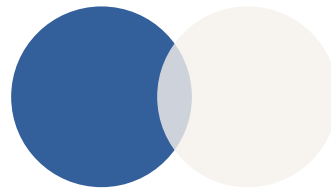


# CANTERBURY BULLDOGS



## Strongest Team

1. Ben Barba (fb/fe/hb/c)
2. Steve Turner (w/fb)
3. Jamal Idris (c/br)
4. Josh Morris (c)
5. Michael Lett (w)
6. Kris Keating (fe/hb/h)
7. Trent Hodkinson (hb)
13. David Stagg (br)
12. Andrew Ryan (br/p)
11. Frank Pritchard (br)
10. Aiden Tolman (p)
9. Michael Ennis (h)
8. Greg Eastwood (p/br)

- 
14. Michael Hodgson (p)
  15. Ryan Tandy (p)
  16. Grant Millington (br)
  17. Ben Roberts (fe/hb)

**Others:** Bryson Goodwin (w), Jonathan Wright (c), Martin Taupau (p), Chris Armit (p), Gary Warburton (br), Dene Halatau (br/h/c), Mickey Paea (p), Jake Foster (br), Brad Morrin (p), Junior Tia-Kilifi (w/c), Daniel Rauicava (c), Joel Romelo (h), Tim Browne (p), Sam Kaisano (p), Corey Payne (br), Aiden Sezer (fe), Josh Jackson (br)

**Gains:** Trent Hodkinson (Manly), Aiden Tolman (Melbourne), Frank Pritchard (Penrith), Greg Eastwood (Leeds), Kris Keating (Parramatta), Grant Millington (Cronulla), Michael Lett (St George-Illawarra), Jonathan Wright (Parramatta)

**Losses:** Brett Kimmorley (Retired), Luke Patten (Salford), Ben Hannant (Brisbane), Jarrad Hickey (Wakefield), Blake Green (Hull KR), "Buddy" Gordon (Penrith), Tim Winitana (Penrith), Daniel Harrison (Manly), Danny Williams (Retired), Kose Lelei (Cronulla), Nathan Massey (Canberra), Ratu Tagive (Wests Tigers), Paki Afu (Parramatta), Marmin Barba (Parramatta)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Todd Greenberg, Peter Mulholland and Kevin Moore have done an outstanding job in difficult circumstances this year with the need to find adequate replacements for departing club legend Luke Patten as well as halfback Brett Kimmorley and prop Ben Hannant. Promising halfback Trent Hodkinson, who plays with a maturity beyond his years, will replace Kimmorley while Aiden Tolman looks and plays like Hannant's twin. Throw in the boost to the backrow stocks with internationals Frank Pritchard and Greg Eastwood, an exciting

utility in Kris Keating and depth with the likes of Millington, Lett and Wright and you have a top notch recruitment class. A broom was also put through the second tier talent which moved on a number of underperformers. There is no doubt this is the best recruitment class of 2011 and is worthy of an A+ grade.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Frank Pritchard, Greg Eastwood. (Possible) Michael Ennis, Aiden Tolman, Jamal Idris, Josh Morris.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 5**

There is uncertainty over who will start in the #1 jersey with Ben Barba likely to get first crack at Luke Patten's old jumper. Barba is an unknown whose height could be an issue under the high ball. Ability to adapt to the position is a query. He does have a ton of ability though and is a potent attacking force. Michael Lett and Steve Turner will challenge if Barba fails.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 8**

Jamal Idris and Josh Morris form a rep-level centre pairing. Idris has issues with his hands and Morris with his defence but both are top quality players who should still be improving. Idris, following eye surgery, is expected to catch better this season. Both are tough to tackle. Wingers Goodwin and Turner have also both played rep footy but will be under pressure from new recruit Michael Lett after disappointing in 2010. Turner has lost a step and Goodwin is seemingly not that good. Dogs have recruited great depth in the three-quarters.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 4.5**

Kevin Moore won't decide until opening night who starts in the six with Ben Roberts and Kris Keating fighting it out for the starting five-eighth role. Keating is the better option as he is a smarter player who plays within the team structure better. Roberts is an individual with sharps bursts of talent filled out with horrid acts of stupidity. Roberts has one of the lowest football IQ's in the NRL and potentially the history of organised sport.

#### **Halfback ----- 7.5**

Canterbury scored a major coup when signing Manly halfback Trent Hodkinson. Hodkinson ascended to City Origin in his debut season where he made his mark as a hard-nosed and creative half. He has a good kicking game, plenty of smarts and his defence is as strong as any seven in the game. He is only going to get better in 2011.

#### **Hooker ----- 8**

Michael Ennis has been the Blues hooker in '09 and '10 but while his attacking form was outstanding in 2009, he really struggled out of dummy half in 2010, quite often taking the low percentage play. Ennis has been touted as a future club captain but

he will need to revive his 2009 form if the Bulldogs are to succeed and he is to be a long-term Bulldog. He should also never kick a ball. Ever.

### **Prop** ----- 7.5

Aiden Tolman is the hottest young prop in the game who will play 15 Tests and he will prove a great purchase by Canterbury. He will need to lead a prop rotation that was too one-dimensional last year, particularly before Ryan Tandy arrived, with the likes of Hodgson and Armit no more than straight up-and-down types. Tandy adds a bit more grunt. Expect both Greg Eastwood and Andrew Ryan to see playing time at prop this season. Ryan needs to move closer to the middle at this stage. Eastwood, whether playing prop or second row, is a genuine x-factor capable of changing the tide of any game but enters the season under a major injury cloud and should miss the first month at least.

### **Backrow** ----- 8.5

Backrow was a major problem for the Bulldogs in 2010 but that has been amended with some astute recruiting. Greg Eastwood returns after a year in England and will provide the Bulldogs fringes with some spark when he recovers from wrist surgery. Big buy Frank Pritchard, with his offloads and hard running, will add a much needed attacking threat on the left-hand fringe. David Stagg is a mule and one of the most reliable players in the NRL, one who regularly makes 50 tackles and 80 metres. Stagg is a player you can build a team around. Skipper Andrew Ryan continues to work hard but his attacking game is declining. Former Shark Grant Millington has promise while Jake Foster will be a first grader when given an opportunity.

### **Coach Rating:** Kevin Moore (3rd season at Canterbury, 3rd in the NRL) ----- 6

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 28-22

Finals Record: 1-1

Finals Seasons: 1

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 28-22

**Coach Analysis:** Canterbury have a history of hiring quality coaches with their five mentors over the last three decades preceding Moore (Steve Folkes, Chris Anderson, Phil Gould, Warren Ryan and Ted Glossop) amongst the finest coaches over that period with all five winning titles and Anderson and Gould winning premierships away from Belmore. Kevin Moore shaped as the next top line coach to be hired by the club when the son of former patriarch Peter led Canterbury to a preliminary final in his debut season of 2009. Moore led a cleanout of the club after the horror wooden spoon season of 2008 and the rewards were immediate with Moore also winning Coach of the Year honours. Last season, however, Moore's reputation plummeted back to earth as Canterbury struggled to build momentum all year, losing a plethora of close games on the back of a lifeless and predictable

attack, flimsy tackling and a poor understanding of defensive structure. Also counting against Moore was his conservatism last season. Moore refused to wield the axe on struggling players when it should have come down heavily on the likes of Buddy Gordon, Mickey Paea, Ben Roberts and Bryson Goodwin, while his reluctance to start Ben Barba in the six jersey was as illogical as it was harmful. His use of the interchange bench was also questionable at times with Moore stupidly taking to substituting 80-minute player David Stagg, wasting both an interchange and the primary talent of his lock, that being his longevity and ability to go all day. Moore reportedly does not have the full support of the Canterbury board and with Wayne Bennett a free agent after this season, the pressure is on the Bulldogs coach to bring the success the club expects. Moore does have some upside but 2011 is the time he needs to show it if he hopes to be around in 2012.

### Club 5-Year Results:

Year	Record	Finish	1-8	9-16	17-24	Finals	Postseason Finish
2010	9-15	13th	3-5	3-5	3-5	DNQ	--
2009	18-6	2nd	7-1	5-3	6-2	1-1	Preliminary Final
2008	5-19	16th	3-5	2-6	0-8	DNQ	--
2007	12-12	6th	4-4	4-4	4-4	0-2	Semi Final
2006	16-8	2nd	5-3	5-3	6-2	1-1	Preliminary Final

### Coach 5-Year Results:

Year	Record	Finish	1-8	9-16	17-24	Finals	Postseason Finish
2010	9-15	13th	3-5	3-5	3-5	DNQ	--
2009	18-6	2nd	7-1	5-3	6-2	1-1	Preliminary Final

**Draw Analysis:** There has been no discernible trending at Canterbury over the last five years in terms of performance at the beginning, middle and end of their seasons. The only point worth noting is that when Canterbury do perform well, they play .500 ball all season and usually finish off the latter third with a strong burst. This year Canterbury have a brutal start to the season where they meet three of the top four teams from 2010, Melbourne and South Sydney in the opening five weeks and double up against the Bunnies and Dragons inside the opening ten rounds. While Canterbury face a difficult start to the year, they should be poised to make a late season run with their last eight matches coming against six teams expected to miss the eight with their most difficult match against the Roosters. Canterbury get a fair match-up before Origin I with both the Dogs and Canberra likely to miss 1-2 players but Canterbury should get a cheap win before Origin III against a Penrith team who could be without two outside backs and two key forwards.

### Home and Away Record:

Year	Record	Home	Away
2010	9-15	4-8	5-7
2009	19-7	12-2	7-5
2008	5-19	3-9	2-10
2007	12-14	4-9	8-5
2006	17-9	9-4	8-5
Five-Year Total	62-64	32-32	30-32

**Home and Away Analysis:** Canterbury seemingly goes into every season handicapped by the lack of a home field advantage. Canterbury have had good years at Stadium Australia but in three of the last five seasons they have failed to win more than four games at the monstrosity of a home ground. The Bulldogs have traditionally been one of the more competent road teams, going 30-32 since the start of the 2006 season.

### Attack Rankings:

Category	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Points Scored	12th	2nd	16th	4th	1st
Metres	8th	10th	16th	9th	3rd
Offloads	10th	6th	13th	7th	4th
Tackle Breaks	2nd	4th	15th	7th	3rd
Errors	8th	12th	15th	12th	4th

### Defence Rankings:

Category	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Points Conceded	12th	3rd	16th	9th	7th
Metres Conceded	14th	12th	16th	6th	8th
Missed Tackles	13th	15th	16th	13th	14th

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** Statistically, the 2008 Canterbury team may be one of the worst teams of the NRL Era, ranking in the bottom four of every category measure here with a top ranking of 13th in offloads, the least important stat category. In the years Canterbury have made the finals, they have not dropped out the bottom in points allowed and metres conceded. The most worrying sign for Canterbury fans is their missed tackle ranking, which has been bottom four since 2006. For a team long regarded as hard-nosed, this is a sign of a significant identity change. Kevin Moore will need to stiffen up the Bulldogs defence and have the Dogs attack improve in efficiency if the Dogs are to improve into a finals team and Moore is to avoid being the shortest tenured Canterbury coach in two decades.

### Leading Tryscorers:

Year	Leading Tryscorer(s)	Tries
2010	Ben Barba	15
2009	Josh Morris	22
2008	Heka Nanai	13
2007	Sonny Bill Williams	14
2006	Hazem El Masri	17

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 39

**Games Lost Analysis:** Despite excuses people being made that Canterbury suffered a glut of injuries in 2010, those injuries mainly came to fringe starters and bench players with Dene Halatau managing only 8 games and Corey Payne playing only 1. Of the starters, Ben Roberts missed 11 games but was easily replaced by Ben Barba when Moore gave the youngster a chance. The loss of Hannant and Hodgson probably did the most damage with the starting props missing 11 games between them due to injury and Origin.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Canterbury were a disappointing team in 2010 and punters felt it with the Bulldogs covering only 10 times in 24 games and losing \$6.39 if investing \$1 on each game. The Bulldogs dished out an almighty savaging to loyal backers. A four game cover streak between rounds 15 and 18 was the only time the Bulldogs managed to beat the number in three straight matches all season. The Bulldogs were particularly poor on the road, covering only 4 of 12 games when playing away. The Bulldogs struggled off the quick back-up as well, winning only 1 of 4 when playing twice within five days. In terms of total points, Canterbury were an under team, finishing below the total point number on 14 occasions. Canterbury were 12-7 under in night/twilight matches though they did finish with a total between 31 and 50 on fifteen occasions, suggesting most matches involving the Dogs were close calls when it came to total points. For a season where Canterbury struggled, their average price of \$2.08 suggests they were very much overbet and overvalued by punters in 2010.

See Appendices A and B for complete betting data on each individual team

### 2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:

Premiership: \$11.00

Minor Premiership: \$8.00

Top 4: \$2.80

Top 8: \$1.50

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**Mr Rugby Assessment:** It would be hard to find many sides in the NRL with a more balanced and resourceful side but I can't get past the fact the Doggies don't have a great number of out-and-out stars. Frank Pritchard and perhaps Josh Morris/Jamal Idris/Ben Barba can be thrown in this category but the rest of the squad are best described as average to above average first graders. That's not to say a squad of this ilk could not win a premiership but I don't think Kevin Moore has what it takes to get the absolute best out of them. Great depth, shrewd hooker and halfback but just off the pace in my opinion. Price: \$21.00



### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 55 (equal 6th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-10th

Predicted Finish: 6th

The atrocities of 2010 will not be accepted again at Belmore. A club that prides itself on both success and an ability to overcome adversity, Canterbury can be expected to bounce back strongly. The Bulldogs have not missed the finals in consecutive years since 1992 and only four times since 1968 has the club failed to win 10 or more matches (1981, 2005, 2008 and 2010) and on the last two occasions, Canterbury have fired back to play in a preliminary final. With such a fine recruitment class and what was surely a gruelling preseason under trainer Tony Grimaldi, Canterbury are back in not only the finals picture but back in the premiership frame. They certainly have a squad that, playing at their peak, could win a premiership. Hodgkinson just looks like a top flight player waiting to rise to the elite level. Aiden Tolman is so clever. Eastwood and Pritchard bring in a style the Dogs have not seen in years. David Stagg is the backbone every team wishes they had. Canterbury get a lot of ticks this year. There are a few concerns though. Ben Barba at fullback is very much a high risk/high return play. He could very much turn into a Matt Bowen at his peak but he could also prove completely untenable due to his defensive weaknesses. Only time will tell. Five eighth is another concern, particularly if Kevin Moore persists with Ben Roberts. Poor tackling is more than a minor issue. The tactical nous of Kevin Moore is also a worry. I see Canterbury going to at least the second week of the finals. A good run with injuries and that could translate into a Grand Final. The more likely return, however, is a week two or three exit as teams regarded as stronger defensive outfits like the Dragons, Storm and Tigers come into their own.

**2011 Betting Advice:** Canterbury offer good value in both the premiership and minor premiership markets with \$13.00 (Bet 365) available for both. Sharp punters though will wait until after the first month though as the Bulldogs have a savage draw to start the season and are sure to drift in markets if they can't sneak at least one win. Canterbury were well backed early by many of the best punters around and are tipped by plenty of sharpies to be dramatic improvers this season. At the \$2.80 (Flemington Sportsbet) available, a wager on Canterbury to run in the top four is also getting the best of it. One would imagine the Canterbury identity will change markedly this year so it is best to be wary of betting their matches early, particularly betting on total points markets.