

# SPORT RUGBY LEAGUE

## Roosters had man is still the one to watch

DEAN RITCHIE  
RUGBY LEAGUE

Noel Cleal had heard the stories emanating from the State Shield rugby union competition. About an aggressive Kiwi back-rower with tremendous skill and a growing reputation. After he was sent a video of a young Jared Waerea-Hargreaves, from player manager Mick Newton, he had to investigate. In 2007, Cleal was well known as Manly's recruitment manager. If "Crusher" ever turned up at a game, you know he had an eye on one of the players.

So, in an attempt to remain inconspicuous from prying Northern Suburbs rugby union officials, Cleal donned a hat and sunglasses in an attempt to disguise himself. "I went to North Sydney Oval and I was in the back row," Cleal said. "Every man and his dog knew I was a rugby league scout and that I was going to come running and a hat, although the beard probably gave away my identity." Cleal didn't see out the match. "What did I see in Jared that day?" saw a league player playing union, Cleal said. "I left before full-time. I'd seen enough and rang his manager that night. We signed Jared the next day. It was all pretty quick."

"I knew there and then he was going to play first grade through his attitude and willingness. The deal was \$250,000 or \$300,000. There was a coffee shop at Cammeroy where we did a little bit of business. It was like our office away from the office. I think we signed him there."

Now, 17 years later, England-bound Waerea-Hargreaves will line up for the Sydney Roosters against Manly in Saturday night's elimination final at Allianz Stadium, in what could be his final game in the NRL.

### STANDING TALL

There was a defining moment in Waerea-Hargreaves' early days at Manly that put everyone on notice. Former Sea Eagles prop John Perry remembered ambushing Waerea-Hargreaves - the young "back" from rugby union - in one of his first pre-season sessions in a brutal rugby league initiation in 2008. After watching him refuse to be intimidated by Manly's elite forward pack, Cleal turned to head coach Des Hasler and declared: "We've got a live one here."

"There was some angry, hardy Jared want to be intimidated. He was mixing it with the big boys," Cleal said. Perry, now 43, is a Manly premiership-winning front-rower who also played State of Origin for NSW.

Parading his Maori heritage as an NRL Pacific Islander in the 2011 Body Pacifica calendar

GREGG PORTERES

### ROOSTERS VS SEA EAGLES

ALLIANCE STADIUM, SATURDAY 5:00PM (AEST)		INTERCHANGE	
Jarrod Taitano	1	Tom Trbojevic	1
Daniel Tupou	2	Tommy Talbot	2
Joseph Sua'ali	3	Talata Kuali	3
Joseph Mann	4	Reuben Garrick	4
Dennis Young	5	Lulu Hapoua	5
Luke Keary	6	Luke Brooks	6
Sasha Smith	7	Dub Cherry-Evans	7
Benjamin Limongeni	8	Tamara Poto	8
Conner Watson	9	Lachlan Croker	9
Lindsay Collins	10	Matthew Lodge	10
Angus Crofton	11	Hamish Croker	11
Sam Tagawa	12	Garrett Lawrence	12
Nathan Whyte	13	Jake Trbojevic	13

Roosters: 14 Siva Wong 15 Spencer Latta 16 Neil Baxter 17 Perrell May 18 Zach Dockar 19 Jayden Taitano 20 Blake Freese 21 Michael Brown 22 Victor Radley

Sea Eagles: 14 Ben Taitano 15 Josh Aisaka 16 Elisha Ballarman 17 Nathan Brown 18 Nathan Brown 19 James Hargreaves 20 Tadhg Beirne 21 London Chan 22 Tommy Mackintosh

Roosters: 14 Siva Wong 15 Spencer Latta 16 Neil Baxter 17 Perrell May 18 Zach Dockar 19 Jayden Taitano 20 Blake Freese 21 Michael Brown 22 Victor Radley

He remembered challenging Waerea-Hargreaves at training and was shocked by the response. "I was trying to sort him out, for sure, because he was the new back in the front row and I was a senior player," Perry said. "We used to go to each other fair bit at training. It was a classic situation of a senior player and a new guy coming across from rugby union. I was a bit of a muppet and he passed every test, I can tell you."

Waerea-Hargreaves played in Manly's NYC side team in 2008 and 2009 - he was named in the Toyota Cup team of the year - before making his NRL debut in round nine 2009, coming off the bench against Brisbane. He moved to the Roosters a year later.

"I remember the first time we played against the Roosters, he tried to have a goal a couple of times," Perry said. "I would run at him but trip a pass and he would get the shot because he couldn't get hold of it. It was good stuff."

The articles earned him the respect of his more experienced former teammates.

"He's a tough banger. Like me, he's probably been suspended more than he needed to but as a performer, and through his longevity, he's been with the best of them," Perry said. "There's not many players like him left. It's a different game these days."

### ROOSTERS DEFECTION

After playing just six NRL matches for Manly, Waerea-Hargreaves defected to the Roosters in 2010 on a three-year deal. He left due to salary cap pressure and because Manly had reached the end of its pre-season prep.

Perry, Brent King and three NSW props ahead of him.

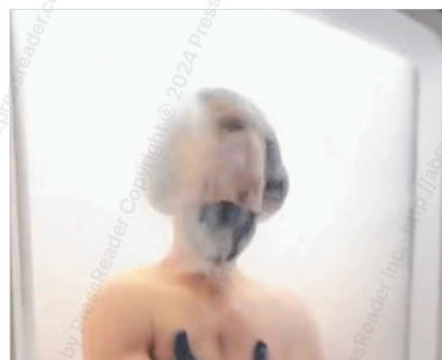
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## How Turbo breaks through pain barrier



DAVID RICCO  
BRENT READ  
MICHAEL CARAYANNIS

Unable to sleep, enduring searing pain simply turning the steering wheel of his car and immersing his body into -16°C temperatures. Influential Sea Eagles star Tom Trbojevic has revealed the excruciating commitment he has made to push through agony to play against the Roosters in a must-win semi-final on Saturday night at Allianz Stadium.

Manly's No.1 has won new fans for his extraordinary mental and physical resolve to play with a grade three AC joint injury and a ACL knee injury.

After requiring painkilling injections to end the Bulldogs season last Sunday, Trbojevic says he's ready to put his body on the line again for his club against the Roosters.

"It's feeling better this week," he says. "It's just a pain barrier thing. The first game signing to be there and then it gets better."

### LIVING IN PAIN

Outside of rugby, Trbojevic gave an insight into how his shoulder injury has affected the rest of his life. Something as simple as writing his name, opening the fridge or reaching for the cereal tests his threshold for pain.

"Obviously shoulder injuries, when you initially get them they are quite sore so it makes it difficult to sleep," he said.

"Driving is also difficult, trying to turn a wheel. It gets sore after games but that's no different to any shoulder injury. Initially you are in a sling so you can't do too much. But it is just sore."

Providing a medical point of view, NRL physio Brian Seemey said he was in awe of Trbojevic's modesty and bravery.

"Along with rib injuries, I'd say AC joint injuries are the two most painful injuries in football," Seemey said. "It hurts with every move that you make in that shoulder."

"It doesn't pose a lot of long-term issues, but in the short term it does cause a lot of pain. You're literally playing with an unstable shoulder joint."

### NFL TREATMENT

Trbojevic has been undergoing cryotherapy and a red light therapy - used by NFL side the San Francisco 49ers - to help with his recovery. He uses the treatment up to three times a week - and as recently as last Thursday.

Health practitioner and co-owner of CRYO Northern beaches in Freshwater, Dimple Naik, said Trbojevic had been a regular in recent months.

"Tom has been using cryotherapy to aid in his recovery and enhance his physical and mental performance," Naik said.

"Cryotherapy exposes the body or parts of the body to subzero temperatures reaching -140C. The fully immersive whole body cryotherapy chamber at CRYO Northern beaches is the only TGA approved chamber that reaches temperatures below -140C and the treatment time is only three minutes."

"When you step in the chamber, the body goes through a 'fight or flight' response activating the nervous system, and all the blood rushes to the core to protect the heart and vital organs."

"When you step out of the chamber, fresh blood circulates the system to instantly reduce pain, muscle soreness and



Ignoring the pain against the Bulldogs last weekend

inflammation. In addition, as the head and neck are also exposed to those temperatures, it ignites the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system to reduce stress, anxiety and provide mental clarity and focus.

"For the shoulder injury specifically, we have been administering localised cryotherapy, where focused application of -162C, cryogenically cooled air is treated to the affected areas, penetrating in deeper layers of muscle tissue and joints."

### IN AWE

Sea Eagles chairman Scott Penn has been amazed at the young enough to witness true courage and player bravery during a serious injury.

"He has seen up close how tough Trbojevic is, having spent time with him in the US when the football video training guru Bill Knowles to help with his hamstring problems. He was also in the stands during the Accor Stadium as Trbojevic, having struggled through the pain barrier, popped up with eight minutes remaining to provide the inspiration for Tolu Koula's match-winning try."

"He is a real tough character. He keeps a lot of it to himself, he doesn't really talk about it," Penn said.

"We have always known the character and leader he is both on and off the field. He is a special human, he loves the club and he loves playing - he is a fierce competitor."

"You could see on Sunday he was hurting. It is super painful playing through it. He has no real achy show his mental toughness, but it is inspiring to the playing group."

### TWO MORE WEEKS

Of course, the end-goal for Trbojevic and the Sea Eagles is to win the premiership on October 6.

The question is, will Trbojevic be able to continue to peak through his shoulder pain and knee complaint for a further two weeks?

"Yes, he will get there," Seemey said. "It's about avoiding obvious hits to that shoulder. He'll be trying to find that balance between protecting it, and also getting the most out of it, so Manly can win."

Jake Trbojevic is also in no doubt about his brother's fortitude in keeping going. "He doesn't live under the spotlight anymore but Jake has spent enough time with Tom to understand that he puts his mind to something, he generally gets it done."

"The thing about Tom is he works so hard so you just want the best for him," Jake said. "He is the nervous system, and all the blood rushes to the core to protect the heart and vital organs."

"Whenever he goes down - touch wood it never happens again - you know he will come out the other side because he is very resilient."

## Everyone on the same page: how Sea Eagles' sole focus became the best interests of the club



WEEKEND READ  
With The Weekend Australia's Brent Read

The bandwagon nestled in the back of Bob Fulton Stand at 4 Pines Park has been quiet of late. Manly, a club that has been a hornet's nest of political upheaval and coaching drama over the years, is enjoying some serenity as they prepare for a scud-doggy final against the Sydney Roosters on Saturday night.

It is almost two years since Des Hasler in the wake of the Pindersey fiasco and majority owner Scott Penn - who also happens to be the chair - insists the club is aligned.

Yes, there has been some disension and angst about plans to bring the club's pathways house, but that aside the Sea Eagles appear in sync.

Everyone involved with the

NRL side, Penn says, are on the same page, reinforcing a message that he first heard 20 years ago when he attended a conference at Pebble Beach and listened to former San Francisco 49ers coach Bill Walsh and Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll and Jerry Rice reveal the secrets to their success.

"The big thing they really pushed on was success platforms was the four Cs - chairman, chief executive, coach and the captain all need to be in alignment," Penn said. "I can honestly say we are all in alignment. We all communicate well and we all are on the same page where we want to go."

"If you are fractured at any of those levels, it doesn't work. That is what it is about - being in communication, being clear about where we want to go. We all have the same interests."

"We have had the best of both worlds. We've had the best of both worlds. We've had the best of both worlds. We've had the best of both worlds."

"It is not in the best interests of the owners or the directors, it is the best interests of our fans and supporters. We're all on the same page, probably for the first time in a long time."

You certainly couldn't say that two years ago as the club grappled

into the game in Sydney, and most notably the western suburbs. AFL is still a niche sport in the city.

The Sydney Swans have done an amazing job and carved out a place on the Sydney sporting landscape, securing a strong and loyal fan base.

GWS, on the other hand, have barely made a dent. Much has been made about the Swans' sellout crowd on Friday night with rugby league being played next door at Allianz Stadium.

Hells, can we talk about GWS and the crowd they pulled at Eagle Stadium last weekend. Just over 18,000 and there were plenty of Brisbane Lions fans who made the trek down to help fill the ground.

Meanwhile, there were more than 50,000 at Accor Stadium to watch the Bulldogs go about their business against Manly on Sunday afternoon.

A couple of nights ago when they couldn't lift any more in at Perth as the Panthers faithful watched their side send off their stadium with a big win over the Sydney Roosters. There was a sellout in Fremantle and well over 20,000 at AAMI Park in Melbourne. Rugby league has broken attendance and viewing records this year.

It has shattered its own ceiling and amid the hubris from the AFL, rugby league is hanging at its door, edging closer to becoming a national game again and preparing to sail into uncharted waters. The set of waters AFL can only dream of navigating. In a

matter of weeks, Perth and PNG will be announced as the NRL's 18th and 19th teams.

There is every chance at the same point, the NRL will confirm a 20th team will be added by 2032, although it seems likely they will take their time before determining where that team will be located.

New Zealand's South Island is the short-priced favourite but the NRL wants to get it right. The last thing they can afford to do is to fall over. The NRL will expand its international tentacles at a time when the domestic game is thriving and America is on its radar.

The AFL is welcome to keep hanging its head against a brick wall in western Sydney while rugby league takes on the world.

And failed to settle the matter through mediation. That right will resume after the season is over. For the moment, their only concern is beating the Roosters. "We have a three-year plan starting this year," Penn said.