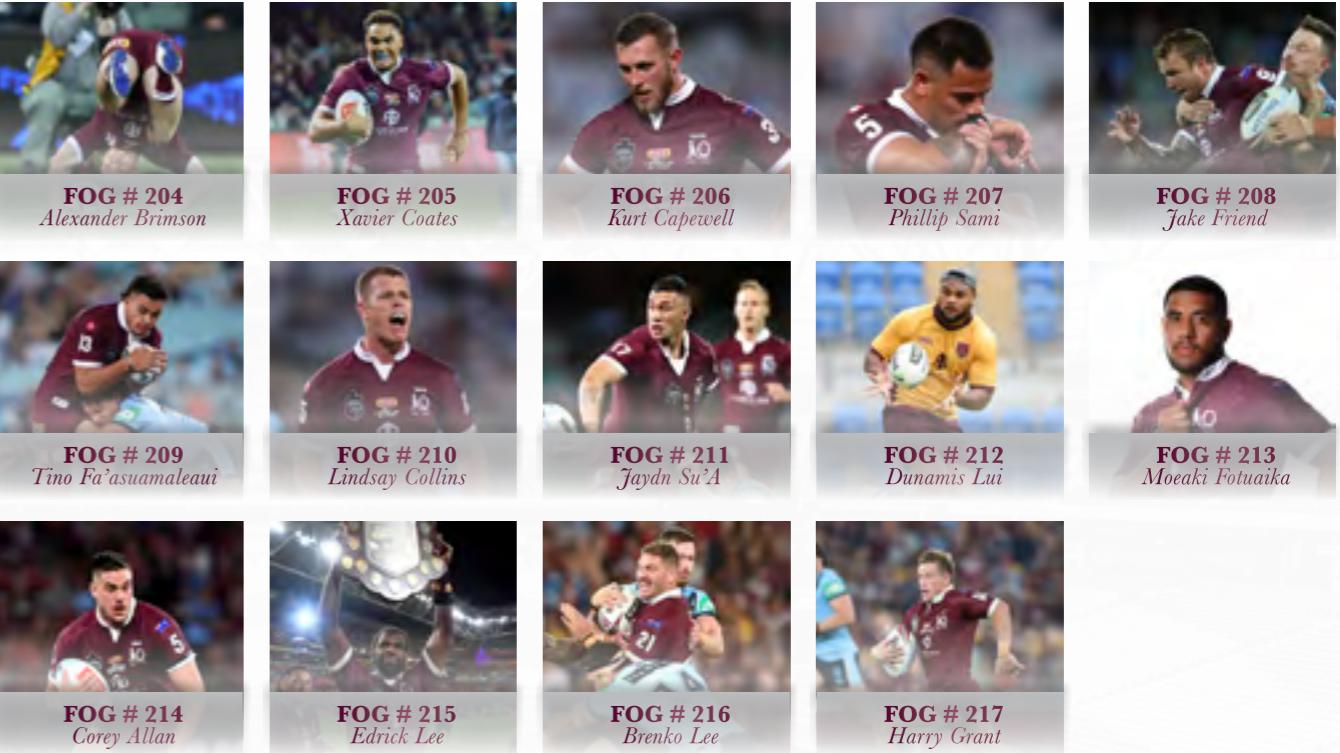
"That's the Queensland way," he said. "A lot of people gave us no chance at the start of the series, even after Game One they gave us no chance. But we had a close group and we came together nicely after the last few weeks."

"It was a massive honour just to play for Queensland."

"As a young kid, I thought how it meant to me to go to school on a Thursday when Queensland won, it was always a pretty good feeling."

"That was in the back of my mind for this series."

"We didn't want to let the Queensland people down."



WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Our newest FOGS for 2020

Game 1, Adelaide Oval	FOG # 209	Tino Fa'asauamaleau	Game 3, Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane
FOG # 204 Alexander Brimson	FOG # 210	Lindsay Collins	FOG # 214 Corey Allan
FOG # 205 Xavier Coates	FOG # 211	Jaydn Su'A	FOG # 215 Edrick Lee
FOG # 206 Kurt Capewell	Game 2, ANZ Stadium, Sydney	Dunamis Lui	FOG # 216 Brenko Lee
FOG # 207 Phillip Sami	FOG # 212	Moeaki Fotuaika	FOG # 217 Harry Grant
FOG # 208 Jake Friend	FOG # 213		



JUST DIVINE

How Queensland's Holy Trinity Delivered A Maroons Christmas Miracle

THEY are the three wise men who delivered what every Queenslander wants for Christmas – a stunning series win over the Blues that will go down as one of the greatest heists in the 40-year history of State of Origin.

While the pandemic made life so difficult in so many ways in 2020, it did also produce some unexpected joys, and it was the NRL's COVID crisis that helped bring together Wayne Bennett, Mal Meninga and Neil Henry to spearhead Queensland's Origin revival.

When incumbent Maroons mentor Kevin Walters was forced to step aside after clinching the Broncos job, the Queensland Rugby League had to move quickly to sort out coaching options for the historic COVID-affected November Origin series.

With little time to act, they turned to a coach who had been there, done that in the Origin arena to instil belief in the injury-ravaged Maroons, whose 27-man squad contained a staggering 17 rookies.

Enter Bennett, who gladly accepted a fourth stint at the helm of the Maroons after his first baptism way back in 1986 – becoming the first man to coach at Origin level in each of the concept's four decades.

And Bennett wasted no time constructing his Holy Trinity, first appointing Henry as his assistant before the final piece of the coaching puzzle – resurrecting the Origin career of former Maroons super coach Meninga, who led Queensland to nine titles in a golden 10-year reign.



Former Origin Greats



"Mal was the first person I hugged after full-time (after Queensland's 20-14 win in the Origin decider at Suncorp)," Bennett said.

The former Raiders, Cowboys and Titans coach did the one-percent stuff, analysing footage of the Blues, identifying weaknesses and helping formulate the game plans that underpinned Queensland's series upset.

"Neil was fantastic," Bennett said.

"I really valued what he brought to our coaching staff.

"He is a good person and has an excellent football brain, and the things myself and Mal couldn't do, Neil could do."

"Together, we were a pretty formidable package. There wasn't a ripple with us."

Bennett admits he never expected to re-unite with Meninga, who, as Australia coach, had no national team duties due to the COVID saga which put international football on ice this year.

"Mal rang me up," he said.

"He called and said he would love to be a part of it (Queensland Origin camp), he said he didn't care what role he had but he just wanted to help Queensland."

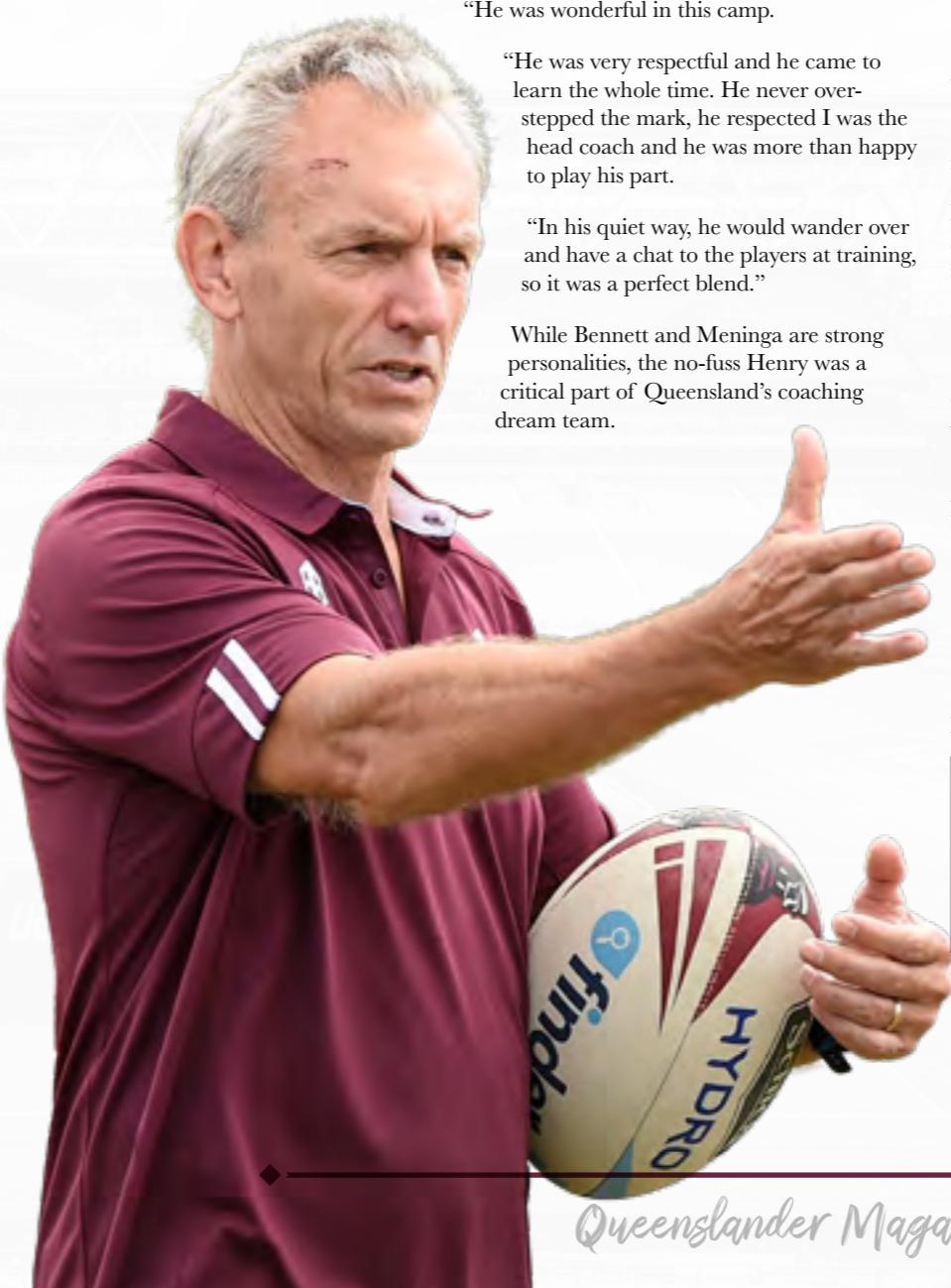
"I said I would think about it over the weekend and I rang him on a Monday morning and said I liked the idea. If there's coaching to be done, we can all help out."

"Mal not only has a great aura but he has knowledge, too. He had been a great player for Queensland, he did a magnificent job coaching them for 10 years and he knew how to bring success in the Origin arena."

Maroons hooker Jake Friend lauded Bennett's influence.

"He is a very different to what I have watched on TV," he said. "He is a great motivator, he knows footy. He is a people person who really cares about his players."

"And because of his record, as a player you have trust in his methods ... none of us wanted to let Wayne and our coaching team down."



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MAROONS PRIDE

Still Runs Deep in Kevvie

FROM the moment he attended the inaugural State of Origin game in 1980 as a 13-year-old, Kevin Walters knew there was something special about being a Queenslander.

But the kid from humble, working-class roots in Ipswich never imagined he would one day play such an important role bringing joy to millions of Queenslanders as coach of their mighty Maroons Origin team.

Walters played 20 games for Queensland during a stellar 10-year Origin career, but it was his stint as coach where he treasured some of his finest moments in Camp Maroon.

During his four-season tenure between 2016-19, 'Kevvie' faced some major challenges, chiefly the task of bringing through the next generation of Origin talent following Mal Meninga's golden dynasty which netted nine series wins in 10 years.

Walters was lucky enough to farewell Maroons icons Johnathan Thurston, Cameron Smith and Billy Slater in their twilight, but he also relished handing a staggering 21 debuts to a raft of rookies during his 12 matches in charge.

Walters not only clinched back-to-back Origin crowns in 2016-17, he also blooded the likes of Cameron Munster, Ben Hunt, Valentine Holmes, Felise Kaufusi, Jai Arrow, Kalyn Ponga and David Fifita.

While Walters departure to take over as Broncos head coach forced him to sever ties with the Maroons in 2020, he will always cherish his time working with the Maroons and the Former Origin Greats who supported him.

"Coaching Queensland made me appreciate what the game means to the people of our state."



Former Origin Greats

"Every year we conducted fan days in regional areas, and I would see people travel hundreds or thousands of kilometres just to get a photo with Thurston or Munster or shake the hand of Cameron Smith."

"That sums up the spirit of why the players go the extra mile for Queensland. I have never forgotten the support of the Maroons fans and the FOOGS. It's such a rewarding job to think you can bring a smile to the people of Queensland."

Walters was contracted to coach the Maroons until the end of 2021 before his beloved Broncos came knocking. He admits walking away from the Maroons just a month before this year's series was gut-wrenching.

"It's great to be selected as Broncos coach, but to let go of my role as head coach of the Maroons was tough. There were some tears telling the guys," he said.

"As a boy I always wanted to play rugby league for Queensland. I was at the first Origin game as a 13-year-old with my parents, and to see Arthur Beetson back in Maroon, it was like we were united as a state, and that moment stayed with me."

"So when I got the call-up to coach the side in 2016, I felt so privileged about upholding the Maroons' legacy."

"When I first came into the job, we had champions like Slater, Smith, Cronk, Thurston, (Greg) Inglis and (Sam) Thaiday."

"Now in the side we have a great future. Guys like Ponga, Munster, David Fifita and Josh Papalii. Young players like AJ Brimson and Harry Grant will have long futures, so it breaks my heart to have to walk away from the Maroons."

Walters says he will never forget the 2017 series.

After being flogged 28-4 in Game 1 at Suncorp, the Maroons hit back in Sydney, with Thurston landing a booming sideline conversion to steal an 18-16 victory before Queensland saluted in the decider with a 22-6 thumping.

"There's been so many great moments as Queensland coach, but my favourite was Johnathan Thurston's kick from the sideline in 2017 in Game 2 in Sydney," he said.

"We lost game one and JT played with a busted shoulder and he had to kick that goal to level the series."

"I thought if there was anyone in the world I wanted to kick this goal, it's JT. And, true to his Queensland spirit, he slotted the ball between the posts."

"Then we came out for the decider and smashed them, which was truly special."

"But I also took great joy out of ringing a kid like Munster or Ponga and telling them they are making their Origin debut for Queensland."

"It makes you feel nice inside, and takes you back to your days as a Queensland player."

"I will always treasure my time in the Queensland colours."



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CAM LEADS ALL-STAR CAST Of Retiring Fogs, or Does He?

CAMERON Smith has smashed more records than plates at a Greek wedding.

But his status as State of Origin's ultimate ironman is perhaps his most compelling feat in rugby league.

After 40 years of State of Origin football, Smith remains the only man in interstate history to have played 40 or more matches, having amassed a record 42 during his decorated 14-year reign as Queensland's No.9 kingpin.

Even at age 37, Smith was still soldiering on in the NRL trenches, captaining Melbourne to this year's premiership in the latest piece of evidence in a compelling argument that the Storm skipper may just be the greatest player we have seen in the code's 112-year history.

If he's not the greatest Maroon, he's in the grand final.

When Smith announced his representative retirement after the 2017 Origin series, the void left behind in Camp Maroon was as large as the Grand Canyon.

Not surprisingly, it took Queensland three years to pick up the pieces and win an Origin series without him.

"There was always something special about putting on the Queensland jumper," says Smith, also the most-capped player in NRL history with 430 club games for the Storm.

"As a kid from Logan, whenever I ran out for the Maroons, I felt a responsibility to perform for the Queensland fans."

"That always pushed me a little bit harder."

It is fitting that Smith's remarkable Origin career was bookended by two trademark performances.

There was his Origin debut in 2003, when, as a 20-year-old, Smith was thrust into the code's toughest arena by then Queensland coach



Wayne Bennett for the final game of the series.

The series was already gone. The Maroons had been beaten 2-0. Bennett turned to Smith, who had played just 18 first-grade games.

Facing the shame of a whitewash, the Maroons hit back, Smith scoring a try on debut in a 36-6 rout of the Blues, setting in motion the greatest Origin career of all-time.

Then there was the glorious ending.

Entering his final game for the Maroons in 2017, Smith was under fire.

His first two games of the series were below par. There were queries as to whether age had wearied the 34-year-old.

But in the decider, Smith – fuelled by the criticism – carved up the Blues, engineering a 22-6 victory on the back of his dummy-half guile and fierce determination to succeed.

Smith's good mate Johnathan Thurston says when it comes to Origin players, the Storm champion is in a league of his own.

"I was lucky enough to play with Darren Lockyer and he was four or five sets ahead of everyone else in knowing what the team needed," Thurston said.

"In that regard, Smithy is six, seven and eight sets ahead of anyone on the field.

"He can dominate in the No.9 jersey, and I haven't seen anyone in my time do some of the stuff that he does.

"Smithy has such a good feel of how games are going that he can turn the momentum in the blink of an eye.

"He is a real leader of men and knows how to get the best out of the players around him."

That was evident in this year's NRL grand final.

While Penrith came storming home, it was Smith's composure and experience that helped the Storm hold their nerve to clinch a 26-20 triumph.

It was Smith's third legitimate premiership, and arguably the most satisfying given the challenges of the COVID pandemic which forced Melbourne to spend five months in lockdown on the Sunshine Coast.



Even as this magazine goes to the printers, Smith has still not made up his mind about his playing future – whether it be a well-deserved retirement, one more year with the Storm, or a final cameo in Queensland with the Titans or Broncos.

"I've spoken with guys like Paul Gallen, Billy (Slater) and JT (Thurston) and the one message they gave me was that they all knew it was time to go. They knew they couldn't go on," he said.

"I still love playing and I've really enjoyed helping the younger guys in the latter stages of my career."

While Smith ponders what 2021 will look like for him, a number of his former Maroons comrades have elected to call it a day.

The 2020 NRL season was the last for FOG #166 Darius Boyd, FOG #178 Aidan Guerra, FOG #185 Gavin Cooper, FOG #191 Tim Glasby and FOG #203 Ethan Lowe.

FOG #175 Chris McQueen has also called time on his NRL career, but will play on in England with Huddersfield.

To all of our retiring Maroons, we thank you for your service to the Maroon jersey. But while you may now be an ex-player, you will remain a FOG for life.

FAREWELL to these FOGS

FOG #140	Cameron Smith*	42 Origins	2003-2017
FOG #166	Darius Boyd	28 Origins	2008-2017
FOG #175	Chris McQueen**	6 Origins	2013-2014
FOG #178	Aidan Guerra	10 Origins	2014-2017
FOG #185	Gavin Cooper	6 Origins	2016-2018
FOG #191	Tim Glasby	5 Origins	2017-2019
FOG #203	Ethan Lowe	1 Origin	2019

*May play on in 2021

**Will play in UK in 2021



STEPH FINALLY GETS Her One For The Road

In the year where she well and truly stepped beyond her famous father's shadow to cement her place among Queensland's greatest rugby league players, Steph Hancock was grateful to have her dad and best mate Rohan beside her for her final game in Maroon.

In a career where she has achieved it all, the one thing she didn't have on her resume was an official 'Origin' win, and she finally achieved her goal in her 16th game for her state.

The 38-year-old forward scored a try and celebrated an inaugural 24-18 State of Origin win with the Maroons at Sunshine Coast Stadium after running out with tears in her eyes.

Before the game she was presented with a canvas organised by the FOGS that had a montage of pictures from her career and that of her father Rohan, who played 11 Origin games for the Maroons.

Rohan then joined her after the match for another presentation to cap a memorable evening.

It capped a great career and great year for Steph, but also another great year for women's rugby league in Queensland.

The Broncos 20-10 NRLW grand final win over the Roosters was the club's third successive premiership, and Broncos and Queensland skipper Ali Briggins won the Dally M Medal as the women's player of the year.

The Maroons then delivered the coup de grace – with a brilliant win over the Blues that ended a drought stretching back to 2014.



But the fact Queensland had come up empty-handed since the women's interstate games became a full Origin match in 2018 was like a thorn in her side.

"To win an official State of Origin, especially being my last game for Queensland, and scoring a meat pie, I couldn't be happier," Steph said. "That is unforgettable."

Steph absorbed herself in Maroons folklore from her early years, and idolised her legendary father who played second-row in Queensland's famous 20-10 win in 1980's inaugural Origin game.

"Dad is my best mate," she said. "I am just so proud that we are the first father/daughter to play Origin for Queensland and it is something no-one can take away from us."

Rohan has been a rock by his daughter's side and attends most of her games.

"I couldn't be prouder. Her career has been unbelievable. She has done everything in the game," Rohan said.

Rohan, who has lived in Killarney near Warwick his entire life, has a great story about how his daughter launched her rugby league career.

He used to train a group of Killarney boys aged eight to 10 once a week, and on the other evening they would go into Warwick and train with their team Easts.

Steph would attend training in Killarney. The boys, without Steph, got thrashed 60-4 by a Collegians side one week.

"The next time they played they were short, and the coach said 'can Steph play?' and I said I didn't think girls could play, but he said they could," Rohan recalled.



"Steph went in and played against this team that had two really fast fellas and she cut them down on the sideline with two of the best cover defending tackles you'd see."

"She scored four tries, kicked two out of two and our side wins 30-4."

"Steph had headgear and shoulder pads on and this selector comes over and says 'mark my words, that boy will be a rep player one day'."

"I told Steph to take her headgear off and out came the long hair and he just couldn't believe it. But he was right – she did become a rep player."

Steph, now in the police force, is just happy her Maroons career ended in style. The FOGS tribute is one she will never forget.

"I got really emotional before the game when they did up a canvas with dad and I all over it, so I had big croc tear eyes when I ran on," she said.

"Then when they presented it to dad afterwards at our function he was over the moon, and so was I."

"We are so grateful to FOGS for acknowledging us and very appreciative of everything they have done for us in the past."

QLD 24 (Tamika Upton 2, Tarryn Aiken, Stephanie Hancock tries; Lauren Brown 4 goals) d **NSW 18** (Kezie Apps, Tiana Penitani, Filomina Hanisi, Botille Vette-Welsh tries; Melanie Howard goal) at **Sunshine Coast Stadium**.





AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Key for ARTIE Educators

This was the year the motivators also became the messengers.

When the coronavirus pandemic forced Queensland into shutdown, ARTIE Academy education co-ordinators had to completely reshape how they operated.

The ARTIE Academy's ability to meet the school-based service delivery requirements in their funding agreement with the Department of Education could not be met because of social distancing restrictions, but their role with 4400 students enrolled in the program was never more vital.

How do you inspire kids to keep up with their education when schools are closed and students are expected to complete homeschooling?

This is where the ARTIE Academy team came to the fore.

"We were very fortunate we didn't lose any staff, we just had to change how we delivered the program," ARTIE Academy General Manager Steven Page said.

"We changed our whole model into everything online, we mentored from the office or home."

"We were like the middle person between the school and the students."

Coordinators worked with each of the 37 primary and secondary schools in their program, collaborating with staff to guarantee the continued learning engagement of students during shutdown.

Weekly Zoom meetings were held to identify students who required further mentoring or support, and co-ordinators were the go-between for teachers and parents.

In total 8430 emails, 11,252 text messages, 2096 phone calls and 1333 face-to-face sessions were made between workers and students to keep their education dreams and goals alive.

With some students not having access to internet or computers at home, staff went the extra mile by collecting books and resources from schools to home deliver almost 1000 items to students so they could keep up with their studies.

Overwhelmingly the feedback from the schools during the period was how grateful they were at the constant assistance from ARTIE co-ordinators and in particular the work they did reaching out directly to families.

They built relationships and connections that will be vital for the coming years.

"With primary school students you were actually talking to the parents and having conversations with them," Page said.

"When school went back, because we had built relationships and engaged the families, that really helped when they got back to school."



"(Throughout shutdown) our staff weren't there to tell the kids what to do, they were just there to help. Some kids just needed someone to talk to or a read a book to them."

"We just adapted as much as we could to keep the kids engaged."

And it worked.

When school resumed in May, Morayfield boasted a 100 per cent attendance record for their Year 11 and 12 ARTIE students. Elsewhere, schools reported up to a 20 per cent increase in some students' attendance records, while many achieved the learning goals set by co-ordinators during the shutdown.



In what for many was the hardest year of their education, the enjoyment of a fun day out with their friends was the perfect reward for their persistence through these difficult times.

"For the kids, it is one of the best days of the year," Page said.

"We're very fortunate they were able to go ahead. At one stage, we were going to cancel it. But thankfully we were able to reward the kids with the fun days."



The success of so many students meant that the 2020 fun days were more enjoyable and memorable.

In north Queensland, students had exclusive access to Sugarworld Adventure Park (Cairns) or Barra Fun Park (Townsville) for the day, while the Rockhampton Bowl and Leisure centre was also entirely booked out for an ARTIE fun day.

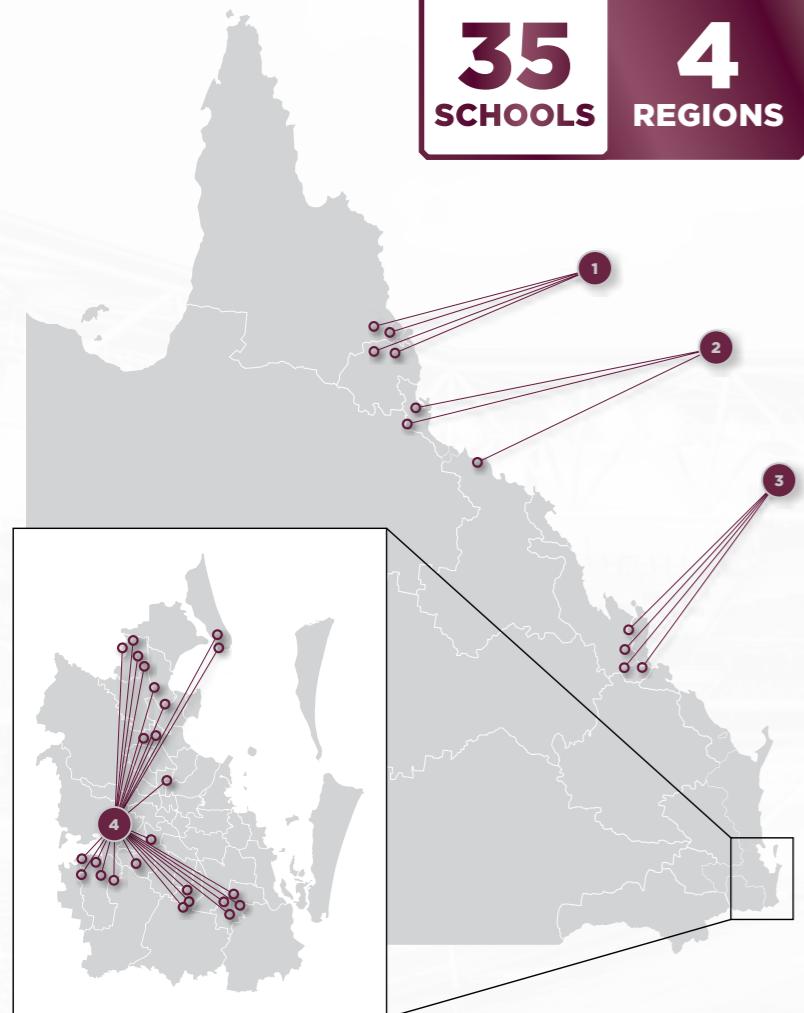
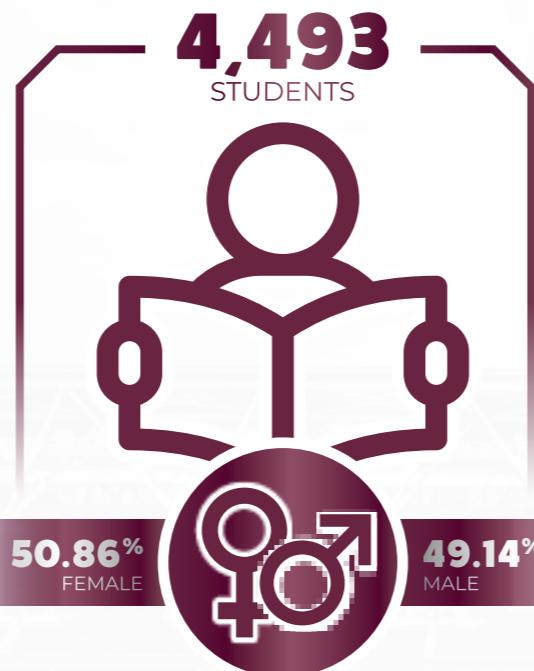
In southeast Queensland, more than 400 students flocked to Dreamworld's Whitewater World theme park for a day of celebration.

BY THE NUMBERS

The ARTIE Academy In 2020



35
SCHOOLS **4**
REGIONS



Former Origin Greats

Former Origin Greats



ARTIE ACADEMY MAKES STUDY A Social Affair In 2020

FaceTime replaced face-to-face time this year as the new frontier of online tutoring became an ARTIE Academy success story in 2020.

Whether it was on Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, through phone calls, text messages or video conferencing, ARTIE Academy co-ordinators and tutors found a way to make things work during the pandemic and school shutdown to keep the program's Indigenous student members engaged.

The ARTIE Academy adapted to the challenges of 2020 by utilising the latest technology and communication trends to reach out to students, build relationships with families and assist teachers to co-ordinate home learning.

The ARTIE Academy Tutoring program, which focuses on junior Indigenous students identified as being engaged in their learning but who require additional support, is run by pre-service teachers and TAFE students who are focussed on community service and health work.

In the past, more than 300 volunteers had provided an additional 10,000 hours of tutoring support.

But in 2020, that increased with a further 16 tutors, all studying a Bachelor of Education, who worked with over 60 additional students each week.

That amounted to more than 5000 extra minutes of one-on-one online tutoring.

ARTIE Academy General Manager Steven Page said tutoring had been one of their biggest requests from parents when the shutdown began, and he was incredibly proud of how the program and the volunteers made it work without being able to meet face-to-face.

"Our tutoring program is extremely valuable to students by assisting them with their academic outcomes," Steven said.

"Due to COVID, unfortunately our tutors were restricted from entering schools at the start. With the overwhelming requests from our student survey for tutoring support, we quickly made this happen via online platforms."

"The ARTIE Academy coordinators would sort all parental permissions, identify the area of support focus required, and then link the students up with one of our tutors."

"With not having face-to-face support from teachers on a daily basis, we identified that some of our students needed additional academic support, even to simply break down the information that was being set by the school or teachers."

"The tutors provided this with the student's specific area of support needed."



TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS DEPARTMENT Has ARTIE Students On The Right Track

ARTIE Academy general manager Steven Page says a funding grant from the Queensland Government's Transport and Main Roads department will help set students up for a successful life after school.

While the ARTIE Academy is heavily focused on academic achievement during school, a \$255,000 partnership with the Palaszczuk Government and Former Origin Greats' ARTIE Academy will help



Indigenous teenagers get their driver's licence and learn about road safety.

Page says getting kids to graduate high school with a licence enables them to either attend university or enter the workforce with greater success and freedom to chase their dreams.

"TMR came on board around that road safety. You don't just want students on the road, you want them to be safe on the road," he said.

"The biggest element to us is we're not in the employment stage of life after school, but we want to make sure they've got all the tools needed for when they do finish school.

"The No.1 thing an employer looks for is a licence. Having a licence before they leave school helps them get a job."

The program is currently offered in six high schools – Bribie Island State High School (SHS), Beenleigh SHS, Marsden SHS, Morayfield SHS, Ayr SHS and Mareeba SHS – with 120 students enrolled in 2020 and up to 100 more to be added in 2021.

To be eligible to participate, students need to maintain a 90 per cent school attendance record, with no suspensions and a satisfactory effort level in both English and mathematics.

In return, they receive \$1500 worth of incentives towards gaining their licence including road safety programs, 10 free driving lessons and car hire for their provisional licence test.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said that the Government was proud to partner with the ARTIE Academy on such an important safety and Indigenous community issue.

"This funding will enable the respected ARTIE Academy to conduct a program designed to help more Indigenous students gain their provisional driver's licence," he said.

"I am confident this funding boost will help to motivate students to improve their education outcomes, as well as introducing employment opportunities enabled by having a driver's licence.

"Tragically, young people continue to lose their lives and sustain serious injuries in road crashes across Queensland."

"Successful initiatives within our Community Road Safety Grant program support improved education on the critical importance of being safe and making good decisions when using the roads.

"Road safety is everyone's responsibility and we are proud to stand behind organisations like ARTIE Academy as they drive positive road safety culture within their local communities."

FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said the program would help inspire children in the classroom and learn how to be safe on the road.

"Our program not only teaches young Indigenous students how to drive safely, it encourages and motivates them attend school and do their best," Gene said.

"The funding we have received through the Community Road Safety Grants will go a long way to ensuring the students we support can gain their drivers' licences in a way that ensures they will be responsible for the safety of themselves and others when they are behind the wheel."





ARTIE ACADEMY AND RACQ *Putting Some Extra Smiles On The Clock*

The biggest challenge for most teens seeking their driver's licence is finding the time to accrue 100 hours of driving experience.

It is even harder if you don't have access to a car.

The ARTIE Academy Drivers Licence Program recognised this major issue facing many Indigenous and Torres Strait islander teenagers and, in partnership with RACQ, found a solution.

This year RACQ handed over the keys to three Holden Cruze motor vehicles to Marsden State High School, Beenleigh State High School and Ayr State High School for kids to get more hours on the road and closer to their ultimate goal of securing their provisional licence.



ARTIE Academy General Manager Steven Page said they hoped to increase the number of cars to five for 2021, and ultimately help every student get access to a car to complete the program and attain a licence.

"The ambition is to get a car into every school," he said.

"That will mean the schools will then be able to build a volunteer base to help the students build up their 100 hours to get their licence.

"The sponsorship of cars is a huge value-add to our program, and is the No.1 biggest barrier to a kid getting a licence within our program.

"We provide them 30 hours with a driving school, but the additional 70 hours can be really hard when kids don't have cars at home, parents to drive them or anything like that.

"We've learnt as we've come along and found those gaps, and looking at avenues to break down those barriers and gaps to get them across the line.

Former Origin Greats



"With funding from the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, we're now able to put on a full-time manager for the driving program. Their role will be to find volunteers externally of schools or us to help the kids to get more hours."

RACQ's Head of Community and Education David Contarini said they were proud to

join the FOGS ARTIE Academy in helping students pass their practical driving test and ensure they became safe and responsible motorists.

"Gaining a driver licence is a right of passage, and for many can be the gift of freedom and independence," Mr Contarini said.

"Not everyone is fortunate enough however to have access to a safe, reliable car which is why we wanted to get on board with this program.

"Not only are we providing a vehicle to learn in, we're also covering the insurance, registration and servicing costs."

Together, we can do more for Queenslanders

Find out more at racq.com/more

RACQ



ARTIE ACADEMY PUTS ANOTHER *Success Story On The Barbie*

The great Artie Beetson knew the value of a good feed, particularly meat pies.

And nothing brings a community together like food – especially when it's free.

Everybody knows the distinctive sound and smell of a sausage sizzling away on the barbecue, and the feeling of togetherness that comes when people from near and far congregate as one to share a small meal.



Now, thanks to a grant from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, the ARTIE Academy is able to break down barriers at schools by hosting events and free sausage sizzles after purchasing a custom-made Chill N Grill BBQ trailer.

The ARTIE program launched their mobile BBQ in NAIDOC week, cooking up over 3600 sausages at seven schools in southeast Queensland.

ARTIE Academy General Manager Steven Page said the successful launch of the BBQ trailer in NAIDOC week proved the FOGS

were onto a winning idea by being able to offer up a further incentive to engage the community into the education program.

“One thing that really resonated with us is community engagement,” he said.

“When you have the community engaged in what you’re doing, it just becomes so much more helpful if everyone is on the same page.

“Being able to provide these events and put a feed on for a community it gets everyone in together, and that is when you can educate or promote what we’re trying to achieve.”

As COVID restrictions ease next year, Page hopes to invite community elders to their BBQ events and also believes it will help increase family engagement in schools by offering an incentive to break down the barriers between educators and parents.

“One of the schools’ biggest things is parents not coming into the school – for interviews or meetings or whatever it is – to talk to the school,” he said.

“If we put some food on and bring a (rugby league) player, all of a sudden people start to turn up and it makes the school feel like a safe place. Then you can get the parents talking to the teachers and the principals.

“So then everyone is in it together and we can work with the students together.”

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YOW YEH BRINGS THE ‘WOW, YEAH!’ *Factor For Artie Academy Students*

Pouring rain in Rockhampton looked set to dampen the ARTIE experience for 100 restless schoolkids – until Jharal Yow Yeh saved the day.

The former Kangaroos, Maroons and Broncos NRL star was standing in a Bunnings Warehouse hundreds of kilometres away.

But he had an entire school hall mesmerised with stories of his life and career as he addressed them via video call with an unplanned presentation while strolling the aisles looking for DIY supplies.

It was the type of selfless commitment to the program that has made Yow Yeh such a valuable addition to the ARTIE team, and the type of personal touch the program offers that he believes sets it apart from any other.

“I remember that day ... it’s just another reason why I love the program,” Jharal said.

“It’s been a breath of fresh air to be a part of the ARTIE Academy.”

“I love that this program is not humungous. I love that it is very personal with the kids.

“Some programs are all about the numbers, but this is not about the quantity. The FOOGS and ARTIE Academy are all about the quality, and having that personal touch.

“In life, you can go to a school and talk to kids in a big group. But I think it’s the personal touch you put on it, when you connect individually. That’s what I get the joy out of.

“I’ve been very lucky to be able to put my touch on why education is important and stay in school.”

ARTIE Academy General Manager Steven Page said Jharal has an enormous impact whenever he talks to the kids and his contribution to the program was invaluable.

“He has a heart of gold and is really good with the kids,” Steven said.

“He has been a great ambassador this year, especially through this hard period.

“He has had hurdles his whole life and always got back up, and that’s something he tells the kids.

“He is very motivating and gets the kids wanting to achieve their goal.”

Indeed a message from Yow Yeh is gold to young Indigenous kids.

During the COVID shutdown for schools, the former star winger filmed individual video messages and sent text messages directly to Indigenous kids who achieved their engagement goals while working from home.

“I can’t remember how many videos we filmed, but I know they were pretty significant and personal,” Jharal said.

“Technology is amazing, and being able to send SMS messages to kids personally for their achievements is great. I only wish I had something like that when I was at school.”

Steve said the Indigenous students in the ARTIE Academy program loved the personal interaction with Jharal.

“If students achieved their goal during COVID, there was an individual video we sent to the student from Jharal,” Steven said.

“The kids loved it.

“He just has a great story to tell, and kids really listen to him. But the main thing is he is really engaging with the kids and the kids just want to be around him.”



FIREBAND CHARLIE READY For His Toughest Battle Yet

Carl Webb played rugby league with enormous heart, and now as he fights his biggest battle against Motor Neurone Disease, he is selflessly opening that heart to assist others in the same predicament.

The 39-year-old launched the Carl Webb Foundation in November at a sold-out luncheon to raise awareness and funds to combat MND, and assist those suffering from a disease that has no known cure.

MND attacks the nerves cells that control breathing, moving, swallowing and speaking and Webb – who played 187 NRL games, one Test and 12 Origin games for the Maroons – has noted a loss of strength in his arms and legs since his diagnosis.

But the strength of his character has come to the fore in his own time of need.

Webb had sent the FOGS organisation a wish list of players he would like to attend the launch of his foundation. The FOGS sent out an invitation, and the Maroon brotherhood responded in style.



Kevin Walters, Darren Lockyer, Shane Webcke, Peter Civoniceva, Andrew Gee, Lote Tuqiri, Chris Walker, Ash Harrison, Jason Smith, Casey McGuire, Sam Thaiday and Willie Tonga were among a galaxy of footy stars at the function to support the cause and support their mate “Charlie”.

“It is just wonderful that they have all taken the time to support this worthy cause. I really wanted to catch up with everyone, and that is a priority for me at the moment to catch up with friends and family,” Charlie said as he welcomed his guests on the big day.

“This year has been tough for everyone with COVID, so this was a great opportunity to launch the foundation, and to catch up with everybody and raise money and awareness at the same time.

“Before I had been to the specialists, I didn’t know a great deal about MND. It is a nasty one, and anything I can do to help, I will.”

All proceeds of this foundation go to fellow sufferers, which includes supporting housing and equipment around the home. It is a way I can give back to the wonderful organisations that have supported me through my journey.

“FOGS and Men of League were the first to get in contact with me and help out when my diagnosis became public, and I am extremely fortunate to have them here. There is nothing they haven’t done. They have been amazing.”

Webb noted the insidious nature of MND and how it was impacting his life, but he remains positive.



“There has been a deterioration of strength, and that is the nature of the condition,” he said.

“It is frustrating more than anything. Just the fundamental things that you do from day-to-day become more and more challenging.”

“I have still remained positive throughout because I have wonderful support from friends, family and the rugby league fraternity. Everyone reached out. It is quite humbling.

“To fill a room with my nearest and dearest is just the icing on the cake.”

Webb’s oldest son Carter is in boarding school at St Brendan’s College in Yeppoon, while his three youngest children are close by in Brisbane where he now lives.

“I am fortunate that I share 50-50 custody with my children, and they stay at home with me,” he said.

“That quality time we can sometimes take for granted, but I’m not now. I am cherishing all the moments I have had with my kids.”

Webb is a proud Maroon, which is why he was over the moon with Queensland’s 2-1 series win against the odds this year. The 20-14 win in Game 3 came two days before his foundation win.



“It was great to get the win and now everyone has turned up on a high,” he grinned.

“I watched the game at home and the atmosphere at the ground would have been electric. It took me back to 2001 when I was one of 10 debutants in the side that won the series.

“I remember the nerves. It was brutal, and then Alf came back for Game 3 and we won the series.

“All those young fellas that got the win the other night can be extremely proud of themselves, and they done us all proud.”

The FOGS have assisted Webb in a variety of ways, including helping set him up with everything he needs in a purpose-built unit that is close to the school attended by his three youngest children in Brisbane.

FOGS have also pledged to assist him when he needs to travel to visit family members around the state.

“Whatever Carl has requested, we have helped him out with,” FOGS Executive Chairman Gene Miles said.

“He is very well liked throughout the extended family of State of Origin, and when he played footy for Queensland he gave it his heart and soul.

“He is the sort of person that deserves to be looked after when assistance is needed.

“I said from Day 1 when he was diagnosed that we would be with him every step of the way.”

Rugby league is forged on close relationships and Miles and Webb struck up an early rapport.

“In 2001 it was my first year as a Queensland selector when we blooded all those young guys, including Carl,” Gene said.

“I had a chat to him before the first game of that series and I said to him that he played against the NSW guys week-in and week-out, and that they were no supermen.

“I said: ‘If you tackle them around the legs, they fall over. And if you smack them in the mouth, they bleed. They are just like you and me’.

“I just told him to continue doing what had got him to this arena, and he was always very aggressive with how he played.”

The COVID-19 prevented various functions taking place in honour of Webb this year, but the FOGS will be contributing to his foundation when planned events are held in 2021.

Side-by-side, Webb will continue his fight with great support from those he knows he can count on.





PIONEERS OF ORIGIN

40 Years Since The Greatest Night That Ever Was

They are the 16 men who, 40 years ago, changed rugby league – and the great state of Queensland – forever.

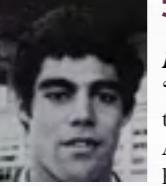
As State of Origin celebrates the 40th anniversary of that unforgettable night in 1980 when Arthur Beetson inspired the Maroons to a historic 20-10 win over NSW in the first Origin game, we have gone back to each of those famous Maroons for their memories of that special match.

While their legendary captain is no longer with us to celebrate Origin's 40th anniversary, Beetson's 14 teammates and coach John McDonald have been good enough to share their memories, and what they are up to 40 years since the night they changed sport forever.

1. COLIN SCOTT

I'll Never Forget: "They flew the Sydney guys up for our first training run and I met Arthur Beetson for the first time in the dressing room. He said 'how are you going Scotty' and that blew me away. For a young fella like me from Townsville to play with a bloke like that was a highlight of my life. After the win, I was his waiter all night."

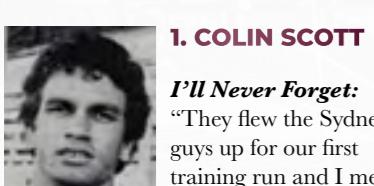
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I'll Never Forget: "I remember running on the field, single-file, with Arthur at the back and the huge roar when he came out. I spent the whole night running around with a big smile on my face, just going 'how good is this?'. I was just so happy to be playing with those guys."

What I'm Doing Now:

"I'm still very lucky to be involved with the game I love. I am still coach of the Kangaroos, and planning for the World Cup. I was honoured to be a part of this year's Origin coaching staff, and I am still enjoying my role with the Gold Coast Titans."



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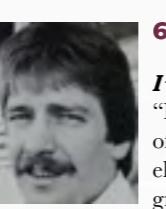
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I'll Never Forget: "I just remember the vibe of the crowd and the electricity in the air. It was great to have Arthur, Rod

2. KERRY BOUSTEAD

I'll Never Forget: "In 1980 the old Lang Park stand at the stadium was timber and everyone upstairs was stomping their feet while we were in the dressing sheds underneath. You could tell the atmosphere was going to be electric when we hit the field."



What I'm Doing Now:

"I sell stuff to the mines for a company called All-Pro and spend a lot of time in central and western Queensland. The people I work with are old footy guys and have been mates of mine for 40 years."

4. CHRIS CLOSE

I'll Never Forget: "The crux of it revolved around Arthur – getting dressed beside him, following him out onto the park and the deafening roar of the crowd. The game was great, and I remember all of it, but what Arthur did was the source of the river that has flowed wide and long ever since."



What I'm Doing Now:

"I work with Shell in the gas fields in Chinchilla where I am a HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) officer and I love it. I live at Hervey Bay on the esplanade."

3. MAL MENINGA

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Morris, Bouie, Greg Oliphant, Rod Reddy and the guys living in Sydney, as I was, to come back and play for Queensland."

What I'm Doing Now:

"Before I retired, I was a national account manager for James Hardie and worked for them for close on 30 years. I really enjoyed my time as a Queensland selector for nearly 20 years in two stints."

7. GREG OLIPHANT

I'll Never Forget: "We all had a job to do and we did it. It was a great atmosphere. I had roomed with Arthur and we knew we could do it if we put it all together. There wasn't a bad player in the squad."

What I'm Doing Now:

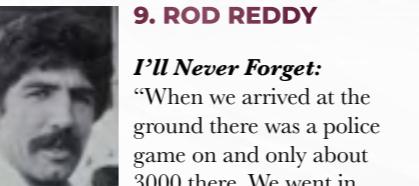
Oliphant had a successful concrete pumping business before retiring and is relishing the nostalgia around 1980: "I just got a couple of signed 1980 jerseys in a frame from the FOOGS delivered to me. I gave one to my son and one to my daughter. They really enjoyed them."

8. WALLY LEWIS

I'll Never Forget: "It was a thrill to run on the field with Arthur Beetson. I heard the deafening roar and to be standing beside him certainly made me feel ten-foot tall and bullet proof. The other memory is that with 20 seconds to go everyone from the outer raced on. The Queensland fans decided the game was over."

What I'm Doing Now:

"Nearly 30 years after my retirement, and with Channel Nine I am still involved in the game I love more than any other. I get to watch the game and tell the fans what it is about rugby league that makes it so special."



I'll Never Forget: "When we arrived at the ground there was a police game on and only about 3000 there. We went in the sheds, warmed up, and when we ran on the place was packed with 30,000. Little things stick out. I remember Arthur Beetson cutting his sleeves off and putting two match programs in his socks for shin pads."

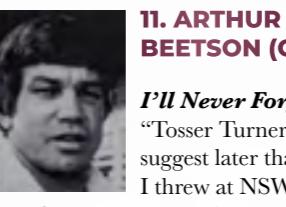
What I'm Doing Now:

"I live in Adelaide, but at the moment I am in Sydney doing some work with the WestConnex on the tunnels. I am doing that to keep busy and stay out of trouble."



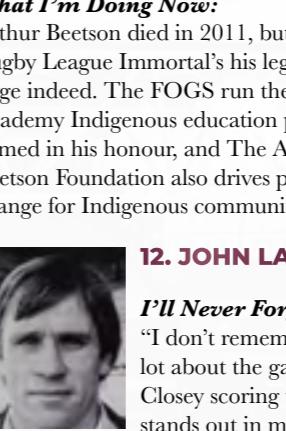
10. ROHAN HANCOCK

I'll Never Forget: "The things that stands out were the roar of the crowd when we ran out behind Arthur Beetson, and when Arthur smacked Cronin, a Parramatta teammate, and connected really well. I thought 'this is it. It's on'."



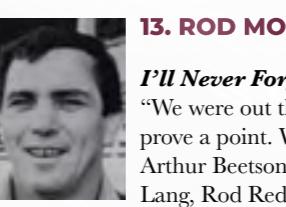
11. ARTHUR BEETSON (C)

I'll Never Forget: "Tosser Turner was to suggest later that a punch I threw at NSW second-rower Graeme Wynn early on was 'the most important moment in Origin history'. I don't know about that, but the dust-up that ensued certainly left no doubt it was fair dinkum." – Beetson in his autobiography Big Artie.



12. JOHN LANG

I'll Never Forget: "I don't remember a lot about the game, but Closey scoring that try stands out in my memory. We went one way, and then Closey cut back and beat four or five blokes from a fair way out. To me that try was the turning point of the game."



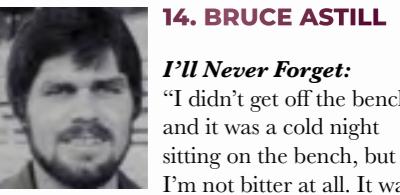
13. ROD MORRIS

I'll Never Forget: "We were out there to prove a point. We knew Arthur Beetson, John Lang, Rod Reddy and the experienced guys would do the job but the young guys were on a bigger stage for the first time and it was great to see them perform at a high level. Artie gave off

positive vibes and the rest of the players got behind him and put Queensland on the right path."

What I'm Doing Now:

"I am a McDonald's franchisee, and have been for the last 35 years. It is very similar to playing sport. Every store has its team. I enjoy developing young people and watching them grow."

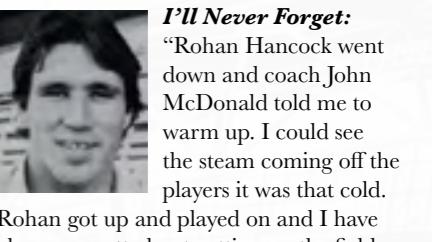


14. BRUCE ASTILL

I'll Never Forget: "I didn't get off the bench and it was a cold night sitting on the bench, but I'm not bitter at all. It was a fantastic atmosphere and a really good bunch of blokes that meshed together. I was part of it, and that is one thing they can't take away from me."

What I'm Doing Now: "I live in Brisbane and have been retired five years now. I was in sales after working for a big, worldwide company. Now I run around and look after the grandchildren and watch them play sport."

15. NORM CARR



I'll Never Forget:

"Rohan Hancock went down and coach John McDonald told me to warm up. I could see the steam coming off the players it was that cold."

Rohan got up and played on and I have always regretted not getting on the field... but it was great to beat NSW."

What I'm Doing Now: "I own a small trucking business in Brisbane. I used to work for QRX, who sponsored Wests 40 years ago. I managed part of their business and then bought a few trucks myself, and that is what I have been doing for the last 20 years."



COACH: JOHN McDONALD

I'll Never Forget: "Every Queensland player was worthy of their position. Arthur led the team out that night, and he was outstanding. The game became a war. It was a special thing for Arthur to represent a team he had never played with before."

What I'm Doing Now: "I enjoyed all my time in football. I've been here in Toowoomba for a hundred years, apart from the three years I spent in Sydney (with Manly). I did my apprenticeship as a printer and we have a family printing business here – Cracker Print and Paper."



FINALS FAILURE NOT AN OPTION

Under New Broncos Coach Kev

DON'T dare mention the word 'rebuild' to new Broncos coach Kevin Walters.

It seems anyone with a basic knowledge of rugby league is adamant the Broncos need to wipe the slate clean and start again following last season's disastrous wooden-spoon finish.

Tear the roster apart. Sack a number of top-liners. Change the entire Broncos board. Hire a new CEO. Buy a generation of new players.

It seems there are a host of theories around what the Broncos need for Walters to return Brisbane to the finals in the wake of former coach Anthony Seibold's demise.

But Walters is confident he can restore success to the Broncos without wholesale changes to the club he loves.

"Rebuild is a trashy word," Walters says.

"The Broncos are one of the most famous clubs in Australian sport. It is a wonderful club with a lot of great talent on and off the field."

"The club doesn't need a rebuild. But it needs a change in attitude, and it's my job to ensure that happens."

The Broncos will start the 2021 season as reigning wooden spooners.

Never before in their glorious 32-year history have the Broncos faced the embarrassment of starting a campaign under pressure to climb out of the NRL dungeon.

To many, resurrecting the Broncos as a finals force is viewed as a two-to-three-year project, but Walters says making the playoffs next season is a non-negotiable expectation.

"Can we make the finals? Of course we can," Walters said.

"This is the Broncos. I won't tolerate us missing the finals."

"There is a lot of talent in this squad, and that is not the issue for the Broncos. This club will always produce good players. But the real problem is the lack of unity. I will be fixing that."



Titans coach Justin Holbrook can empathise with Walters.

He arrived at the Gold Coast as a rookie NRL coach this season having inherited a wooden-spoon squad at a club viewed as the basketcase of the NRL.

But Holbrook was a smash hit in 2020, guiding the Titans to the brink of the finals in ninth spot after finishing with five consecutive wins.

There is a feeling the Titans are ready to be a force, and the signing of Origin stars David Fifita and Tino Fa'asauamaleau could propel them to their first finals campaign since 2016.

"Seeing the guys improve technically, but also really wanting to do well for our club and create some hype around the Gold Coast, was great for us," Holbrook said.

"The expectation (in 2021) is a good thing. Last year we weren't given many expectations and we also didn't have much credibility, which I didn't like."

"As a club we're in a much better spot. We've got some really key players coming which is exciting, I can't wait to see what Tino and Dave (Fifita) bring to our squad."

In North Queensland, the club also welcomes a new coach in Todd Payten and the former Warriors caretaker is under pressure to get immediate results.

The Cowboys have suffered three consecutive bottom-four finishes. Payten has vowed to bring a more dynamic edge in attack and defence.

"I watched their footy and it hadn't really changed a great deal in a long time," Payten said.

"The game has evolved, especially with the rule changes, and I don't think the club evolved their style of footy."

"That's what I'll be implementing – a real change in the way we do things."

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WHY THE 2020 SERIES WIN *Was So Special*

We all love to celebrate a series win over NSW. But this year's series win just had that little extra something, didn't it?

A group of inexperienced young blokes mixed in with some old hard-heads, written off by the critics, who came through and got the job done when not too many people thought they could.

It was terrific stuff, and very familiar at the same time.

Hard as it is to believe, this year was the 25th anniversary of the 1995 series, when Queensland somehow got the job done even when no one thought we could.

And that is why I am just so happy for every Maroons player in this year's squad that got the job done for Queensland.

Not just because they beat the Blues, and brought the shield back to Queensland (although, that feeling is pretty good).

But because, even though they might not realise it yet, they have forged friendships and a bond that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

The boys from the 1995 squad don't get to see each other as much as we used to, and certainly not as often as we would like.

But I still keep in touch with a lot of the boys, and I can tell you the mateship we took out of our time together in Maroon 25 years ago is as strong as ever.

Winning for Queensland in a series is the ultimate feeling. But to do it under such adversity, just makes it even more special.

This is a bond that the 1995 and 2020 squads now share.

In 1995, people were telling us that we weren't just going to get beaten, we were going to get beaten by 50.

To prove all those critics wrong and come out and not just beat NSW, but to spank them 3-0, it was such an incredible feeling.

I was always confident we could do it. Just getting around talking to the blokes, I could feel that as soon as they got into camp, they started to believe that they could do it.

The longer the camp went on, the more confident they became.

They never got cocky or anything like that, but you could see it at training – they were growing and improving with everything they did.

Similarly, you could see this year's Maroons growing with every game.

When the squad for this year's series was announced, I thought there was a very similar feeling to the squad in 1995.

There were a few experienced blokes who were there to lead by example, and a few younger blokes who would take the opportunity to go to another level.

I look at a guy like Harry Grant, who made his Origin debut in Game 3 after just 15 first grade games.

Go back to 1995, and Benny Ikin made his Origin debut after just three games.

I think back to other guys who played their first games in 1995 – like Robbie O'Davis, Matt Sing, Adrian Lam and Wayne Bartrim, among others – who were able to make the most of their opportunity and ended up being mainstays of the Queensland team for years to come.

And then I look at guys from this year's team like Kurt Capewell, Big Tino, Lindsay Collins and Xavier Coates – among others – who looked like they had been playing Origin footy all their lives.

And most of them will be Maroons for many years to come.

So congratulations to the Class of 2020 for a job well done. You certainly made the boys of 1995 very proud.

And in 25 years when you look back at this year's series, I know that you will remember it as the time when your best memories and best mateships were made.

Just like the 1995 boys do now.



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