



Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club

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Newsletter

27 May 2015

#74

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State of Origin Special

State of Origin screening on Sky Sport 2
Live tonight at 9.30pm followed by replays
at 2am 6am and 5.30pm on Wednesday

State Of Origin Festivities

HOLDEN State of Origin Game I festivities will begin with a massive pre-game party outside ANZ Stadium today, kicking off at 4pm local time.

Dedicated Blues supporters will take over Cathy Freeman Park, with the party featuring a monster marquee, live bands, a 50m bar and visits by NSW Blues legends.

Other entertainment and activities in the Sydney Olympic Park precinct include an extension to The Brewery, DJs, roving entertainment, 40 pop-up cafes and food trucks, themed restaurants and bars, and vox pops with the crowd.

Queensland supporters will also have their dedicated pre-game party zone, with a themed Maroons Bar inside ANZ Stadium (near Aisle 140) featuring an MC, live band, bar and food, raffle and prizes.

Stadium gates will open at 5:45pm, with the Under 16s NSW v Qld Origin teams playing the curtain-raiser from 6pm.

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A lap of honour to thank NSW emergency services heroes for their hard work during the recent storm disaster will be a highlight of the pre-match entertainment before the 8pm kick-off.

NRL Chief Operating Officer Suzanne Young urged fans to get to the ground early to thank our emergency services.

“Whether you’re a Blue or a Maroon, we can all agree on the outstanding job our emergency services do,” Ms Young said.

“State of Origin is sport’s great rivalry and attending the game is an experience in itself. I encourage fans to make the most of the precinct-wide entertainment both before and after the match.”

ANZ Stadium Managing Director, Daryl Kerry, said: “The winning game plan for fans is to travel smart, try to be in the Sydney Olympic Park precinct early, enjoy the pre-match festivities, and be in your seat in time for the entertainment.

“While it’s always good to see Queenslanders in the crowd, ANZ Stadium will very much be a Blues’ fortress on Wednesday night. . . the Stadium will be lit up in blue and the precinct will be a sea of blue as proud NSW fans flock to support Laurie Daley and his men.”

All tickets to Holden State of Origin Game I at ANZ Stadium include entry and return travel on Sydney Trains services, Sydney Olympic Park Major Event Buses and regular Sydney Buses (STA) services and Sydney Ferries services.

Fans are strongly encouraged to leave the car at home and take advantage of the direct transport services in operation.

Fans are reminded to keep their tickets for their return journey, as customers must have a valid ticket when travelling on public transport.

Whilst a bumper crowd is expected at ANZ Stadium, good seats are still available at the special price of ‘2 for \$100’ from www.nrl.com/tickets



State of Origin Teams

New South Wales:

1. Josh Dugan, 2. Daniel Tupou, 3. Josh Morris, 4. Michael Jennings, 5. Will Hopoate, 6. Mitchell Pearce, 7. Trent Hodkinson, 8. James Tamou, 9. Robbie Farah (c), 10. Aaron Woods, 11. Beau Scott, 12. Ryan Hoffman, 13. Josh Jackson

Interchange: 14. Trent Merrin, 15. Boyd Cordner 16. David Klemmer, 17. Andrew Fifita

Queensland:

1. Billy Slater, 2. Darius Boyd, 3. Greg Inglis, 4. Justin Hodges, 5. Will Chambers, 6. Johnathan Thurston, 7. Cooper Cronk, 8. Matt Scott, 9. Cameron Smith (c) 10. Nate Myles, 11. Aidan Guerra, 12. Sam Thaiday, 13. Corey Parker

Interchange: 14. Michael Morgan, 15. Josh McGuire, 16. Matt Gillett, 17. Jacob Lillyman 18. Dylan Napa

Graham Lowe was a man who was dying to coach State of Origin and almost died doing so! - Courtesy of Brisbane Courier Mail

NEW ZEALANDER Lowe, the only non-Australian to coach Queensland or NSW in rugby league's showpiece series, was so seriously ill in his first series coaching Queensland in 1991 doctors thought he might die.

In the lead-up to the deciding Game Three of that series, Lowe was taken to a Sydney hospital with a life-threatening blood clot in his leg.

"I was in intensive care and away from the team," Lowe, 68, recalled this week.

"(Captain) Wally Lewis got the whole team into his room at the hotel and put them on speakerphone so they could all talk to me.

"It was a wonderful thing to do and really lifted my spirits."

Lewis revealed Maroons team management had kept Lowe's illness from most of the players until the group phone call to ICU.

"We didn't pass it on straight away because we didn't want to worry the other players," he said.

"As usual (manager) Tossler Turner took charge and led the way.

"Lowie was a great coach and a terrific communicator. His one-on-one skills were second to none.

"When he spoke to the team or to an individual player you could feel the emotion in his voice.

"Graham always said it was a privilege to coach Queensland.

"I think I can speak for every player he ever coached and say it was a privilege to be coached by him."

Lowe, who coached against Lewis at Brisbane club and international level, described the undisputed "King" of Origin as "magnificent".

"I knew Wally as an opposing player. I had coached against him in domestic football in Brisbane and he had destroyed the Kiwis when I was New Zealand

coach and he was the Australian captain so I knew what a great player he was," he said.

"Then I got the chance to coach him at Origin level and I learned what a great leader he was, too.

"We became great friends and I would say I'm closer to Wally than any other player I coached against."

The Lowe-Lewis bond may well have started in Game One of the 1991 series, a match best remembered for Lewis's halftime confrontation with Blues forward Mark Geyer.



Graham Lowe

Lowe was incensed that Geyer appeared to have a licence to do what he liked in the match and famously said later: "There were 33 blokes out there playing football and one maniac." He later apologised for the remark.

Before he stepped up to coaching the Maroons, Lowe had arrived in Brisbane early in 1979 as a 34-year-old unknown from Auckland to take over as coach of the 1978 Brisbane Rugby League wooden-spooners Norths.

He was lured to Australia by the legendary Bob Bax, who took a punt on a Kiwi when no one else in the world was interested in New Zealand rugby league, then a very poor cousin of rugby union.

Lowe had guided Otahuhu to the Auckland premiership in '78 after being forced to retire as a player because of injuries.

"In those days the Auckland premiers would play the Sydney premiers in an end-of-season challenge. Manly and Cronulla drew in the grand final and had to go through a replay and a stack of Manly players got picked for the Kangaroos tour so Cronulla came over to Auckland instead," Lowe said.

"We played them at Carlaw Park and beat them 8-2. I was at the club after the match when Baxy phoned and said he needed an answer about coaching Norths.

"He was a straight shooter, was Baxy. He said 'If you don't improve things in the first five weeks or so you can bugger off home again.'"

Lowe arrived at Bishop Park to find a club in a mess.

He was told 17 players who had played first grade for the club the previous year had moved on to other clubs and his reaction was classic Graham Lowe: “Well, they finished last; they couldn’t have been much good”.

VIDEO: The wild brawl in the 1980 BRL grand final

Lowe brought a couple of Kiwis with him to Brisbane. One was backrower Mark Graham who Lowe said at the time was a “combination of Ron Coote and Johnny Raper” and who is still rated by good judges as the best New Zealand league player ever produced. The other was an unsung front rower named Stan Napa, the father of current Maroon Dylan.

Under Lower’s guidance Stan Napa became a BRL cult figure.

“Stan was ahead of his time,” Lowe said. “In those days, props were supposed to be connected to the middle of the ruck at the hip but with his speed and footwork, we used Stan as a wide-running front rower.

“He caused havoc and became a real crowd favourite.

“It is such a thrill to see his son playing so well in the NRL and earning an Origin jersey.”

When the inaugural State of Origin match was



Game Two, 1991 and Ben Elias gets between Wally Lewis and Mark Geyer.



Norths coach Graham Lowe (in white T-shirt) at the end of the 1980 grand final.

played in July, 1980, Lowe was at Lang Park having a few beers with some of his Norths players.

A few months later, at the same venue, Lowe’s Devils upset the red-hot favourites Souths, coached by Bob McCarthy and containing a stack of stars, including none other than Mal Meninga in the BRL grand final.

The Norths team that day was:

Joe Kilroy, Brian Bird, Brian “Yogi” Dunn, Peter Dutton, Gary Warnock, Mark Murray (c), Ross Hernrick, Neville Draper, Mark Graham, Gary Walker, Shane Bernardin, Greg Conescu, Campbell “Zulu” Dews. Stan Napa was on an extended reserves (pre-inter-change) bench.

VIDEO: Devils win the 1980 BRL grand final against the odds

Kilroy, Murray, Henrick and Conescu were to become Origin players for Queensland and Murray coached the Maroons. Walker’s sons Chris, Shane and Ben played at NRL level and Chris played Origin for Queensland. Ross “the Angry Ant” Henrick died in 2005. Peter Dutton represented Queensland and Australia in baseball.

Graham Lowe coached Queensland six times for three wins and one series win. He was awarded the Queen’s Service Medal in 1986 and in 2013 he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, for services to the community.



Graham Lowe with, from left, Greg Conescu, Ross Henrick, Mark Murray and Campbell Dews.



Former Maroons coach Graham Lowe tells what it meant to him - **Courtesy of Brisbane Courier Mail**

IN 1980 I was coaching Norths in Brisbane and after standing in the Lang Park “pig pen” with my players watching Arthur Beetson lead the Queenslanders to history, I thought I had an idea of what State of Origin meant to Queensland.

Follow tonight’s clash on Twitter using #marooncrusade

But it was as Queensland coach, when I looked into the eyes of Wally Lewis, Mal Meninga, Martin Bella and the rest of the players, that I actually saw the very soul of the game, and what it actually meant to be a Queensland.

I got it.

In 1991, I received a phone call from QRL director Kevin Brasch, who asked me if I would be available to coach the Queensland Origin team.

That phone call changed me and my life.

For a Kiwi who had loved and played rugby league from the age of five in New Zealand, this event and atmosphere was something I’d dreamed about and had always known I would find in Australia.

Growing up and playing rugby league in Auckland in the 1950s and 60s was not easy. League people were socially disadvantaged and many were reluctant to tell their friends and even families they were involved in the game.

Rugby union came first, second and third over there.

But for us, our passion was kept alive by not only some great Kiwi

players of the past playing at Carlaw Park, but also the snip-pets of media we consumed from newspapers that were thrown out when planes were being cleaned in Auckland following flights from Sydney or Brisbane.

There was very limited media coverage at all of our sport in New Zealand. We were second-class citizens in the eyes of many, playing on grounds throughout the country that most local councils refused to maintain.

Follow tonight’s clash on Twitter using #marooncrusade

However, we loved watching the great Australian teams that toured the country in those days.

I went to Carlaw Park and watched them against either the Kiwis or Auckland and many of the Australian players became our idols.

And although I’d never seen Lang Park, my dreams had provided me an exact vision of what it would be like.

But really, I was totally unprepared for what was about to happen to me.

I know my appointment came with a bit of controversy at the time and I assure you it didn’t go unnoticed.

I felt like a Kiwi gate-crasher.

All of a sudden I felt I knew every Queensland on the planet and they were all looking at me.

I cherish the 15 minutes I had with Arthur Beetson over a cup

of tea when he said to me “Lowie, the boys will do it for you, don’t worry.”

And thinking back, I could never do justice to the commitment each and every player gave me in every game of ‘91 and ‘92. I love them all to this day and I hope I never let them down as their coach.

Follow tonight’s clash on Twitter using #marooncrusade

I’d already had the huge honour of coaching my country against many of these blokes wearing the Australian jumper, and I never want to sound disrespectful to that role as Kiwi coach.

But sitting in the team bus, coach of the Queensland, as we drove slowly past the Caxton pub, is a moment that is etched in my heart. As is trying to hug each and every player after we’d won in ‘91.

You gave me the honour and privilege to wear the coach’s badge for your state.

Thank you Queensland.

Graham Lowe coached at Otahuhu in Auckland before joining Norths in Brisbane in 1979. He coached New Zealand, Manly, North Queensland, Wigan (UK), Western Samoa and a “Rest of the World” team and was regarded as one of the great coaching innovators.



The King and the Kiwi. Wally Lewis and (inset) Graham Lowe.

State of Origin - 35 Years

If you are a fan of State of Origin Rugby League this book is for you. This fantastically illustrated book takes the reader on a journey spanning 35 Years with 350 great photos capturing the action.

A detailed look at each series from 1980 to 2014. Every game in every series is explored in detail, with a blow by blow account of all the key incidents.

There is also a detailed list of results, captains, teams, coaches, man of the match winners and referees.

The book is available in bookshops, The Warehouse or by going online at www.batemanpublishing.co.nz

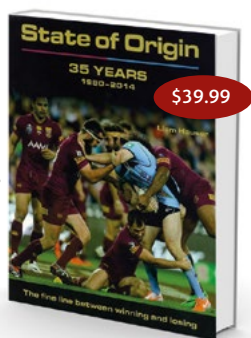
RRP is \$39.99

If you are a league fan, this is the book for you!

- Every State of Origin game explored in detail, with blow-by-blow accounts of all key incidents.

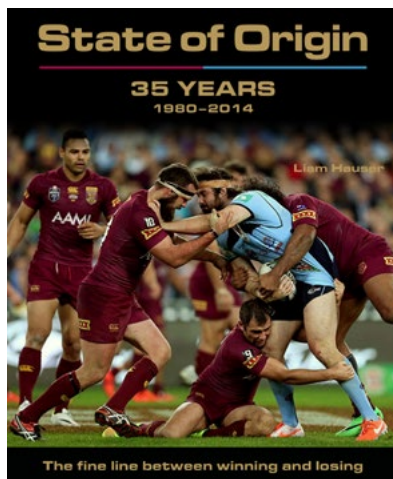
- Highs and lows, controversies and shocks.

- Over 350 great photos capturing the action.



Bateman

Available at The Warehouse, good bookshops or online at www.batemanpublishing.co.nz



2015 State of Origin Games:

Game I - May 27th - ANZ Stadium

Game II - June 17th - MCG

Game III - July 8th - Suncorp Stadium



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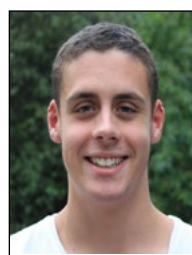
Here is the team that help me make the newsletter each week. Between us we make the newsletter happen - and like everything it's a team effort.



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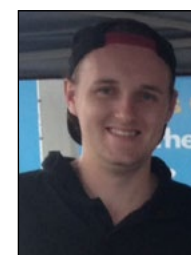
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