

LEAGUE OF LEGENDS



100 YEARS OF RUGBY LEAGUE IN AUSTRALIA

League of Legends: milestones of rugby league

Dally Messenger: On 8 August 1907 a group of leading rugby union players and supporters met at Bateman's Hotel, Sydney, to discuss the creation of the New South Wales Rugby Football League. Adopting the playing rules of the rebel Northern Union of England, the new competition began in 1908. A key figure in the early success of rugby league was New South Wales player Herbert Henry 'Dally' Messenger. The rugby union hero defected to rugby league and added much credibility to the new code emerging as the first superstar of rugby league.

1907 NSW versus New Zealand 'All golds' match: A catalyst for the establishment of a breakaway code was the visit to Sydney of a professional New Zealand side in August 1907. Known as the All Golds and led by New Zealand football entrepreneur Albert Henry Baskerville, the New Zealand side was en route to England to play Northern Union teams.

Dave Brown- 1930s: Known as 'the Bradman of league', Dave Brown is a legend of the game's early years. After losing his hair due to illness, Brown was easily distinguishable on the field by the leather headgear that became his trademark.

Clive Churchill- The Little Master: Clive Churchill was widely acknowledged among his contemporaries as one of the most accomplished players of the post-Second World War era. His nickname, 'The Little Master', placed him alongside Dally Messenger, 'The Master'. Churchill was instrumental in the success of both the Australian and South Sydney sides of the 1950s.

Frank Hyde: Frank Hyde's gravelly voice is synonymous with rugby league. Starting in 1953 with radio station 2SM, he was unbeaten in the listener ratings for 31 years. His trademark call from his card table on the sidelines, 'It's long enough, it's high enough, it's straight between the posts!' could be heard on radios everywhere.

State of Origin: New life was injected into interstate football when, as an experiment in the third match of the 1980 series, it was suggested that players represent their state of origin, rather than the state where they were playing.

Laurie Nichols: Long-term fans of the Balmain (now Wests) Tigers will no doubt remember Laurie Nichols. From the mid-1960s till his death in 2000, Laurie was seen at every game, wearing a singlet and revving up the players with his shadow-boxing moves as they ran onto the field.

Tina Turner: In 1989 the New South Wales Rugby League set out on an ambitious marketing campaign featuring United States singer, Tina Turner. The initial campaign featuring her song 'What you get is what you see' proved a success and was followed by 'Simply the best'. The songs provided the soundtrack for what was to be a glorious period for rugby league.

Super league: Rugby league became a victim of its own success in the mid-1990s when battles over the control of pay television in Australia saw News Limited establish a breakaway competition. The war lasted over three years, cost millions of dollars and disillusioned thousands of fans.