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**PAGES OF  
QUALITY  
ANALYSIS**

# **THE PUNTERS'**

*guide to the*

**2011  
NRL**

## **SEASON**

★ ALL THE LATEST TEAM INFORMATION WITH COMPLETE SQUAD LISTINGS FOR EACH CLUB  
★ DETAILED BETTING INFORMATION FROM THE 2010 SEASON INCLUDING ANALYSIS OF HEAD-TO-HEAD, LINE AND TOTAL POINTS BETTING FOR EACH CLUB AND THE NRL AS A WHOLE ★ THE THOUGHTS AND PREMIERSHIP PRICES OF AUSTRALIA'S TOP RUGBY LEAGUE GAMBLER AND FORMER PUNTING ACE GURU MR RUGBY ★ AN IN-DEPTH AND ORIGINAL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF ALL 16 TEAMS' RECRUITMENT, POSITIONAL AND COACHING ASSESSMENT AND DRAW EVALUATION FOR EVERY CLUB ★ PREDICTIONS AND BETTING ADVICE FOR THE 2011 SEASON **BY NICK TEDESCHI**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Punters' Guide to the 2011 NRL Season, the first but hopefully not the last. The aim of this guide is to provide a thorough analysis of each club, offering in-depth analysis of how each team shapes up, how they are likely to perform, their strengths and weaknesses and most importantly for punters, what kind of betting opportunities each team present.

And be sure and certain: plenty of betting opportunities exist.

It is a tremendously useful resource for punters from professionals to casual punters and even those who are just simply in love with league and want all the latest information on their team.

The 2011 season is shaping up as a fascinating one. Certainly the most interesting team is the Melbourne Storm. The club was left on its knees after last year's salary cap scandal but Craig Bellamy and Cameron Smith are two men who will not take the harsh and perceived unfair punishment of 2010 without retaliation and with a chip on their collective shoulder and still a high portion of star power, Melbourne are going to look to legitimise their greatness.

In the way of the Storm are defending premiers and hated rivals St George-Illawarra. The Dragons were dominant in 2010. They were clearly the best team in the competition but question marks remain over whether they would have won the title if the Storm were not forced to play out the season for no premiership points.

Parramatta have a new coach in Stephen Kearney, already being hailed as a saviour but sure to be on the hot seat if results don't improve immediately. Coaches don't last long at the Eels these days.

Cronulla also have a new coach in Shane Flanagan, who took over with seven weeks remaining in 2010. Expectations are lower for Flanagan than Kearney but he will need to get the Sharks showing signs of life, at the very least, to keep his job.

Ivan Henjak at Brisbane, David Furner at Canberra, Neil Henry at North Queensland and Kevin Moore at Canterbury are all on the hot seat. Henry and Henjak, in particular, will need early results to save their careers.

Excitement is certainly high in Canberra for the first time in many years with the

Raiders right in the premiership picture for the first time since the days of Daley and Mullins. The Green Machine have the talent to go a long way in 2011.

Penrith had a season to remember in 2010, their best since winning the title in 2003, but it finished in disappointing circumstances and the club is now at the crossroads again with coach Matt Elliott still searching for his first finals victory after ten years as an NRL boss.

As Matt Elliott chases his first finals win, Brian Smith chases that elusive premiership in what will be his 23rd season in the top grade. He has the likely New South Wales halves pairing in Todd Carney and Mitchell Pearce and will fancy his chances.

There were some huge offseason player moves. Greg Inglis to South Sydney was the biggest of all, arguably bigger than his waistline. Ben Hannant returns to Brisbane. Dallas Johnson has signed with the Cowboys. Feleti Mateo has crossed the ditch and is now a Warrior. Canterbury have gone on a spending spree with Frank Pritchard, Greg Eastwood, Aiden Tolman and Trent Hodkinson their biggest purchases. The Sharks will no doubt welcome the arrival of Jeremy Smith. Matt Orford will don the lime green of Canberra.

Those returning from injury will also be watched closely. Brett Stewart is back from two straight season-ending knee injuries while Justin Hodges did not make it onto the paddock for the Broncos in 2010. Taniela Tuiaki was forced to consider retirement.

With the Independent Commission surely set to arrive, Robert Finch thankfully consigned to rugby league history and the New South Wales selectors certain to make another mess of the team, the NRL will again be the most exciting and interesting sporting competition in the land.

So lets get ready to rock and roll for what will be another salivating and hopefully profitable year of rugby league action.

**Nick Tedeschi**

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

There are many betting terms and phrases used in this publication. For anybody confused or unsure of the meaning of any expression, here is an in-depth list of all terms used.

**ATS:** Against the Spread (Against the Line/ Covered). ATS refers to how a team performed against the bookmaker's handicap (or line, as it is also known). When discussing team records for the 2010 season, 'against the spread' is essentially interchangeable with 'against the line' or 'against the number'. For example, if Canterbury were 2 ½ point favourites and won by 4 over Penrith, they would cover the spread. But if Canterbury either won by 2 points or less or lost the match, then Penrith would have covered the spread. References to the number of times a side 'covered' relate to the number of time the team in question successfully covered the spread. All lines referred to are opening lines provided by the TAB.

**Attack Rankings:** These rankings show where a club ranked among all sixteen teams in points scored, metres gained, offloads, tackle breaks and handling errors.

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** This analysis looks at the strengths and weaknesses of an individual team in regards their relative attack and defence statistics. It looks for trends such as Melbourne ranking top-two in points allowed each year over the last five and Brisbane ranking bottom-four in missed tackles every year since 2006. The analysis also gives a good indication of where a team sits heading into the 2011 season, what areas are likely to improve and what areas are likely to go backwards.

**Average Price:** This refers to a team's average head-to-head price throughout the season. Average Home Price is the team's average price in all home matches while the team's Average Away Price is the team's average price in all away matches.

**Away Data:** Teams designated with the away game have those statistics added to their away data. For example, the Roosters played a home game in Christchurch, New Zealand but that still counts as an away game for the Warriors even though the match was played in New Zealand. Underdogs received the away game allocation in semi-final matches played at neutral venues where both teams were from Sydney.

**Club 5-Year Results:** This table provides the records for each club over the last five seasons, breaking down the season into thirds and providing each club's record in each season over the opening third (matches 1-8), middle third (matches 9-16) and final third (matches 17-24). The table also displays each team's finals record and what round of the finals the team was eliminated from if that team made the finals.

**Coach 5-Year Results:** This table provides the records for each coach over the last five seasons, breaking down the season into thirds and providing each coach's record in each season over the opening third (matches 1-8), middle third (matches 9-16) and final third (matches 17-24). The table also displays each coach's finals record and what round of the finals the coach was eliminated from if that team made the finals.

**Coach Rating:** This is a measure of each and every coach based on their overall record, recent record, finals record, reputation, current relationship with players and tactical nous.

**Defence Rankings:** These rankings show where a club ranked among all sixteen teams in points allowed, metres conceded and missed tackles.

**Draw Analysis:** This portion of a team's analysis looks at the team's draw. It studies how each team traditionally performs over each third of the season, the difficulty of each team's start and finish and how each team will be impacted by State of Origin.

**Favourite:** The team/side/option in betting that is shortest in odds. In handicap betting, the favourite is often said to "have the minus" or "give the start" meaning they have to win by more than the handicap for handicap bettors to win the wager.

**Final Assessment:** This provides an overall summary of each team. It looks at where a club is currently at, what their upside is, what their downside is, what their strengths and weaknesses are, how strong their roster is and how good their coach is and where they fit in to the greater NRL picture for the 2011 season.

**5-Day Back-up:** This is when a club is forced to play five days after their last match. It is the shortest accepted time between games. Teams on a five day backup play on a Monday followed by a Saturday or on a Sunday followed by a Friday.



**Games Lost to Injury/ Suspension/ Rep Duty:** This metric is a measurement of how many games were lost by a team's starting thirteen in 2010 due to reasons other than a coach's decision. A low number suggests a team consistently fielded its strongest starting line-up while a high number suggests a team was forced to play without their strongest team significantly longer than other clubs.

**Head-to-Head Betting:** Also known as match odds, this is the price a bookmaker bets about a team for a particular match. The price is based on the bookmaker's perceived chance of victory given to each team.

**Home Data:** Teams designated with the home game have those statistics added to their home data. For example, South Sydney played a home game in Perth but that still counts as a home game for the Bunnies as does the Gold Coast playing a preliminary final at Lang Park against the Roosters. Favourites received the home game allocation in semi-final matches played at neutral venues where both teams were from Sydney.

**Home, Away and Total Profit/ Loss:** This number refers to the net profit a punter would have received back if placing \$1 on the club in each match. For example, the Broncos played 12 matches at home. If they won 5 games and paid \$2.00 in each of them, their home profit figure would be calculated as -\$2.00 (a \$12.00 outlay for a \$10.00 return) but if they won 7 games and paid \$2.00 in each of them, their home profit figure would be calculated as +\$2.00 (a \$12.00 outlay for a \$14.00 return). All prices are the TAB starting price for each match.

**Home and Away Analysis/Record:** This portion of a club's analysis looks at how each team has performed at home and on the road over the last five years.

**Interstate:** References to travelling interstate refers to when teams travel outside the state they play in. For the purposes of this publication, Canberra are considered to be in New South Wales while New Zealand is considered a separate state.

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** This is an assessment of a team's overall recruitment and retention and whether their roster has improved or gone backwards this offseason.

**Off Bye:** The match a team plays following their weekly bye. For the purposes of this publication, teams who play in the preliminary final who won a week off are considered to be playing off a bye.

**Off Monday Night Football:** The match a team plays following a match of Monday Night Football.

**Position Ratings:** For each club, every position is analysed with a mark out of ten given. Taken into account is primarily the starting team but depth is also considered.

**Prediction Range:** This is the range where, given normal luck and a normal injury run, a team will most likely finish and is a measure of both a team's predicted finish and predicted volatility.

**Representative Losses:** This looks at which players are likely to play either State of Origin or in the Anzac Day Test.

**Roster Rating:** The overall roster rating is out of 80 and accounts for all Position Ratings plus the Coach Rating.

**7-Day Plus Back-up:** This refers to when a team has seven days or longer to prepare for a match.

**Strongest Team:** This is the best possible side each team can play according to the author. For the most part, it is the team that will be played by the coach. There are exceptions, however, as at Canterbury with Bryson Goodwin likely to start ahead of Michael Lett on the wing despite the author rating Lett a stronger player than Goodwin.

**Total Points Betting (Over/ Under):** For every match, bookmakers will offer a bet type allowing punters to wager whether the total combined score for both teams will be above or below a certain number. When the total score finishes higher than the set total points line, the score is said to have gone "over." When the total score finishes lower than the set total points line, the score is said to have gone "under". Bookmakers usually bet \$1.91 for each side of the line. For example, bookmakers set a total points line of 44.5 for a match between Newcastle and Manly. If Newcastle beat Manly 34-20, the score has gone over. If, however, Newcastle beat Manly 22-20 then the score has gone under. Most total points lines total no smaller than 36.5 and no higher than 48.5 though there are exceptions. A team which is referred to as a "good under team" played in significantly more matches where the total score went "under" than where it went "over". The inverse is true for a "good over team".



**2010 Betting Assessment:** This portion of a club's analysis looks at how a club performed in a betting sense in 2010. It looks at many factors including situations where obvious betting situations existed, suggesting they may again arise in 2011.

**2011 Betting Advice:** This portion of a club's analysis looks at how a club is expected to perform in a betting sense in 2011, offering futures wagering advice as well as match situations that should prove strong this season.

**Underdog:** The team/side/option in betting that is longest in odds. In handicap betting, the underdog is often said to "have the plus" or "gets the points" meaning they can either win or lose by a margin within the allocated handicap for bettors who backed that team/side/option to win their bet.

## 2010 NRL BETTING ANALYSIS

The 2010 season was an interesting one for punters and the following should provide an insight into the betting patterns seen in 2010. Before reading on, readers should refer to appendices A and B at the back of the guide, which provides the detailed betting data used in the following chapter.

Home teams had a 112-89 (55.72%) record throughout the season but were slightly worse against the line, going 108-93 (53.73%). Home favourites won at a rate of 51.43% (72-68) but it was home underdogs who were again the play, going 36-25 (59.02%) against the spread.

Underdogs of between 0.5 and 6 points were the best play in terms of covering in 2010. Underdogs of less than a converted try covered went 65-55 (54.17%) ATS. Favourites in excess of 6.5 points covered 51.85% of the time including a 5-4 record when favoured by in excess of 12 points.

The Dragons (25) started favourites on most occasions followed by Melbourne (19), Tigers (17) and Penrith (17). Cronulla did not start favourite all season with the Cowboys (5), Newcastle (6) and South Sydney (9) the teams to jump favourite the fewest times. The Dragons had the shortest average price at \$1.51 followed by Melbourne at \$1.64, Parramatta at \$1.76 and Penrith at \$1.80. Cronulla (\$3.15) and North Queensland (\$2.85) had the highest average starting prices. Those two, along with South Sydney, were the only teams to be average home outsiders.

The Dragons (15-10), Melbourne (12-7) and New Zealand (7-4) were the strongest teams to bet as favourites in 2010 while South Sydney (11-4), Gold Coast (9-4), Sydney Roosters (10-5), New Zealand (9-5) and the Wests Tigers (7-3) were the strongest cover teams as outsiders.

Two teams had a particularly strong record when travelling interstate. The Gold Coast Titans went 8-0 ATS when playing outside of Queensland as outsiders while New Zealand went 7-4 when playing in Australia as an underdog. The Roosters (3-0) and the Tigers (2-0) did not miss a cover playing outside of New South Wales. Parramatta were the only team to not cover interstate in 2010 while the Cowboys were a dreadful 2-8 ATS outside of the sunshine state.

Every season some teams prefer day matches; others night games. 2010 was no different.

Brisbane were the punters pal in day matches, going 5-1 ATS when playing under sunshine. The Roosters and New Zealand (both 6-4 ATS) were other good teams to bet in day matches. Cronulla were the worst team to bet in day matches (0-5 ATS) followed by Newcastle and Canberra (both 3-6 ATS).

Interestingly, teams coming off a 5-day backup were a solid 29-30 ATS, putting a dent in the myth that teams on a quick backup were horrible bets (or at least highlighting that bookmakers are making broadly the correct handicap allowance for teams coming off a quick backup). Rather, it is teams off an extended break that are disappointing punters. Teams playing off a rest of seven or more days went 116-128 ATS (47.54%) in 2010. This could have to do with the focus a team has on such a rest, the difference in preparation, a drop in intensity and/or the overcompensation bettors give well rested teams.

The shortest priced favourite all season was the Melbourne Storm in their last home match with Newcastle. The Storm went into the game 20.5 point favourites and \$1.08 in head-to-head betting. The Storm won 34-4. Seven teams started at below \$1.20 or as bigger than 14 ½ point favourites. Five teams won (Parramatta against Cronulla and Melbourne against Brisbane did not) and four covered (St George-Illawarra defeated Brisbane by 18 but did not cover the 18.5 point start). Had you have backed all seven teams that started below \$1.20 in head-to-head markets, you'd have only received \$5.57 for your \$7 outlay-bear that in mind the next time you think about betting big on a so-called certainty.

Cronulla were the longest priced home winner, saluting at \$4.60 against Parramatta in round 4. Brisbane also won at \$4.60 in Melbourne in round 9 (as per the two shortest priced losing favourites noted above). The Gold Coast (\$4.10 against St George-Illawarra in round 20) and Newcastle (\$4.10 against Canterbury in round 1) were the only other teams to win straight out at odds of greater than \$4.00. Of the five teams who started at odds of greater than \$5.00, only one team (Brisbane against St George-Illawarra) scored a first half try and no team got closer than 18 points at full time.

Six teams, if bet at level stakes in every match in the match odds market, would have given punters a profit. In order of profit, they are: Gold Coast (\$6.20), Sydney Roosters (\$5.89), Canberra (\$3.70), New Zealand (\$3.42), St George-Illawarra (\$2.46) and the Wests Tigers (\$1.04). Seven teams recorded a home profit while six teams recorded a road profit.

Total points betting also threw up some interesting results.

The under saluted in 106 of the 201 matches at a strike rate of 52.74%. Melbourne (18-6), St George-Illawarra (18-9), Wests Tigers (16-11) and the Sydney Roosters (16-12) were the top under teams and the three eligible clubs amongst them all reached the preliminary final suggesting under wagers in matches involving the top teams is a rewarding play (and further, that strong under teams are indeed legitimate premiership contenders).

Wet weather, unsurprisingly, tended to lead to small scores but the record of over-under matches hindered by inclement weather suggests bookmakers did not react

strongly enough to the poor conditions. The under went 25-10 (71.43% under) in wet weather where matches in dry weather went over 51.20% of the time. No team went over in better than 50% of their wet weather matches with South Sydney (2-2) the only team to achieve such a mark. Wet weather leads to under matches.

Teams coming off a bye have a 22-12 under record. This sits well with the logic that tired teams leak points. When teams are freshened up, they are much sturdier defensively and matches tend to go under the total points mark. Additionally, coaches tend to work on defensive patterns more often in byes.

The under also occurred proportionately more often when a match involved an interstate favourite. In those matches, the under went 18-7, a 72% under record. This transfers across to any match involving a road favourite with a 37-24 under record when the home team enters the match as an outsider. Interestingly, home underdogs went 36-25 in the same matches providing an opportunity to wager both the home outsider and the under in the same match. An interstate underdog, however, resulted in a 38-38 over-under record.

Day matches went over 53.57% (30-26 over) of the time while night matches went over in only 44.83% (80-65 under) of games contested once the sun has gone down.

The most common ten-point breakdown for NRL matches is the 31-40 point band with 29.35% of the matches finishing between those two numbers. The 41-50 point band finished with 26.37% of final totals. 55.72% of matches ended with a total of between 31 and 50 points.

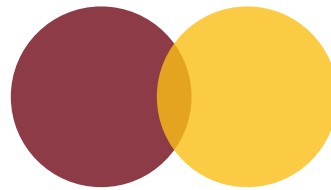
49.25% of matches finished with a total of 40 points or below with 50.75% finishing above the 40 point mark. This effectively means that the over-under total points betting line should, on average, be set at 40.5 points. Allowances should then be made for the trends highlighted above with respect to weather, stronger or weaker teams taking part, consideration of teams coming off a bye and the like. Keep these things in mind before you race out to bet the over when the line is, say, 46.5 points.

4.48% of matches totalled 20 points or less. 2.49% of matches totalled 71 or more points.

The biggest total points line set in 2010 came in round 5 when the Penrith-Roosters total was set at 50.5. The total in that match went under. The lowest total points line set in 2010 came in round 13 when Parramatta hosted Melbourne. The total was set at 28.5 but the final score went over.

The total for four matches was set at below 36 points with the over saluting going 3-1. The total for three matches was set at above 47 points with the under going 2-1. When the total was set at 46.5 or higher, the under went 13-10. When the total was set at 37.5 or lower, the under went 14-7. This suggests that bookmakers do not go low enough for predicted low scoring games but the inverse does not hold true.

# BRISBANE BRONCOS



## Strongest Team

1. Josh Hoffman (fb)
2. Gerard Beale (w/c)
3. Alex Glenn (c/w/br)
4. Justin Hodges (c)
5. Jharal Yow Yeh (w)
6. Darren Lockyer (fe)
7. Peter Wallace (hb)
13. Corey Parker (br)
12. Sam Thaiday (br/p)
11. Matt Gillett (br/c/w)
10. Ben Hannant (p)
9. Andrew McCullough (h/hb)
8. Shane Tronc (p)

- 
14. Nick Kenny (p)
  15. Ben Te'o (br/c)
  16. Josh McGuire (p)
  17. Ben Hunt (h/hb)

**Others:** Corey Norman (fe/fb), Scott Anderson (p), Mitchell Dodds (p), Dane Gagai (fb/w/c), Dale Copley (fb/w/c), Dane Carlaw (br/p), Guy Williams (br), Denan Kemp (w/fb), Rohan Ahern (br), David Hala (p), Dunamis Lui (p), Mitch Rivett (w)

**Gains:** Ben Hannant (Canterbury), Dane Carlaw (Catalans)

**Losses:** Israel Folau (AFL), Antonio Winterstein (North Queensland), Ashton Sims (North Queensland), Lagi Setu (Retired), Tariq Sims (North Queensland), Korbin Sims (Newcastle), Andrew Clayton (Cronulla)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Brisbane will certainly welcome back Ben Hannant with open arms with the Broncos in desperate need of hard-headed forwards. His return to the club will hardly make up for the loss of Israel Folau and his touted replacement Greg Inglis though. Brisbane will head into 2011 with arguably their least potent backline in twenty years. The loss of Ashton Sims, Lagi Setu and Antonio Winterstein can only be viewed as a positive for Brisbane.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Darren Lockyer, Justin Hodges, Sam Thaiday. (Possible) Matt Gillett, Jharal Yow Yeh, Corey Parker.

## Position Ratings:

### Fullback ----- 6

Josh Hoffman won the job out in 2010 and had a nice debut year and will get first crack in 2011. Hoffman proved a dangerous attacking player though his ability under the high ball and his tackling remain issues.

### Three Quarters ----- 6.5

Justin Hodges is a star but must return from a serious injury that could hamper his speed and movement. Yow Yeh is touted as an Origin player but is not there yet, particularly defensively. Glenn is more a forward and Beale is unproven at the top level. The Broncos seem to be lacking class outside of Hodges. Try scoring could be a major worry.

### Five-Eighth ----- 8

The sun may be setting on Darren Lockyer's outstanding career but he remains Brisbane's most important player and a defence can certainly be mounted that he is still worthy of wearing the Australian six. He has lost some speed but none of his smarts and is the only man capable of moving Brisbane around the park. He will break plenty of records in 2011.

### Halfback ----- 6.5

It has been a fairly heavy fall for Peter Wallace, the former Origin halfback who has likely had a pen put through his name by rep selectors. He managed only 10 try assists in 22 matches last year and his defence was a real concern. Most worryingly, however, he seems to have lost his confidence to run the ball and plays now as simply Lockyer's butler.

### Hooker ----- 7

The Broncos have been pushing the youth barrow over the last few years and Andrew McCullough is one of the best young players to emerge. He is sharp out of dummy half, has a killer dummy and the heart for a large workload. He has just turned 21 but already has 50 games experience and will play a critical role for the Broncos this year and for a long time.

### Prop ----- 7.5

Brisbane have a legitimate superstar in Ben Hannant, who returns to the club after two seasons with Canterbury. Happier and injury free, he should improve on a disappointing 2010. There is little depth under Hannant though. Shane Tronc is a good ball-player but was ineffective last season. Nick Kenny has fallen off the face of the earth. Scott Anderson is just a whacker. Dane Carlaw hasn't been sighted for year. The likes of Hala and McGuire are anything but proven first graders at the moment.



## **Backrow** ----- 8

Backrow is a position of strength for Brisbane with Sam Thaiday one of the best in the game. There are few more damaging ball runners. Matt Gillett will pack down with him after a sensational debut season where he played beyond his years in many positions. The ever reliable Corey Parker locks the scrum. Parker does everything at a high level. Ben Te'o is a dangerous fringe runner who lifted his game significantly in 2010.

## **Coach Rating:** Ivan Henjak (3rd season at Brisbane, 3rd in the NRL) ----- 4

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 27-24

Finals Record: 2-1

Finals Seasons: 0

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 27-24

**Coach Analysis:** Only a deep run into September will save Ivan Henjak's job and it will need to come after a good start as a poor opening will see him gone before the birds of May stop chirping. After showing signs of decline in 2009 during Henjak's first season, the Broncos rallied and made it to preliminary final weekend. That decline manifested itself into full scale descent in 2010 when Henjak coached the first Broncos team to miss the finals since 1991. He seems to lack an understanding of the importance of defence, he does not know how to change the team's attitude to tackling, he chops and changes players too often and he has lost the dressing room to such an extent that for the first time, free agents were actively rejecting a move to the one-time powerhouse. Henjak is tactically poor and offers little in the way of motivation. Promising assistant Anthony Griffin is Henjak's likely successor.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 11-13  | 10th   | 2-6 | 6-2   | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 14-10  | 6th    | 6-2 | 3-5   | 5-3   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2008 | 14-9-1 | 5th    | 6-2 | 2-5-1 | 6-2   | 1-1    | Semi Final        |
| 2007 | 11-13  | 8th    | 3-5 | 5-3   | 3-5   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 3rd    | 6-2 | 5-3   | 3-5   | 3-1    | Premiers          |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 11-13  | 10th   | 2-6 | 6-2  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 14-10  | 6th    | 6-2 | 3-5  | 5-3   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |

**Draw Analysis:** The Broncos have been a particularly middling team over the last five years, finishing with between 11 and 14 wins in every season and qualifying for the finals from 2006 to 2009. They did, however, win the title in 2006. The Broncos have no real tendencies in regards the draw. They started well in '06, '07 and '09 but were ordinary in the opening third in '08 and '10. This year, the Broncos open with five games in Queensland but have tough road games against Canberra, the Tigers and the Roosters. The middle third is a little easier with byes in rounds 11 and 18, four home games and road trips against Cronulla and Parramatta. Danger games include a home match against bitter rivals Melbourne in round 9 and a trip to Perth to play Souths in round 16. Brisbane have both byes in Origin weeks and a home game against Canberra before Origin II, where they will likely start outsiders after losing most of their big names. The major concern for Brisbane in recent years has been their July-August fade. The post-Origin blues have not been awful for the Broncos in recent years but in three of the last five seasons, they have finished below .500 over their final eight games and are 20-20 over that five year stretch. Brisbane have a great run home with five matches at Suncorp and their final six matches against teams who didn't advance past week one of the finals in 2010. If Brisbane starts the season well, the draw suggests they should be looking at a finals berth.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record  | Home  | Away    |
|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| 2010            | 11-13   | 5-7   | 6-6     |
| 2009            | 16-11   | 9-4   | 7-7     |
| 2008            | 15-10-1 | 9-4   | 6-6-1   |
| 2007            | 11-14   | 6-6   | 5-8     |
| 2006            | 17-11   | 8-5   | 9-6     |
| Five-Year Total | 70-59-1 | 37-26 | 33-33-1 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Brisbane have had a reasonable home field advantage over the last five seasons, winning 58.7% of their home matches. One of the prime reasons for their fall from grace in 2010 was their disappointing home record, winning only 5 of 12 at Lang Park. On the road, Brisbane are a dead-on .500 team over the last five seasons, splitting their road matches down the middle over the last three years.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 9th  | 8th  | 3rd  | 10th | 6th  |
| Metres        | 5th  | 14th | 12th | 6th  | 2nd  |
| Offloads      | 5th  | 16th | 14th | 13th | 7th  |
| Tackle Breaks | 1st  | 3rd  | 4th  | 5th  | 1st  |
| Errors        | 4th  | 2nd  | 10th | 2nd  | 2nd  |

## Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 11th | 14th | 5th  | 7th  | 1st  |
| Metres Conceded | 15th | 13th | 9th  | 16th | 5th  |
| Missed Tackles  | 15th | 16th | 15th | 16th | 13th |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** The Broncos have major issues with defence and in particular tackling, ranking in the bottom two for missed tackles in each of the last four years and in the bottom four for metres conceded in three of the last four seasons. Just as concerning for the Broncos would be the points they have leaked under Ivan Henjak, where they have ranked 14th and 11th in points conceded. Their attacking numbers tell a much happier story with Brisbane one of the leading tackle break teams thanks to the likes of Sam Thaiday and Justin Hodges, ranking top five since 2006. Brisbane teams also traditionally have very good hands, ranking top four in handling errors in four of the last five years. If Brisbane are to improve in 2011, Ivan Henjak will need to completely redo the Broncos defensive patterns as well as attitude to tackling. Failure to do so and Brisbane will again allow too many points to be considered legitimate title contenders.

## Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)       | Tries |
|------|----------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Israel Folau               | 20    |
| 2009 | Israel Folau               | 17    |
| 2008 | Denan Kemp                 | 19    |
| 2007 | Justin Hodges              | 12    |
| 2006 | Tame Tupou, Darren Lockyer | 13    |

## Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 61

Games Lost Analysis: The Broncos were hit hard with Justin Hodges doing his knee in the preseason and missing the entire year. The team was forced to play six games without key playmaker Darren Lockyer. Folau and Thaiday missed games due to rep duty while the loss of hooker Andrew McCullough for 3 games did the club no favours.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Broncos were a good team to bet last year in handicap markets, going 14-10 against the line. They were particularly handy as a home underdog (3-0) and an underdog of less than a converted try (5-2) while also displaying a strong liking for day time football, where they were 5-1 against the bookies' number, and in wet weather, where they went 4-0 against the line. Brisbane did not cover in two matches on Monday Night Football. The Broncos best period for bettors came midseason when they covered six straight at home and ten of twelve in

total from round 10 to round 23. Brisbane were a small losing team in head-to-head betting. Ivan Henjak's team was a marginal over team (13-11 over), going under in all three affairs as a home underdog. Broncos games landed between 31-40 on seven occasions.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$19.00

Minor Premiership: \$17.00

Top 4: \$4.25

Top 8: \$1.75

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** After missing the finals for the first time in a generation, the 2011 side are possibly the most unstable Broncos version in Brisbane's proud history. That is not to say they will be cannon fodder as they possess countless young and unknown quantities to compliment established Origin heroes Darren Lockyer, Justin Hodges, Sam Thaiday and Ben Hannant. Coach Henjak is reportedly under huge pressure and his career will be over if the Broncos don't make the playoffs. Brisbane lack plenty of experience and are probably a tad weak in the outside back department but with their countless young players holding the key it is hard to completely write them off. Price: \$23.00

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 53.5 (11th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 7th-13th

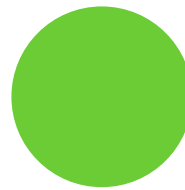
Predicted Finish: 11th

This is not the Brisbane Broncos of Wayne Bennett and this is not a Brisbane Broncos team that will worry too many opposition coaches. The only coach who should be too worried about the Broncos form is Ivan Henjak, the much maligned Broncos coach who is likely coaching his last year of first grade rugby league. Taking over from Wayne Bennett was always going to be a difficult task but Henjak has done himself no favours by reportedly alienating many in the playing group, something that has no doubt played a major role in Brisbane's poor recruitment record in recent times. The major headache for the Broncos this season will again be their defence though. The once feared Broncos defence has gone dramatically downhill in recent years with the poor tackling reaching record levels and the inability to stop points since Henjak arrived becoming an increasingly pressing concern. In days gone by, the Brisbane defence could afford to be a little below par because the backline could score plenty of points but outside Darren Lockyer only Justin Hodges excites as a try scoring threat and he may have lost some speed with the injury that sidelined him for all of 2010. Depth is also a worry. The starting forward pack is very good but falls away alarmingly outside of the top thirteen. The holes are too big to overcome and the players don't seem all that committed to overcoming them. If they

catch every break, they could sneak into the finals. The more realistic suggestion is, however, that Brisbane will miss the playoffs for the second straight season and Ivan Henjak will be sent packing. They look like a very middling ten or eleven win team with very little upside.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The best futures bet on Brisbane is on the Broncos to miss the eight. Prices aren't up at the time of publication but with Brisbane rated at \$1.75 to make the top eight, it is reasonable to assume that a price of around \$1.90 or better will be offered. Brisbane should be at \$1.55 to miss the finals. Brisbane also have a great start to the season so a trading opportunity should exist come mid-April for any bettor keen to play the Broncos in premiership betting though they are generally not considered legitimate contenders so be wary of trading them. Brisbane were a positive over team in the good weather last season and with their porous defence, they should again be in plenty of high scoring matches.

# CANBERRA RAIDERS



## Strongest Team

1. Josh Dugan (fb)
2. Daniel Vidot (w)
3. Jarrod Croker (c)
4. Joel Thompson (c/br)
5. Blake Ferguson (w/c)
6. Terry Campese (fe)
7. Matt Orford (hb)
13. Shaun Fensom (br)
12. Bronson Harrison (br)
11. Tom Learoyd-Lahrs (br/p)
10. Brett White (p)
9. Alan Tongue (h/br)
8. David Shillington (p)

- 
14. Travis Waddell (h)
  15. Joe Picker (br)
  16. Josh Miller (br/p)
  17. Dane Tilse (p)

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**Others:** Josh McCrone (hb/fe), Glen Buttriss (h), Michael Picker (fe/hb), Sam Williams (hb), David Milne (fb/w), Danny Galea (p/br), Reece Robinson (w), Drury Low (w), Trevor Thurling (br/p), Josh Papali (br), Mark Nicholls (br), Nathan Massey (fb), Sam Mataroa (br/p), Mark Appleton (p), Mark Ioane (p), James Stuart (c/w)

**Gains:** Matt Orford (Bradford), Brett White (Melbourne), Blake Ferguson (Cronulla), Nathan Massey (Canterbury), Mark Ioane (Warriors)

**Losses:** Joel Monaghan (Warrington), Troy Thompson (Melbourne), Scott Logan (Retired), Adam Mogg (Retired), Justin Carney (Roosters), Marc Herbert (Bradford), Brett Kelly (France), Cameron Bruest (Parramatta)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Canberra landed the coup of the offseason in early January when securing the services of 2008 Dally M Medal winner Matt Orford. Orford led Manly to Grand Finals in 2007 and 2008 and is a top level halfback. While he has lost a step, Orford is exactly the player Canberra have needed since Terry Campese went down with a serious knee injury. Orford's signing means Canberra are now legitimate title contenders for the first time in a generation. The Raiders have also made two other nice purchases in international prop Brett White and outside back Blake Ferguson. White may be surplus to needs as the Raiders boast a very strong prop rotation but he does add toughness and a touch of class to the pack. Blake Ferguson also seemed to be purchased as a luxury



but after the Joel Monaghan scandal the Raiders had no issues with Ferguson set to slot onto the wing without drama. The Raiders certainly would not have been too upset with any of their losses outside of Monaghan with most either too old or not good enough to play regular NRL football. The Raiders recruitment team deserve top marks.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) David Shillington, Tom Learoyd-Lahrs. (Possible) Josh Dugan, Brett White, Bronson Harrison, Daniel Vidot, Joel Thompson.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 9.5**

Josh Dugan is the hottest young custodian in the league. He is arguably the best kick returner in the NRL and few players are tougher to tackle. He is also critical when moving into the line as a second five-eighth. David Milne adds great depth.

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

The Raiders have quietly assembled a top class three-quarter line. Joel Thompson is a brilliant line runner and tough defender who could be pushing for an Origin spot this season. Croker is a touch small but serviceable and can find the line. Ferguson is a hot young winger with freakish athleticism while Vidot is not far behind.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 5.5**

If Terry Campese was set to start the season fit and healthy, this rating would be 8. If he was out for the year, it would be 3. He is expected back midyear so we have split the difference. He won't be anywhere near his best when he does return though as serious knee injuries take as long as two years to recover fully from. The key component to the Raiders success at the backend of 2010 was Campese's running game, something that won't be seen in 2011. Josh McCrone, Mick Picker or Sam Williams will fill in until Campese returns.

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

With Marc Herbert punted, the Raiders seemingly committed themselves to Josh McCrone. He turned in a number of superb performances in 2010 but he would more often have a mediocre game. The Raiders then landed a coup by signing Matt Orford, a genuine top level playmaker and exactly the type of general Canberra need. Sam Williams is the third in the line for the seven jersey.

#### **Hooker ----- 6**

The Raiders will likely start skipper Alan Tongue at hooker before bringing on either Waddell or Buttriss. Tongue is a hard worker but has a slow pass which puts the Raiders on the back foot. His career is no doubt winding down. Waddell is dangerous but has a poor set of hands. Buttriss is safe but also a touch slow and predictable. Hooker is a problem at the Raiders.

## **Prop** ----- 9

The Raiders have built themselves the best front row rotation in the NRL with internationals Brett White, David Shillington and Tom Leayrod-Lahrs sharing time alongside Dane Tilse and Josh Miller. Shillington has emerged as the top prop in the game over the last two seasons. White is overrated but is still a quality hit-up man. Learoyd-Lahrs is tough to tackle but is better suited a little wider. Tilse does his job well and Miller is an underrated workhorse who rarely lets the Raiders down.

## **Backrow** ----- 7.5

Canberra have tremendous depth in the backrow with eight legitimate first graders capable of starting. Skipper Alan Tongue will likely play plenty of hooker such is their strength. Bronson Harrison has been a revelation since heading down the Hume with his ball playing critical to the Raiders attack. Tom Learoyd-Lahrs is a beast on the other side of the field. Shaun Fensom is a workhorse, the new Alan Tongue. The likes of Miller, Picker, Thurling and even Galea are often more than effective.

## **Coach Rating:** David Furner (3rd season at Canberra, 3rd in the NRL) ----- 5

### **Coach History:**

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| W-L Record:     | 23-27 |
| Finals Record:  | 1-1   |
| Finals Seasons: | 1     |
| Premierships:   | 0     |
| Club Record:    | 23-27 |

**Coach Analysis:** Last year's astonishing finals run should not mask the fact that David Furner is not a particularly talented top grade coach. The Raiders style has changed significantly under Furner's leadership and it has been for the worse as the once flamboyant Raiders attack now looks stilted and blunt. That could be accepted if the defence had improved but it hasn't. Take away a three month period at the end of 2010 and Canberra have been one of the worst teams in the NRL under Furner, who can consider himself lucky that his brother is the CEO and his family is Raider royalty. Furner will most likely see out the season though thanks to the talent he has on hand though a move to assistant and former Toyota Cup mentor Andrew McFadden would be the smart play to make if the Raiders start poorly.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason       | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|------------------|--------|
| 2010 | 13-11  | 7th    | 3-5 | 3-5  | 7-1   | 1-1    | Semi Final       |        |
| 2009 | 9-15   | 13th   | 2-6 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --               |        |
| 2008 | 13-11  | 6th    | 3-5 | 4-4  | 6-2   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final |        |
| 2007 | 9-15   | 14th   | 3-5 | 3-5  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --               |        |
| 2006 | 13-11  | 7th    | 4-4 | 4-4  | 5-3   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final |        |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 2010 | 13-11  | 7th    | 3-5 | 3-5  | 7-1   | 1-1    | Semi Final |        |
| 2009 | 9-15   | 13th   | 2-6 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |

**Draw Analysis:** The Raiders are poor starters, pure and simple. Over the last five seasons, their best start was 4-4 in 2006 and they have gone a combined 15-25 during the first-third of the season over that period. The early season struggles have been particularly pronounced since David Furner took the reins and could really be an issue with no Terry Campese in 2011. Those in charge of the draw have given Canberra every chance to fix their early season woes with a cushy opening third that includes five home games (three in the opening month) and road trips to Townsville and Penrith. Two contests with the Tigers are the big matches for the Raiders. Even so, the Raiders are not betting propositions early in the season. Over the middle-third of the season, Canberra have been consistently middling, going 3-5 or 4-4 over the last five years. Canberra are beneficiaries from the Origin draw where they will take on weakened Canterbury, Brisbane and Roosters teams, three matches where they would be priced as favourites at this stage. In seasons the Raiders have done well, they have finished fast, as they did last year with a 7-1 burst and in '08 with a 6-2 ending to the regular season. With the Warriors and the Gold Coast their worst road trips in the backend of 2011, they can again finish strongly.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 14-12  | 7-6   | 7-6   |
| 2009            | 9-15   | 7-5   | 2-10  |
| 2008            | 13-12  | 9-3   | 4-9   |
| 2007            | 9-15   | 7-5   | 2-10  |
| 2006            | 13-12  | 7-5   | 6-7   |
| Five-Year Total | 58-66  | 37-24 | 21-42 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Canberra's inability to win on the road has caused the club no end of grief over the last five seasons, winning only 33% of road games including two seasons where they went 2-10 away from Canberra Stadium. Canberra have not had a losing season at home in the last five years and have a winning record at Canberra Stadium of 60.6% over that time.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 10th | 12th | 2nd  | 9th  | 7th  |
| Metres        | 1st  | 5th  | 8th  | 15th | 13th |
| Offloads      | 3rd  | 3rd  | 1st  | 7th  | 12th |
| Tackle Breaks | 6th  | 11th | 13th | 15th | 14th |
| Errors        | 7th  | 4th  | 13th | 16th | 13th |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 7th  | 10th | 8th  | 15th | 12th |
| Metres Conceded | 7th  | 5th  | 12th | 7th  | 11th |
| Missed Tackles  | 10th | 3rd  | 5th  | 14th | 10th |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** While Canberra have improved attacking indicators such as handling errors, offloads, metres gained and to a lesser extent tackle breaks under David Furner, their relative points scored has dropped, suggesting Canberra are playing more structured league but lacking a killer instinct, especially inside the opposition twenty. Defensively, the Raiders don't really have an identity and are really a rather middling defensive unit.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)   | Tries |
|------|------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Daniel Vidot           | 16    |
| 2009 | Jarrod Croker          | 12    |
| 2008 | Adrian Purtell         | 15    |
| 2007 | Todd Carney            | 12    |
| 2006 | Todd Carney, Adam Mogg | 12    |

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 61

**Games Lost Analysis:** The most critical injury the Raiders suffered in 2010 was centre Joel Thompson, who missed the backend of the season with osteitis pubis though injuries to Fensom, Tongue and Dugan also hurt the Raiders at times. The Raiders also suffered from injuries to fringe players (not included in the data) such as Glen Buttriss, Josh Miller and Joe Picker.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Simply, the Canberra Raiders were not good betting propositions in 2010. The once underrated team struggled to cover the spread for much of the year, going 11-15 against the line. The Raiders were particularly woeful when giving the start, going 3-8 against the line when favourites including a 3-6 ATS mark as a home favourite. The Raiders also struggled when heading interstate, going 1-4 against the line when travelling outside of New South Wales. The Raiders went 2-6 when favoured by under six points but were 6-2 when a 0.5-6 point outsider. Other notable points are that the Raiders did not cover in their two games off a bye, they went only 1-3 ATS off a Monday night game and they went a poor 3-6 in day games. The Raiders were a 14-12 under team in 2010 with a 9-4 under record on the road and an 11-6 under record in night matches. The Raiders went under the total on all four occasions off a Monday night game. The disparity of average home and away price of \$0.94 reflects the Raiders historical struggles when travelling. Canberra twice won at prices of bigger than \$3.40 and were an outstanding away bet with a return on investment of plus \$5.07 when playing outside of the capital. See Appendices A and B for complete betting data on each individual team

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$17.00

Minor Premiership: \$17.00

Top 4: \$4.50

Top 8: \$1.95

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** Terry Campese's injury has really clouded things for the Raiders in 2011 but they probably couldn't have done better than snaring Matt Orford at short notice. There are few more attractive sides in the competition when at their best but sadly it may be Canberra's lack of combination and class in the important 6, 7, 9 jerseys that sees them finish midfield...again. Josh Dugan is a fan favourite while the likes of Croker and Thompson in the centres should mean Joel Monaghan is not missed a great deal. However it is their huge and skilful pack that puts this side on the front foot. Dane Tilse is the only non-Origin prop in the four-man rotation while Bronson Harrison had his best year in grade last season. It is a strong side with a great home ground advantage but the lack of stability in the important positions that makes them another side I'm willing to pass over. Price: \$28.00\* (assessed pre-Orford signing).

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 58 (4th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-10th

Predicted Finish: 4th

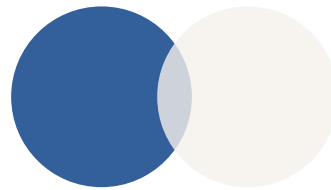
Despite a coach that can be described as average at best and a long-term knee injury to their star playmaker, the Canberra Raiders premiership window has officially opened and anything short of a preliminary final this season has to be considered a disappointment. They have such a talented team that measures up

across the paddock. The forward pack, with the exception of hooker, is the most talented and deepest pack in the NRL. Matt Orford is a premiership winner and a top level halfback. The three-quarter line is just brimming with youthful athleticism, the right mix of strength, speed and guile. And then, of course, there is Josh Dugan, a player who will come to be one of the greats of the modern game. If only they had a decent coach. The key indicators to look for this season in terms of improvement from Canberra are these: they need to get off to a good start (something that never happens), they need to win away from Canberra (something that improved in 2010 but is not at the level expected of a legitimate premiership contender) and they need to score more points (something that has dropped off dramatically since David Furner arrived as coach). If the Raiders can improve in these measures, they will be a top four team and top premiership hope. If they don't then mid-table mediocrity awaits and an opportunity has been wasted.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The Canberra Raiders have already been well backed, supported from \$21.00 into \$17.00 on the back of news Matt Orford has signed with the club. He is the most important signing the club has made in many years. Canberra remain a bet at \$17.00 and should be bet preseason with \$18.00 available at Sports Alive. They should shorten with their smooth early draw and will be a trade-out proposition after six weeks but it is a bet that is probably best held onto. Canberra happen to be outstanding finals bets. The top four at anything above \$3.00 is a play (\$4.50 is available at Flemington Sportsbet) while it should be money for old rope betting the Raiders to make the eight. Bookies are betting \$2.10 (Sports Alive) when their price should be somewhere around the \$1.50 mark.



# 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



## **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.

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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

**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)

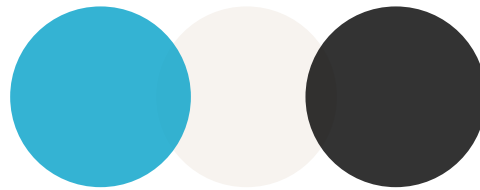
Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-10th

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.

# CRONULLA SHARKS



## Strongest Team

1. Nathan Gardner (fb)
2. John Williams (w)
3. Colin Best (c/w)
4. Dean Collis (c)
5. Isaac Gordon (w)
6. Wade Graham (fe)
7. Scott Porter (hb)
13. Paul Gallen (br)
12. Anthony Tupou (br)
11. Jeremy Smith (br)
10. Luke Douglas (p)
9. Paul Aiton (h/br)
8. Kade Snowden (p)

- 
14. John Morris (h/hb)
  15. Broderick Wright (br)
  16. Josh Cordoba (p)
  17. Ryan Tongia (fb/w/c)

**Others:** Tim Smith (hb), Albert Kelly (hb/fe/fb), Taulima Tautai (br/c/w), Nathan Stapleton (fb/w), Ben Pomeroy (c), Andrew Clayton (p), Kose Lelei (fe/c/w), Stuart Flanagan (h), Siosaia Vave (p), Johnny Mannah (p), Matthew Wright (c), Guy Borgas (c/w), Jason Bukuya (br), Stewart Mills (c/w/fb), Ricky Leutele (c), Matt Parata (w/c)

**Gains:** Jeremy Smith (St George-Illawarra), Colin Best (Souths), Wade Graham (Penrith), John Williams (North Queensland), Ryan Tongia (Gold Coast), Andrew Clayton (Brisbane), Kose Lelei (Canterbury), Guy Borgas (Gold Coast)

**Losses:** Trent Barrett (Retired), Luke Covell (Retired), Reece Williams (Retired), Blake Ferguson (Canberra), Adam Cuthbertson (St George-Illawarra), Grant Millington (Canterbury), Kyle O'Donnell (Newcastle), Josh Lewis (France), Lancen Joudo (Released), Luke Harlen (Released)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The poor old Sharks are in a horrible position right now, sitting deep in financial trouble yet needing to pay over-the-odds to attract talent to the club. The result has been the Sharks bringing in only Jeremy Smith, Wade Graham and Colin Best for his second stint at the club as well as a host of youngsters they are hoping can develop into first grade quality talent. There is no doubt Jeremy Smith is a fine addition. He is tough, uncompromising and is a natural leader. The problem for the Sharks is that their pack was already quite good. They needed backs and while Graham has potential and Best comes in as probably their

most dangerous outside back, they still missed out on a halfback and some genuine speed in the outside backs. Losing Blake Ferguson must cut Sharks officials deep as will the retirement of Trent Barrett. The Sharks pack certainly looks stronger this year but the backline looks far worse.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Paul Gallen. (Possible) Kade Snowden, Luke Douglas, Jeremy Smith.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 7**

Nathan Gardner had a fabulous debut season once given a chance, marked by his try-of-the-season against the Roosters. He is the Sharks best attacking option and he shapes as a long-term custodian. Nathan Stapleton is a capable back-up.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 3**

Cronulla have real issues with their attack and it is not helped by their lacklustre three-quarter line. The returning Colin Best is their leading three-quarter but he is 32 years old and managed only 5 tries last season. Centre partner Collis is a fringe first grader at best but is better than the flipper-handed Ben Pomeroy. John Williams offers little while Isaac Gordon has yet to show he is a top grader.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 5**

The Sharks are pinning plenty to their new five-eighth Wade Graham. Graham is a big-bodied type in the Braith Anasta mould, a player who is as dangerous running as passing or kicking. His lack of experience will be a worry and he may not be suited to the top playmaker role but he is Cronulla's only hope of scoring points. He will need to balance his game up more as a stand-and-deliver half won't make the nut at Shark Park.

#### **Halfback ----- 0.5**

Tim Smith does not even resemble an NRL footballer. He has no smarts, is an ordinary kick, shows no leadership and has a passing game that can be described as dubious at best. Scott Porter is only a smidgen better but Flanagan has, for some reason, committed to Smith.

#### **Hooker ----- 6**

Paul Aiton and John Morris will share the minutes at hooker. Both are capable but neither are game changers. Aiton is a tireless defender who should get the job considering where Cronulla are positioned. Morris has looked more comfortable back at hooker since leaving the Tigers but he still lacks the class and smarts to be an effective nine.

### **Prop** ----- 8.5

Kade Snowden and Luke Douglas are two of the hardest working, most talented and largely unrecognised props in the NRL. Both regularly play big minutes and they have saved a horrible Sharks team from embarrassment plenty of times. Snowden was rewarded with an Origin jersey last year. Douglas is extraordinarily durable but somehow remains the Brad Hodge of the NRL. The Sharks ranking would be higher if they had some depth at the position but they fall away sharply after their starting duo with the clumsy Josh Cordoba their third best bookend.

### **Backrow** ----- 8

Paul Gallen matured in 2010, keeping his aggression but eliminating much of the grubby stuff. He was inspirational and is the best all-round backrower in the NRL. Jeremy Smith is a player whose impact is not shown in the stats and will prove a very good purchase if he can stay off the injury list. He runs hard and will alleviate some of the pressure from Gallen. Anthony Tupou has played for Australia but has only ever been touted by Ricky Stuart. He is lazy and offers little to the Sharks. Cronulla have no depth at the position and simply cannot afford to lose either Gallen or Smith, which could be a problem as Smith has only completed one full season (2008) since debuting in 2004.

### **Coach Rating:** Shane Flanagan (2nd season at Cronulla, 2nd in the NRL) ----- 3

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 2-5

Finals Record: \*

Finals Seasons: 0

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 2-5

**Coach Analysis:** It is tough to buy into Shane Flanagan considering he got his apprenticeship at the calloused feet of Ricky Stuart, who managed to drive the Sharks even further into the ground with a refusal to adopt a simple brand of attack that his players were capable of understanding and implementing. Cronulla certainly showed more signs of life in Flanagan's seven games in charge but how much is to be credited to Flanagan and how much is to be credited to the new coach kick is hard to determine. Flanagan deserves some rope but it is already tightening when he hitches his wagon to the Tim Smith horse and his offseason recruitment was not overly effective.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason  | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------|--------|
| 2010 | 7-17   | 14th   | 2-6 | 3-5  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2009 | 5-19   | 15th   | 1-7 | 4-4  | 0-8   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2008 | 17-7   | 3rd    | 5-3 | 6-2  | 6-2   | 1-1    | Preliminary | Final  |
| 2007 | 10-14  | 11th   | 4-4 | 3-5  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2006 | 9-15   | 13th   | 4-4 | 5-3  | 0-8   | DNQ    | --          |        |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 2010 | 2-5    | 14th   | *   | *    | 2-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |

**Draw Analysis:** Cronulla have been the worst performed team in the NRL over the last five seasons. They have tended to start poorly, show some fight in the middle stages and then collapse in a heap over the last two months. Twice in the last five years Cronulla have failed to find a win over the last two months of the season and over the last two years they have opened a combined 3-13 over their first eight games. They have been surprisingly solid in the middle-third of the season, however, going 21-19 over the last five years between matches nine and sixteen. This year Cronulla get bunnies Parramatta without, presumably, Hayne before Origin I and then South Sydney without Inglis and Taylor before Origin III, though they will be without Paul Gallen in those games. The Sharks open the season with five matches against 2010 finalists. Cronulla meet all four preliminary finalists from 2010 in their last eight matches which means that if Cronulla are to position themselves as finalists they will need to be sitting top four come the final-third of the year.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 7-17   | 4-8   | 3-9   |
| 2009            | 5-19   | 3-9   | 2-10  |
| 2008            | 18-8   | 10-3  | 8-5   |
| 2007            | 10-14  | 5-7   | 5-7   |
| 2006            | 9-15   | 5-7   | 4-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 49-73  | 27-34 | 22-39 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Cronulla have generally been about a one win per season better team at home than away. That means little though as the Sharks have won only 40.2% of matches over that time. The one thing that can be taken from these numbers is that Toyota Park is not the fortress it once was in the nineties.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 16th | 16th | 15th | 11th | 8th  |
| Metres        | 15th | 15th | 6th  | 2nd  | 7th  |
| Offloads      | 2nd  | 7th  | 11th | 2nd  | 2nd  |
| Tackle Breaks | 13th | 12th | 12th | 2nd  | 4th  |
| Errors        | 13th | 16th | 11th | 8th  | 14th |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 15th | 13th | 3rd  | 3rd  | 9th  |
| Metres Conceded | 12th | 10th | 5th  | 5th  | 12th |
| Missed Tackles  | 6th  | 11th | 12th | 8th  | 6th  |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** Cronulla have been horrendous in attack over the last three years with their only bright spot coming in offloads, a category that rarely equates to team success. Cronulla, simply, cannot score points and the recruitment for 2011 and the fact Shane Flanagan came from the Ricky Stuart coaching tree suggests little is likely to change this year. Cronulla drop the ball, make little impact going forward (outside of Paul Gallen), rarely bust tackles, lack pace out wide and are one-dimensional when pressing. A total overhaul is required. Defensively, the Sharks try hard and tend to make their tackles but their inability to score points and hold the ball adds both scoreboard and field position pressure and Cronulla just aren't talented enough to deal with it. It is hard to imagine Cronulla boosting their rankings enough to be considered anything resembling a top-eight team.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Nathan Gardner       | 8     |
| 2009 | Blake Ferguson       | 9     |
| 2008 | Luke Covell          | 15    |
| 2007 | Ben Pomeroy          | 12    |
| 2006 | Darren Albert        | 12    |



## **Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 32**

**Games Lost Analysis:** The big injury for the Sharks in 2010 was the retiring Luke Covell, who missed 11 games with a knee injury. Poor catching centre Ben Pomeroy missed 7 games with a pinkie injury. Paul Gallen and Trent Barrett missed a handful of games due to rep duty.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Cronulla were regarded as such a bad team by punters and bookmakers alike that they did not start favourite in any game all season, being handed 6 ½ points or more start in 18 of their 24 matches. The Sharks were sent out at an average price of \$3.15 and if bet in every match still would have finished down even with their seven wins. The Sharks went 0-5 ATS in day matches and were a horrid 4-13 ATS when playing on seven days or more rest. Cronulla were a 13-11 under team and were particularly likely to finish under the total at Shark Park where the total finished under on 8 of 12 occasions. Cronulla as an under team may have been skewed by wet weather, however, with the Sharks going 5-1 under when the game is played in wet conditions and 10-8 over when playing in the dry.

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

## **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$61.00

Minor Premiership: \$61.00

Top 4: \$9.00

Top 8: \$4.00

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** What can I say about this club that hasn't been said in the past few years? Paul Gallen and Jeremy Smith lead a tough pack while the backline is truly mediocre. Depth is pretty much non-existent. Will win 6+ games and if things fall their way could even make the finals but realistically are no hope of challenging in September/October. Price: \$1001.00

## **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 41 (16th)

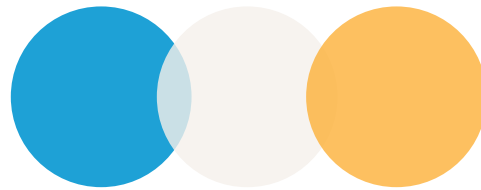
Predicted Finishing Range: 13th-16th

Predicted Finish: 16th

The Sharks have more problems than the New South Wales Labor Party and are in just as much trouble. They cannot score points, ranking bottom-two each of the last three seasons and not having a player score 10 tries in each of the last two years. They have major problems in the halves, a slow and classless three-quarter line, a recent history of poor starts and even worse finishes, poor ball handling skills, a rookie coach, struggles at home, major financial concerns and very few excuses for a tough 2010. The only positive for Cronulla is that despite their struggles in recent times, they are a club that rarely throws the towel in thanks to the triumvirate of Gallen, Snowden and Douglas. Despite that ticker, along with the talent offered by Gardner and toughness offered by Jeremy Smith, it is hard to see Cronulla rising outside of the bottom four and on pure talent terms they have the worst roster in the NRL. The poor old Sharkies are in for another tough season and they can already tick up 45 as the number of seasons played without a premiership.

**2011 Betting Advice:** Cronulla are unlikely to be betting propositions even with big starts in 2011 though the under should be strongly considered for matches played at Shark Park. No Cronulla player should be considered in any top try scorer futures bets while the Sharks offer no value in premiership or finals betting.

# GOLD COAST TITANS



## Strongest Team

1. William Zillman (fb/w/c)
2. Kevin Gordon (w)
3. Esi Tonga (c)
4. Joseph Tomane (c/w)
5. David Mead (w)
6. Luke Capewell (fe/fb)
7. Scott Prince (hb)
13. Ashley Harrison (br)
12. Greg Bird (br/fe)
11. Anthony Laffranchi (br/p)
10. Matt White (p)
9. Nathan Friend (h)
8. Luke Bailey (p)

- 
14. Preston Campbell (fb/fe/hb)
  15. Mark Minichiello (br)
  16. Brad Meyers (p/br)
  17. Ryan James (p)

**Others:** Bodene Thompson (br/c), Steve Michaels (c/w), Clinton Toopi (c), Kayne Lawton (h), Richie Williams (fe), Will Matthews (br/p), Ben Ridge (br), Michael Henderson (p), Sam Tagataese (c/br), Luke O'Dwyer (br/c), Jordan Rankin (hb), Riley Brown (h), Dom Walsh (c), Joe Vickory (w/c), Shannon Walker (fb/w)

**Gains:** Luke Capewell (Souths), Joe Vickory (St George-Illawarra)

**Losses:** Mat Rogers (Retired), Jordan Atkins (Parramatta), Ryan Tongia (Cronulla), Guy Borgas (Cronulla), Aaron Cannings (Released), Josh Graham (Released), Marshall Chalk (Released), Selesi Berdie (Released)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The Titans big loss over the offseason was Mat Rogers, who was outstanding at the backend of 2010 wearing the six jersey. Club officials are hopeful new recruit Luke Capewell, an underrated ball handler from Souths, can fill the void but he is far from certain to win the jumper. The loss of Ryan Tongia may also hurt down the track though the Titans have some depth in the outside backs.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Ashley Harrison. (Possible) Scott Prince, Greg Bird, Kevin Gordon, Anthony Laffranchi.

## Position Ratings:

### Fullback ----- 4.5

William Zillman is expected to finally be given the #1 jersey with Preston Campbell likely to fill a utility role. Zillman has shown glimpses of his pre-knee surgery Raiders form but consistency has been an issue and he lost a yard of speed and his confidence may be shot after a howler in the preliminary final. Campbell is a capable replacement but is getting on and is not a credible kick returner these days.

### Three Quarters ----- 5.5

Kevin Gordon is a brilliant young winger who has speed to burn and a wonderful ability to score tries. The rest of the line lacks class though. David Mead has potential on the other wing but is not there yet. Esi Tonga is in a similar boat: the potential exists but it hasn't manifested itself on the field. Joseph Tomane is not as good as advertised with his defence resembling that of a special needs mule. Yet Tomane's defence makes him look like Dallas Johnson in comparison to Clinton Toopi and Steve Mirchaels.

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

The retirement of Mat Rogers and the (correct) decision to move Greg Bird back to the forwards means the Titans will be trying a new five-eighth. Luke Capewell is promising and Titans fans should be hoping he wins the jersey. If not, Preston Campbell may find himself back in the halves though Campbell is no longer suited to the six or seven.

### Halfback ----- 9.5

Scott Prince was unlucky to lose his standing as Queensland and Australia's second best halfback. He had arguably his best season, finishing second in try assists and guiding the Titans to within a game of the Grand Final. He is one of the best kickers in the NRL, few can guide a team around a park with Prince's class and he can put on a try in the blink of an eye. An elite #7 and one of the best players in the NRL.

### Hooker ----- 8.5

Nathan Friend is an 80 minute hooker revered for his selfless thirst for the gritty stuff but Friend plays a key role in attack as well. He is sharp out of dummy half and often gets clean ball to Prince. He can also kick. Defensively, there is no more reliable middle-field player in the game.

### Prop ----- 7.5

Luke Bailey has just turned 31 but seemed rejuvenated in 2010, playing injury free and without the burden of rep footy for the first time since his days at the Dragons. He averaged 31 tackles and 125 metres a game and is still an elite prop. He will most likely be partnered by doppelganger Matt White who, while similar in appearance, does not have the same impact. Brad Meyers still gets some go-forward and Michael Henderson is decent. Ryan James may be something special. He is raw as sushi but looks to have plenty of heart and the build of a beast. Anthony Laffranchi was tried

at prop towards the backend of last season but that experiment was a complete and utter failure on many fronts.

### **Backrow ----- 9.5**

The Titans are blessed with three internationals in their backrow. Anthony Laffranchi has earned the ire of rep selectors in recent times but he continues to be a punishing defender and skilful ball-playing forward. Greg Bird is a terrier who, though he has poor hands, is strong and feisty and adds some spunk to the Titans team. Ashley Harrison does all the unfashionable stuff and he does it exceptionally well. Mark Minichiello plays like a moron sometimes and he has feet for hands but when focussed he is a high class fringe runner who is very difficult to stop close to the tryline. Bodene Thompson is highly rated and could develop into a nice player.

**Coach Rating:** John Cartwright (5th season at the Gold Coast, 5th in the NRL) --- 8

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 52-48

Finals Record: 1-3

Finals Seasons: 2

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 52-48

**Coach Analysis:** John Cartwright gives the impression of being a lifer, a coach who is around the league for 20-30 years in the mould of Bennett, Sheens and Brian Smith. He is intelligent, a fine motivator and a coach that has the undying respect of his team. He has improved the Titans at each of their four seasons and he has given them an identity of being tough in defence and dangerous in attack. Tactically, Cartwright is very astute as seen in how he directs Scott Prince to kick when taking on a dangerous return fullback. The Titans almost nearly always show up. The knocks on him are only minor and as he has shown an ability to learn it is expected these will become much less of an issue. He has a tendency to play players out of position. He tends to get the Titans peaking too early. He has persisted with Preston Campbell for too long. He has not drummed in the importance of one-on-one tackling to the Titans outside backs. Overall, Cartwright is a very good mentor who is in no danger of losing his job anytime soon though and if he continues to improve the Titans, he could push them into their first Grand Final. Assistant Trevor Gillmeister also happens to be the perfect foil for the passionate and intense Cartwright and is a key cog in the Titans machine.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 15-9   | 4th    | 6-2 | 3-5  | 6-2   | 1-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2009 | 16-8   | 3rd    | 6-2 | 5-3  | 5-3   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2008 | 10-14  | 13th   | 6-2 | 3-5  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 10-14  | 12th   | 4-4 | 4-4  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 15-9   | 4th    | 6-2 | 3-5  | 6-2   | 1-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2009 | 16-8   | 3rd    | 6-2 | 5-3  | 5-3   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2008 | 10-14  | 13th   | 6-2 | 3-5  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 10-14  | 12th   | 4-4 | 4-4  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |

**Draw Analysis:** The Titans have been fast starters since entering the NRL in 2007, starting 6-2 in each of the last three years. John Cartwright's men jump the gates and are always top betting propositions early in the season. The Titans meet some quality teams in the opening rounds with the Dragons and the Storm in the opening fortnight as well as the Tigers and the Roosters in the first two months but can catch poor starting teams early. The Titans have historically steadied after that over the middle months before either surging, as they did in 2009-10, or fading, as in 2007-08. John Cartwright has likely learnt from those first two years and with a decent run in against the likes of Cronulla, Newcastle, North Queensland and Parramatta, the smart money is on the Titans finishing strongly as they have the last two seasons. The Titans struck the jackpot during Origin with byes before I and III and the Dragons before game II with St George-Illawarra likely to be missing at least Boyd, Weyman and Morris along with maybe a few more while the Titans will lose only Ash Harrison and perhaps Greg Bird.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 16-10  | 9-4   | 7-6   |
| 2009            | 16-10  | 11-2  | 5-8   |
| 2008            | 10-14  | 7-5   | 3-9   |
| 2007            | 10-14  | 8-4   | 2-10  |
| Four-Year Total | 52-48  | 35-15 | 17-33 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** The Titans have won of the strongest home-field advantages in the NRL, winning 70% of matches played on the Gold Coast. Their road record is almost equally as poor, winning only 34% of road games. As the Titans have improved, however, so has their road form and it is a reasonable expectation that their road form this season will be similar to that of 2010.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 8th  | 10th | 11th | 15th | *    |
| Metres        | 3rd  | 6th  | 13th | 14th | *    |
| Offloads      | 12th | 14th | 15th | 14th | *    |
| Tackle Breaks | 12th | 14th | 14th | 16th | *    |
| Errors        | 9th  | 9th  | 6th  | 4th  | *    |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 8th  | 8th  | 12th | 10th | *    |
| Metres Conceded | 5th  | 9th  | 13th | 15th | *    |
| Missed Tackles  | 11th | 13th | 13th | 9th  | *    |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** Despite having one of the premier halfbacks in the NRL, the Titans have one of the more dour attacks with the Gold Coast ranking bottom five every year in offloads and tackle breaks. They are disciplined though and consistently rank mid-table in errors conceded. When the Titans did improve to a finals team in 2009, it was on the back of metres gained. The Titans forwards laid a stronger platform and that resulted in better field position and more points. The same was true in defence. The Titans toughened up in the middle of the ruck and allowed fewer metres and it resulted in fewer points conceded. Missed tackles have been a problem but that is to be expected with a backline that is one of the smallest in the NRL.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)      | Tries |
|------|---------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Kevin Gordon              | 12    |
| 2009 | Kevin Gordon              | 13    |
| 2008 | Anthony Laffranchi        | 12    |
| 2007 | Matt Petersen, Mat Rogers | 10    |

**Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty:** 58



**Games Lost Analysis:** The Titans did remarkably well to make it to preliminary final weekend considering some of their injuries. Starting centre Joseph Tomane missed 15 games while wing partner David Mead missed 13 matches. The most damaging injuries came to halves Scott Prince, Mat Rogers, Preston Campbell and Greg Bird, who missed 21 matches between them. Queensland lock Ashley Harrison missed 5 matches for the Titans due to rep duty and a rib injury.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Some great situations could be found with the Titans in 2010 with the Titans as an underdog and particularly an interstate one reaping huge rewards for punters. The Titans finished the season 15-11 ATS but were 9-4 as an underdog, 8-2 as a road underdog and 8-0 as an interstate underdog suggesting bookmakers severely underestimated the Titans ability to play well on the road. Straight up, the Titans had a return of +\$6.20 with most of that accumulated on the road, where the club was +\$6.02. The Titans also went 2-0 when spotted 6 ½ or more points by the oddsmakers. John Cartwright's men had few problems off either a quick back-up or playing off a full week's rest. The Titans shutdown entirely when the weather was wet, going 4-1 under, while the Titans went 9-5 under at home including a 3-0 under record when playing as an outsider at Skilled Park. In Friday night games, the Titans were 10-3 under. The Titans were simply an undervalued road team who played well above expectations, winning seven matches when travelling and losing by more than four points only three times. This is representative of the team's experience, maturity and conservative style of play that will likely be maintained in 2011.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$19.00

Minor Premiership: \$19.00

Top 4: \$4.00

Top 8: \$1.85

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** This side have been consistent over the past few years but cannot win the matches that count. I'm tipping the status quo will continue in 2011 and if anything they could drop off. Obviously their halves and hooker are their best players but the support cast seems one-dimensional. The pack looks flimsy, their outside backs pedestrian and their depth only fair. Preston will probably play off the bench for most of the year but given his class I could see coach Cartwright being forced into starting him. I must say I look forward to the progression of Bodene Thompson and if he can find a few young partners in crime such as Joseph Tomane, Esi Tonga or Jordan Rankin they may surprise me. Price: \$34

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 55 (5th)

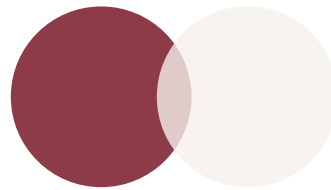
Predicted Finishing Range: 3rd-10th

Predicted Finish: 5th

Most judges have the Titans as a team on the slide in 2011, one who hit the high watermark with a preliminary final appearance in 2010 and will now recede like a wave. Those judges are wrong. The Titans still have plenty to offer and with very little changing in their makeup, I am at a loss to why so many are tipping the Titans to miss the eight. The Gold Coast have done nothing but improve since returning to the NRL and they were outstanding for much of 2010, again starting well and again finishing in the top four and this time adding a playoff win to their resume. There are certainly concerns at fullback, five-eighth and over the average age of the squad but are those really enough to suggest the Titans will fall through the floor? As Mike LaFontaine would say, "I don't think so." Unless Scott Prince loses a leg or John Cartwright loses his mind, the Titans will again be playing finals football. I'm not sure they have the improvement in them to win those big September games and they may be just a little off premiership material but they will be there when the whips are cracking.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The Titans look set to be the best team to bet of the 2011 season thanks to the market completely writing off a team that has improved every season, is full of quality, has a star half, is well coached and is coming off a preliminary final. Though I don't think they will win the premiership, the \$19.00 available on them to win the minor premiership is a top quality play while the \$19.00 on the title is over the odds. The Titans have an older team with probably one last run in them before their premiership window shuts, so an all-out assault on the title is expected. They are better bets for the minor premiership as big game wins have not been their specialty but they should be in the mix all season at the top end of the ladder. Betting the Titans to finish in the top four at better than \$2.50 (\$4.00 is available at Flemington Sportsbet) and to finish in the top eight at \$1.40 (\$1.85 is available at Flemington Sportsbet) are also two of the better bets you will find anywhere this year. As match propositions, the Titans again look like they will present plenty of value, again going around underrated, potentially even more so than last season when they finished 15-11 against the spread and were outstanding road propositions. Look for the Titans as an underdog and play them at all opportunities. They are also shaping as a sound home under play. David Mead may offer value as a top try scorer bet. He has sizzling speed and will score plenty if he stays fit.

# MANLY SEA EAGLES



## Strongest Team

1. Brett Stewart (fb)
2. Michael Robertson (w)
3. Jamie Lyon (c/fe)
4. Steve Matai (c)
5. Tony Williams (w/c)
6. Kieran Foran (fe/hb)
7. Daly Cherry-Evans (hb)
13. Glenn Stewart (br)
12. Shane Rodney (br)
11. Anthony Watmough (br)
10. Jason King (p)
9. Matt Ballin (h)
8. Brent Kite (p)

- 
14. Daniel Harrison (br)
  15. George Rose (p)
  16. Matt Cross (p/br)
  17. Joe Galuvao (br)
- 

**Others:** David Williams (w), Dean Whare (c), William Hopoate (fb/w/c), Michael Oldfield (w), Liam Foran (hb/fe), Tim Robinson (p), Jamie Buhner (br/h), Vic Mauro (br), Darcy Lussick (br), James Cunningham (p), Terrence Seu Seu (h), Junior Palau (p/br)

**Gains:** Daniel Harrison (Canterbury), Tim Robinson (Parramatta), Liam Foran (Roosters)

**Losses:** Trent Hodkinson (Canterbury), Ben Farrar (Catalans), Chris Bailey (Harlequins), Josh Perry (St Helens), Lama Tasi (Roosters)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Losing halfback Trent Hodkinson has surely cut Manly deep. Hodkinson is an outstanding prospect but the Eagles have lost him after only a year due to salary cap issues that have been present for a number of years. Manly also lost international prop Josh Perry though his form declined markedly over the last two years along with decent fullback Ben Farrar. Having purchased not a single player with first grade experience, Manly are big losers in the recruitment stakes.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Anthony Watmough. (Possible) Jason King, Glenn Stewart, Brett Stewart, Steve Matai, Kieran Foran, Brent Kite.

## Position Ratings:

### Fullback ----- 8.5

Brett Stewart, at his best, is one of the most dangerous attacking players in the NRL. The problem for Manly is that he has played only six games over the last two years due to two knee injuries. Stewart will likely take time to recover and it must be said he is injury prone these days so there is a query over how he will return. Few players have his try scoring nous.

### Three Quarters ----- 7.5

Centre Jamie Lyon had arguably his finest season in 2010 and is a threat as both a scorer and a distributor. Wing is a position of strength for Manly with the improved Michael Robertson on one side and international David Williams and behemoth Tony Williams fighting it out for the other flank position. Steve Matai is the only downside. The club loves his aggression but he is more nuisance than help with his penchant for penalties and rushing out of the defensive line. Matai is one of the most selfish players in the NRL.

### Five-Eighth ----- 6

Kieran Foran was steady last year playing outside Hodkinson but will need to form his third halves pairing in three years with his 2010 partner now at Canterbury. Foran is more runner than playmaker but can let his outside backs loose and he does have a nice boot. One of the more consistent five-eighths in the NRL.

### Halfback ----- 4.5

Daly Cherry-Evans will make his debut in round one and comes in after winning the Queensland Cup player of the year. He looked good in the Toyota Cup and can improve quickly. He has plenty of upside.

### Hooker ----- 7.5

Matt Ballin was finally unleashed as an 80 minute player by Des Hasler and it reaped rewards as Ballin made his Origin debut. In the Nathan Friend mould he is a top tackler but his effectiveness is blunted by his refusal to run the ball. A little bit more creativity would improve his game and Manly's fortunes no end.

### Prop ----- 6

The Manly prop rotation is terribly overrated. Brent Kite has a soft underbelly and has never been an elite front rower. It defies belief that Jason King was gifted an Origin jersey last season and says more about the dubious selection panel than King as a player. George Rose is fun to watch but is only a first grader. Matt Cross doesn't add much.

### Backrow ----- 7.5

Anthony Watmough, on his day, is one of the top backrowers with the ball in his hands. Those days are becoming fewer, though, and his poor tackling and worse discipline

has seen his effectiveness put under the microscope. Glenn Stewart is a talented player but his form has gone missing over the last two years while his brother has been sidelined. The drop in his attacking game is particularly concerning. The injury ravaged Shane Rodney will have to return from surgery again but is super skilled with a great work ethic and will shine if Des Hasler will play him properly and use him for 80 minutes. Daniel Harrison is a nice recruit though is similar in style to Rodney. Joe Galuvao doesn't add much.

**Coach Rating:** Des Hasler (7th season at Manly, 7th in the NRL) ----- **7**

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 101-78

Finals Record: 5-6

Finals Seasons: 6

Premierships: 1

Club Record: 101-78

**Coach Analysis:** Des Hasler is a solid coach but one that is well overrated by pundits in the game. Hasler has plenty of credits stored up from taking Manly to the Grand Final in 2007 and the premiership in 2008, he usually produces a well drilled team and there are rarely rumours of player unrest at Brookvale. Cracks have appeared over the last few seasons though as an aging Manly team becomes less competitive. Hasler has done little to revitalise his squad with an influx of youth. He persisted way too long with the foolhardy two-hooker policy when he has an 80-minute hooker in Matt Ballin though, in fairness, he did give Ballin a lot more 80-minute games in 2010. He continues to believe that a mammoth forward pack is the way to go when such a theory has been disproven numerous times over the last five years. He refuses to rein in the costly eccentricities of players like Steve Matai and Anthony Watmough. His attacking game plans have been found wanting with Brett Stewart out of the team for much of the last two years. Manly are reluctant to switch coaches and Hasler is well liked still at Brookvale but he will need to find a few more tricks if he is to arrest Manly's expected slide in 2011.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 12-12  | 8th    | 5-3 | 3-5  | 4-4   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2009 | 14-10  | 5th    | 2-6 | 6-2  | 6-2   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2008 | 17-7   | 2nd    | 5-3 | 7-1  | 5-3   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2007 | 18-6   | 2nd    | 7-1 | 5-3  | 6-2   | 2-1    | Grand Final       |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 5th    | 5-3 | 3-5  | 6-2   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 12-12  | 8th    | 5-3 | 3-5  | 4-4   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2009 | 14-10  | 5th    | 2-6 | 6-2  | 6-2   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2008 | 17-7   | 2nd    | 5-3 | 7-1  | 5-3   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2007 | 18-6   | 2nd    | 7-1 | 5-3  | 6-2   | 2-1    | Grand Final       |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 5th    | 5-3 | 3-5  | 6-2   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |

**Draw Analysis:** Over the last five seasons, Manly have tended to play consistent rugby league throughout the season. They have only had one start to the season below 5-3 (in 2009, while suffering a premiership hangover) and they have come home at least 4-4 in each of those seasons. The middle of the season has been their most inconsistent with their record ranging from 3-5 in 2006 and 2010 to 7-1 in their premiership season. Manly have been given a fantastic opening draw where after road games against Melbourne and the Roosters they get six favourable matchups where they are likely to start favourite in at least five of them. Manly also finish with four home games in the last six weeks which should allow the Eagles to sneak in to the finals again if they are there or thereabouts with two months to play. Manly get the Cowboys at Brookvale before Origin II, a North Queensland team that will be without Johnathan Thurston.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 12-13  | 7-5   | 5-8   |
| 2009            | 14-11  | 8-4   | 6-7   |
| 2008            | 20-7   | 10-3  | 10-4  |
| 2007            | 20-7   | 12-1  | 8-6   |
| 2006            | 14-12  | 8-4   | 6-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 80-50  | 45-17 | 35-33 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** With Manly establishing a 72.6% win rate at home, Brookvale Oval has become renowned as one of the hardest grounds to win at. Manly's record at home has declined over the last three seasons though and Brookvale is perhaps not the fortress it once was. Much of Manly's success was built on a strong home record as their 35-33 record on the road is only average.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 7th  | 6th  | 1st  | 2nd  | 11th |
| Metres        | 10th | 9th  | 1st  | 3rd  | 9th  |
| Offloads      | 15th | 11th | 5th  | 3rd  | 9th  |
| Tackle Breaks | 9th  | 8th  | 2nd  | 1st  | 8th  |
| Errors        | 2nd  | 5th  | 4th  | 7th  | 1st  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 10th | 6th  | 2nd  | 2nd  | 8th  |
| Metres Conceded | 9th  | 6th  | 1st  | 3rd  | 14th |
| Missed Tackles  | 5th  | 9th  | 7th  | 5th  | 10th |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** When Manly made back-to-back Grand Finals in 2007 and 2008, the Eagles were a top-two team in both attack and defence. They slipped a little in 2009 and fell even further in 2010. In attack, Manly made fewer metres due to a drop in the kick return game caused by Brett Stewart's run of injury and an aging forward pack losing dominance in the middle of the park. Anthony Watmough's drop in form also played a major role. Defensively, Manly have become softer up the centre over the last two seasons. It is hard to see Manly bucking the decline in 2011 considering their lack of movement on the recruitment front.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Tony Williams        | 16    |
| 2009 | David Williams       | 11    |
| 2008 | Brett Stewart        | 22    |
| 2007 | Brett Stewart        | 19    |
| 2006 | Brett Stewart        | 21    |

**Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty:** 70



**Games Lost Analysis:** Manly were struck down hard with injuries in 2010 with Brett Stewart again missing nearly the entire season with a knee injury. Former Australian winger David Williams also missed the entire season with various ailments. Jamie Lyon missed 3 weeks for various reasons while Steve Matai again got himself suspended and will miss the beginning of 2011 as will Glenn Stewart, both for cheap acts of thuggery. Shane Rodney suffered another serious injury late in the year but missed only 3 weeks.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Sea Eagles were very much an over team in 2010, going 15-10 over with 17 scores above 41. Situations that favoured an over in Manly games were when Manly were favoured in betting (11-5 over) and night matches (10-6 over). Manly were viewed by punters as having one of the premier home ground advantages in the NRL with an average home price of \$1.54 and the Eagles being sent out favourite at home in 11 of their 12 matches. Home results did not play out as such, however, with Manly losing 5 matches of their 10 played at Brookvale, covering only three times at their traditional home ground. Manly were particularly vulnerable as a road underdog last season, going only 2-6 against the line. For punters, it was a tale of two identities in 2010 with the Eagles a darling to round twelve where they were 8-3 against the line before it turned very sour as Manly finished the season 3-10 against the spread, covering against only Cronulla when playing on the road during that period. Manly were a bad losing team for punters, overvalued by the market all season.

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

**2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$19.00

Minor Premiership: \$18.00

Top 4: \$4.75

Top 8: \$2.25

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** This will be an interesting year for Des Hasler and his Manly side. Over the past two years they have struggled to see the season out but are clearly one of the teams to beat when at full strength and in form. Brett Stewart is one of the best fullbacks to ever play the game and one can only hope he recaptures his best form. I think he will. I suppose we know the strengths of this side in the pack and the three quarter line (especially when Glenn Stewart and Steve Matai return from suspension) but the main area of concern for the Sea Eagles is the halves combination. Kieran Foran has pace and ability but is not yet a first grade playmaker. Daly Cherry-Evans is the mooted halfback but he is untested. The only question mark for me is the main playmaker but it is a huge question mark so this is another side I will regard as middle pinner until proved otherwise. Price: \$26.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 54.5 (8th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 7th-11th

Predicted Finish: 9th

Manly's premiership window is well and truly closed and 2011 will be spent, if used intelligently, bleeding young players and preparing for another shot in 2013-14. This aging squad as a whole does not have a title in them. The return of Brett Stewart should certainly add some spark to a dulling attack but the untested halves combination is a major concern. The aging forward pack is another worry. How many more years are Manly going to run with Kite? Surely not many. With an obvious lack of depth and even versatility amongst the pack, Manly's game is scaring nobody. Key injuries have to be a worry as well. Manly cannot afford for Brett Stewart, Jamie Lyon or Anthony Watmough to go down with the club as reliant on those three as a club like the Roosters are on Pearce, Carney and Anasta. Jamie Lyon is an out-and-out superstar but he just does not have enough class around him. The fact Manly are well disciplined and Brookvale Oval is a generally tough ground for opposing teams to win at, the Eagles won't bottom out but it is difficult to see them going better this season than last.

**2011 Betting Advice:** No futures betting for Manly though the \$2.25 (Flemington Sportsbet) on the Eagles sneaking into the eight is tempting. It may prove positive to bet against Manly at home as well this season. Manly slid at home in 2010 and while they will most likely bounce back, big plusses are often available so there could be plenty of value in taking them on in handicap markets. Manly were an over team in 2010 but be wary as they are traditionally an under team, particularly at home, and the move to an over team was a result more of bookmaker overcompensation than more free-flowing Manly football.

# MELBOURNE STORM



## Strongest Team

1. Billy Slater (fb)
2. Anthony Quinn (w)
3. Beau Champion (c)
4. Dane Nielsen (c/w)
5. Justin O'Neill (c/w)
6. Gareth Widdop (fe/fb/c/w)
7. Cooper Cronk (hb)
13. Ryan Hinchcliffe (br/h)
12. Sika Manu (br/p)
11. Kevin Proctor (br)
10. Adam Blair (p/br)
9. Cameron Smith (h)
8. Bryan Norrie (p)

- 
14. Chase Stanley (fe/c/br)
  15. Troy Thompson (p)
  16. Adam Woolnough (p)
  17. Todd Lowrie (br)

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**Others:** Matt Duffie (w), Jesse Bromwich (p), Luke Kelly (hb/fe), Robbie Rochow (br), Sione Kite (p), Rory Kostjasyn (h/fe), Maurice Blair (c/fe), Jaiman Lowe (p), Elijah Niko (c/w/fb), Atelea Vea (br), Dane Chisholm (fe/hb), Jake Hawkins (fe/hb/h), Mitchell Johnson (p)

**Gains:** Maurice Blair (Penrith), Troy Thompson (Canberra), Jaiman Lowe (Souths), Adam Woolnough (Retirement), Elijah Niko (New Zealand)

**Losses:** Greg Inglis (Souths), Ryan Hoffman (Wigan), Brett Finch (Wigan), Jeff Lima (Wigan), Brett White (Canberra), Aiden Tolman (Canterbury), Willie Isa (Released), Luke MacDougall (Released), Sinbad Kali (Released), Hep Cahill (Released), Billy Rogers (Parramatta), Blake Leary (North Queensland), Maipele Morseau (Newcastle)

Net Recruitment Assessment: After the salary cap scandal, it comes as no surprise that the Storm have had their playing list gutted with Greg Inglis leading a necessary exodus that included internationals Ryan Hoffman, Jeff Lima and Brett White, Origin representative Brett Finch and the ultra-promising Aiden Tolman. Although the Storm have had their list torn apart, they have kept their three most important players in Smith, Slater and Cronk and Craig Bellamy has reached some renown in being able to build an effective team by slotting in competent players around them. Troy Thompson fits the mould of bit-part players Bellamy has used effectively in the

past as do Mo Blair and Adam Woolnough. Somehow the Storm have also scored the hard-running Beau Champion in a deal that has not been explained by the NRL. Who is actually paying Champion's \$200,000 per season contract? The over-the-cap Melbourne Storm or the over-the-cap South Sydney? While there is no doubt the Storm have lost more talent than they have purchased, the damage may not be so bad thanks to some shrewd bargain basement purchasing and the high theft of Beau Champion.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Billy Slater, Cameron Smith, Cooper Cronk, Adam Blair. (Possible) Justin O'Neill, Beau Champion.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 10**

Slater is unquestionably the king of fullbacks and has been the undisputed top custodian for at least four years. With a chip on his shoulder, Slater should be at his best this year. His kick return has dropped off a little in recent years but he makes up for it as an elite runner and ball player at the line and his kick-chase game is the best in the world.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 7**

Landing Beau Champion was a major coup for the Storm. Champion is a fearsomely strong ball runner who can carve a defence to shreds. He will excel in the Storm system outside Cronk. Justin O'Neill is a top prospect who could develop into a top level outside back this year. He can score and he can run. Dane Nielsen is a solid defender who will shift to left centre. Anthony Quinn and Matt Duffie are both very handy players to have on the wing while Chase Stanley is an international who will back-up the centres.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 5**

Gareth Widdop will most likely win the vacant six jersey at Melbourne though Luke Kelly, Chase Stanley and Mo Blair are all in the mix. Widdop was good enough to win an England jersey after only two games for the Storm. He looks handy and if he plays the Robin to Cooper Cronk's Batman as Brett Finch did, he will be a valuable contributor.

#### **Halfback ----- 9.5**

Arguably the most important player at the Melbourne Storm, Cooper Cronk ranks as an elite player in all important categories for a halfback. He has a top class kicking game. He has a sensational pass. He can run. He can tackle. He can lead his team around the park. Richly deserved rep honours in 2010 and should improve in 2011 with the Storm again playing for competition points.

#### **Hooker ----- 10**

Melbourne skipper Cameron Smith has arguably been the best player in the NRL over the last five years. He is always one of the leading tacklers, he kicks, is a

key component of the Storm's attack, he slots goals and is one of the game's best leaders. There is nothing Smith does not do at a high level and he has been critical to the Storm's success in recent years. No player will play with a bigger chip on his shoulder in 2010.

### **Prop** ----- 6

The Storm retain the talented Adam Blair up front but have had to rebuild with no-frills props around him. Bryan Norrie, Adam Woolnough and Troy Thompson are all honest players but nothing more. Jaiman Lowe will need to improve significantly. Young prop Jesse Bromwich had a taste of top grade last year and is a player for the future though is still a long way from being a regular top grader.

### **Backrow** ----- 6

Staples Hoffman and Johnson are now gone so the Storm will field a new look backrow in 2011. Ryan Hinchcliffe won the Storm player of the year in 2010 and will fill the Dallas Johnson mule role again. Sika Manu is a very hard man to tackle but injuries are a concern with him. Kevin Proctor has potential. Todd Lowrie has been disappointing since arriving from Parramatta. Robbie Rochow is going to be something special.

### **Coach Rating:** Craig Bellamy (8th season at Melbourne, 8th in the NRL) ----- 9.5

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 140-70-1

Finals Record: 14-5

Finals Seasons: 7

Premierships: 2

Club Record: 140-70-1

**Coach Analysis:** For all Craig Bellamy's achievements as a coach, his performance in holding the Storm together in 2010 may well be his finest. More than his two premierships, three straight minor premierships and four straight Grand Finals, his ability to get the Storm to a 14-10 record and playing hard and with passion over the final two-thirds of the season after the club had essentially been kicked out of the NRL was astonishing. Arguably only Wayne Bennett would have been able to pull off such a feat. Chasing redemption in 2011, the Storm are sure to be up. Bellamy will run the legs off the Storm in the preseason and they will jump the gun as always. Expect Melbourne to return to their identity of a conservative attacking and stoic defensive team where everyone fits in around Slater, Smith and Cronk with set roles and an expectation those roles are fulfilled. Bellamy may well be the heir apparent to Wayne Bennett and is one of the game's great motivators and outstanding tacticians.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8   | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 14-10  | 16th   | 6-2   | 3-5  | 5-3   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 14-9-1 | 4th    | 4-3-1 | 6-2  | 4-4   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2008 | 17-7   | 1st    | 6-2   | 5-3  | 6-2   | 2-2    | Grand Final       |
| 2007 | 21-3   | 1st    | 7-1   | 7-1  | 7-1   | 4-0    | Premiers          |
| 2006 | 20-4   | 1st    | 6-2   | 7-1  | 7-1   | 2-1    | Grand Final       |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8   | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 14-10  | 16th   | 6-2   | 3-5  | 5-3   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 14-9-1 | 4th    | 4-3-1 | 6-2  | 4-4   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2008 | 17-7   | 1st    | 6-2   | 5-3  | 6-2   | 2-2    | Grand Final       |
| 2007 | 21-3   | 1st    | 7-1   | 7-1  | 7-1   | 4-0    | Premiers          |
| 2006 | 20-4   | 1st    | 6-2   | 7-1  | 7-1   | 2-1    | Grand Final       |

**Draw Analysis:** As the most dominant team in the NRL over the last five years, Melbourne have shown a tendency to be strong from beginning to end. In fact the middle of last season, just after the salary cap scandal broke, was the only time the Storm failed to win at least four games in one of the divides over the last five years. If there is any tendency to be noted it is that the Storm can occasionally struggle during the middle months but that struggle is only relative. Simply, the Storm start well and usually build on that lead with more winning. You don't win two premierships and three minor premierships and make four Grand Finals by having down periods. The Storm will, presumably, be itching for a good start and the NRL has cut them a break by giving them four home games in the opening five weeks and eight home games in their first eleven matches. The three road trips in that period are also more than winnable. Melbourne can be expected to be hovering near the top of the table at the halfway mark of the season. The run home is much tougher, however, with road trips to the Gold Coast, Brookvale and the Sydney Football Stadium along with a home match against the Dragons in the last month. Storm insiders would consider a 4-4 finish to the year a good result, one would imagine. Melbourne will cop plenty of key losses before Origin II but meet the Roosters at AAMI Park with the Roosters likely to be without Pearce and Carney, making the match winnable for Melbourne though my no means a certainty considering the likely Storm losses.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record  | Home   | Away  |
|-----------------|---------|--------|-------|
| 2010            | 14-10   | 9-3    | 5-7   |
| 2009            | 17-9-1  | 11-2-1 | 6-7   |
| 2008            | 19-9    | 11-2   | 8-7   |
| 2007            | 25-3    | 14-0   | 11-3  |
| 2006            | 22-5    | 12-1   | 10-4  |
| Five-Year Total | 97-36-1 | 57-8-1 | 40-28 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Melbourne is the hardest place in rugby league to go in and win with the Storm accumulating an incredible 57-8-1 record at home over the last five seasons. Even with nothing to play for in 2010, the Storm still went 9-3. Whether it is AAMI Stadium, Olympic Park or the Docklands, the Storm simply do not lose at home. Craig Bellamy's team also have an imposing record on the road, winning 40 of 68 outside of Victoria.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 13th | 5th  | 4th  | 1st  | 3rd  |
| Metres        | 16th | 7th  | 4th  | 1st  | 6th  |
| Offloads      | 8th  | 15th | 16th | 16th | 14th |
| Tackle Breaks | 14th | 1st  | 7th  | 3rd  | 6th  |
| Errors        | 16th | 3rd  | 2nd  | 5th  | 6th  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 2nd  | 1st  | 1st  | 1st  | 2nd  |
| Metres Conceded | 4th  | 8th  | 6th  | 1st  | 2nd  |
| Missed Tackles  | 2nd  | 1st  | 1st  | 2nd  | 5th  |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** The success of Melbourne over the last five seasons has been based on their impregnable defence. Melbourne have ranked top two in points allowed (the best indicator of a strong team) over the last five seasons and top two in missed tackles. The Storm players are well drilled in defence and know that to keep a first grade position they need to make tackles and adhere to Bellamy's patterns. Even after the scandal last season, the Storm remained a top-class defensive unit. In fact, after the scandal broke, their most noticeable drop came in attack with the Storm moving from a conservative, safety-first game plan to a more expansive style. The result was more offloads and more errors. Expect the Storm to



go back to holding the ball more this season, reverting back to the game plan where they hold the opposition to less than 12 points knowing they can score the 16 required to win.

### **Leading Tryscorers:**

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)      | Tries |
|------|---------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Greg Inglis               | 11    |
| 2009 | Billy Slater              | 18    |
| 2008 | Greg Inglis               | 17    |
| 2007 | Israel Folau              | 21    |
| 2006 | Greg Inglis, Steve Turner | 18    |

### **Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 60**

**Games Lost Analysis:** The Storm lost 60 games to injury, suspension, rep duty and resting but none of it mattered as the Storm were no longer competing for premiership points. The number may also be a little high as Anthony Quinn was the starting winger when injured in round nine but may not have won his way back into the team later in the season. Ryan Hoffman, Aiden Tolman and Cooper Cronk all spent time on the sidelines with injuries at some point.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Despite the Storm playing for nothing for virtually two-thirds of the season, Craig Bellamy's men started favourites in 19 games with an average price of \$1.64 and an average home price of \$1.48. The Storm went well when favoured, covering 12 times but were blown out when sent out the underdog, failing to cover in all five of those matches though four of those were road games at the backend of the season when Melbourne were struggling for motivation. The standout Storm number from last year was their 18-6 under record, continuing their run as the top defensive team in the game. 11 of Melbourne's 12 away games finished under the total in 2010 with Storm games totalling 40 or less on 19 occasions. Getting a grip on their numbers is difficult given the circumstances of last season though. The Storm will likely remain an under proposition given the reluctance of bookmakers to drop totals below the current basement of around 36 ½ but the rest of the numbers should be treated with caution.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$12.00

Minor Premiership: \$12.00

Top 4: \$3.10

Top 8: \$1.60

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** I really am excited to see how the Storm will perform in 2011. They possess the best players in the world in the most important positions of hooker, half and fullback but we all know that depth will be a huge issue. I actually like the Storm backline with the exception of five eighth but their pack will battle to get on top of many teams. Still you will not find a better man-manager than Craig Bellamy and he will have this side “up” for most of the year. With the youngsters getting plenty of experience last year and the side used to dealing with adversity I regard the Storm as a better than midfield proposition. They will take some beating most weeks but their weaker players probably can't get them home if Slater/Smith/Cronk are injured or having quiet games. Price: \$15.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 63 (3rd)

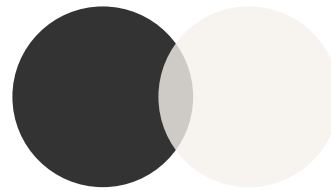
Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-6th

Predicted Finish: 3rd

There will be no team playing with a bigger chip on their shoulder in 2011 than the Melbourne Storm. Those that have been around the Storm for years remain bitter at how the club was treated. Craig Bellamy is surly at the best of times. And those new players brought in were a group essentially rejected by all other clubs, thrown on the scrapheap until saved by the Storm. Vengeance, redemption and spite will be the name of the game. And no team is better equipped to recover from such a stunning scandal as Melbourne. They have one of the all-time great coaches and stars at fullback, halfback and hooker. More importantly, the Storm have always been built around those stars with Craig Bellamy choosing to slot in players around them, players whose sum add up to well above their individual parts in the Bellamy system. Just as importantly, the success of the Storm has not been built solely on those stars and their attacking prowess but more sound defensive principles that have seen them rank top two in points allowed in each of the last five years. The Storm are also blessed with the most imposing home ground record in the league, something that did not change last year even with the move to AAMI Stadium and the salary cap scandal. If the Storm roll on as they have under Craig Bellamy-strong at home, well prepared, strong early in the season, top-of-the-line defensively, bit players buying into the system, young players rising to the task, few injuries to key players- then they will be a top four team. The worst case scenario in reasonable circumstances is that the Storm make it to the finals and are bundled out in the first two weeks. Best case is one of the most memorable premiership victories ever.

**2011 Betting Advice:** Melbourne should be bet preseason for both the minor premiership and the premiership at better than \$10.00 (\$14.00 available for the premiership at Sportsbet, \$12.00 available for the minor premiership at Sports Alive). The minor premiership is a particularly strong wager. Melbourne are sure to be well drilled, sure to win plenty of their games at home and sure to be playing hard all year and that should result in them being around the mark for the minor premiership. The \$1.70 (Sports Alive) available on Melbourne making the eight should also be swallowed up. I can't envisage too many scenarios where Melbourne are not playing in September. As always, the under will be a top grade play in Storm matches throughout the season. I also fancy that with the Storm playing with such bitterness, they will be in the business of really pounding on teams, making their minuses a good play.

# NEW ZEALAND WARRIORS



## Strongest Team

1. Lance Hohaia (fb/c/fe/hb/h)
2. Kevin Locke (fb/w)
3. Jerome Ropati (c/fe)
4. Krisnan Inu (c/w)
5. Manu Vatuvei (w)
6. Issac John (fe/hb)
7. Brett Seymour (hb/fe)
13. Feleti Mateo (br/fe)
12. Micheal Luck (br)
11. Simon Mannering (br)
10. Sam Rapira (p)
9. Shaun Berrigan (h/hb/fe/c)
8. Russell Packer (p)

- 
14. Lewis Brown (br/c)
  15. Ben Matulino (br/p)
  16. Steve Rapira (br/p)
  17. Aaron Heremaia (h)

**Others:** Jeremy Latimore (p), James Maloney (hb/fe), Joel Moon (c/fe), Ukuma Ta'ai (p/br), Shaun Johnson (hb/fe), Jacob Lillyman (br), Sione Lousi (br), Alehana Mara (h), Bill Tupou (w), Elijah Taylor (br/fe/c), Upu Poching (p), James Gavet (p)

**Gains:** Feleti Mateo (Parramatta), Krisnan Inu (Parramatta), Steve Rapira (North Queensland), Shaun Berrigan (Hull)

**Losses:** Steve Price (Retired), Brent Tate (North Queensland), Ian Henderson (Catalans), Jesse Royal (Retired), Patrick Ah Van (Bradford), Siuatonga Likiliki (Newcastle), Elijah Niko (Melbourne), Mark Ioane (Canberra), Nafe Seluini (Penrith)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Though Steve Price didn't play a match last season and Brent Tate may not play one this year, the loss of the two veterans leaves an enormous leadership vacuum at the Warriors, a club that has always needed strong leaders. The addition of the enigmatic Feleti Mateo could go either way pending his frame of mind and want to compete. Krisnan Inu is a reserve grader and they have paid massive overs for the former Eel who refuses to tackle, play hard or inject himself into any match that doesn't involve his team being up by 30. Steve Rapira has upside and can improve playing with his brother. The late recruitment of Shaun Berrigan could prove a coup as the former Clive Churchill Medal winner is a top class talent. At present it appears as if the Warriors are on the losing end of

the stick in terms of talent transfers but if Mateo has a big year, as he is capable of pulling out, and Berrigan returns at the level he fled Australia at, that assessment could be turned on its head.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Lance Hohaia, Manu Vatuvei, Kevin Locke, Feleti Mateo, Simon Mannering, Sam Rapira. (Possible) Krisnan Inu, Jerome Ropati, Russell Packer, Lewis Brown, Aaron Heremaia.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 7.5**

Lance Hohaia can be prone to errors but he is an outstanding talent who is at his best playing fullback where he can roam the field and chime in anywhere in attack. He has a sharp turn of foot and can set the Warriors attack alight with sharp runs up the middle.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 7**

There is no doubt that Manu Vatuvei is one of the best outside backs in the worlds. He is, as his nickname suggests, a beast. There is no more fearsome or effective winger in the game. He is complemented well by his opposite number Kevin Locke, a courageous fullback biding his time on the wing. Centre is an issue. Krisnan Inu is a major liability while Jerome Ropati can be hot and cold.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 5.5**

The Warriors have three promising five-eighths with Isaac John, Shaun Johnson and James Maloney all in the mix. While all three are short on experience, a very good playmaker could emerge from the trio. Maloney is the safe option but the Warriors will be better off with John, who has the most upside.

#### **Halfback ----- 5**

Brett Seymour was hailed as a saviour when arriving in Auckland but suffered through an injury ravaged 2010. He is no superstar but he deserves an injury and controversy free chance to prove he can cut it at NRL level.

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

Aaron Heremaia knocked Ian Henderson out of his job last year. Heremaia made a real impact with his dummy half running and will need to reproduce that form for the Warriors to make another finals run. Shaun Berrigan will also play at hooker and having played 14 Tests he is clearly a major plus for the Warriors.

#### **Prop ----- 6.5**

Sam Rapira and Russell Packer are both promising young props who should really lift their game in 2011. Rapira was flying last year before felled by an injury that looked like it would end his season. Packer has had some application problems but has all the tools to be one of the best props in the NRL. The Warriors have little depth

behind these two though with the likes of Latimore and Ta'ai and backrowers Steve Rapira and Ben Matulino likely to play plenty of prop.

## **Backrow** ----- 7.5

The addition of Feleti Mateo has the Warriors backrow looking strong for 2011. Mateo will pack in at lock and will offer second phase play. Micheal Luck will again tackle his heart out and then tackle some more. Skipper Simon Mannering offers a mix of both. The promising Lewis Brown will get his chance again. He has tremendous leg strength and is a smart footballer who will be around for many years to come.

## **Coach Rating:** Ivan Cleary (6th season at New Zealand, 6th in the NRL) ----- 7

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 61-62-3

Finals Record: 2-4

Finals Seasons: 3

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 61-62-3

**Coach Analysis:** A highly underrated coach, Ivan Cleary has led the Warriors to 12-plus win seasons in four of his five years at the helm and a playoff berth in three. The only year the Warriors have failed under Cleary's mentorship was in 2009 when the side had a horror 7-15-2 year after the Sonny Fai tragedy gutted the team. Cleary has added some discipline to the Warriors attack while maintaining the focus on second phase play. Defensively, the Warriors tend to tackle well even if they make poor reads. He made the tough call to give the captaincy to Simon Mannering last offseason and it worked and he will have some tough decisions to make in 2011 with his halves, the Warriors having five potential first graders in his squad competing for the six and seven jerseys. Cleary has added a level of professionalism at what was a distinctly unprofessional club and the challenge for Cleary now is to take the Warriors to the next level.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8   | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason  | Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------------|--------|
| 2010 | 14-10   | 5th    | 3-5   | 6-2  | 5-3   | 0-1    | Qualifying  | Final  |
| 2009 | 7-15-2  | 14th   | 3-4-1 | 2-6  | 2-5-1 | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2008 | 13-11   | 8th    | 4-4   | 3-5  | 6-2   | 2-1    | Preliminary | Final  |
| 2007 | 13-10-1 | 4th    | 4-4   | 3-5  | 6-1-1 | 0-2    | Semi        | Final  |
| 2006 | 12-12   | 10th   | 3-5   | 5-3  | 4-4   | DNQ    | --          |        |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8   | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 14-10   | 5th    | 3-5   | 6-2  | 5-3   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2009 | 7-15-2  | 14th   | 3-4-1 | 2-6  | 2-5-1 | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 13-11   | 8th    | 4-4   | 3-5  | 6-2   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2007 | 13-10-1 | 4th    | 4-4   | 3-5  | 6-1-1 | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2006 | 12-12   | 10th   | 3-5   | 5-3  | 4-4   | DNQ    | --                |

**Draw Analysis:** The Warriors have not started well under the coaching of Ivan Cleary, failing to go better than .500 over the opening two months of the season. Having said that, they have been very consistent, winning either three or four games and being midtable. It is at the backend of the season where Warriors seasons have been won and lost, however, with the Warriors finishing with 5 or 6 wins when they have made the finals and 4 or less when missing out. The enigmatic Warriors tend to make the finals on the back of some hefty momentum garnered throughout July and August and have the draw this year to stage another deep push. It is how they stand after 16 games, however, that should determine their fate. The Warriors face the three best teams from 2010 in the first five weeks and then get the Roosters, Tigers and Melbourne in the month following the Anzac Day Test. If the Warriors are within striking distance come the home stretch, they have traditionally gotten the sniff and flown home like Makybe Diva. It is just a matter of whether they are close enough. The Warriors host Souths and the Tigers during Origin and get a slight edge in both thanks to Inglis, Taylor, Farah and Lawrence likely being out.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record  | Home  | Away    |
|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| 2010            | 14-11   | 7-5   | 7-6     |
| 2009            | 7-15-2  | 5-7   | 2-8-2   |
| 2008            | 15-12   | 10-3  | 5-9     |
| 2007            | 13-12-1 | 8-5   | 5-7-1   |
| 2006            | 12-12   | 7-5   | 5-7     |
| Five-Year Total | 61-62-3 | 37-25 | 24-37-3 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** The Warriors posted their first winning road record since 2003 last year, a sign that bodes well for 2011. Facing greater travel issues than most, New Zealand have traditionally struggled away from home but have always been dangerous when they are at least competitive on the road. Conversely, the Warriors have a major advantage when playing at home and it has shown in their recent 37-25 record at Mt Smart. The story is the same for the Warriors as it is every year: win away and stay in the hunt, lose in Australia and concede the season.



### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 4th  | 15th | 10th | 3rd  | 4th  |
| Metres        | 11th | 3rd  | 5th  | 5th  | 4th  |
| Offloads      | 6th  | 2nd  | 2nd  | 1st  | 1st  |
| Tackle Breaks | 10th | 5th  | 5th  | 6th  | 11th |
| Errors        | 3rd  | 13th | 9th  | 10th | 5th  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 5th  | 12th | 10th | 5th  | 5th  |
| Metres Conceded | 2nd  | 14th | 3rd  | 4th  | 1st  |
| Missed Tackles  | 9th  | 6th  | 4th  | 4th  | 3rd  |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** The Warriors rarely have the same identity from one season to the next with their only consistent feature being that they are always near the top of the offload rankings. They tend to be a good attacking team but that does not always translate to points while they are usually good tacklers who usually win the arm wrestle but poor field position can lead them to concede too many points. As always, which Warriors team will turn up is difficult to predict. My gut feeling is that the Warriors will again be a top attacking team whose defence could slip just a little with the loss of Brent Tate.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)                       | Tries |
|------|--|-------|
| 2010 | Manu Vatuvei                               | 20    |
| 2009 | Manu Vatuvei                               | 13    |
| 2008 | Manu Vatuvei                               | 16    |
| 2007 | Manu Vatuvei, Jerome Ropati, Grant Rovelli | 10    |
| 2006 | Brent Webb                                 | 11    |

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 85

**Games Lost Analysis:** The Warriors did a remarkable job to do as well as they did in 2010 considering their mammoth injury toll. Former captain and leading prop Steve Price missed the entire season and was forced into retirement. His replacement, Simon Mannering, was out of action for seven matches while fellow prop Sam Rapira missed nine games and did remarkably well to make it back on the paddock. Halfback Brett Seymour missed twelve games. Tryscoring machine Manu

Vatuvei missed six. Centres Tate and Ropati missed ten matches between them. The Warriors were hit hard by injury in 2010 but showed both depth and resilience to finish in the top eight.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Punters who found the Warriors early in the 2010 season had starry eyed dreams and a heart as hard as fairy floss for Ivan Cleary's men with the Warriors going 16-9 against the line and having a positive straight-up return, becoming the punters darling in the process. While the Warriors were sound at home (7-5 ATS), it was on the road where they were continually underestimated by bookmakers, going 9-4 against the handicap. The lesson is simple: the Warriors learned to travel. They won seven road games including five straight-up as an outsider. With an average road price of \$2.70, it was a license to print money. Interestingly, the Warriors didn't play a Monday night game and only once backed up on 5-days rest. New Zealand also happened to be a 15-10 over team, going 11-6 over in good weather and 8-5 over on the road.

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

**2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$14.00

Minor Premiership: \$16.00

Top 4: \$3.50

Top 8: \$1.75

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** New Zealand rugby league continues to mature and within five years I predict the Anzac test matches will rival State of Origin. Their production line of youngsters is something to behold and if the Warriors can get all their ducks in a row, this club should challenge most seasons. Feleti Mateo is a good signing but the less said about Krisnan Inu the better. NZ posses amazing depth in the pack and are blessed to have big Manu out wide but I think they are still questionable at hooker and half. Heremaia, Seymour and Maloney are all honest players but they are not the players to lead this side to a premiership. One thing this club does have is the 2010 Toyota Cup premiership so the likes of Shaun Johnson are the real x-factors. If one or more of these Toyota Cup stars can step up then the sky is the limit for the Warriors. Price: \$19.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 54 (equal 9th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 4th-13th

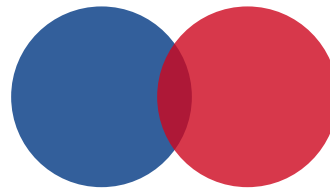
Predicted Finish: 8th

There is a lot to like about the Warriors this year and the biggest of those factors is Ivan Cleary. The Warriors have won 12 games on his watch in four of the last five seasons and there was a more than reasonable excuse for 2009. The Warriors improved in nearly every facet of the game in 2010 with their ability to win in

Australia and their improved defence the two most notable. The Warriors also did that hamstrung by plenty of key injuries. So with natural improvement, a very good coach and a fair amount of luck, the Warriors shape up as likely contenders in 2011. I have three concerns, however, and they all mean that excitement for the Warriors must be tempered. Firstly, they have lost leaders Steve Price and Brent Tate, two very committed footballers, and have recruited two players who can throw the towel in very quickly. Secondly, and closely linked to the first, is that the Warriors are going to do it tough in the first couple of months and with Inu and Mateo in and Price and Tate out, the toughness required to bounce back may not be there. Thirdly, there are rightful concerns over the four spine positions. Hohaia is very good but despite the depth the Warriors have at halfback and hooker, they are lacking a touch of class. Perhaps Shaun Berrigan brings it and that could push them into a legitimate contender but at the moment the spine is looking a little fragile. So a good season is expected from New Zealand. Ivan Cleary rarely delivers anything else. But in the end the Warriors are probably just a little short on key position class and leadership to really push for that first title.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The punters sweetheart of 2010 may well back up in 2011 as it appears they have again been underestimated by punters. The best betting opportunities will arise when the Warriors travel to Australia. The perception remains that the team cannot travel and despite a fine year in Australia in 2010, it is doubtful the market has fully caught on. The Warriors will again be a good over team too. In terms of futures markets, a small interest on the Warriors for the premiership around the Anzac Test is the play. New Zealand have a tough opening to the season and traditionally are slow starters so they could get out to a silly price. That will be the time to bet them.

# NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS



## Strongest Team

1. Shannon McDonnell (fb/w)
2. Akuila Uate (w)
3. Adam MacDougall (c)
4. Junior Sau (c)
5. James McManus (w)
6. Jarrod Mullen (fe/hb)
7. Kurt Gidley (hb/fb/fe/h)
13. Matt Hilder (br/h)
12. Zeb Taia (br)
11. Chris Houston (br)
10. Neville Costigan (p/br)
9. Isaac De Gois (h)
8. Daniel Tolar (p)

- 
14. Mark Taufua (p/br)
  15. Richie Fa'aoso (p/br)
  16. Cory Paterson (br)
  17. Beau Henry (hb/fe)

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**Others:** Evarn Tuimavave (p), Wes Naiqama (c/w/fb), Keith Lulia (c/w), Antonio Kaufusi (p), Steve Southern (br), Siuatonga Likikiki (c), Kevin Naiqama (c/w/fb), Ben Rogers (fe/br), Cameron Ciraldo (br), Marvin Karawana (br), Joel Edwards (p), Con Mika (br), Kyle O'Donnell (br), Maipele Morseau (fb), Korbin Sims (br/p), Chris Adams (h), Ethan Cook (br)

**Gains:** Neville Costigan (St George-Illawarra), Chris Houston (Free Agent), Beau Henry (St George-Illawarra), Steve Southern (North Queensland), Kyle O'Donnell (Cronulla), Korbin Sims (Brisbane), Maipele Morseau (Melbourne), Siuatonga Likikiki (New Zealand)

**Losses:** Steve Simpson (Retired), Ben Cross (Leeds), Cooper Vuna (Rugby Union), Scott Dureau (Catalans)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The Knights needed to buy well to be in the mix this season and they haven't come close with Neville Costigan their only purchase who can be assured a starting spot though Chris Houston's exoneration from drugs charges sees him return to the club. Both fill the hole left by the retirements of Ben Cross and Steve Simpson. The loss of Cooper Vuna to rugby also hurt the Knights strike power out wide. Under no measure did Newcastle improve their roster throughout the offseason.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Kurt Gidley. (Possible) Neville Costigan, Akuila Uate, Junior Sau, Zeb Taia.

## **Position Ratings:**

### **Fullback ----- 4.5**

With Kurt Gidley likely to move to halfback, Shannon McDonnell will get the nod at fullback over Wes Naiqama. Both are serviceable at best with McDonnell the safer option. Naiqama offers more in attack.

### **Three Quarters ----- 7**

The Knights have strength in their outside backs. Akuila Uate was the top try scorer in the NRL and may well be the fastest player in the game at present. He can score from anywhere. Junior Sau is in a different mould but is incredibly strong and one of the better defensive centres. James McManus is solid, if unspectacular, on the right wing. Adam MacDougall is still an effective centre but, as per usual, is often injured and cannot be relied on to see out a season. The fair Keith Lulia will get a run when MacDougall is in the sick bay.

### **Five-Eighth ----- 7.5**

Jarrold Mullen will likely play in the six all season, which should suit his game as he appears to get flustered when given the job as sole playmaker. Mullen needs to run the ball more but with the exception of the occasional error he is a regular performer for Newcastle with limited resources.

### **Halfback ----- 9**

Kurt Gidley may prefer to play fullback but the Knights need him at halfback, where he can get his hands on the ball more and offer more direction in attack. Gidley is an elite player, a jack-of-all-trades who is tireless in his work. His move to the seven is a huge upgrade for a Knights team that struggled with Scott Dureau and Ben Rogers rotating through the halves.

### **Hooker ----- 7**

Isaac De Gois left Cronulla as a player on the rise but his form has flattened out since moving to Newcastle in 2009. De Gois is a player capable of great creativity out of dummy half and he can play as a second halfback but his tackling is a worry and his constant string of injuries means he cannot be relied on.

### **Prop ----- 4**

The Knights have the weakest prop rotation in the NRL. Dan Tolar and Richie Fa'aoso are probably Newcastle's two best bookends though recruit Neville Costigan will likely play plenty of prop. Along with Mark Taufua, they will form a solid but completely unspectacular engine room. Antonio Kaufusi is the laziest prop in the NRL and Rick Stone would be well advised to keep him out of the NRL team.

## **Backrow** ----- 7

Newcastle are not too bad off in the backrow and they have the potential to be quite good if Chris Houston returns in the form he left and Zeb Taia recaptures his 2009 talents. Houston was on the verge of Origin selection before missing a year due to a drug supply charge. Taia was running hard and tackling harder in 2009 but his form fell off dramatically in 2010. Matt Hilder always works hard as does Neville Costigan. Cory Paterson continues to receive praise but he is constantly battling injury and personal demons and he rarely plays with a smart football brain.

## **Coach Rating:** Rick Stone (3rd season at Newcastle, 3rd in the NRL) ----- 6

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 13-16

Finals Record: 0-1

Finals Seasons: 1

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 13-16

**Coach Analysis:** Rick Stone is probably the most low profile coach in the NRL and the jury is still out on whether he is up to the task. He did a good enough job to round out 2009 but while the Knights occasionally showed something last season, they were inconsistent and stats suggested they became a much worse team. Newcastle did have excuses in 2010, however, and the Knights players do love him. He will need to turn the Knights into a playoff team in 2011 to keep his job and I'm not sure he can do that but he does have something about him that suggests he can coach. Stone has achieved nothing yet but he has the players on board and that is the first step.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 2010 | 10-14  | 11th   | 3-5 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2009 | 13-11  | 7th    | 5-3 | 4-4  | 4-4   | 0-1    | Qualifying | Final  |
| 2008 | 12-12  | 9th    | 4-4 | 3-5  | 5-3   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2007 | 9-15   | 15th   | 4-4 | 4-4  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 4th    | 5-3 | 4-4  | 5-3   | 1-1    | Semi       | Final  |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 2010 | 10-14  | 11th   | 3-5 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2009 | 3-1    | 7th    | *   | *    | 3-1   | 0-1    | Qualifying | Final  |

**Draw Analysis:** The Knights have been remarkable for their consistency over the last five years, having only one period (the last third of 2007 where they went 1-7) where they didn't win between 3 and 5 games. The Knights rarely hit horrid lows but rarely get on any major hot streaks and it has shown in their middling performances over the last five seasons. Newcastle have to start the season with three road games and six away games but face the toughest part of their season in the middle-third. The Knights have the Cowboys and Cronulla twice which will help their win tally. Newcastle may be the biggest winners with the Origin draw despite likely missing Kurt Gidley. They have drawn the Roosters and the Dragons, both of whom will have at least three players on rep duty.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 10-14  | 6-6   | 4-8   |
| 2009            | 13-12  | 10-2  | 3-10  |
| 2008            | 12-12  | 7-5   | 5-7   |
| 2007            | 9-15   | 4-8   | 5-7   |
| 2006            | 15-11  | 7-6   | 8-5   |
| Five-Year Total | 59-64  | 34-27 | 25-37 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Considering how close Newcastle is to Sydney and the fact they get a good number of away matches just down the road at Gosford, the Knights have a disgraceful road record over the last four seasons, winning only 34.7% of the time away from Energy Australia Stadium. Newcastle cannot possibly move up a level until they learn to play away from home.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 11th | 11th | 6th  | 14th | 2nd  |
| Metres        | 14th | 13th | 3rd  | 12th | 5th  |
| Offloads      | 11th | 8th  | 6th  | 9th  | 10th |
| Tackle Breaks | 7th  | 9th  | 6th  | 11th | 9th  |
| Errors        | 11th | 10th | 8th  | 9th  | 7th  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 14th | 9th  | 7th  | 16th | 10th |
| Metres Conceded | 3rd  | 4th  | 2nd  | 13th | 4th  |
| Missed Tackles  | 12th | 4th  | 6th  | 10th | 4th  |



**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** After a solid year in 2008 with the ball in hand, the Knights have fallen away in attack. Errors have been an issue as has go-forward and the result has been a struggle in scoring points. Defensively, Newcastle had a horrid 2010. They leaked plenty of points and in a manner not particularly Novacastrian, missing too many tackles and not showing much pride in the line. The move of Gidley to halfback should help the Knights in regards points (though it will hurt the metres gained) so their attack should improve but defence remains a query. They won't be an elite defensive unit but can they get to the point where their defence is not a liability? That is the major task for Rick Stone and the major query of Knights fans.

### **Leading Tryscorers:**

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Akuila Uate          | 21    |
| 2009 | Jarrod Mullen        | 10    |
| 2008 | Kurt Gidley          | 9     |
| 2007 | James McManus        | 10    |
| 2006 | Brian Carney         | 16    |

### **Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 74**

**Games Lost Analysis:** The Knights were hit hard by injury in 2010 which had a greater impact than it probably should have after the Wicks-Houston drug scandal left the club short on top grade players. Kurt Gidley started the season on the sidelines and veteran warhorse Steve Simpson finished his on the same stretch of pine, along with his career. Origin wing James McManus only played a handful of matches but was ably replaced by Cooper Vuna. Adam MacDougall, as always, spent nearly half the season on the sideline with various ailments.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Knights were a tough team to bet in 2010, finishing the year 10-14 against the spread and a slight loser in their total return but showing some wild variations in their performances. The Knights were competent at home (6-6 ATS) but dreadful on the road (4-8 ATS). They were solid propositions as home underdogs but could not be trusted with the points on the road. They were 3-6 ATS in day matches and 5-10 ATS off a 7-day or longer break but performed well in wet weather (4-2 ATS). The over-under was similarly schizophrenic. Knights games finished below 40 on 12 occasions but also exceeded 50 on 9 occasions. Newcastle went 12-12 over-under in 2010 but those numbers were likely skewed somewhat by the weather with Newcastle playing six wet weather games, going 1-5 under in those encounters. Newcastle started favourites only seven times last season and are a generally unfashionable team with little public betting support, which has been the case since Andrew Johns retired.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$23.00

Minor Premiership: \$31.00

Top 4: \$6.00

Top 8: \$3.00

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** Always a proud club with great support, the Knights are a side that cannot be ignored. Kurt Gidley's move to the halves and Jarrod Mullen's late season revival were encouraging signs for the Knights but I have some reservations over coach Rick Stone's ability. Neville Costigan's arrival will add some much needed starch to an already skilful pack but apart from the deadly Uate, the Newcastle outside backs are best described as fair. However we know the Mad Dog will lift in big matches and I like the look of Kevin Naiqama. Newcastle are the epitome of a middle rung team and I could genuinely see their season go either way. Price: \$34.00

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 52 (13th)

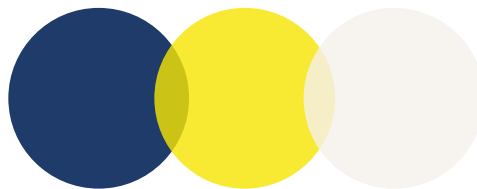
Predicted Finishing Range: 8th-14th

Predicted Finish: 13th

There is just very little to get excited about if you are a Newcastle fan this year. The team is fair. The coach is fair. And that is about it. Everything is fair and fair teams tend to miss the eight and they certainly don't challenge for premierships. 2011 looks like it could go the same way as any one of the last four, where the Knights have either just made the eight or just missed out. Newcastle will consistently beat the teams they should, particularly at home. They will consistently lose to teams above them on the table, teams with greater strike power or an elite defence. They will win at home and they will lose on the road. To steal an overused phrase from American sport: they are who we think they are. Newcastle are actually one of the easiest teams to get a grip on and it is unlikely the club has the dynamic player or top prospect who will change their identity. The Knights will again be heavily reliant on Gidley, Mullen and Uate and if any of that trio goes down then Newcastle will automatically drop down to wooden spoon contenders. The upside for the Knights is sneaking a spot in the eight. The reality, however, suggests the club does not have the talent in either attack or defence to compete with most teams nor do they have the forward pack to win many arm wrestles.

**2011 Betting Advice:** Newcastle are a very predictable team. For bettors, that means two things. Firstly, Newcastle matches are easy to tip in. Secondly, it means there is very little money to be made out of playing the Knights in most match-bet options. It is wise to play against the Knights on the road in good situations but that is about the only positive way to bet Newcastle games at present. There is no value in any futures market involving Newcastle. Interestingly enough, Jarrod Mullen and Kurt Gidley have both led the Knights try-scoring tally in two of the last three years. They both may offer value and could claim it if Uate missed significant time with injury.

# NORTH QUEENSLAND COWBOYS



## Strongest Team

1. Matt Bowen (fb/fe)
2. Kalifa Faifai-Loa (w)
3. Brent Tate (c)
4. Willie Tonga (c)
5. Antonio Winterstein (w)
6. Michael Morgan (fe/hb)
7. Johnathan Thurston (hb)
13. Dallas Johnson (br)
12. Gavin Cooper (br)
11. Scott Bolton (br)
10. Matt Scott (p)
9. Aaron Payne (h)
8. James Tamou (p/br)

- 
14. Glenn Hall (br/p)
  15. Dane Hogan (br)
  16. Ricky Thorby (p)
  17. Ashley Graham (c/w/fe)
- 

**Others:** Ray Thompson (fe/hb), Ashton Sims (br/p), Ben Jones (c/fe/hb/h), Will Tupou (w/c), Shannon Gallant (fb/w), James Seyeyaro (h/hb), Clint Amos (h/br), James Taumalolo (br), Isaac Ah Mau (p), Leeson Ah Mau (br/p), Tariq Sims (p/br), Josh Bateman (br), Michael Bani (w), Jack Cooper (br), Blake Leary (br), Tyson Martin (br)

**Gains:** Brent Tate (New Zealand), Dallas Johnson (Catalans), Gavin Cooper (Penrith), Kalifa Faifai-Loa (St George-Illawarra), Glenn Hall (Bradford), Ashton Sims (Brisbane), Ricky Thorby (St George-Illawarra), Josh Bateman (Penrith), Antonio Winterstein (Brisbane), Tariq Sims (Brisbane), Blake Leary (Melbourne)

**Losses:** Luke O'Donnell (Huddersfield), Willie Mason (Hull KR), Carl Webb (Parramatta), Anthony Watts (Roosters), Steve Rapira (New Zealand), Arana Taumata (Penrith), John Williams (Cronulla), Steve Southern (Newcastle), Ty Williams (Retired), Ben Harris (Retired), Donald Malone (Released), Obe Geia (Released), Grant Rovelli (Released)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The Cowboys undertook a major cleanout during the offseason, a cleanout that was absolutely necessary considering the rancid culture at the club and their underperformance over the last half-decade. Out are thugs Luke O'Donnell and Willie Mason, lazy bums Carl Webb and Antonio Kaufusi and an array of others who weren't up to the task. The only losses the Cowboys should be upset about are Anthony Watts, one of the Cowboys best in 2010, and

Steve Rapira, who has some upside. They made some good purchases with workhorse Dallas Johnson and top class centre Brent Tate (who they were unlucky to lose for most of the season to yet another injury) along with value buys Cooper and Faifai-Loa. The purchase of Ashton Sims has to be questioned though. The Cowboys have purchased backbone and heart and Sims does not fit those criteria. Overall, the Cowboys have come out winners in the transfer market but they have a long way to climb to be competitive.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Johnathan Thurston, Matt Scott, Dallas Johnson. (Possible) Willie Tonga.

### **Position Ratings:**

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

Matt Bowen will be 29 when the season kicks off and after some serious knee injuries he is clearly on the downswing of his career. He averaged less than 80 metres per game in 2010 as a fullback, the worst in the NRL. With his pace diminishing and his confidence seemingly low, Bowen has little to offer the Cowboys.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 5.5**

The Cowboys sought to significantly upgrade this position by signing Brent Tate but those plans came askew with Tate now out for the season. Willie Tonga had his first good season since 2004 last year but reportedly wants out and has a history of knee troubles. Faifai-Loa looks a very exciting type and may provide the Cowboys with some spark. Familiar faces like Graham, Gallant and Ben Jones are unlikely to provide much.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 2.5**

The Cowboys have nobody of any talent capable of playing the six. Michael Morgan and Ray Thompson will likely duel for the job. Neither are particularly good.

#### **Halfback ----- 8.5**

Johnathan Thurston has long held the title of the best halfback in the game but that has to be questioned after another dismal season from the Cowboys. He never stops trying, he is a brilliant kick and he is a gifted playmaker but his leadership skills are poor and he does not get the best out of those around him so therefore rates below Prince and Cronk.

#### **Hooker ----- 6.5**

Aaron Payne may have been the club's vice captain and starting nine but he was comprehensively outplayed by backup Anthony Watts in 2010. With Watts gone, the pressure is on Payne to recapture old form not seen for a number of years. Payne is only 28 but seems to be on the downslide.

## **Prop** ----- 6

Matt Scott developed into an elite player in 2010 and jumped the likes of Ben Hannant and Petero Civoniceva to earn an Australian jersey and a place among the elite prop forwards in the game. Even as the Cowboys folded cheaply, Scott never eased up. He does not have much to work with though with Ricky Thorby and the decent James Tamou. Ashton Sims will likely be used as a prop and he is simply a horrible player unworthy of an NRL jersey.

## **Backrow** ----- 7

The Cowboys made the smart play by bringing in Dallas Johnson, the talented Australian lock who never tires of tackling or hard work. Johnson will add some much needed starch to the Cowboys defensive line. Scott Bolton had a breakout year in 2010 and was very effective when running on the left fringe off Thurston. Gavin Cooper is another nice recruit. Cooper tackles well, tries hard and will bring a dramatic change in attitude to that displayed by the likes of Webb, O'Donnell and Mason. Young Dane Hogan has promise.

**Coach Rating:** Neil Henry (3rd season at North Queensland, 5th in the NRL) --- **4.5**

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 38-59

Finals Record: 0-1

Finals Seasons: 1

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 16-32

**Coach Analysis:** It is difficult to understand why Neil Henry is so highly rated. He has a terrible win-loss record, reports from Townsville suggest he has alienated many of the playing group, the Cowboys have dropped off in most measurable indicators since his arrival and the team has shown little-to-no commitment in defence. The only reason he still has a job is the fact he signed a five-year deal. He will surely be gone if he cannot turn the Cowboys fortunes around and soon. After taking Canberra to the finals in his first season and being given much of the credit for Queensland's Origin success thanks to his role as the assistant charged with installing game plans and tactics, his reputation has been almost fatally tarnished. His tactical nous is being severely questioned after he tried to limit Thurston to playing the left side of the field and his man management skills have been a major issue even since his days at Canberra. If he doesn't get the Cowboys firing early, he will be gone and soon. His credits are long dried up and he needs results or he will soon be sent to the rugby league gulag.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 5-19   | 15th   | 2-6 | 2-6  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 11-13  | 12th   | 3-5 | 6-2  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 5-19   | 15th   | 3-5 | 0-8  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 15-9   | 3rd    | 6-2 | 4-4  | 5-3   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2006 | 11-13  | 9th    | 6-2 | 2-6  | 3-5   | DNQ    | ---               |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 5-19   | 15th   | 2-6 | 2-6  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 11-13  | 12th   | 3-5 | 6-2  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 13-11  | 6th    | 3-5 | 4-4  | 6-2   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2007 | 9-15   | 14th   | 3-5 | 3-5  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |

**Draw Analysis:** It is hard to get a grip on the tendencies of the Cowboys considering they have been a generally awful team over the last three years, winning a combined 21 matches over that period. They performed well over the middle sector of 2009 but have not been a good team outside that period. They have started poorly over the last three years, the latter two under Neil Henry, whose two Raiders teams were also slow starters. The Cowboys have also been a bad finishing team over the last three years, getting home at a combined rate of 5-19. The Cowboys get no easy wins throughout Origin and if odds were framed on all their matches at present they would be favoured in no more than four games (Newcastle, Canberra, Cronulla at home and perhaps Cronulla on the road) so there is no doubt their draw appears tough. Playing the Dragons, Roosters and Storm only once will help their cause though and in those terms they are playing one of the easier schedules.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 5-19   | 4-8   | 1-11  |
| 2009            | 11-13  | 7-5   | 4-8   |
| 2008            | 5-19   | 3-9   | 2-10  |
| 2007            | 17-10  | 10-4  | 7-6   |
| 2006            | 11-13  | 7-5   | 4-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 49-74  | 31-31 | 18-43 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Winning less than 30% of your road games is not a recipe for success and when mixed with only a 50% home win record, then a formula for mediocrity is on the offing. That is exactly what the Cowboys have produced. Having gone 7-29 away from Dairy Farmers over the last three years, the Cowboys have put together two five-win seasons and an 11-13 disappointment.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 14th | 4th  | 13th | 5th  | 14th |
| Metres        | 13th | 12th | 15th | 16th | 11th |
| Offloads      | 9th  | 12th | 8th  | 4th  | 3rd  |
| Tackle Breaks | 11th | 15th | 16th | 8th  | 10th |
| Errors        | 12th | 11th | 12th | 11th | 15th |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 16th | 5th  | 14th | 12th | 5th  |
| Conceded        | 13th | 1st  | 4th  | 12th | 3rd  |
| Missed Tackles  | 14th | 7th  | 8th  | 15th | 8th  |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** The Cowboys were a rabble on both sides of the ball last year. They were error prone and ineffective in attack and they leaked points thanks to poor tackling and a soft underbelly in defence. Attack has been a major concern under Henry despite finishing 4th in points in 2009. All other indicators suggest the Cowboys show poor discipline in attack and rarely offer anything for opposing defences to worry about outside of the inconsistent Thurston. The Cowboys were actually quite solid defensively and weren't bad in 2008. Having put a broom through the team, it is tough to guess what the Cowboys will look like in 2011. The smart money suggests that their defence will improve before their attack.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)         | Tries |
|------|------------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Willie Tonga                 | 12    |
| 2009 | Willie Tonga, Matt Bowen     | 12    |
| 2008 | John Williams, Ashley Graham | 10    |
| 2007 | Matt Bowen                   | 22    |
| 2006 | Matt Sing                    | 13    |



## **Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 53**

**Games Lost Analysis:** The Cowboys had few excuses last year. Sure, Bowen was a late starter and Thurston missed the finish to the year but few first graders were missing with injury. Luke O'Donnell spent most of his time suspended and the Cowboys were unlucky at five-eighth after dropping Grant Rovelli but the reality is that the Cowboys had one of the better runs with injury yet were still the worst team in the NRL.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** 2010 was an unmitigated disaster for the Cowboys and it was reflected in their betting data with the Cowboys going 9-15 against the spread, having a putrid total return of -\$13.81 and starting favourites in only five games, all at home. The Cowboys held up at home, going 7-5 ATS at Dairy Farmers but were an abomination on the road, covering only twice all season when travelling. As an underdog, the Cowboys were 6-13 against the spread. The Cowboys matches tended to be high scoring with 16 over 41 points but bookmakers set high enough lines to ensure the Cowboys went 12-12 over-under. With an average price of \$2.85, the Cowboys were found out very early by punters who recalled previous collapses.

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

## **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$41.00

Minor Premiership: \$45.00

Top 4: \$8.00

Top 8: \$4.00

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** The Cowboys would have done plenty of soul searching in the off-season and they have offloaded some of their poisonous players but another tough season awaits. The culture and morale in Townsville seems to be terribly lacking and apart from JT they do not possess class. Matt Scott and Scott Bolton will hopefully drag the best out of the other Cowboys forwards and let's hope there is still some life in Matty Bowen's legs. Will struggle overall but still have some good wins in them. Price: \$67.00

## **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 45.5 (15th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 12th-16th

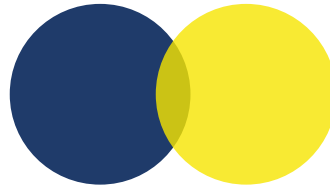
Predicted Finish: 15th

No team in the entire competition has a smaller collective heart than the North Queensland Cowboys, a team that reflects none of the characteristics of the area it represents. No team is quicker to wave the white flag. No team is quicker to quit. Only a truly outstanding mentor can get the Cowboys playing top football consistently but the club shunted Graham Murray out years ago and now must deal

with the overrated and mediocre Neil Henry. The club has taken steps in the right direction. Dallas Johnson is a buy who offers more than his on-field contribution, Brent Tate is a genuine leader and Gavin Cooper has plenty of heart but the club is simply lacking in class and a genuine will to win. A number of the Cowboys backs also play very selfish games. The smart money will be on the Cowboys starting poorly, leading to the dismissal of Neil Henry, before a small resurgence and a finish reflective of where they belong. The Cowboys simply don't have the attacking tools to score points and defensive attitude is always a worry. The likes of Johnson, Matt Scott, Scott Bolton and Johnathan Thurston may be able to pull the Cowboys over the line in a couple of matches but it is difficult to picture the club winning more than eight games this season.

**2011 Betting Advice:** There is simply no value in any of the Cowboys premiership or finals markets. There may be a touch of value once wooden spoon markets are up with anything over \$3.25 (\$5.50 available at Sportingbet) a wager in that market. Betting Faifai-Loa for season top try scorer when those markets come up is also a play to consider as he is one of the few players capable of getting over the line. He is a legitimate try scoring threat and it would not surprise at all if he finished with 12 or more meat pies this season. The Cowboys tend to throw the towel in a lot and that is an outstanding trait to understand when you are betting a minus against them. Take on the Cowboys early and often in 2011.

# PARRAMATTA EELS



## Strongest Team

1. Jarryd Hayne (fb/w/c/fe)
2. Luke Burt (fb/w)
3. Joel Reddy (c/w)
4. Paul Whatuira (c)
5. Chris Hicks (w)
6. Daniel Mortimer (fe/hb)
7. Jeff Robson (hb/h)
13. Ben Smith (br/c)
12. Justin Horo (br/p)
11. Nathan Hindmarsh (br)
10. Fuiyui Moimoi (p)
9. Anthony Mitchell (h)
8. Justin Poore (p)

- 
14. Tim Mannah (p)
  15. Shane Shackleton (br/p)
  16. Reni Maitua (br)
  17. Matt Keating (h)

**Others:** Carl Webb (p/br), Chris Walker (w/c), Jordan Atkins (w/c), Casey Maguire (hb/fe/h), Jacob Loko (c/br), Tom Humble (fe/fb/c/w), Brendan Oake (br), Brad Murray (hb), Etu Uaisele (w), Pele Peletelese (p), Manase Manuokafoa (p/br), Billy Rogers (br), Cameron Bruest (fe), Eni Folau (c/w), Paki Afu (p), Marmin Barba (fb/fe)

**Gains:** Chris Hicks (Warrington), Paul Whatuira (Huddersfield), Chris Walker (Catalans), Carl Webb (North Queensland), Casey Maguire (Catalans), Reni Maitua (Free Agent), Jordan Atkins (Gold Coast), Brad Murray (Roosters), Billy Rogers (Melbourne), Eni Folau (Brisbane Easts), Cameron Bruest (Canberra), Paki Afu (Canterbury), Marmin Barba (Canterbury)

**Losses:** Nathan Cayless (Retired), Timana Tahu (Released), Eric Grothe (Retired), Feleti Mateo (New Zealand), Krisnan Inu (New Zealand), Kris Keating (Canterbury), Jonathan Wright (Canterbury), Tim Robinson (Manly)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Those in charge of recruitment and retention at Parramatta should be shot. They have made an absolute mess of an already ordinary roster. While they have snuck in late with a couple of potentially good buys in Hicks and Whatuira, they have signed the lazy Carl Webb, the drug cheat Reni Maitua, the inconsistent Chris Walker and Casey Maguire, who many league types thought had retired years ago. This class follows the debacle that was Timana Tahu, the premature retirement of Nathan Cayless, the loss of promising utility Kris Keating

and the snubbing of match-winner Feleti Mateo. At least liabilities Krisnan Inu and Eric Grothe are gone. This offseason recruitment and retention was a total and unmitigated disaster for Parramatta.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Jarryd Hayne, Fuihui Moimoi. (Possible) Nathan Hindmarsh, Tim Mannah.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 8.5**

Jarryd Hayne has the ability to earn a 10 rating but his aptitude and inability to play within a team structure that has seen his rating drop to 8.5. Hayne is an elite returner, a pure try scorer and a player who can create his own opportunities but unless Kearney can convince Hayne to play a team game then his potential will continue to go unfulfilled.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 5**

The Eels have turned over most of their three-quarter line with Tahu, Inu and Grothe gone and Hicks and Whatuira in. The result: three starting outside backs who will be older than 30 come the end of the season and a three-quarter line lacking in speed, class and NRL seasoning. Hicks was a talented try scorer and Whatuira is a duel premiership winner but they have both been gone a long time. Luke Burt is solid on a wing but nothing more. Joel Reddy is really the only Parramatta outside back with any upside and even that is limited.

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

Daniel Mortimer burst onto the scene as a prodigious talent in 2009 but struggled in 2010 to the point where he was dropped from first grade. He tries hard but he consistently gets worked too much defensively and he does not provide the presence to lead an NRL team around the park.

#### **Halfback ----- 4**

The Eels have major problems at halfback and those problems were complicated by Kris Keating's move to Canterbury. Jeff Robson now seems to have the spot with only youngster Scott Murray likely to challenge if Murray takes time out from his busy gambling habit. Robson does not have the class or the game to assist the Parramatta backline.

#### **Hooker ----- 6**

One of the few bright lights in 2010 for the Eels was the discovery of Anthony Mitchell. Mitchell only played 3 games but showed the zip and ability to cause defensive lines problems, a characteristic Matt Keating has never exhibited. Mitchell is a must start in 2011 and is potentially a long-term solution at nine for the Eels.

## **Prop ----- 8.5**

Even with the retirement of Nathan Cayless, Parramatta still has a high class prop rotation. Fuifui Moimoi is a machine when hitting the ball up, going at over 10 yards per run and 113 metres per game. Justin Poore was a colossal disappointment in his first season at the Eels, falling from New South Wales prop to nearly-New South Wales Cup prop. He has the talent and could be one to improve under Stephen Kearney. Tim Mannah came from nowhere last year to make his Origin debut. He has played some great games. His problem is fitness, however, with Mannah playing 40 minutes only three times in 2010.

## **Backrow ----- 6.5**

Nathan Hindmarsh will turn 32 just after the Grand Final but he is as good as he has ever been. Hindmarsh has always, rightly, been revered for his work ethic and his thirst for tackling but he adds plenty more including handy ball-playing skills and inspirational leadership. There is little quality in the backrow around him though. Ben Smith tries hard but it is difficult to see what he offers. Justin Horo looks a real nice type and may yet turn into something but he is still green as grass. Carl Webb gives Antonio Kaufusi a run for the honour of being the laziest forward in the NRL. Reni Maitua will return midseason but hasn't played for two years and hasn't played well for six.

## **Coach Rating: Stephen Kearney (1st season at Parramatta, 1st in the NRL) ----- 6**

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 0-0

Finals Record: \*

Finals Seasons: 0

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 0-0

**Coach Analysis:** Stephen Kearney has his work cut out for him at Parramatta but his credentials could not be any more impressive for a first year coach. Kearney has learnt at the feet of the best. He has been an assistant at the Storm for five years, where the club made four straight Grand Finals. Craig Bellamy does not tolerate fools so Kearney was obviously contributing plenty and learning along the way. Kearney also had the advantage of coaching in the NRL in an unofficial capacity while Bellamy was on Origin duty. Michael Maguire's efforts at Wigan are a good sign of what Bellamy's assistants are capable of. Added to that is Kearney's experience in the international arena. Kearney coached New Zealand to the 2008 World Cup and the 2010 Four Nations, two unexpected victories. He also had Wayne Bennett as an assistant in 2008 and as an advisor in 2010. Kearney has all the credentials and is as well positioned as any first year coach to handle the Parramatta role.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 10-14   | 12th   | 4-4 | 3-5   | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 12-11-1 | 8th    | 3-5 | 2-5-1 | 7-1   | 3-1    | Grand Final       |
| 2008 | 11-13   | 11th   | 4-4 | 3-5   | 4-4   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 13-11   | 5th    | 4-4 | 5-3   | 4-4   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |
| 2006 | 12-12   | 8th    | 2-6 | 4-4   | 6-2   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year              | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|-------------------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| --Debut Season--- |        |        |     |      |       |        |                   |

**Draw Analysis:** Unless Stephen Kearney can bring some of the Melbourne charm to Parramatta this season, a fast start cannot be expected with the combination of wholesale team changes and a history of slow starts counting against an early Eels surge to the top of the ladder. Only once in the last five seasons have Parramatta won more games than they had lost two-thirds into the season with the Eels twice falling into the finals on the back of late-season surges. Parramatta doesn't have a horrible start to the season but must travel to New Zealand and Melbourne in the first five weeks. The Eels then meet Cronulla leading into Origin I. Parramatta's draw does favour another late season run as well with the Eels having only one interstate match in the final nine rounds.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record  | Home    | Away  |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------|
| 2010            | 10-14   | 5-7     | 5-7   |
| 2009            | 15-12-1 | 7-4-1   | 8-8   |
| 2008            | 11-13   | 7-5     | 4-8   |
| 2007            | 15-12   | 8-4     | 7-8   |
| 2006            | 12-13   | 7-5     | 5-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 63-64-1 | 34-25-1 | 29-39 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Average. That sums up Parramatta over the last few seasons. They are slightly above average at home, slightly below average on the road and have won between 10 and 13 regular season matches over the last five years. The Eels, for all their bluster, have simply been an average team over the last half-decade.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 15th | 13th | 8th  | 6th  | 12th |
| Metres        | 9th  | 2nd  | 10th | 4th  | 8th  |
| Offloads      | 1st  | 1st  | 4th  | 5th  | 13th |
| Tackle Breaks | 6th  | 2nd  | 11th | 4th  | 7th  |
| Errors        | 15th | 7th  | 6th  | 6th  | 3rd  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 3rd  | 4th  | 9th  | 6th  | 6th  |
| Metres Conceded | 16th | 11th | 14th | 8th  | 9th  |
| Missed Tackles  | 3rd  | 5th  | 2nd  | 3rd  | 1st  |

**Attack-Defence Ranking Analysis:** The deal with Parramatta's attack is this: since Brian Smith left, the Eels have consistently been at the top of offload rankings including first placed rankings the last two seasons. Yet they cannot seem to score points. In 2009 and 2010, the Daniel Anderson years, they led the NRL in offloads yet finished 13th and 15th in points scored. Other indicators also dropped off markedly last year including handling errors and tackle breaks to the point Parramatta were rightly considered one of the most flaccid attacking outfits in the league. This is no doubt a result of major problems in the halves. Stephen Kearney will have his work cut out for him fixing such a squalid attack. He takes control of a better defence, however, with the Eels ranking top six in the last five years bar 2008 in points conceded and in the top five since 2006 in missed tackles. The Eels have a good foundation in defence. It is their attack which is an absolute mess thanks to no halfback, no five-eighth and an all-star fullback who does not know how to play as part of a team.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s)      | Tries |
|------|---------------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Jarryd Hayne, Krisnan Inu | 11    |
| 2009 | Luke Burt                 | 15    |
| 2008 | Joel Reddy                | 12    |
| 2007 | Jarryd Hayne, Krisnan Inu | 12    |
| 2006 | Jarryd Hayne              | 17    |

**Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty:** 43



**Games Lost Analysis:** The Eels could not have had a better run with injury with their number skewed by the season ending round 1 injury to Shane Shackleton, a player who may or may not have been a starter throughout the season. Parramatta had four props healthy for nearly every game, no injuries to their halves and only the loss of Eric Grothe in their backs and he was probably outside their best thirteen at any rate.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Parramatta were a nightmare for punters wanting to play them in 2010, going an horrific 8-16 against the line and having a significant losing return. No team was more overrated by the betting community with Parramatta's average price being \$1.76 with the Eels starting favourites in 16 matches despite their horrendous form all year. When sent out favourite, the Eels were a potentially historic 3-13 ATS. They were 0-8 ATS when favoured by less than a try, 2-8 ATS when a home favourite, 1-5 ATS off a 5-day backup and 6-13 ATS in good weather. The Eels are traditionally a public team but even that doesn't account for why punters continued to trust them like a dog who is continually kicked but continues to go up to the owner, ever-wishful of a pat. Parramatta should almost never be bet and that will hold through to 2011.

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

**2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$19.00

Minor Premiership: \$19.00

Top 4: \$4.50

Top 8: \$2.25

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** Oh dear. There is a saying that a fish rots from the head down. Given Parramatta's horrendous off-field issues I see no reason why their NRL season won't be equally as sick. The player-drain at the Eels is much publicised and their halves and hooker situation is dire. Jarryd Hayne and Stephen Kearney can only do so much and it won't be enough to get this side anywhere near the big boys. Price: \$51.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 49 (14th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 9th-16th

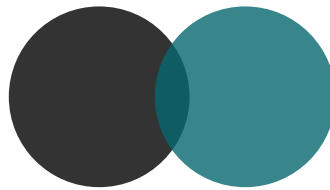
Predicted Finish: 14th

Stephen Kearney is officially the fat inside the fire now. He will leave Parramatta either a hero or a villain. There is no in between at the Eels. There is also very little time. Parramatta have chewed through four coaches in the last half-decade and chief executive Paul Osborne is not renowned for his patience or, after the Daniel Anderson affair, his loyalty. The concern for Stephen Kearney will no doubt be the backline and the insipid attack Parramatta offered in 2010. It seems ludicrous that

a backline with Jarryd Hayne is so putrid but the numbers don't lie and neither does Parramatta's record over recent years. It is hard to imagine the likes of Hicks, Whatuira and Chris Walker doing much to improve the situation, particularly with no improvement in the halves, a situation that won't change until after Quade Cooper signs post-2011 World Cup. One attacking trait that should change is the Eels penchant for offloads. Melbourne do not offload and it is unlikely Kearney will encourage it, preferring a more disciplined ball-control approach to attack. Attitude is also a major problem at Parramatta. There is very much a selfish streak that permeates the Eels as well but that is not surprising considering the in-fighting and politicking that goes on at the board and front office levels. Stephen Kearney may drive that out and allowing the likes of Mateo, Inu, Tahu and Grothe to go may improve it organically but until every last drip of that attitude is wiped up and wrung out, Parramatta are going to be a club in trouble. The Eels most likely will win between 9 and 12 games this season. They could sneak up to fringe finals contenders with a hot streak but all the indicators suggest Parramatta are in for a long year.

**2011 Betting Advice:** Parramatta are a public team and public teams like the New York Yankees, New England Patriots and Manchester United are best avoided as they are oversubscribed and under the odds. The Eels left punters in need of long-term psychiatric help with a horrible performance as both a straight-up proposition and a line play in 2010. Premiership betting this season seems to have cast them in a more reasonable light heading into 2011 but any small burst of form will see punters clamour for the Eels with the memories of 2009 still burning bright. Avoid betting Parramatta at all costs. The Eels will likely be a reasonably good under play though. They are sturdy defensively and they have a lifeless attack that looks to have gotten worse. That is a good mix for an under team. Bettors should look wide when analysing the top Parramatta try scorer when markets come out. With tries unlikely to be flowing, a half like Daniel Mortimer or a fringe runner like Ben Smith at double figure odds will be in with a shot.

# PENRITH PANTHERS



## Strongest Team

1. Lachlan Coote (fb)
2. Sandor Earl (w)
3. Michael Jennings (c)
4. Michael Gordon (fb/w/c)
5. Adrian Purtell (w/c)
6. Travis Burns (fe)
7. Luke Walsh (hb)
13. Luke Lewis (br/fe/hb/c/w)
12. Trent Waterhouse (br)
11. Nathan Smith (br)
10. Petero Civoniceva (p)
9. Kevin Kingston (h)
8. Tim Grant (p)

- 
14. Matthew Bell (p/br)
  15. Sam McKendry (p)
  16. Nigel Plum (br)
  17. Arana Taumata (hb/fe/c)
- 

**Others:** Yileen Gordon (br/c), Brad Tighe (w/c), Masada Iosefa (h), Shane Elford (w), Frank Puletua (p), David Simmons (w/fb/c), Joseph Paulo (br), Nafe Seluini (h), Daine Laurie (p), Tim Winitana (w/c)

**Gains:** Arana Taumata (North Queensland), Yileen Gordon (Canterbury), Tim Winitana (Canterbury), Nafe Selulini (New Zealand)

**Losses:** Frank Pritchard (Canterbury), Wade Graham (Cronulla), Maurice Blair (Melbourne), Gavin Cooper (North Queensland), Josh Bateman (North Queensland), Daniel Penese (St George-Illawarra)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** Penrith were big losers in the offseason transaction stakes, losing ball-playing forward Frank Pritchard, promising half Wade Graham and the versatile clubman Gavin Cooper. In return they picked up two fringe first graders from Canterbury and journeyman Arana Taumata, who could well be gone by round six if his history is anything to go by. While Pritchard underachieved at Penrith over the last couple of years, most likely due to staleness, he did offer an attacking threat in the Panthers pack, something that will be sorely lacking in 2011. Graham would also have been a better option at six than Burns, who is as one-dimensional as a half can come. The underrated Cooper had a fine 2010 and provided some backbone that doesn't appear to have been replaced for 2011.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Luke Lewis, Petero Civoniceva, Michael Gordon. (Possible) Michael Jennings, Trent Waterhouse, Sam McKendry.

## **Position Ratings:**

### **Fullback ----- 8**

In this era of outstanding fullbacks, Lachlan Coote may well be the most underrated and oft-forgotten. Penrith's form mirrored Coote's health. More runner than passer and scorer than playmaker, Coote was the centrepiece of Penrith's effective kick-to-score game-plan in 2010. A good returner and a safe pair of hands, Coote ticks all the boxes. Injuries are the only worry with him. Michael Gordon provides outstanding cover.

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

The Panthers are going to field the most exciting centre pairing in the NRL with Michael Jennings and Michael Gordon set to roam the middle of the field. On song and fit, Jennings is without doubt an Australian quality centre while Michael Gordon came along in leaps and bounds last year and will move to the centres to get more ball. Wing is more of a concern. Sandor Earl has upside but has never been able to hold down a spot while Adrian Purtell is like the Big Pineapple: it is there but really, it is not that impressive.

### **Five-Eighth ----- 3.5**

Matt Elliott has made a dreadful decision to let Graham go and keep Burns. Burns offers plenty of feistiness but that is about it. Burns is a small hooker if he is even a first grader.

### **Halfback ----- 6**

Luke Walsh led the NRL in try assists in 2010 and guided Penrith to their first finals series in six years but Walsh was found out come season's end. He has a very one-dimensional game that is too reliant on the kick to be effective long term. Expect to see Walsh return to the pack in 2011.

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

Kevin Kingston was one of the most astute buys last season and was electric for the Panthers. He built the platform Penrith used to score last season and he never shirked his workload in defence. The most underrated hooker in the game and a match-winner that Penrith will rely on plenty in 2011.

### **Prop ----- 7**

Petero Civoniceva displayed the first signs of a drop off in 2010, losing his Australian jersey and having noticeably less impact with his hit-ups. Petero is still a machine but he has missed games with injury in both 2009 and 2010 and it is hard to see him getting any better. Tim Grant and Sam McKendry are both promising young bookends. Grant is a dour player but an effective one when hitting the line while

McKendry is more of an impact type and already has international experience for New Zealand. Matthew Bell is handy. Frank Puletua is well past his best. Daine Laurie should never play first grade again and is a cancer on whatever club he happens to be with.

## **Backrow ----- 7.5**

Penrith have two classy backrowers in Luke Lewis and Trent Waterhouse. Lewis just continues to get better and combines an intense running style with an array of skills to make him one of the game's elite lock forwards. Waterhouse has seen a rejuvenation in his form over the last two years. He is still solid defensively but his attacking game is too inconsistent. After those two, the Panthers really struggle with the hard hitting Nigel Plum, toiler Nathan Smith and Bulldogs reject Buddy Gordon to all get playing time.

## **Coach Rating:** Matthew Elliott (5th season at the Penrith, 10th in the NRL) ----- 6

### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 103-117-3

Finals Record: 0-7

Finals Seasons: 5

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 44-52-2

**Coach Analysis:** Entering his tenth year as an NRL head coach, Matt Elliott is still chasing his first finals victory after seven straight September losses. After being stolen from Canberra, Elliott took four seasons to get Penrith into the playoffs and even then the performance may have been a false dawn as the Panthers success in 2010 was built on the rather flimsy foundation of scoring tries from kicks. Penrith were figured out by the backend of the season and Elliott seemed to have few answers. He certainly didn't give Penrith much assistance in their two finals matches. There is continual sniping at the club with rumours abounding that Elliott does not have the support of the playing group. Elliott also played a key role in letting Frank Pritchard and Wade Graham go, which could really hurt Penrith in 2011. Elliott always seems to be living on the edge at Penrith and another disappointing season will see him back on the hot seat.

### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason | Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 2010 | 15-9    | 2nd    | 5-3 | 6-2   | 4-4   | 0-2    | Semi Final |        |
| 2009 | 11-12-1 | 11th   | 4-4 | 4-4   | 3-4-1 | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2008 | 10-13-1 | 12th   | 4-4 | 3-4-1 | 3-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2007 | 8-16    | 16th   | 2-6 | 2-6   | 4-4   | DNQ    | --         |        |
| 2006 | 10-14   | 12th   | 3-5 | 4-4   | 3-5   | DNQ    | --         |        |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 15-9    | 2nd    | 5-3 | 6-2   | 4-4   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2009 | 11-12-1 | 11th   | 4-4 | 4-4   | 3-4-1 | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 10-13-1 | 12th   | 4-4 | 3-4-1 | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 8-16    | 16th   | 2-6 | 2-6   | 4-4   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2006 | 13-11   | 7th    | 4-4 | 4-4   | 5-3   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |

**Draw Analysis:** 2010 was the first time in five years that Penrith left one of the sectors with a better than 4-4 record. They did it twice, opening the year 5-3 and then going 6-2 throughout the middle of the season. Aside from Penrith's inability to break out, they rarely lay an egg either. They are not traditionally fast or slow starters or fast or slow finishers. Penrith get an exceptionally cosy run into the season, opening up with five games they should win if they are to build on last season. Their run home is a little harder, however, with road matches against Melbourne, Canberra and the Dragons and a big clash with the Tigers over the last five weeks. Penrith get the Tigers and Canterbury on Origin weekends where they will likely come off the worst in both rep counts.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record  | Home    | Away  |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------|
| 2010            | 15-11   | 9-4     | 6-7   |
| 2009            | 11-12-1 | 7-4-1   | 4-8   |
| 2008            | 10-13-1 | 4-7-1   | 6-6   |
| 2007            | 8-16    | 3-9     | 5-7   |
| 2006            | 10-14   | 6-6     | 4-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 54-66-2 | 29-30-2 | 25-36 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Penrith have at least made in-roads into the first sin of any football club: losing at home. Over 2007 and 2008, the Panthers were an unforgivable 7-16-1 at Penrith Park while a decent 11-13 on the road. Penrith bumped their home win total to seven games in 2009 and nine games in 2010. While Penrith Park is far from feared by opposition teams, Penrith are at least gaining some respectability at home. Penrith have not had a winning season on the road over the last five years.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 1st  | 9th  | 7th  | 8th  | 10th |
| Metres        | 7th  | 8th  | 11th | 7th  | 1st  |
| Offloads      | 7th  | 4th  | 12th | 10th | 8th  |
| Tackle Breaks | 15th | 10th | 8th  | 10th | 2nd  |
| Errors        | 5th  | 14th | 14th | 15th | 8th  |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 9th  | 15th | 13th | 13th | 13th |
| Metres Conceded | 1st  | 2nd  | 8th  | 2nd  | 7th  |
| Missed Tackles  | 8th  | 12th | 10th | 7th  | 11th |

**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** Penrith improved both their attack and defence last year and it was reflected on the premiership table. Penrith went from bottom three in handling errors from 2007-09 to fifth last season and despite a fall in tackle breaks, they moved from the middling seventh to tenth in points scored from 2006-09 to lead the NRL last year. These statistics may be a little misleading as Penrith scored many of their points from kicks, a factor that was figured out later in the season by opposition teams. If the Panthers continue to cut out the errors, their attack will likely still be better than it was up to 2009 but will still most likely suffer a decline. Defensively, Penrith were a bottom four team from 2006 through 2009 primarily because Penrith's handling errors placed the Panthers in bad field position consistently. Penrith have been a team that has traditionally been strong through the middle defensively but have major problems out wide with their defence. I expect Penrith to put up a similar defensive performance in 2011 as they did in 2010.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Lachlan Coote        | 17    |
| 2009 | Michael Jennings     | 17    |
| 2008 | Michael Jennings     | 12    |
| 2007 | Michael Jennings     | 15    |
| 2006 | Rhys Wesser          | 19    |

**Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty:** 54



**Games Lost Analysis:** The Panthers were lucky in the fact they suffered no long-term injuries to starters though they did lose the likes of Coote, Pritchard, Waterhouse and Grant for periods ranging from a month to a touch over. Shane Elford, the reserve three-quarter, was the only player seriously knocked around early in the season. Wade Graham managed only 12 games due to injury but Matt Elliott had preferred Travis Burns so his missed games were not included in the tally.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** Despite Penrith coming from the clouds last year to finish second on the premiership ladder, punters found the Panthers early and stuck with them throughout the season with Penrith going out an average price of \$1.80 and being sent out at home at an average price of \$1.50. The result of that meant Penrith were not a great team to play on, going only 13-13 ATS and providing a slightly negative return. They may have started the season as a dark horse but they became well known. The only real angle that worked for Penrith bettors in 2010 was backing them at home against the line where Penrith went 8-5 against the line. The over-under was a different story. Penrith were a 16-10 over team and had by a long way the most number of 61-point plus games with eight. The Panthers were particularly likely to be part of an over game when on the road (9-4 over), in good weather (16-7 over) and in day matches (5-2 over). Penrith were very much a streaky team in 2010, covering five straight at home early in the season before failing to cover their final five games on the road, another indicator that the Panthers' simple attack was found out.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$18.00

Minor Premiership: \$13.00

Top 4: \$3.85

Top 8: \$1.75

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** This is a club with massive depth and a handful of very classy players. However their coach is a non-winner and they just seem to be lacking something. I have plenty of time for the majority of their squad but I'm not sure if Luke Walsh and Arana Taumata are the answer in the halves. If they can click or they can find someone else to fill the breach then I would regard the Panthers as one of the better sides in the comp. Definitely worth respecting but I'm not rushing in to back them. Price: \$21.00

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 54 (equal 9th)

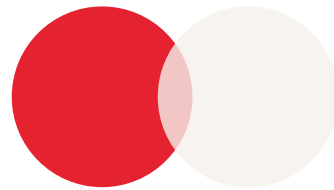
Predicted Finishing Range: 5th-14th

Predicted Finish: 12th

The Penrith Panthers look like they will be the big fallers from 2010. Truth be told, the fall began at the backend of last season when they limped into the final, went out in straight sets and then lost a good portion of their roster in the offseason. It just seems that Penrith were the beneficiaries of a perfect storm last season and regressing back to normal luck and normal breaks, they don't appear to have the depth or the middle-rung class to make the finals. The likes of Luke Lewis, Michael Jennings, Michael Gordon, Petero Civoniceva and Lachlan Coote ensures Penrith have some chance to make the playoffs but the lack of a quality halves pairing, questionable depth at outside back and in the backrow and some questionable characters in the squad suggests the Panthers are more likely to struggle than not, reverting back to a team more similar with the versions of 2006 to 2009 than last year. That realisation seems even more evident considering Matt Elliott's general struggles at Penrith. If Penrith get hot early on with their easy draw, they could sneak a finals berth. The more likely outcome, however, is that the Panthers are set for a big slide in 2011.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The smart move with Penrith in premiership betting is to take the price now and then lay them back after round 4 with the Panthers opening up with games against Newcastle, Parramatta, Brisbane and Cronulla and will likely shorten up if they start 3-1 or 4-0. With a profit locked in on Penrith, it is time to stay away from them in the premiership market. When markets to miss the eight come out, punters should also look to bet Penrith to miss out at somewhere around the \$1.75 mark. Penrith have more downside than up this year. Expect Penrith to remain an over team this year and they are a sound bet, particularly in dry conditions, to go over the total.

# ST GEORGE-ILLAWARRA DRAGONS



## Strongest Team

1. Darius Boyd (fb/w)
2. Brett Morris (w)
3. Mark Gasnier (c)
4. Matt Cooper (c)
5. Jason Nightingale (w/fb)
6. Jamie Soward (fe/hb)
7. Ben Hornby (hb/fb)
13. Dean Young (br/h)
12. Ben Creagh (br)
11. Beau Scott (br)
10. Dan Hunt (p)
9. Nathan Fien (h/hb/fe)
8. Michael Weyman (p)

- 
14. Matt Prior (br/p/c)
  15. Trent Merrin (p)
  16. Jon Green (p)
  17. Kyle Stanley (fe/hb/c/w/br)
- 

**Others:** Michael Greenfield (p), Peni Tagive (w/c), Junior Paulo (br), Daniel Penese (br), David Gower (br), Adam Cuthbertson (p), Cameron King (h), Nick Emmett (br/c/w), Jack Bosden (br), Jake Marketo (br), Bronx Goodwin (fb/w)

**Gains:** Adam Cuthbertson (Cronulla), Daniel Penese (Penrith), David Gower (Tigers)

**Losses:** Jeremy Smith (Cronulla), Neville Costigan (Newcastle), Beau Henry (Newcastle), Michael Lett (Canterbury), Ricky Thorby (North Queensland), Kalifa Faifai-Loa (North Queensland), Jarrod Saffy (Rugby Union), Luke Priddis (Retired)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** As is the case with most premiers, the Dragons have taken a hit to their depth. The Dragons will go around without starters Jeremy Smith and Neville Costigan along with fringe players like Thorby, Saffy and Priddis. These losses will provide opportunities to the likes of Kyle Stanley and Trent Merrin but there is no doubt the Dragons are worse off in terms of list this season even though the knock has come outside the top seventeen and will only be felt if injuries hit hard. Wayne Bennett may be the greatest coach ever but he will have his work cut out for him making Adam Cuthbertson into anything resembling a competent first grade footballer.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Darius Boyd, Brett Morris, Michael Weyman, Jason Nightingale. (Possible) Ben Creagh, Dean Young, Beau Scott, Matt Cooper, Mark Gasnier, Jamie Soward.

## **Position Ratings:**

### **Fullback ----- 9**

Darius Boyd had a year to remember in 2010, winning the Clive Churchill Medal and Dally M Fullback of the Year as well as playing a key role in guiding the Dragons to the title. Boyd is an effective kick-returner who plays a key playmaking role on the left. Rarely scores but has matured into an elite fullback.

### **Three Quarters ----- 9**

The Dragons have a star-studded three-quarter line. Brett Morris is a try scoring machine on the left wing. Jason Nightingale is reliable and talented on the right. Matt Cooper is not the player he was a few years back but is still reliable defensively and can find his way to the line. Mark Gasnier was rusty when he returned last season but was carrying an ankle injury and should be back to his best this year. The Dragons are so strong in their outside backs that New South Wales centre Beau Scott was returned to the backrow to accommodate Gasnier's return.

### **Five-Eighth ----- 8.5**

Jamie Soward has claims at being the best five-eighth in the NRL. Since Wayne Bennett arrived at Kogarah, Soward has excelled and he is worthy of winning higher honours. No player in the NRL has a longer or more accurate boot and he is a lethal runner when he turns on the jets. The only knock on his game is his ability to sit back and watch occasionally.

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

Ben Hornby is the perfect type of Wayne Bennett player: he has a role and he plays it perfectly. Rarely does Ben Hornby ever overplay his hand. He kicks when required and runs the left side of the attack with a good passing game but generally he is there to be a voice of reason and a listened to leader.

### **Hooker ----- 7.5**

Nathan Fien and Dean Young will share the hooking role this year. Fien was a great acquisition for the Saints, a player who is a genuine playmaking threat. Young struggles with the dummy-half work when required to play hooker but does a great job with all other roles.

### **Prop ----- 8**

Michael Weyman has transformed from an injury hampered, ill disciplined powder puff to a hardened, top level prop under Wayne Bennett. If he can stay on the field in 2011, he will be one of the best prop forwards in the NRL. Dan Hunt was having an outstanding season, averaging 30-plus tackles and 110-metres before an achilles injury

ruled him out for the season. Trent Merrin is one of the most exciting young props in the code and will come along in leaps and bounds. Jon Green does his job well.

### **Backrow** ----- 8

Despite the fact most of the Dragons backrow looks identical, all perform very different roles and all do them well. Ben Creagh is the best fringe runner in the NRL while Beau Scott is one of the game's top defenders. The versatile Matt Prior is a hard-worker in the Scott mould but offers more punch with his run. Dean Young continues to be underrated but his work-rate, leadership and deft skill have been critical to the Dragons recent success.

### **Coach Rating:** Wayne Bennett (3rd season at the Dragons, 24th in the NRL) ----- 10

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 388-206-12

Finals Record: 27-25

Finals Seasons: 21

Premierships: 7

Club Record: 37-16

**Coach Analysis:** The greatest coach in rugby league history, Bennett confirmed his standing by leading the Dragons to their first title as a merged club and the first St George premiership in over thirty years. Bennett has completely reformed the Dragons identity and they are now one of the toughest and most feared teams in the NRL. Their 2010 season was one of the most dominant of the NRL era. Bennett has not missed a finals series since 1991 and since then has won seven premierships and never lost a Grand Final. His faith in Jamie Soward has turned the once enigmatic five-eighth into one of the elite pivots in the NRL while he has moulded players like Beau Scott and Michael Weyman from solid first graders into rep quality stars. Bennett is the master coach and as long as he is at the Dragons, the club will be more than competitive.

#### **Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 17-7   | 1st    | 7-1 | 5-3  | 5-3   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2009 | 17-7   | 1st    | 6-2 | 6-2  | 5-3   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2008 | 13-11  | 7th    | 2-6 | 7-1  | 4-4   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2007 | 9-15   | 13th   | 2-6 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 6th    | 4-4 | 7-1  | 3-5   | 2-1    | Preliminary Final |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 17-7   | 1st    | 7-1 | 5-3   | 5-3   | 3-0    | Premiers          |
| 2009 | 17-7   | 1st    | 6-2 | 6-2   | 5-3   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2008 | 14-9-1 | 5th    | 6-2 | 2-5-1 | 6-2   | 1-1    | Semi Final        |
| 2007 | 11-13  | 8th    | 3-5 | 5-3   | 3-5   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2006 | 14-10  | 3rd    | 6-2 | 5-3   | 3-5   | 3-1    | Premiers          |

**Draw Analysis:** Wayne Bennett teams start well and that was shown when Bennett arrived at Kogarah and turned back-to-back 2-6 starts into 6-2 and 7-1 starts that laid the platform for consecutive minor premierships and last year's triumph. If Bennett can get the Dragons to another 6-2 start this year, they will be well on the way to winning another minor premiership as the Dragons open the season with six road games in the first seven rounds including trips to the Gold Coast and New Zealand and the Grand Final replay in round seven. The draw then gets far more favourable with the Dragons having a good run throughout Origin (the Titans leading into Origin II and the Knights without Gidley leading into Origin III) before a good run in with four home games in the last six rounds. They will be tested by road games in Melbourne and at the Tigers though and the final third of the season tends to be when both the Dragons and Wayne Bennett teams hit a relative flat spot.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 20-7   | 10-3  | 10-4  |
| 2009            | 17-9   | 10-3  | 7-6   |
| 2008            | 13-12  | 8-4   | 5-8   |
| 2007            | 9-15   | 6-6   | 3-9   |
| 2006            | 16-11  | 8-4   | 8-7   |
| Five-Year Total | 75-54  | 42-20 | 33-34 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** The Dragons have a mighty home record at Kogarah and Wollongong over the last half-decade, winning 42 of 62 including a 20-6 record at home under Wayne Bennett. The Dragons road record has also improved under Bennett, jumping from 8-17 in the two years before the master coach arrived to 17-10 with Bennett at the helm.

### Attack Rankings:

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 5th  | 7th  | 12th | 13th | 9th  |
| Metres        | 2nd  | 1st  | 2nd  | 10th | 10th |
| Offloads      | 14th | 5th  | 3rd  | 6th  | 15th |
| Tackle Breaks | 3rd  | 6th  | 3rd  | 9th  | 5th  |
| Errors        | 1st  | 1st  | 5th  | 13th | 12th |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 1st  | 2nd  | 4th  | 8th  | 3rd  |
| Metres Conceded | 6th  | 7th  | 10th | 9th  | 10th |
| Missed Tackles  | 1st  | 2nd  | 3rd  | 12th | 2nd  |

**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** The improvement of the Dragons under Wayne Bennett has been as notable as the decline in the Broncos since he left. In defence, the Dragons moved from a good defensive unit to an elite one. In both years under the master coach, the Dragons have ranked top two with the Storm in points conceded and missed tackles and have tightened up in the middle of the ruck. In attack, the Dragons are now far more disciplined and the results have come on the scoreboard. No team has shown better ball control than the Dragons the last two years and they are now leading the NRL in metres gained. Statistically, the Dragons are out with the Storm defensively and rank in the better third with the ball. They are unlikely to go backwards in 2011 either. Bennett gets the best out of his players and with this amount of talent, little is likely to change.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Brett Morris         | 20    |
| 2009 | Brett Morris         | 25    |
| 2008 | Brett Morris         | 14    |
| 2007 | Matt Cooper          | 11    |
| 2006 | Mark Gasnier         | 18    |

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 88

**Games Lost Analysis:** The premiers lost 88 games from starters in their premiership season in what was an amazing show of depth. The big injuries went to Nathan Fien, who returned from a busted ankle to play in the run home, and Dan



Hunt, who did not take the field after round 10. Jeremy Smith, Mick Weyman, Matt Cooper, Beau Scott and Neville Costigan all missed at least six weeks as well.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Dragons were the leading under team in the NRL, going 18-9 under with only one of their matches totalling above 50 points and a remarkable 14 totalling below 30. Based on their near impenetrable defence, Dragons games went under on 9 of 12 occasions when they played on the road. The Dragons also went against the grain with their scores, going 7-2 under in day matches and 15-7 under in good weather matches. The Dragons were well found by punters throughout the year, with an average price of \$1.51, but still came out well in front of the bookies line where the club went 16-11 against the line. The Dragons went 10-5 ATS at home and 14-8 ATS in good weather. The Dragons were also slight betting winners straight-up as both home and road propositions. Despite low total points lines and large minuses, the Dragons were very predictable in 2010, covering and going under more often than not. See Appendices A and B for complete betting data on each individual team

**2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$6.50

Minor Premiership: \$7.00

Top 4: \$1.65

Top 8: \$1.25

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** Wayne Bennett delivered what Dragons fans have been demanding for years and it seems he will pack up at the end of the upcoming season and move on. I don't know what effect this will have on the squad because their greatest strength was their commitment and structure. I don't think they have the pure class to win without either of those above assets which are traditionally the first to go when a team wins a competition. It's terribly hard to win back-to-back titles in the Gen-Y era and while the Dragons are almost certain of being in the final four, I would not be surprised to see them miss out on the big one. Price: \$6.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 67.5 (1st)

Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-4th

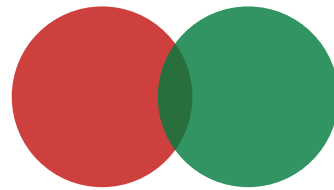
Predicted Finish: 2nd

There is very little not to like about the Dragons this year. They have the number one coach in the game. They have clearly the best roster, at least in terms of 1-to-17, and have taken very few knocks to their squad list. They are out with only the Storm in terms of defence. They have some brilliant attacking weapons. They are strong down the spine. They won in 2010 with quite a bit of injury damage. There is no real reason to tip against the Dragons. They are as good a chance as any team to win the premiership. I just cannot buy fully into a team going back-to-back in these heady days of near-total parity. Great teams like the '98 Broncos, '04 Bulldogs and '07 Storm couldn't do it and there have been plenty of top teams not even claim

a single title because the best teams of a particular season do not always win the title (see indisputably Newcastle in 2001, the Roosters in 2002, Wests Tigers in 2005 and Brisbane in 2006 and, arguably, Penrith in 2003, Canterbury in 2004 and Manly in 2008). If one coach can break the trend, Wayne Bennett is the man. But it is a significant pall to be hanging over their 2011 campaign and there are certain worries with depth. The Dragons will fall no further than a preliminary final loss and they are more than likely headed to another Grand Final but at the moment I have them getting rolled in the decider.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The Dragons are going to be in the final four thanks to the solid foundation their success in 2010 was built on but having won the premiership so convincingly, bookmakers have them as the rightful preseason favourite at \$6.50 (Flemington Sportsbet) and it is hard to take that price considering no team has won back-to-back (legitimate) premierships since Brisbane in 1992-93. Saying that, you certainly don't want to be against them either. With six road matches in the first seven rounds, they may get out to a price if they don't jump out running. Punters should stick with the Dragons and the under all season in weekly match betting though. The Dragons have plenty of wins in them this year and showed in 2010 they could be relied on to cover starts. As a top notch defensive unit, the under is a reliable play in Dragons matches, even when set low in the mid-thirties. Defence is more reliable than attack to measure and the Dragons will again be a stingy defensive unit that allows no more than 12 points per match.

# SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITHOHS



## Strongest Team

1. Rhys Wesser (fb)
2. Nathan Merritt (w/fb)
3. Junior Vaivai (c)
4. Greg Inglis (c/fb/fe)
5. Fetuli Talanoa (w/c/fb)
6. John Sutton (fe/br)
7. Chris Sandow (hb)
13. Ben Lowe (br)
12. Dave Taylor (br/p)
11. Sam Burgess (br/p)
10. Luke Stuart (p/br)
9. Issac Luke (h)
8. Roy Asotasi (p)

- 
14. Eddy Pettybourne (br/p)
  15. Michael Crocker (br)
  16. Scott Geddes (p)
  17. Jason Clark (br/h),

**Others:** Dylan Farrell (c), Dave Tyrell (br), Adam Reynolds (hb), Shannan McPherson (br), Ben Ross (p), Matt Mundine (br/fe), Beau Falloon (h), Kane Morgan (w/c), Blake Judd (br), Josh Mansour (br/w), Chris McQueen (w/c), Nathan Peats (h/br), Malcolm Webster (fb/hb), George Burgess (p)

**Gains:** Greg Inglis (Melbourne)

**Losses:** Beau Champion (Melbourne), Colin Best (Cronulla), Jaiman Lowe (Melbourne), Luke Capewell (Gold Coast), Craig Stapleton (Released), Garrett Crossman (Released), Jamie Simpson (Huddersfield)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** On face value it appears as if South Sydney did an outstanding job, signing Greg Inglis from under the nose of the Broncos and fitting him in under the cap. Yet the NRL was having none of it, no doubt pushed by the public hubris of South Sydney officials. In the end, Souths had to trade away outstanding centre Beau Champion, who had a wonderful 2010 and was critical to the Bunnies keen attack. With Inglis overweight and Champion hungry for representative honours, it would not surprise in the slightest if South Sydney regretted this deal by the end of season 2011.

Representative Losses: (Likely) Greg Inglis. Issac Luke, Dave Taylor. (Possible) Roy Asotasi.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 3**

Rhys Wesser was done two years back yet continues to hold the Bunnies role unchallenged. Worse, Souths let the promising Luke Capewell go meaning they are without a suitable replacement. He is slow, unsteady, uncommitted and old and offers South Sydney almost nothing but a good news story in such a key position.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 7**

Greg Inglis has joined the club but it is unclear how he will perform. He clearly has the ability but his fitness is a major issue as is his commitment to both the game and his team. Having been forced to swap Beau Champion, Souths may actually have been downgraded in their three-quarter line. Nathan Merritt continues to give his all and is a fine player to have on the wing. Fetuli Talanoa can go missing. Junior Vaivai is highly touted as is Dylan Farrell.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 7**

John Sutton is an enigma. One week he looks a world beater, the next week he looks weather beaten. Sutton has all the tools with a wonderful offload and a dangerous fend but he more often than not is back on his heels, exhibiting not an ounce of leadership. If his character issues can be overcome, he can push Souths to the finals. John Lang has his work cut out though.

#### **Halfback ----- 3**

If there is one word to describe Chris Sandow, it is no. That is certainly the word John Lang needs to use more in regards the enigmatic half at any rate. He is not a first grader. He is not the player to guide a team of such quality around the paddock. He is not the player you want to make a tackle. Or kick a ball. Or have the game in his hands. No.

#### **Hooker ----- 9**

After being misused for years by Jason Taylor, Issac Luke was given full rein as an 80 minute player in 2010 and he was simply brilliant. Arguably the best player in the NRL over the first half of the season, there was no more dangerous dummy half runner with Luke making 130 metres per game, nearly twice that of his nearest hooking rival Farah. He also led the hooker category in tries, tackle breaks and offloads. His hands can be a worry and he misses too many tackles but there is no doubting he is one of the most dangerous and explosive hookers in the NRL.

#### **Prop ----- 7**

With Burgess and Taylor both likely to spend more time in the backrow, the South Sydney prop rotation does not look as strong as advertised or professed by the club

for that matter. Roy Asotasi is declining rapidly with 2011 a very strong chance of being his last at the club. Luke Stuart continues to perform at a strong level but is no superstar. Ben Ross hasn't laced a boot for two seasons so who knows how he will come back. Scott Geddes is a sound bench option but nothing more.

### **Backrow** ----- 9

The strength of South Sydney certainly lies in the backrow. Sam Burgess certainly proved himself in the NRL last season, quickly becoming one of the most popular and revered players in the game thanks to his fearless style and unquestioned desire. Dave Taylor is still maturing into a footballer and may never get there but his size gives him a huge advantage on the fringes. Ben Lowe emerged as an elite defensive lock last season. Eddy Pettybourne is as tough as they come and offers variety off the bench.

### **Coach Rating:** John Lang (2nd season at South Sydney, 14th in the NRL) ----- 7.5

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 194-147-5

Finals Record: 11-9

Finals Seasons: 8

Premierships: 1

Club Record: 11-13

**Coach Analysis:** The effectiveness of John Lang at this stage of his career is tough to measure. He is a genius compared to his predecessors at South Sydney, from Jason Taylor all the way back to George Piggins including some real gems like Paul Langmack and Craig Coleman. He also recently turned 60 and returned to the NRL last year for the first time since 2006. It is further expected that Lang is only warming the seat for Wayne Bennett with 2011 expected to be his last year in charge of the Bunnies. He is a premiership winner but he hasn't coached a team to the finals since taking Penrith to the playoffs in 2004 and Souths dramatically underachieved in his first year at Redfern. Lang smartly decided to play Issac Luke for 80 minutes in 2010 but did get questioned tactically with his use of forwards Sam Burgess, Roy Asotasi and Dave Taylor while it defies belief that he persists with Chris Sandow at halfback without trying someone else. The laconic and well-liked Lang has the smarts to turn Souths into a playoff team but whether he has the dedication or the toughness at this stage of his career is another question.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16  | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 11-13   | 9th    | 4-4 | 4-4   | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | 11-12-1 | 10th   | 4-4 | 3-4-1 | 5-3   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 8-16    | 14th   | 1-7 | 5-3   | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 12-12   | 7th    | 4-4 | 3-5   | 5-3   | 0-1    | Qualifying Final  |
| 2006 | 3-21    | 15th   | 0-8 | 1-7   | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 11-13  | 9th    | 4-4 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2009 | *      | *      | *   | *    | *     | *      | *                 |
| 2008 | *      | *      | *   | *    | *     | *      | *                 |
| 2007 | *      | *      | *   | *    | *     | *      | *                 |
| 2006 | 10-14  | 12th   | 3-5 | 4-4  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |

**Draw Analysis:** Souths have hit .500 only once in the last five seasons and have played only one final since 1989 so it seems like a somewhat fruitless exercise analysing their past performances. Over the last few seasons, where they have had a competitive roster, their problem has been stringing games together. At no point over that timeframe have the Bunnies gone through a sector better than 5-3. The Bunnies have a brutal start to the season and it would seem unlikely that they will hit a 6-2 run there so it will be up to the latter half of the season where the Bunnies will need to make a run. Souths also don't get any favours during Origin, travelling to New Zealand before Origin I before playing Cronulla at Shark Park before Origin III. It would not surprise to see Souths sitting outside the eight after twelve rounds only to fill a hole come September.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record  | Home  | Away    |
|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| 2010            | 11-13   | 8-4   | 3-9     |
| 2009            | 11-12-1 | 5-7   | 6-5-1   |
| 2008            | 8-16    | 5-7   | 3-9     |
| 2007            | 12-13   | 6-6   | 6-7     |
| 2006            | 3-21    | 3-9   | 0-12    |
| Five-Year Total | 45-74-1 | 27-33 | 18-42-1 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** Like Canterbury, South Sydney seem to garner very little home ground advantage at Stadium Australia and before that, the Sydney Football Stadium. Both are too cavernous for club games to have any real impact on a match. Souths road record also happens to be appalling. Having not won a game on the road in 2006, the Bunnies managed only 3 wins in 2008 and 2010 and need to learn to play away from home before they will be anywhere near legitimate contenders.

### **Attack Rankings:**

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 2nd  | 1st  | 14th | 16th | 15th |
| Metres        | 4th  | 11th | 9th  | 8th  | 15th |
| Offloads      | 13th | 10th | 9th  | 11th | 6th  |
| Tackle Breaks | 8th  | 13th | 9th  | 14th | 15th |
| Errors        | 14th | 8th  | 3rd  | 3rd  | 9th  |

### **Defence Rankings:**

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 13th | 11th | 15th | 4th  | 15th |
| Metres Conceded | 11th | 15th | 15th | 11th | 15th |
| Missed Tackles  | 16th | 10th | 11th | 1st  | 15th |

**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** Sadly for South Sydney fans, the Bunnies usually rank among the worst in either attack or defence and usually both. In 2006, Souths were the worst team in every defensive measure and the worst in the most important attacking indicators. Their attack did not improve in 2007 and rose only marginally in 2008. In 2007, South Sydney rose to a top four defensive unit thanks to a change in attitude to tackling. That attitude quickly went away in 2008 and Souths have been a miserable defensive unit since and it has cost them a finals berth in both 2009 and 2010 with the Bunnies a top two attacking team in points scored. The improvement in attack in 2009 was based on better handling while in 2010 it was based on superior go-forward. Souths rank as one of the premiership favourites in 2011 but until they prove they can at least rank midtable on both sides of the ball, they almost certainly have to be left alone.



### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Nathan Merritt       | 16    |
| 2009 | Nathan Merritt       | 19    |
| 2008 | Nathan Merritt       | 13    |
| 2007 | Nathan Merritt       | 10    |
| 2006 | Nathan Merritt       | 22    |

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 40

**Games Lost Analysis:** For all the Bunnies bleating about injuries in 2010, they lost only 40 games from their best thirteen. Souths lost only four games from Sutton and a combined seven games from outside backs. The pack was reported to have taken a battering and there were plenty of injuries to bench and fringe players but Luke Stuart missed only seven games, Dave Taylor and Ben Lowe only six with no other starter out for over a month.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** South Sydney were very good to followers and keen handicap punters in 2010, going 15-9 against the spread and winning 11 games despite being sent around at an average price of \$2.11. They were particularly profitable as an underdog where they were 11-4 against the line and 8-2 as an underdog of 6 points or less. The Bunnies were also particularly good at night (10-5 ATS), off a 7-day or longer break (13-4 ATS) and in good weather (13-7 ATS). Souths could also be relied on to go over in certain situations. While 14-10 over throughout the year, Souths were 7-1 over as a road underdog and 7-2 over when playing during daylight. With ten scores over 50 and ten only under 40, Souths did skew high in total points.

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

### 2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:

Premiership: \$8.50

Minor Premiership: \$8.00

Top 4: \$2.60

Top 8: \$1.50

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** I may have had too many scotches over the off-season but in my mind, Souths are one of the top three teams to beat in 2011. Assuming he gets fit, Greg Inglis is the final piece of the puzzle for a side that now ticks almost every box. Perhaps only depth and ability to perform under pressure is a concern for a side that has no other clear weaknesses. Many will scoff at the fact I have chosen not to rubbish their maligned halves but I am prepared to give Sandow and Sutton the benefit of the doubt. Time will tell but I would not be surprised to see the Bunnies in a preliminary final. Price: \$6.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 52.5 (12th)

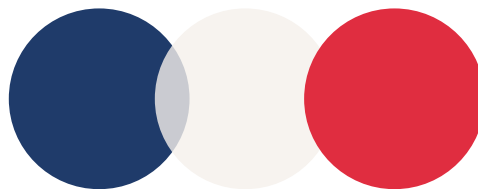
Predicted Finishing Range: 5th-12th

Predicted Finish: 10th

South Sydney remind me of Parramatta last year, only without the Grand Final run or the superstar fullback or any legitimate sign that they deserve to be rated as one of the three or four best teams in the NRL. South Sydney have made one finals series in two decades. They have dramatically underachieved over the last few seasons. They have a terrible defence. They lost their most potent attacking weapon. They have proven themselves incapable of getting on any kind of run. They have lost their most potent outside back. They are significantly hampered at both fullback and halfback. That is a lot of crosses against their title hopes. Sure, there is plenty of upside to Inglis, they have a classy forward pack that includes a top rate hooker, John Lang is loved and respected and the club now has the best facilities around but I just cannot fathom why the Rabbitohs are being touted as much as they are. The Rabbitohs are not an elite team yet and it doesn't look like they will reach that stage this year. The Bunnies are flip of the coin to make the finals. They have more upside than a few teams close to them on ratings (Manly, New Zealand) but there is also much more downside. Souths just have that look about them, that look of over-hyped disappointment. More frustration awaits fans of the cardinal and myrtle.

**2011 Betting Advice:** The operative word for futures bets with the Rabbitohs: Lay. Lay the proverbial out of them. Lay them to kingdom come. Lay them so that they are so sore they decide to spend the morning in bed rather than go to the gym. Just lay them. Lay them for the premiership at anything under \$14 (\$9 is the best available at Luxbet). Lay them for the minor premiership at anything under the same price. Lay them for the top four. Even lay them to make the eight at the short odds and/or bet them to miss the finals at anything better than \$2.10 (\$2.75 is available at Sportingbet). South Sydney are unlikely to run last but a bet at \$41 (Sportingbet) for them to win the fewest games is also a play. As a week-to-week proposition, they are likely to be under the odds. They served punters well in 2010 but that will likely be flipped around this year as they enter the season as the most overrated proposition in the NRL.

# SYDNEY ROOSTERS



## Strongest Team

1. Anthony Minichiello (fb/w)
2. Justin Carney (w/c)
3. Kane Linnett (c/w)
4. Shaun Kenny-Dowall (c/w)
5. Sam Perrett (w/fb)
6. Todd Carney (fe/hb/fb)
7. Mitchell Pearce (hb)
13. Braith Anasta (fe/br)
12. Mitch Aubusson (br/c)
11. Nate Myles (br/p)
10. Jason Ryles (p)
9. Jake Friend (h/hb)
8. Frank-Paul Nuuausala (p/br)

- 
14. Mark Riddell (h/br)
  15. Mose Masoe (p)
  16. Martin Kennedy (p)
  17. Jared Waerea-Hargreaves (p/br)

**Others:** Anthony Watts (h/hb), BJ Leilua (w/c/br), Phil Graham (w), Tom Symonds (br/c), Anthony Cherrington (br/p), Aiden Guerra (br), Daniel Conn (br), Tinirau Arona (p), Cheyse Blair (fb/c), Boyd Cordner (br), Jonathan Ford (fe/fb), Steve Naughton (fb/w), Brad Takairangi (br/c)

**Gains:** Anthony Watts (North Queensland), Mark Riddell (Wigan), Justin Carney (Canberra)

**Losses:** James Aubusson (Released), Nick Kouparitsas (Harlequins), Lopini Paea (Catalans), Brad Murray (Parramatta), Sam Brunton (Released), Jason Baitieri (Catalans), Jacob Miller (Tigers)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The Roosters have upgraded significantly at hooker by signing Anthony Watts and Mark Riddell, who both offer utility value as well. Both are better players than 2010 backups Aubusson, Kouparitsas and Brunton, all of whom have been moved on. The signing of Justin Carney will also reap rewards as he was outstanding for the Green Machine before suffering a savage broken leg that has seen him fighting for confidence since. Despite no big-name signings, the Roosters look a more potent attacking force this season and will be far more dangerous around the ruck this year, particularly when Watts returns from injury.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Nate Myles, Mitchell Pearce, Todd Carney.  
(Possible) Jared Waera-Hargraves, Shaun Kenny-Dowall, Sam Perrett.

### **Position Ratings:**

#### **Fullback ----- 5.5**

Anthony Minichiello returned to fullback midway through last season and remained uninjured and somewhat effective at the back. Injuries are again a major concern and Minichiello is getting no younger at 31 but if he remains serviceable with some sparks of the old Mini, the Roosters coaching staff will be pleased.

#### **Three Quarters ----- 6.5**

The Roosters are solid across their three-quarter line without being spectacular. Shaun Kenny-Dowall relished his move to centre. He can still throw in a stinker but he is the one Roosters three-quarter with real dynamism. Sam Perrett is reliable on one wing and is a fine kick returner and worker out of dummy half. Kane Linnett will play left centre but is no more than a first grader. New recruit Justin Carney looked a superstar for Canberra two seasons back but a horribly broken leg and a year in reserve grade means he is an unknown prospect with high upside. Phil Graham is a capable backup.

#### **Five-Eighth ----- 8.5**

Rugby league purists simply love Todd Carney for his skill and grace, if not for his fairytale comeback in 2010, culminating in the Dally M Medal. Carney has a penetrating kicking game, a delightful pass that is effective both short and long and a quick first step that allows him to make a nuisance of himself when he runs. If Carney goes down, the Roosters have a ready made replacement in skipper Braith Anasta.

#### **Halfback ----- 8**

Mitchell Pearce formed a lethal combination with Carney in 2010 and combined for 27 tries/try assists along with winning back the Origin seven. Pearce has plenty of heart and he has a smart kicking game. He is not quite at the top level yet but he is critical to the Roosters success and is more important than both Carney and Anasta to team structure.

#### **Hooker ----- 6.5**

The Roosters biggest problem in 2010 was at hooker. Jake Friend is the only one of the four players used to return. Friend is a nuggety tackling machine but he offers little out of dummy half and is not overly creative. Anthony Watts was set to be the perfect complement but is out for a significant period of the year with injury. Mark Riddell has a sharp football brain and should prove a positive pick-up for the Roosters.

### **Prop ----- 4.5**

It was surprising that the Roosters made it to the Big Dance with such an ordinary front row and they have done nothing in the offseason to improve the position. Jason Ryles improved his handling and discipline but he really isn't a top level prop and never has been. Jared Waerea-Hargreaves grabs the headlines but is nothing more than a big shot merchant. Frank-Paul Nuuausala, Mose Masoe and Martin Kennedy all go hard but they all have small tanks. The Roosters have one of the weakest prop rotations in the NRL.

### **Backrow ----- 7.5**

Nate Myles had a career year in 2010, performing at the levels many had hoped he would for a long time. He is an outstanding player when fit and focussed and after last year it is a reasonable expectation that he will show up as same in 2011. Braith Anasta may not like his move to the backrow but that is where his future at the Roosters lies. He looks a little lost in the position, truth be told, but he still adds some class with his ability to ball-play. Mitch Aubusson is used purely as a fringe runner/workhorse and does his job capably even through there are questions over his physical toughness.

### **Coach Rating:** Brian Smith (2nd season at the Roosters, 23rd in the NRL) ----- 8

#### **Coach History:**

W-L Record: 286-256-10

Finals Record: 15-14

Finals Seasons: 12

Premierships: 0

Club Record: 17-11

**Coach Analysis:** A lifer who has now coached at five clubs, Brian Smith is a great coach to a point. A renowned disciplinarian and sound tactician, Smith has the ability to rebuild clubs who find themselves on the canvas. He turned the struggling Dragons teams of the late eighties into Grand Finalists in 1992 and 1993. He rebuilt Parramatta from a rabble to a powerhouse five years either side of the turn of the century. He gutted the Knights in acrimonious circumstances and built a team that made the finals in 2009. In his first year at the Roosters, he took the club from the wooden spoon to a Grand Final. Smith does not accept mediocrity and he gets his teams to play competitive rugby league year in and year out. Smith's problem comes during the finals when he cannot kick his teams into that extra gear required to win a title. 22 seasons into his career and he is still chasing that elusive premiership. One of the biggest problems is that Smith tends to work his team very hard throughout the year with very few let-ups. The Roosters will again be competitive in 2011 because of Smith but no smart punter could back a Brian Smith team to win a premiership.

### Club 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record  | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|---------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 14-10   | 6th    | 5-3 | 4-4  | 5-3   | 3-1    | Grand Final       |
| 2009 | 5-19    | 16th   | 3-5 | 1-7  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 15-9    | 4th    | 5-3 | 6-2  | 4-4   | 0-2    | Semi Final        |
| 2007 | 10-13-1 | 10th   | 2-6 | 3-5  | 5-2-1 | DNQ    | --                |
| 2006 | 8-16    | 14th   | 4-4 | 1-7  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |

### Coach 5-Year Results:

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 14-10  | 6th    | 5-3 | 4-4  | 4-3   | 3-1    | Grand Final       |
| 2009 | 10-10  | *      | 5-3 | 4-4  | 1-3   | *      | *                 |
| 2008 | 12-12  | 9th    | 4-4 | 3-5  | 5-3   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 9-15   | 15th   | 4-4 | 4-4  | 1-7   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2006 | 2-7    | *      | 2-6 | 0-1  | *     | *      | *                 |

**Draw Analysis:** The two successful Roosters teams of the last five seasons have jumped the gun well with 5-3 starts. It has also been a consistent trait of Brian Smith teams that they start with the pack and are at least mid-table come the end of round eight. The Roosters have a standard draw throughout the first month so another 4-4 or 5-3 start looks to be on the cards. The Roosters best sector of their draw is through Origin where they get a cushy run though they do play before all three Origin matches and will be hard hit against Newcastle, Melbourne and Canberra. The final six weeks would be a concern, particularly considering how Brian Smith teams can collapse. Smith is a polarising figure and did not see out the 2006 or 2009 seasons while the Knights went home 1-7 under Smith in 2007. The Roosters season will swing on their final-third of the season.

### Home and Away Record:

| Year            | Record  | Home    | Away  |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------|
| 2010            | 17-11   | 8-6     | 9-5   |
| 2009            | 5-19    | 2-10    | 3-9   |
| 2008            | 15-11   | 8-5     | 7-6   |
| 2007            | 10-13-1 | 5-6-1   | 5-7   |
| 2006            | 8-16    | 4-8     | 4-8   |
| Five-Year Total | 55-70-1 | 27-35-1 | 28-35 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** The Roosters have tended to put up very similar home and away records over the last five years, again reinforcing the notion that the Sydney Football Stadium offers no home ground advantage. On the road, the Roosters have been a losing proposition but during strong seasons have shown an ability to win away from the SFS.

### **Attack Rankings:**

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 3rd  | 14th | 9th  | 12th | 5th  |
| Metres        | 12th | 16th | 7th  | 13th | 14th |
| Offloads      | 4th  | 9th  | 7th  | 8th  | 5th  |
| Tackle Breaks | 4th  | 16th | 10th | 13th | 12th |
| Errors        | 10th | 15th | 16th | 14th | 11th |

### **Defence Rankings:**

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 4th  | 16th | 6th  | 14th | 14th |
| Metres Conceded | 8th  | 16th | 7th  | 14th | 13th |
| Missed Tackles  | 7th  | 14th | 9th  | 6th  | 7th  |

**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** The Roosters have been extremely hit and miss over the last five years with their defence a particular concern. In 2006, 2007 and 2009 they were a bottom three defensive unit with 2009 an absolute mess. Brian Smith, as he tends to do, improved the Roosters defence last year and it was enough to propel them into a Grand Final. The story was similar with their attack with the club jumping from 14th to 3rd in points scored. One area of concern for the club, however, must surely be handling errors. The Roosters ranked bottom three from 2007 through 2009 and still ranked 10th in 2010. If they can respect the ball more and maintain their solid defensive performance, they should put together a performance similar to 2010 again.

### **Leading Tryscorers:**

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Shaun Kenny-Dowall   | 21    |
| 2009 | Shaun Kenny-Dowall   | 14    |
| 2008 | Shaun Kenny-Dowall   | 15    |
| 2007 | Joel Monaghan        | 14    |
| 2006 | Amos Roberts         | 18    |



### **Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 26**

Games Lost Analysis: The Roosters had a superb run with injuries in 2010 and also scored well on the rep front with Nate Myles and Mitch Pearce the only two selected for Origin. Hooker Jake Friend missed nine games after starting the season working at a sandwich shop but that number was not included as he was not signed. Pearce missed six weeks with a combination of injury and rep duty and was the worst missing person case for the Roosters all season.

**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Roosters were heavily underbet in 2010 and the result was an average price of \$2.15 (making them an average price outsider when factoring in the bookies vig), a huge return for punters betting level stakes and a 16-12 record against the spread. The Roosters were particularly good bets in most situations in 2010 but were best backed as an outsider, where they went 10-5 against the assigned line. Off a 7-day back-up, the Roosters made the most of the extra preparation (a trait of Brian Smith teams) and went 11-8 ATS. The Roosters also covered every game between rounds 14 and 21 in 2010. Brian Smith's men were a 16-12 under team in last year but they were not a low scoring team with only three games totalling under 30 points and four totalling in excess of 60. This suggests the bookmakers were putting up lines a fraction too big on Roosters matches. Not being a public team, the Roosters will likely be a good team to follow in match betting in 2011.

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

### **2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$9.00

Minor Premiership: \$8.00

Top 4: \$2.35

Top 8: \$1.40

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** I don't necessarily think the Roosters over-performed in 2010 but I don't think they were the second best side in the competition. It's a good squad with great halves and a great backrow. In fact, with the return of Anthony Cherrington from injury and the signing of Justin Carney and highly-rated Lami Tasi, they have probably improved. Come to think of it they are an extremely good chance of a repeat grand final performance but I don't think they have the strongest underbelly and I refuse to back a Brian Smith coached side when it comes to winning a grand final. Price: \$13.00

### **Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 55 (equal 6th)

Predicted Finishing Range: 2nd-10th

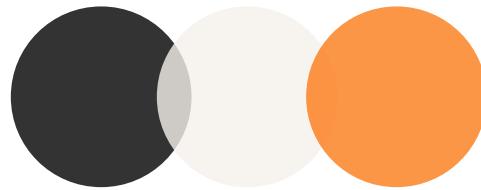
Predicted Finish: 7th

Brian Smith coached teams, once they reach the top level, rarely bottom out. When his Dragons made the finals in 1991, they followed it up with back-to-back Grand Finals, a window of three years, before they came back under him in '95 and then

went on to another Grand Final in 1996 under David Waite. Parramatta were a perennial force once Smith arrived until they lost a Grand Final in 2001, a period of five seasons. The Roosters won't fall through the floor like they did with Brad Fittler in 2009. They have an array of classy, clever halves with a top notch forward in Nate Myles and some nice three-quarters in Shaun Kenny-Dowall and Sam Perrett. I remain unconvinced about their forward pack though with the string of props lacking in class, smarts and work ethic. And how long can Anthony Minichiello stay healthy? While he has lost a step, he is very important to team structure, often getting the Roosters off to good starts in a set with darting runs from dummy half. The Roosters will be there or thereabouts. It would be a notable surprise if they were to miss the finals. They have the quality to even make it back to Stadium Australia on the final weekend of the season. I just don't think they will as their front row and their depth creates too many concerns. An exit in the first two weeks of the final seems the most likely outcome for the Bondi boys.

**2011 Betting Advice:** As Mr Rugby so aptly noted, you simply cannot back a Brian Smith coached team for the premiership. Certainly not at the \$9.00 (Flemington Sportsbet) and certainly not when his team has such obvious holes. If forced to take a long-term Roosters futures bet, the play would be for the Roosters to win the minor premiership at \$8.50 (Luxbet) and there is some of that about. The Roosters were a fantastic betting proposition last year as they were so undervalued and while they won't be the same outstanding team to follow this time around, they will likely provide some value, particularly if they start the season slow. Look to bet the Roosters off a seven-day rest as Brian Smith is one of the most prepared coaches in the NRL and always makes the most of a full rest. Punters should also look to take the under in Roosters matches. Their defence should at least stay on par and bookmakers tend to skew a little high in Rooster games.

# WESTS TIGERS



## Strongest Team

1. Wade McKinnon (fb)
2. Lote Tuqiri (w/c/fb)
3. Blake Ayshford (c)
4. Chris Lawrence (c/w/fe)
5. Taniela Tuiaki (w)
6. Benji Marshall (fe/hb)
7. Tim Moltzen (hb/fb)
13. Chris Heighington (br)
12. Gareth Ellis (br)
11. Liam Fulton (br)
10. Keith Galloway (p)
9. Robbie Farah (h)
8. Bryce Gibbs (p)

- 
14. Simon Dwyer (br)
  15. Todd Payten (br/p)
  16. Mark Flanagan (br)
  17. Andrew Fifita (p)

**Others:** Ben Murdoch-Masila (br/p), Robert Lui (hb), Beau Ryan (w), Jason Cayless (p), Mitch Brown (w/c/fb), Geoff Daniela (c), Junior Moors (p), Jason Schirnack (br), Jake Mullaney (fb), Nu Akeripa (c/br), Matt Hyland (br), Pat Politoni (h), Aaron Woods (p), Willie Mataka (br), Ratu Tagive (w)

**Gains:** Ratu Tagive (c/w)

**Losses:** David Gower (St George-Illawarra), Daniel Fitzhenry (Released)

**Net Recruitment Assessment:** The Tigers have built their current squad over the last three years through sharp recruitment (Ellis, Tuqiri, Flanagan) and nurturing juniors (Lawrence, Ayshford, Moltzen, Dwyer). Nearing the peak of this cycle, they have remained pat for this season with no major roster changes.

**Representative Losses:** (Likely) Robbie Farah, Benji Marshall. (Possible) Keith Galloway, Chris Lawrence, Lote Tuqiri, Chris Heighington.

## Position Ratings:

### Fullback

6

It is unclear whether Tim Sheens will go with Tim Moltzen or Wade McKinnon at fullback. It will likely be Moltzen though McKinnon would be a better play with

Moltzen at seven. Both are good custodians with Moltzen offering more upside. He does not offer much in terms of kick return but acts as an additional playmaker.

### **Three Quarters ----- 8.5**

The Tigers backline is outstanding. Lote Tuqiri offers speed and strength on one wing. Taniela Tuiaki is a Manu Vatuvei-prototype on the other and will be a handful if he recovers from his horrid broken ankle. Chris Lawrence is an Australian representative who has tightened up defensively. The only real weakness is Blake Ayshford and he is still more than capable. Beau Ryan is a very good player not to be in first grade.

### **Five-Eighth ----- 9**

Benji Marshall matured in 2010. He maintained his flair for the brilliant, his boyish excitability, his penchant for the magnificent. But he added to it a dose of common sense, more often taking the smart option in 2010 when, in previous years, he would have gone the low percentage play. Marshall, now injury free and playing smart, is the top five-eighth in the NRL.

### **Halfback ----- 5.5**

Halfback is a major concern for the Tigers with Sheens needing to decide between Tim Moltzen and Robert Lui. Moltzen offers more life at seven and is a better complement for Benji. Both are decent though and can do a job.

### **Hooker ----- 9.5**

Robbie Farah is unquestionably the second best hooker in the NRL behind Cameron Smith. Farah is a brilliant attacking player giving the Tigers a genuine playmaker out of dummy half. Farah has a great pass and an outstanding kick and can run the ball effectively. Farah has double figure try assists since 2005 and is central to the Tigers attack. He is also a typically sound defender who racks up the tackles.

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

“Big” Keith Galloway keeps getting injured at the worst times but he will soon be recognised as one of the better props going around. He always bends the defensive line and never shirks the tough stuff. Bryce Gibbs is still a menace. In a positive terms, he leads the Tigers forward. On the flip side, he gives away penalties and can play some dumb football. Andrew Fifita had a couple of outstanding games in 2010 and has plenty of potential.

### **Backrow ----- 9.5**

The Tigers have class and depth in the backrow. Gareth Ellis is the one who gets all the kudos and deservedly so: he is everywhere, hitting hard and punching the ball up and getting his hands dirty. Chris Heighington and Liam Fulton deserve some attention though. Heighington just does not stop, a bull who loves to go hard all day. Liam Fulton has more subtlety to his game. He loves to tackle but he can hit a hole or put someone else through the gap with a pretty short ball. Throw in talisman Todd

Payten, top prospect Simon Dwyer and the reliable Mark Flanagan and you have one of the best backrows in the NRL.

**Coach Rating:** Tim Sheens (9th season at the Tigers, 27th in the NRL) ----- **8.5**

**Coach History:**

W-L Record: 312-295-11

Finals Record: 18-12

Finals Seasons: 11

Premierships: 4

Club Record: 95-104

**Coach Analysis:** The most experienced coach in the NRL, Sheens has an up-and-down resume. Sheens guided the Raiders to their maiden premiership in '89 and subsequently premiership in '90 and '94. He then had an unsuccessful run at the Cowboys from '97 to '01 before moving to the Wests Tigers in 2003 and winning an unexpected title with them in '05. The Tigers then dramatically underachieved over the next four seasons, missing the playoffs every year until 2010 where they went within a field goal of rolling eventual premiers St George-Illawarra in the preliminary final. He is a renowned thinker and innovator with a love of attacking rugby league but came to the conclusion last season that the Tigers needed to toughen up defensively and respect the ball more if they were to be legitimate contenders. The Tigers game was modified and the rewards were reaped. It is also no coincidence that bringing in Steve Folkes as an assistant increased the toughness and fitness of the Tigers. It has been reported that Sheens is under pressure but it seems to be an annual tradition to claim Sheens could be moved on and he looks like he has the job at least as long as this premiership window is open.

**Club 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason  | Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------|--------|
| 2010 | 15-9   | 3rd    | 4-4 | 6-2  | 5-3   | 1-2    | Preliminary | Final  |
| 2009 | 12-12  | 9th    | 4-4 | 2-6  | 6-2   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2008 | 11-13  | 10th   | 4-4 | 3-5  | 4-4   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2007 | 11-13  | 9th    | 4-4 | 5-3  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --          |        |
| 2006 | 10-14  | 11th   | 4-4 | 3-5  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --          |        |

### **Coach 5-Year Results:**

| Year | Record | Finish | 1-8 | 9-16 | 17-24 | Finals | Postseason Finish |
|------|--------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| 2010 | 15-9   | 3rd    | 4-4 | 6-2  | 5-3   | 1-2    | Preliminary Final |
| 2009 | 12-12  | 9th    | 4-4 | 2-6  | 6-2   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2008 | 11-13  | 10th   | 4-4 | 3-5  | 4-4   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2007 | 11-13  | 9th    | 4-4 | 5-3  | 2-6   | DNQ    | --                |
| 2006 | 10-14  | 11th   | 4-4 | 3-5  | 3-5   | DNQ    | --                |

**Draw Analysis:** There are few more consistent teams in the NRL at least in terms of starting with the Tigers going 4-4 over the first eight rounds the last five seasons. From 2006-09, they continued to plug on for between 6 and 8 wins to finish between 9th and 11th. The Tigers have a good draw to open up 2011 though they have to travel interstate twice so a 4-4 start could be on the cards again. The Tigers get the Panthers and Warriors before Origin I and II. Penrith will likely have more Origin players than the Tigers though the Warriors should not impact Origin this season.

### **Home and Away Record:**

| Year            | Record | Home  | Away  |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2010            | 16-11  | 10-3  | 6-8   |
| 2009            | 12-12  | 7-5   | 5-7   |
| 2008            | 11-13  | 5-7   | 6-6   |
| 2007            | 11-13  | 5-7   | 6-6   |
| 2006            | 10-14  | 7-5   | 3-9   |
| Five-Year Total | 60-63  | 34-27 | 26-36 |

**Home and Away Analysis:** The Wests Tigers record between 2006 and 2009 was remarkably consistent, winning between 10 and 12 games each year and between 5 and 7 home games. At no stage over that time did the Tigers win more than 6 games on the road, including last year when they reached the finals for the first time since 2005. The Tigers did show remarkable improvement at home last year, however, and that 10-3 home stand, assisted by games at Leichardt and Campbelltown, was critical in getting the Tigers a top four berth.

### **Attack Rankings:**

| Category      | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Scored | 6th  | 3rd  | 5th  | 7th  | 13th |
| Metres        | 6th  | 4th  | 14th | 7th  | 12th |
| Offloads      | 16th | 13th | 10th | 10th | 11th |
| Tackle Breaks | 5th  | 7th  | 1st  | 11th | 13th |
| Errors        | 6th  | 6th  | 1st  | 1st  | 10th |

### Defence Rankings:

| Category        | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Points Conceded | 6th  | 7th  | 11th | 11th | 11th |
| Metres Conceded | 10th | 3rd  | 11th | 10th | 6th  |
| Missed Tackles  | 4th  | 8th  | 14th | 11th | 9th  |

**Attack-Defence Rankings Analysis:** The big change for the Tigers over the last two seasons has been their emphasis on defence. The Tigers attack has been fairly consistent over the last four seasons where they have been among the top teams. Defensively, the Tigers struggled with missed tackles and points conceded from 2006 to 2008 but started showing signs of improvement in 2009 and improved again in 2010, where they ranked 4th in missed tackles and 6th in points conceded. There is no reason to expect a downturn this year with the Tigers likely a top-six attacking team and a top-six defensive team.

### Leading Tryscorers:

| Year | Leading Tryscorer(s) | Tries |
|------|----------------------|-------|
| 2010 | Lote Tuqiri          | 18    |
| 2009 | Taniela Tuiaki       | 21    |
| 2008 | Chris Lawrence       | 10    |
| 2007 | Chris Lawrence       | 16    |
| 2006 | Daniel Fitzhenry     | 11    |

### Games Lost to Injury/Suspension/Rep Duty: 91

**Games Lost Analysis:** It is a testament to the Tigers depth that they managed to drive to a preliminary final and have their best season since their premiership in 2005 after a horror run with injury. Winger Taniela Tuiaki did not make the field after a horror injury finished his season prematurely in 2009 and Tim Moltzen missed the majority of the season with a severe knee injury. Robert Lui, Liam Fulton and Keith Galloway were also sidelined for over a quarter of the season each. While the backrow was fine, halfback was an issue all year as was the front row, where Galloway was pressing for Origin selection before succumbing to injury.



**2010 Betting Analysis:** The Tigers are generally regarded as one of the looser, more points-happy teams in the NRL but data from 2010 suggests that is a flawed impression. The Tigers were a 16-11 under team and had 14 totals finish below 40 points. One notable trend was the Tigers in wet or damp conditions. The Tigers went 6-0 under when there was any precipitation around, preferring to rely on their defence to win matches. Overall the Tigers went 15-12 against the line in 2010 and were particularly effective as an underdog, when they went 7-3 ATS. The Tigers were fairly well figured out by the market in 2010 and though slightly profitable, they were not an outstanding bet.

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

**2011 Flemington Sportsbet Odds:**

Premiership: \$8.50

Minor Premiership: \$7.00

Top 4: \$2.30

Top 8: \$1.40

**Mr Rugby Assessment:** Those in the know have declared the Tigers as the team to beat in 2011. Rarely have all pro-punters in the rugby league market agreed on their favoured side so early in the piece. I am happy to say I agree wholeheartedly with the general consensus. Robert Lui's rise to prominence in the big matches of 2010 was nothing short of impressive and at his current rate of progression I have no doubt he will be one of the players to watch in years to come. Tim Moltzen is back and he should have the inside run for the fullback role. In years gone by the Tigers have been known as pussycats when it came to forward exchanges and Tim Sheens will be putting faith in the likes of Simon Dwyer, Andrew Fifita and Ben Murdoch-Masala to avoid the "second year syndrome". Wests are far from the finished package but if Benji and Robbie play the season without any major injuries then I expect them to go at least one better than they did in 2010. Price: \$6.00

**Final Assessment:**

Roster Rating: 64 (2nd)

Predicted Finishing Range: 1st-6th

Predicted Finish: 1st

The Wests Tigers have the look of a premiership winner and if they do claim the title then it will be a more richly deserved and more praiseworthy title than their 2005 premiership. The Tigers are a team with very few flaws and on paper field one of the three strongest teams in the competition with the Dragons and the Storm. Their pack rates as one of the best in the premiership with an elite hooker and a superstar five-eighth guiding them around the park. Out wide, the Tigers are chock full of talent. Depth is not an issue. The only worries are over the one and the seven and the talented Tim Moltzen will take one of those positions. The key for the Tigers success in 2010 was Steve Folkes coming on board as an assistant. He provided the Tigers

with a tough underbelly and it showed in their defensive statistics, their ability to win close games and their reappearance in the finals for the first time since 2005. Tim Sheens is an experienced coach with a super finals record and the Tigers are likely viewing this as their best premiership hope in this cycle. I can't knock the club at all. They are going to be very difficult to beat with their expected defensive improvement and the further maturation of Benji Marshall set to make this very strong Tigers outfit even stronger.

**2011 Betting Advice:** I love the \$9.00 (Centrebet) available about the Tigers for the premiership. As mentioned above, they have few flaws. Many of the sharp punters have bet the Tigers early with a number of bookmakers reporting heavy liabilities for the club. They are over the odds at anything above \$7.00. With an easy start to the season, I don't expect to see the Tigers at double figure odds in 2011. As a weekly proposition, the under may present the most value. The Tigers seem to be changing their identity to that of a more defensive oriented unit and that could lead to some nice under plays, particularly when the Tigers are playing at night.

## FORECAST 2011 PREMIERSHIP LADDER

| Position | Team                | Wins-Losses |
|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1        | St George-Illawarra | 18-6        |
| 2        | Wests Tigers        | 17-7        |
| 3        | Melbourne           | 15-9        |
| 4        | Canberra            | 15-9        |
| 5        | Gold Coast          | 14-10       |
| 6        | Canterbury          | 14-10       |
| 7        | Sydney Roosters     | 14-10       |
| 8        | New Zealand         | 13-11       |
| 9        | Manly               | 12-12       |
| 10       | South Sydney        | 11-13       |
| 11       | Brisbane            | 11-13       |
| 12       | Penrith             | 10-14       |
| 13       | Newcastle           | 8-16        |
| 14       | Parramatta          | 8-16        |
| 15       | North Queensland    | 6-18        |
| 16       | Cronulla            | 6-18        |

## APPENDIX A: AGAINST THE SPREAD RECORDS FOR 2010 SEASON PT 1

|                             | BRIS    |    | CANB    |    | CANT    |    | CRON    |    | GC     |    | MAN     |    | MELB    |    | NZ      |   | NEWC    |    |
|-----------------------------|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|--------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|---|---------|----|
|                             | W       | L  | W       | L  | W       | L  | W       | L  | W      | L  | W       | L  | W       | L  | W       | L | W       | L  |
| <b>ATS Betting</b>          |         |    |         |    |         |    |         |    |        |    |         |    |         |    |         |   |         |    |
| Overall                     | 14      | 10 | 11      | 15 | 10      | 14 | 10      | 14 | 15     | 11 | 11      | 14 | 12      | 12 | 16      | 9 | 10      | 14 |
| Home                        | 7       | 5  | 5       | 8  | 6       | 6  | 5       | 7  | 7      | 7  | 5       | 7  | 8       | 4  | 7       | 5 | 6       | 6  |
| Away                        | 7       | 5  | 6       | 7  | 4       | 8  | 5       | 7  | 8      | 4  | 6       | 7  | 4       | 8  | 9       | 4 | 4       | 8  |
| Favourite                   | 7       | 6  | 3       | 8  | 4       | 6  | 0       | 0  | 6      | 7  | 8       | 8  | 12      | 7  | 7       | 4 | 2       | 4  |
| Underdog                    | 7       | 4  | 8       | 7  | 6       | 8  | 10      | 14 | 9      | 4  | 3       | 6  | 0       | 5  | 9       | 5 | 8       | 10 |
| Home Favourite              | 4       | 5  | 3       | 6  | 3       | 3  | 0       | 0  | 6      | 5  | 4       | 7  | 8       | 3  | 6       | 4 | 2       | 3  |
| Away Favourite              | 3       | 1  | 0       | 2  | 1       | 3  | 0       | 0  | 0      | 2  | 4       | 1  | 4       | 4  | 1       | 0 | 0       | 1  |
| Home Underdog               | 3       | 0  | 2       | 2  | 3       | 3  | 5       | 7  | 1      | 2  | 1       | 0  | 0       | 1  | 1       | 1 | 4       | 3  |
| Away Underdog               | 4       | 4  | 6       | 5  | 3       | 5  | 5       | 7  | 8      | 2  | 2       | 6  | 0       | 4  | 8       | 4 | 4       | 7  |
| Interstate Favourite        | 1       | 1  | 0       | 1  | 1       | 2  | 0       | 0  | 0      | 1  | 2       | 0  | 4       | 4  | 1       | 0 | 0       | 0  |
| Interstate Underdog         | 5       | 5  | 1       | 3  | 1       | 0  | 1       | 3  | 8      | 0  | 1       | 1  | 0       | 4  | 7       | 4 | 2       | 3  |
| Favourite 0.5-6 points      | 5       | 5  | 2       | 6  | 2       | 4  | 0       | 0  | 3      | 3  | 6       | 3  | 7       | 3  | 5       | 4 | 0       | 4  |
| Favourite 6.5-12 points     | 2       | 1  | 0       | 2  | 2       | 2  | 0       | 0  | 2      | 4  | 2       | 5  | 4       | 3  | 2       | 0 | 2       | 0  |
| Favourite 12 plus points    | 0       | 0  | 1       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 1      | 0  | 0       | 0  | 1       | 1  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0  |
| Underdog 0.5-6 points       | 5       | 2  | 6       | 2  | 4       | 3  | 2       | 4  | 7      | 4  | 1       | 3  | 0       | 5  | 3       | 3 | 5       | 8  |
| Underdog 6.5-12 points      | 0       | 2  | 2       | 5  | 2       | 5  | 7       | 9  | 1      | 0  | 2       | 2  | 0       | 0  | 6       | 2 | 3       | 1  |
| Underdog 12 plus points     | 2       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 1       | 1  | 1      | 0  | 0       | 1  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 1  |
| Day Matches                 | 5       | 1  | 3       | 6  | 2       | 3  | 0       | 5  | 3      | 2  | 5       | 4  | 4       | 3  | 6       | 4 | 3       | 6  |
| Night/Twilight Matches      | 9       | 9  | 8       | 9  | 8       | 11 | 10      | 9  | 12     | 9  | 6       | 10 | 8       | 9  | 10      | 5 | 7       | 8  |
| 5-Day Back-Up               | 2       | 3  | 1       | 2  | 1       | 3  | 0       | 0  | 4      | 2  | 1       | 2  | 1       | 1  | 0       | 1 | 1       | 1  |
| 7-Day Plus Back-Up          | 9       | 6  | 7       | 7  | 7       | 7  | 4       | 13 | 8      | 6  | 7       | 10 | 6       | 9  | 9       | 7 | 5       | 10 |
| Off Bye                     | 2       | 0  | 0       | 2  | 1       | 1  | 0       | 2  | 1      | 2  | 1       | 1  | 1       | 1  | 2       | 0 | 1       | 1  |
| Off Monday Night Football   | 1       | 1  | 1       | 3  | 2       | 2  | 0       | 0  | 2      | 1  | 4       | 2  | 2       | 0  | 0       | 0 | 2       | 1  |
| In Good Weather             | 10      | 10 | 10      | 15 | 9       | 12 | 7       | 11 | 12     | 9  | 11      | 11 | 12      | 10 | 10      | 6 | 6       | 12 |
| In Damp/Wet Weather         | 4       | 0  | 1       | 0  | 1       | 2  | 3       | 3  | 3      | 2  | 0       | 3  | 0       | 2  | 6       | 3 | 4       | 2  |
| On Friday                   | 7       | 7  | 0       | 2  | 4       | 5  | 1       | 0  | 7      | 6  | 0       | 2  | 1       | 2  | 1       | 2 | 2       | 1  |
| On Saturday                 | 2       | 0  | 5       | 6  | 2       | 4  | 9       | 8  | 3      | 2  | 5       | 3  | 7       | 5  | 7       | 1 | 3       | 7  |
| On Sunday                   | 5       | 1  | 3       | 6  | 2       | 3  | 0       | 6  | 3      | 2  | 5       | 4  | 4       | 3  | 8       | 6 | 3       | 5  |
| On Monday                   | 0       | 2  | 3       | 1  | 2       | 2  | 0       | 0  | 2      | 1  | 1       | 5  | 0       | 2  | 0       | 0 | 2       | 1  |
| <b>Head To Head Betting</b> |         |    |         |    |         |    |         |    |        |    |         |    |         |    |         |   |         |    |
| Average Price               | \$2.26  |    | \$2.37  |    | \$2.08  |    | \$3.15  |    | \$1.96 |    | \$1.94  |    | \$1.64  |    | \$2.24  |   | \$2.40  |    |
| Average Home Price          | \$1.79  |    | \$1.72  |    | \$1.98  |    | \$2.82  |    | \$1.62 |    | \$1.54  |    | \$1.48  |    | \$1.74  |   | \$1.90  |    |
| Average Away Price          | \$2.73  |    | \$2.66  |    | \$2.18  |    | \$3.49  |    | \$2.36 |    | \$2.31  |    | \$1.81  |    | \$2.70  |   | \$2.90  |    |
| Home Profit/Loss            | -\$3.12 |    | -\$1.37 |    | -\$4.70 |    | \$1.00  |    | \$0.18 |    | -\$0.56 |    | \$0.84  |    | -\$1.08 |   | -\$0.35 |    |
| Away Profit/Loss            | \$2.10  |    | \$5.07  |    | -\$1.69 |    | -\$2.50 |    | \$6.02 |    | -\$3.75 |    | -\$3.88 |    | -\$4.50 |   | -\$0.95 |    |
| Total Profit/Loss           | -\$1.02 |    | \$3.70  |    | -\$6.39 |    | -\$1.50 |    | \$6.20 |    | -\$4.31 |    | -\$3.04 |    | \$3.42  |   | -\$1.30 |    |

## APPENDIX A: AGAINST THE SPREAD RECORDS FOR 2010 SEASON PT 1

|                             | NQ       |    | PAR     |    | PEN     |    | ST G   |    | SOU     |   | SYD     |    | WS      |    | OVERALL |     |
|-----------------------------|----------|----|---------|----|---------|----|--------|----|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|---------|-----|
|                             | W        | L  | W       | L  | W       | L  | W      | L  | W       | L | W       | L  | W       | L  | W       | L   |
| <b>ATS Betting</b>          |          |    |         |    |         |    |        |    |         |   |         |    |         |    |         |     |
| Overall                     | 9        | 15 | 8       | 16 | 13      | 13 | 16     | 11 | 15      | 9 | 16      | 12 | 15      | 12 | 201     | 201 |
| Home                        | 7        | 5  | 4       | 8  | 8       | 5  | 10     | 5  | 9       | 3 | 7       | 6  | 7       | 6  | 108     | 93  |
| Away                        | 2        | 10 | 4       | 8  | 5       | 8  | 6      | 6  | 6       | 6 | 9       | 6  | 8       | 6  | 93      | 108 |
| Favourite                   | 3        | 2  | 3       | 13 | 9       | 8  | 15     | 10 | 4       | 5 | 6       | 7  | 8       | 9  | 97      | 104 |
| Underdog                    | 6        | 13 | 5       | 3  | 4       | 5  | 1      | 1  | 11      | 4 | 10      | 5  | 7       | 3  | 104     | 97  |
| Home Favourite              | 3        | 2  | 2       | 8  | 8       | 4  | 10     | 5  | 3       | 2 | 5       | 5  | 5       | 6  | 72      | 68  |
| Away Favourite              | 0        | 0  | 1       | 5  | 1       | 4  | 5      | 5  | 1       | 3 | 1       | 2  | 3       | 3  | 25      | 36  |
| Home Underdog               | 4        | 3  | 2       | 0  | 0       | 1  | 0      | 0  | 6       | 1 | 2       | 1  | 2       | 0  | 36      | 25  |
| Away Underdog               | 2        | 10 | 3       | 3  | 4       | 4  | 1      | 1  | 5       | 3 | 8       | 4  | 5       | 3  | 68      | 72  |
| Interstate Favourite        | 0        | 0  | 0       | 1  | 0       | 0  | 1      | 2  | 0       | 0 | 1       | 2  | 0       | 1  | 11      | 15  |
| Interstate Underdog         | 2        | 8  | 0       | 2  | 2       | 3  | 0      | 1  | 2       | 1 | 3       | 0  | 2       | 0  | 37      | 38  |
| Favourite 0.5-6 points      | 3        | 1  | 0       | 8  | 4       | 5  | 6      | 4  | 3       | 5 | 4       | 3  | 5       | 7  | 55      | 65  |
| Favourite 6.5-12 points     | 0        | 1  | 3       | 4  | 5       | 3  | 7      | 4  | 1       | 0 | 2       | 4  | 3       | 2  | 37      | 35  |
| Favourite 12.5 plus points  | 0        | 0  | 0       | 1  | 0       | 0  | 2      | 2  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 5       | 4   |
| Underdog 0.5-6 points       | 2        | 4  | 5       | 3  | 3       | 5  | 1      | 1  | 8       | 2 | 8       | 4  | 5       | 2  | 65      | 55  |
| Underdog 6.5-12 points      | 4        | 7  | 0       | 0  | 1       | 0  | 0      | 0  | 3       | 2 | 2       | 1  | 2       | 1  | 35      | 37  |
| Underdog 12.5 plus points   | 0        | 2  | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0      | 0  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0  | 4       | 5   |
| Day Matches                 | 0        | 0  | 1       | 2  | 4       | 3  | 4      | 5  | 5       | 4 | 6       | 4  | 5       | 4  | 56      | 56  |
| Night/Twilight Matches      | 9        | 15 | 7       | 14 | 9       | 10 | 12     | 6  | 10      | 5 | 10      | 8  | 10      | 8  | 145     | 145 |
| 5-Day Back-Up               | 2        | 1  | 1       | 5  | 2       | 0  | 2      | 0  | 2       | 2 | 3       | 3  | 6       | 4  | 29      | 30  |
| 7-Day Plus Back-Up          | 5        | 13 | 5       | 8  | 7       | 8  | 11     | 9  | 13      | 4 | 11      | 8  | 2       | 3  | 116     | 128 |
| Off Bye                     | 0        | 2  | 1       | 1  | 2       | 0  | 1      | 2  | 1       | 1 | 2       | 0  | 1       | 1  | 17      | 17  |
| Off Monday Night Football   | 2        | 2  | 2       | 2  | 2       | 3  | 2      | 2  | 1       | 1 | 2       | 3  | 2       | 0  | 25      | 23  |
| In Good Weather             | 8        | 13 | 6       | 13 | 12      | 11 | 14     | 8  | 13      | 7 | 15      | 8  | 11      | 10 | 166     | 166 |
| In Damp/Wet Weather         | 1        | 2  | 2       | 3  | 1       | 2  | 2      | 3  | 2       | 2 | 1       | 4  | 4       | 2  | 36      | 35  |
| On Friday                   | 2        | 3  | 4       | 6  | 3       | 1  | 7      | 4  | 2       | 4 | 3       | 1  | 6       | 4  | 50      | 50  |
| On Saturday                 | 6        | 9  | 1       | 5  | 4       | 7  | 2      | 2  | 4       | 0 | 4       | 3  | 2       | 4  | 66      | 66  |
| On Sunday                   | 0        | 0  | 1       | 3  | 3       | 3  | 6      | 4  | 7       | 5 | 6       | 6  | 5       | 4  | 61      | 61  |
| On Monday                   | 1        | 3  | 2       | 2  | 3       | 2  | 1      | 1  | 2       | 0 | 3       | 2  | 2       | 0  | 24      | 24  |
| <b>Head To Head Betting</b> |          |    |         |    |         |    |        |    |         |   |         |    |         |    |         |     |
| Average Price               | \$2.85   |    | \$1.76  |    | \$1.80  |    | \$1.51 |    | \$2.11  |   | \$1.95  |    | \$1.88  |    |         |     |
| Average Home Price          | \$2.21   |    | \$1.65  |    | \$1.50  |    | \$1.38 |    | \$2.03  |   | \$1.68  |    | \$1.63  |    |         |     |
| Average Away Price          | \$3.50   |    | \$1.86  |    | \$2.10  |    | \$1.67 |    | \$2.20  |   | \$2.18  |    | \$2.10  |    |         |     |
| Home Profit/Loss            | -\$4.81  |    | -\$3.32 |    | \$0.04  |    | \$1.41 |    | \$4.40  |   | -\$1.14 |    | \$1.59  |    |         |     |
| Away Profit/Loss            | -\$9.00  |    | -\$2.22 |    | -\$0.45 |    | \$1.05 |    | -\$5.85 |   | \$7.03  |    | -\$0.55 |    |         |     |
| Total Profit/Loss           | -\$13.81 |    | -\$5.54 |    | -\$0.41 |    | \$2.46 |    | -\$1.45 |   | \$5.89  |    | \$1.04  |    |         |     |

## APPENDIX B: TOTAL POINTS RECORDS FOR THE 2010 SEASON PT 1

|                               | BRIS |    | CANB |    | CANT |    | CRON |    | GC |    | MAN |    | MELB |    | NZ |    | NEWC |    |
|-------------------------------|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|----|----|-----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|
|                               | OV   | UN | OV   | UN | OV   | UN | OV   | UN | OV | UN | OV  | UN | OV   | UN | OV | UN | OV   | UN |
| <b>Total Points Betting</b>   |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |    |    |     |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |
| Overall                       | 13   | 11 | 12   | 14 | 10   | 14 | 11   | 13 | 12 | 14 | 15  | 10 | 6    | 18 | 15 | 10 | 12   | 12 |
| Home                          | 7    | 5  | 8    | 5  | 6    | 6  | 4    | 8  | 5  | 9  | 7   | 5  | 5    | 7  | 7  | 5  | 7    | 5  |
| Away                          | 6    | 6  | 4    | 9  | 4    | 8  | 7    | 5  | 7  | 5  | 8   | 5  | 1    | 11 | 8  | 5  | 5    | 7  |
| Home Favourite                | 7    | 2  | 5    | 4  | 3    | 3  | 0    | 0  | 5  | 6  | 7   | 4  | 4    | 7  | 6  | 4  | 4    | 1  |
| Away Favourite                | 2    | 2  | 0    | 2  | 1    | 3  | 0    | 0  | 2  | 0  | 4   | 1  | 1    | 7  | 1  | 0  | 0    | 1  |
| Home Underdog                 | 0    | 3  | 3    | 1  | 3    | 3  | 4    | 8  | 0  | 3  | 0   | 1  | 1    | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3    | 4  |
| Away Underdog                 | 4    | 4  | 4    | 7  | 3    | 5  | 7    | 5  | 5  | 5  | 4   | 4  | 0    | 4  | 7  | 5  | 5    | 6  |
| Interstate Favourite          | 1    | 1  | 0    | 2  | 0    | 2  | 0    | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1   | 1  | 1    | 7  | 1  | 0  | 0    | 0  |
| Interstate Underdog           | 4    | 4  | 1    | 2  | 1    | 1  | 2    | 2  | 5  | 4  | 0   | 2  | 0    | 4  | 8  | 4  | 2    | 3  |
| Day Matches                   | 4    | 2  | 6    | 3  | 3    | 2  | 3    | 2  | 3  | 2  | 5   | 4  | 2    | 5  | 6  | 4  | 4    | 5  |
| Night/Twilight Matches        | 9    | 9  | 6    | 11 | 7    | 12 | 8    | 11 | 9  | 12 | 10  | 6  | 4    | 13 | 9  | 6  | 8    | 7  |
| Off Bye                       | 0    | 2  | 1    | 1  | 1    | 1  | 1    | 1  | 1  | 2  | 2   | 0  | 0    | 2  | 0  | 2  | 0    | 2  |
| Off Monday Night Football     | 1    | 1  | 0    | 4  | 2    | 2  | 0    | 0  | 3  | 0  | 4   | 2  | 2    | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0    | 3  |
| In Good Weather               | 12   | 8  | 12   | 13 | 9    | 12 | 10   | 8  | 11 | 10 | 14  | 8  | 5    | 17 | 11 | 5  | 11   | 7  |
| In Damp/Wet Weather           | 1    | 3  | 0    | 1  | 1    | 2  | 1    | 5  | 1  | 4  | 1   | 2  | 1    | 1  | 4  | 5  | 1    | 5  |
| On Friday                     | 8    | 6  | 1    | 1  | 4    | 5  | 0    | 1  | 3  | 10 | 1   | 1  | 1    | 2  | 3  | 0  | 2    | 1  |
| On Saturday                   | 0    | 2  | 4    | 7  | 1    | 5  | 8    | 9  | 4  | 1  | 5   | 3  | 1    | 11 | 3  | 5  | 5    | 5  |
| On Sunday                     | 4    | 2  | 6    | 3  | 3    | 2  | 3    | 3  | 3  | 2  | 5   | 4  | 3    | 4  | 9  | 5  | 3    | 5  |
| On Monday                     | 1    | 1  | 1    | 3  | 2    | 2  | 0    | 0  | 2  | 1  | 4   | 2  | 1    | 1  | 0  | 0  | 2    | 1  |
| <b>Total Points Breakdown</b> |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |    |    |     |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |
| 0-20                          | 2    |    | 0    |    | 0    |    | 1    |    | 0  |    | 1   |    | 1    |    | 3  |    | 1    |    |
| 21-30                         | 3    |    | 6    |    | 3    |    | 5    |    | 4  |    | 3   |    | 7    |    | 0  |    | 1    |    |
| 31-40                         | 7    |    | 6    |    | 8    |    | 8    |    | 8  |    | 4   |    | 11   |    | 7  |    | 10   |    |
| 41-50                         | 3    |    | 9    |    | 7    |    | 5    |    | 10 |    | 10  |    | 4    |    | 9  |    | 3    |    |
| 51-60                         | 5    |    | 4    |    | 4    |    | 3    |    | 2  |    | 5   |    | 0    |    | 4  |    | 5    |    |
| 61-70                         | 3    |    | 1    |    | 1    |    | 2    |    | 1  |    | 2   |    | 1    |    | 2  |    | 3    |    |
| 71-plus                       | 1    |    | 0    |    | 1    |    | 0    |    | 1  |    | 0   |    | 0    |    | 0  |    | 1    |    |

## APPENDIX B: TOTAL POINTS RECORDS FOR THE 2010 SEASON PT2

|                               | NQ |    | PAR |    | PEN |    | ST G |    | SOU |    | SYD |    | WS |    | OVERALL |     |
|-------------------------------|----|----|-----|----|-----|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|---------|-----|
|                               | OV | UN | OV  | UN | OV  | UN | OV   | UN | OV  | UN | OV  | UN | OV | UN | OV      | UN  |
| <b>Total Points Betting</b>   |    |    |     |    |     |    |      |    |     |    |     |    |    |    |         |     |
| Overall                       | 12 | 12 | 10  | 14 | 16  | 10 | 9    | 18 | 14  | 10 | 12  | 16 | 11 | 16 | 95      | 106 |
| Home                          | 5  | 7  | 5   | 7  | 7   | 6  | 6    | 9  | 6   | 6  | 5   | 8  | 5  | 8  | 95      | 106 |
| Away                          | 7  | 5  | 5   | 7  | 9   | 4  | 3    | 9  | 8   | 4  | 7   | 8  | 6  | 8  | 95      | 106 |
| Home Favourite                | 3  | 2  | 4   | 6  | 7   | 5  | 6    | 9  | 2   | 3  | 4   | 6  | 4  | 7  | 71      | 69  |
| Away Favourite                | 0  | 0  | 1   | 5  | 4   | 1  | 3    | 7  | 1   | 3  | 1   | 2  | 3  | 3  | 24      | 37  |
| Home Underdog                 | 2  | 5  | 1   | 1  | 0   | 1  | 0    | 0  | 4   | 3  | 1   | 2  | 1  | 1  | 24      | 37  |
| Away Underdog                 | 7  | 5  | 4   | 2  | 5   | 3  | 0    | 2  | 7   | 1  | 6   | 6  | 3  | 5  | 71      | 69  |
| Interstate Favourite          | 0  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 0   | 0  | 1    | 2  | 0   | 0  | 1   | 1  | 0  | 1  | 7       | 18  |
| Interstate Underdog           | 5  | 5  | 3   | 0  | 3   | 2  | 0    | 1  | 2   | 1  | 2   | 1  | 0  | 2  | 38      | 38  |
| Day Matches                   | 0  | 0  | 1   | 2  | 5   | 2  | 2    | 7  | 7   | 2  | 4   | 6  | 5  | 4  | 30      | 26  |
| Night/Twilight Matches        | 12 | 12 | 9   | 12 | 11  | 8  | 7    | 11 | 7   | 8  | 8   | 10 | 6  | 12 | 65      | 80  |
| Off Bye                       | 2  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 1   | 1  | 0    | 3  | 1   | 1  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 1  | 12      | 22  |
| Off Monday Night Football     | 1  | 3  | 2   | 2  | 3   | 2  | 1    | 1  | 1   | 1  | 3   | 2  | 2  | 0  | 25      | 23  |
| In Good Weather               | 11 | 10 | 8   | 11 | 16  | 7  | 7    | 15 | 12  | 8  | 10  | 13 | 11 | 10 | 85      | 81  |
| In Damp/Wet Weather           | 1  | 2  | 2   | 3  | 0   | 3  | 2    | 3  | 2   | 2  | 2   | 3  | 0  | 6  | 10      | 25  |
| On Friday                     | 3  | 2  | 4   | 6  | 2   | 2  | 3    | 8  | 2   | 4  | 0   | 4  | 3  | 7  | 20      | 30  |
| On Saturday                   | 8  | 7  | 3   | 3  | 7   | 4  | 1    | 3  | 2   | 2  | 4   | 3  | 2  | 4  | 37      | 37  |
| On Sunday                     | 0  | 0  | 2   | 2  | 4   | 2  | 4    | 6  | 9   | 3  | 5   | 7  | 5  | 4  | 29      | 27  |
| On Monday                     | 1  | 3  | 1   | 3  | 3   | 2  | 1    | 1  | 1   | 1  | 3   | 2  | 1  | 1  | 12      | 12  |
| <b>Total Points Breakdown</b> |    |    |     |    |     |    |      |    |     |    |     |    |    |    |         |     |
| 0-20                          | 0  |    | 3   |    | 2   |    | 2    |    | 0   |    | 1   |    | 1  |    | 9       |     |
| 21-30                         | 2  |    | 3   |    | 2   |    | 12   |    | 3   |    | 2   |    | 6  |    | 31      |     |
| 31-40                         | 6  |    | 9   |    | 4   |    | 5    |    | 7   |    | 11  |    | 7  |    | 59      |     |
| 41-50                         | 8  |    | 6   |    | 8   |    | 7    |    | 4   |    | 7   |    | 6  |    | 53      |     |
| 51-60                         | 7  |    | 2   |    | 2   |    | 0    |    | 4   |    | 3   |    | 4  |    | 27      |     |
| 61-70                         | 1  |    | 1   |    | 7   |    | 1    |    | 4   |    | 2   |    | 2  |    | 17      |     |
| 71-plus                       | 0  |    | 0   |    | 1   |    | 0    |    | 2   |    | 2   |    | 1  |    | 5       |     |



## ABOUT NICK TEDESCHI

Nick Tedeschi is a freelance rugby league writer and betting industry consultant. He has written extensively over the last six seasons on "The Greatest Game of All," penning words for Punting Ace as the popular staff writer. Nick has also written for Back Page Lead, Crikey, Betfair and The Roar and he is currently the Editor-in-Chief at The Big Tip.

Nick Tedeschi has discussed both the big and small issues during his time in the game, naming names and calling shots at anyone who dares wind him into a frenzy over anything he perceives as an attack on the sport or a travesty of justice. For the past three seasons he has written a weekly rugby league column titled "From The Couch" and for the past four years he has written an annual Top 50 List, ranking the 50 best players in the NRL.

With a great deal of experience in the betting industry as both a bookmaker and a commentator on wagering issues, Nick Tedeschi is well placed to opine on gambling matters and provide rugby league betting advice. Nick has been wagering on rugby league for as long as he can remember and has served as a price consultant for many years.

Nick Tedeschi can be heard regularly as a panellist on the Sportzfan radio program on Southern FM and can be found at [www.makingthenut.com](http://www.makingthenut.com) and on Twitter @NickTedeschi.