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“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

He has seen how tough Trbojevic is, having spent time with him in the US when the champion fullback visited training guru Bill Knowles to help with his hamstring problems.

He was also in the stands on Sunday at Accor Stadium as Trbojevic, having pushed through the pain barrier, popped up with eight minutes remaining to provide the inspiration for Tolu Koula's match-winning try.

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

"He has definitely been through some dark times and tough times.

"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."

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN
Of course, the end goal for Trbojevic and the Sea Eagles is to win the premierships on that first Sunday in October.

The question is, will Trbojevic be able to continue to push through his shoulder



Sea Eagles fullback Tom Trbojevic is receiving all manner of treatments to stay on the field in 2024. Main picture: Rohan Kelly

pain and knee complaint for a further two weeks?

"Yes, he will get there," Seeny said.

"It's about luck as well. 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 to keep going.

"They don't live under the same roof any more, but Jake has spent enough time with Tom to understand that when 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 so professional, works extremely hard. He does everything right."



Romance facing a huge test

An Eagles v Roosters divide

Martin Gabor

He did well to get his dad and brothers to support him last week even though they're all Bulldogs fans, but Tommy Talau faces an even tougher challenge when his Sea Eagles take on Jess Sergis' Roosters in a sudden death semi-final.

You don't often need to convince your partner to support your team with the season on the line, but this is a unique situation given Talau's girlfriend just so happens to be one of the biggest stars in the world and plays for the club he's coming up against.

Sergis was in the sheds after the game on Sunday afternoon and will be at her home ground Allianz Stadium for the blockbuster clash, with the strike centre currently unavailable for the NRLW squad as she deals with a knee injury.

"I've already asked her and I'd like to think it's me," Talau said when asked who she'll support.

"You'd think that she's going for the Roosters, but she told me that she's going for me.

"If I see her cheering for the Roosters in the crowd then I won't be happy.

"If I'm here then I don't see why (she wouldn't wear a Manly jersey) but I don't think the Roosters would be too happy with that."

The pair have been dating since last year, with Talau crediting Sergis for improving his game which has seen him score a career-high 17 tries this season in his first year for Manly. "Earlier in the year when



Tommy Talau with partner and Roosters NRLW star Jess Sergis.

there wasn't much footy being played, that's when I was doing some training with her," he said.

"I feel like she's been good for me mentally, and if your life is good off the field then you're going to give yourself the best chance to be good on the field.

"My life's pretty good for me at the moment and I'm very happy. I'm relaxed and settled, and that's something she definitely brings to my life."

While he's confident Sergis will support him, Talau had to convince his family to cheer him on last week given his dad, Willie, used to play for the Bulldogs.

"I don't know if he was going for Manly, but he was definitely going for me. Wherever I go, he'll support me," he said.

"All my brothers were all Bulldogs supporters growing up and I played all my junior football for the Bulldogs so it was weird and surreal to play them."

Talau settled the nerves with an early try in his first finals game, and was solid in his side's 24-22 victory.

Making Eagles' pack work harder the key for Chooks' chances

With the Roosters and Sea Eagles clashing tonight, **Matty Johns** puts himself in the coach's box to reveal each team's strengths, vulnerabilities and the tactics he would employ to drive them to victory.

Matty Johns



them credit for. Even under pressure, they'll take this game to the 80th minute.

Keep close tabs on Luke Brooks, he was excellent in his first finals match.

WE MUST STOP
Obviously Daly Cherry-Evans and Tom Trbojevic, but special emphasis on Haumole Olakau'atu, he's been a

powerhouse in the last month. He and Angus Crichton could be the biggest forward match-up of the season.

HOW WE WIN
Make the Manly pack work double time. We do this by minimising Tom Trbojevic's kick return impact and then crushing their plays two and three.

This will force Manly's big forwards to make a long run to get back behind the football.

SEA EAGLES
WHAT I LEARNT ABOUT ROOSTERS LAST WEEK
The Roosters were left in the barriers physically and emotionally. They started slow against Penrith and, defensively, were caught on their heels. I also learnt, even without key playmakers, get them good field position and they'll score points.

WE MUST STOP
Last week they lacked fire. It

will be very different this week and they will be led by Jared Waerea-Hargreaves. Along with Joey Manu, Luke Keary, Joseph-Aukuso Sualii and Sitali Tupouniua, this could be the big enforcer's last game with the club.

If it is, he will go out, guns blazing.

HOW WILL WE WIN?
Start fast and be adventurous with the football. We look great when we come out of the

sheds and play some sideline-to-sideline football early. Let's see how they defend this.

In the second half, attack their tired big men with Daly Cherry-Evans, Tom Trbojevic and Luke Brooks through the centre field.

In defence, apply pressure to Sandon Smith and his kicks. When James Tedesco gets to first receiver, markers fade back fast to protect our big men closest to the ruck.