

BRISBANE CLUB FOOTBALL (NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION CLUBS)

Brisbane Broncos



Club information

Full name	Brisbane Broncos Rugby League Football Club Ltd.
Website	bronscos.com.au (http://www.bronscos.com.au/)
Founded	5 April 1987
Ground(s)	Suncorp Stadium (52,500)

Honours

- **World Club Challenge: 2**
1992, 1997
 - **Premiership: 6**
1992, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2006
 - **Minor Premiership: 4**
1992, 1997, 1998, 2000
 - **Panasonic Cup: 1**
1989
 - **Lotto Challenge Cup: 1**
1991
 - **Tooheys Challenge: 1**
1995
- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Most capped | 355 - Darren Lockyer |
| Most points | 1,195 - Darren Lockyer |

The Brisbane Broncos were introduced to the NSWRL's Winfield Cup premiership in 1988, taking the competition by storm in winning their first six games, and have since become one of only three teams to have won every grand final they have contested (the others being the Newcastle Knights in 1997 and 2001, and the Wests Tigers in 2005). The Broncos also participated in 18 consecutive finals series, from 1992-2009, winning the premiership six times (in 1992, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2000 and 2006).

1980's

Whilst Brisbane had had its own rugby league club competition since 1909, Brisbane teams had been assembled occasionally, usually referred to as "Combined Brisbane" for Bulimba Cup tournaments and representative matches against Sydney-based sides and touring international teams. By the 1980s, it was decided that the New South Wales Rugby Football League premiership should be expanded outside its traditional Sydney base. This began in 1982 with the introduction of the Canberra Raiders and the Illawarra Steelers. In 1985, the NSWRL decided to allow a team from Brisbane to be entered into the competition. A proposal was made to the Queensland Rugby League to enter a Brisbane team in 1987, but it was voted down. However the following year, along with the Gold Coast-Tweed Giants and Newcastle Knights the Brisbane team would enter the New South Wales competition.

After tough competition between various syndicates for the Brisbane NSWRL license, the Queensland Rugby League chose the bid that belonged to former Brisbane Rugby League (BRL) players Barry Maranta and Paul "Porky" Morgan. After deliberating over such names as Bulls, Brumbies, Bombers and Kookaburras, the club eventually decided on the name Broncos. Former Australian representative player John Ribot was appointed the club's first chief executive officer.

As the Broncos would begin to represent Brisbane at rugby league in the Australian public eye, and go on to take up all the best players from the Brisbane Rugby League competition, the BRL would soon enter the terminal phase of its decline. Indeed, the Broncos' first year of 1988 was the first time no player from the BRL was chosen to represent Queensland in the State of Origin.

The Brisbane Broncos debuted in the New South Wales Rugby League premiership in the 1988 Winfield Cup competition. As can be seen from the first ever team's player lineup below, the Broncos had attracted a large number of high-profile Queensland Maroons players wanting to play NSWRL club football in their own state. The team boasted the current Australian Kangaroos captain and Queensland State of Origin legend Wally Lewis, who was the first player to sign on with the new club, and was the inaugural Broncos captain. All but four players from this team played State of Origin during their careers. Incumbent Maroons coach Wayne Bennett was the inaugural coach for the Broncos, and would be for the following twenty-one years.

On 6 March 1988, at Lang Park in Brisbane, the brand-new Broncos defeated the 1987 Winfield Cup Premiers Manly-Warringah 44-10 in their first premiership game. Although the Broncos won the first six games in their inaugural season, a midseason slump cost the club a debut finals appearance, finishing the season in seventh position.

The Broncos' second season saw them claim their first piece of silverware by winning the mid-week knockout Panasonic Cup competition defeating Illawarra 22-20 in a tense final. In the 1989 season the club improved on the previous year, finishing the season in sixth position after losing their first ever play-off match against the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks.

1990's

In 1990, in order to increase the Broncos' success in the Winfield Cup, Wayne Bennett controversially sacked Wally Lewis as club captain and gave the role to centre Gene Miles. Miles had retired from representative football, and Bennett wanted a captain who would be there for the whole season rather than one who would be away during the representative period.

The Balmain Tigers were the last team the Broncos had failed to beat, until their victory in Round 18 of the 1990 season. Brisbane finished the regular season in second position, qualifying for their first finals campaign. In the Preliminary Final against the Canberra Raiders, the Broncos were knocked out 30-2, so finished the regular season in third place. Canberra then went on to win the competition. At the end of the season, Wally Lewis parted company with the Broncos, moving to the Gold Coast Seagulls.



In their fourth season, the Broncos won the pre-season 1991 Lotto Challenge competition. In round 16 of NSWRL season 1991, they were kept scoreless for the first time ever by the Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles. Steve Renouf became the first Bronco to score four tries in a match in round 20. The club finished the season in seventh place, missing the finals, despite winning their last five games consecutively. The reserve grade team won the premiership that year.

After the retirement of Gene Miles, the captaincy role fell onto half-back Allan Langer for the 1992 season. The Broncos were at the top of the ladder for most of 1992's competition, losing just four matches to gain their first minor premiership with a six-point buffer over second-placed St George Dragons. Newly appointed captain Langer also won the Rothmans Medal. In their first Grand Final appearance, the Broncos were favourites and comprehensively defeated the St. George Dragons 28-8 at the Sydney Football Stadium and finally the Winfield Cup was transported to Queensland for the first time. A month later, the Broncos played in the 1992 World Club Challenge match against dominant British champions Wigan. No Australian club had yet gone to England and won, and many expected the Broncos to follow that trend. They smashed the cherry pickers in emphatic fashion 22-8.

After years of dispute with the Lang Park Trust over brewery advertising, Fourx had pouring rights for Lang Park while Powers Brewing was major sponsor of the Broncos. For the 1993 season the Broncos moved to the Council-owned ANZ Stadium, in suburban Nathan. Signs of a hangover existed with the club losing two of its first three matches, including their debut at the new home ground against the struggling Parramatta Eels. But the Broncos bounced back, beating the Balmain Tigers 50 nil, (the highest winning margin for the club at the time) to establish themselves solidly in the upper echelons of the competition.

A last round lapse against St George relegated the Broncos to fifth spot, meaning they had to win four straight elimination games to defend their title. They went on to demolish the Manly Sea Eagles' defence in a 36-10 romp. Canberra dropped dead with the loss of Ricky Stuart and the Broncos ran roughshod over them with a 30-12 win. Against the minor premiers Canterbury Bulldogs in the preliminary final, Brisbane were trailing 16-10 at half time, but Allan Langer scored immediately in the second half to level, then potted a field goal to break the dead lock late in the game. The Broncos won 23-16. In the grand final, again against the Dragons, the Broncos were victorious once more, this time 14-6. This win was significant because it was the only time a team which had finished 5th had gone on to win the competition. It was Glenn Lazarus' fifth consecutive grand final appearance, having already played in the previous year's for Brisbane and the three years' before that for Canberra.

In the English spring of 1994 it was announced that the Brisbane Broncos club was buying the London Crusaders, who would be renamed 'London Broncos'. The 1994 season started in fine fashion for Brisbane. They cruised through to the final of the Toohey's Challenge for the fifth time, but amazingly were pipped by the South Sydney Rabbitohs in the decider. That started a shocking opening to the 1994 competition that saw them win just one game in the first month of the competition and leave them languishing near oblivion. They were flat out winning two games in a row for much of the season. Behind the scenes, Broncos chief executive John Ribot sent his first report on the Super League concept to News Ltd chief executive Ken Cowley.

On-field Brisbane continued to struggle, with frustration reaching boiling point against fellow 1988 expansion club, the Newcastle Knights. Referee Greg McCallum sinbinned Allan Langer for dissent as the Knights beat the Broncos for the first time. More disappointment came mid-season when dominant British champions Wigan avenged their 1992 loss by winning the 1994 World Club Challenge at ANZ Stadium. A late season revival catapulted the Broncos into fifth spot, narrowly beating out the Illawarra Steelers for a spot in the finals. A 16-4 victory over Manly revived some hope of a 'three-peat'. The following week they played against the North Sydney Bears, and after trailing 14-4 the Broncos staged a comeback to level at 14-14. In the end, a Jason Taylor field goal won the game for North Sydney 15-14 shortly before full-time.

Before the start of the 1995 season, which was to be controlled by the Australian Rugby League, the Brisbane Broncos started Federal Court action against New South Wales Rugby League over salary cap rules. The Super League war had arrived.

The team was hoping to avenge their on-field disappointment of 1994. They started perfectly, winning their first seven matches in their best start ever. But a 26-0 humiliation against Canberra sent the Broncos on another tumble that saw them lose four matches in five weeks. Despite being free of State of Origin representative duties due to their affiliation with Super League, the Broncos had again faltered mid-season, but went on to win their last 6 matches of the regular season. In the finals though, the Broncos suffered close defeats at the hands of defending Premiers Canberra and eventual 1995 winners the Canterbury Bulldogs. An injury to Allan Langer resulted in crucial missed tackles in both matches by the Brisbane skipper, and played a contributing factor in the Broncos' failure to win. However a positive for the 1995 season at the Broncos was the introduction of a new talent in teenager Darren Lockyer, who was named the club's rookie of the year.

In 1996, the Broncos once again went through a losing streak mid-season but once more recovered to finish second. Gordon Tallis, at the time still contracted to the ARL-loyal St. George club, chose to sit out this season rather than play for the Dragons as he had also signed to play for the Broncos in 1996. Captain Alfie Langer was judged the best and fairest player in the competition, claiming the Dally M Medal. However the Broncos again capitulated, going down to North Sydney and then Cronulla to lose their fifth straight finals match. At the end of the 1996 season, players Kerrod Walters, Alan Cann, Willie Carne and Michael Hancock were asked to leave the club, as they could no longer be guaranteed regular places in the Broncos' first grade team.

The Brisbane Broncos had been involved in the Super League war since the beginning around 1994. After thinly veiled threats of expulsion from the NSWRL, the club was one of the first of several to sign with the new league and all players followed suit. In 1996 the club's Chief Executive, John Ribot was appointed CEO of Super League (Australia), leading to a common perception that the war was orchestrated by the Brisbane Broncos club.

After much court action aimed at stopping it, the Super League competition started in 1997, and was run parallel to the existing ARL premiership season. The Broncos again won their first 7 matches, before finally losing to the Penrith Panthers in round 8. Brisbane won their final three regular season games to capture their second minor premiership. In the Major Semi-Final against Cronulla the Broncos thrashed the sharks to move into their first home Grand Final. The Sharks recovered to make the big one, but they were no match for the Broncos. Despite being without key forward Glenn Lazarus and hampered by a troublesome groin injury, Allan Langer led his side to victory 26-8 for their third premiership in front of almost 60,000 home fans. Following the premiership win, the Broncos also won the 1997 World Club Championship which involved clubs from the European Super League as well.

In the pre-season of 1998 the National Rugby League (NRL) was formed, after a merger deal was struck between the Australian Rugby League and Super League organisations. As could be expected by their finish to the 1997 season, Brisbane were solid in their first five matches of 1998, snatching five victories. In rounds five and seven, the Broncos won by a margin of 54 points, which was the club's record at the time. This was followed by shock losses to the Sydney City Roosters and Cronulla, but Langer led them to a big win over Canterbury only to see two more club losses. But the Broncos recovered to post huge wins over Penrith and the Western Suburbs Magpies. The Broncos finished the remainder of the regular season undefeated, but far from in their best form. After a week off granted by winning the minor premiership, the Broncos were smothered out of the game by Parramatta in their opening finals match. But they lifted and provided some miracle spark against the Melbourne Storm a week later, resurrecting their premiership hopes. A huge win over Sydney City in the preliminary final installed them at near unbackable odds against Canterbury in the first NRL Grand Final. The Broncos came back from a 12-10 half time deficit to again win consecutive premierships for the second time, and their fourth in seven seasons with a 38-12 Grand Final victory. The League's top try-scorer for the season was Brisbane's Darren Smith.

In their early years the Broncos fielded a team in the BRL competition as well as a reserve grade team in the ARL competition. After they withdrew their BRL team they linked for a time with Brothers in the BRL competition. The unified NRL in 1998 no longer had a reserve grade competition. In 1999, Queensland Cup side, the Toowoomba Clydesdales became a feeder club for the Brisbane Broncos. the '99 season saw the departure of one of Brisbane's favourite sons, Allan "Alfie" Langer, after the Broncos had a shocking start to their NRL campaign. The captaincy was passed onto Kevin Walters part way through the season. The club made an amazing turnaround midseason, winning 11 consecutive games to qualify for the finals in eighth position but were easily disposed of 42-20 by the Cronulla Sharks at Toyota Park in week one of the finals series.

2000's

Brisbane spent their entire 2000 season from round four in first position on the ladder. However, the record for worst collapse in a match was broken in round 18 when an 18 point lead was surrendered to the Newcastle Knights. Veteran winger Michael Hancock and captain Kevin Walters, playing their final seasons with Brisbane, both took the record for most grand final appearances for the club when they helped the Broncos to victory in the last daytime Grand Final at Stadium Australia, defeating the Sydney Roosters in a tight match 14-6. It was the club's fifth premiership in nine seasons.

Walters moved from the Broncos to join Allan Langer in England at the end of 2000s NRL season, and the captaincy was passed onto Gorden Tallis. The Broncos players wore black armbands during the 2001 World Club Challenge match in January in memory of the club's co-founder Paul "Porky" Morgan who had died from a heart attack the previous day. The 2001 season was unusual for the Broncos in that they were unable to string together more than three wins at any time during the season. They lost six games from rounds 20 to 25, at the time the club's worst-ever losing streak. However they finished NRL season 2001 in 5th position and made it as far as the preliminary final which they lost to Parramatta.

The Broncos' 2002 season saw the return of club legend Allan Langer to the side, following his successful comeback to Australian rugby league in the previous year's State of Origin decider. It was also the beginning of Brisbane's recurring "post origin slump", which was to haunt the club for the next four years. As many of the Queensland Maroons who compete in the mid-week State of Origin matches are Broncos' players, this extra workload often results in a loss of form for the club around and after the time of the Origin series. The Broncos finished the 2002 regular season in 3rd position, with the highest points differential in the league, but were knocked out in the Preliminary Final against the Sydney City Roosters.

On 6 January 2003 Shane Edwards was replaced as CEO of the club by Bruno Cullen. The Brisbane Broncos had a strong start to their 2003 season, winning 11 of their first 14 games, but later breaking the club's longest losing streak record by losing their last 8 games straight. Brisbane still made it to the finals, finishing the regular season in 8th position, but lost the Qualifying Final to the Penrith Panthers 28-18. The 2003 season was the first in the Broncos' history in which they lost more games than they won. In the first half of the 2003 NRL season, whilst still at ANZ Stadium, the Broncos were only beaten once (by the New Zealand Warriors in round five). However, upon returning to Suncorp Stadium in round 12, the Broncos only won a home match once (defeating the Sydney Roosters in round 16).

Also in 2003 the Rugby Union World Cup was played in Australia. As a testament to the quality of the athletes produced at the Broncos, three of the club's former players would feature in two of the top three finishing teams of the rugby union world's peak competition, all of them having played together in the Broncos' 2000 premiership-winning side: Lote Tuquri with Wendell Sailor for The Wallabies and Brad Thorn for The All Blacks.

The 2004 NRL season was Darren Lockyer's first in the position of Five-eighth. Brisbane started their 2004 campaign by winning their first match since Round 19, 2003 with a 28-20 win over the New Zealand Warriors in Round 1. However, the Broncos lost their next match against bogey team, the Parramatta Eels 26-18. Brisbane won their next five games after that. In round 10 the Broncos and the Newcastle Knights made history by playing out the first ever golden point match on free-to-air television. After 3 minutes and 26 seconds of extra time, Newcastle's Kurt Gidley booted a field goal which got the Knights home 17-16.

The 2004 season's Finals Series saw Brisbane captain Gorden Tallis' final match: the Broncos were knocked out of contention by the North Queensland Cowboys in a 10-0 loss in the Raging Bull's home town of Townsville. It was the first time the Broncos had lost to the Cowboys.

With Gorden Tallis' retirement at the end of the previous season, the Broncos' captaincy was passed onto Darren Lockyer. In round 1 of the 2005 season the Brisbane Broncos got their revenge for the previous season's Semi-Final loss to the North Queensland Cowboys, defeating them 29-16. The Melbourne Storm gave the Broncos their biggest defeat in the club's history with a 50-4 rampage in Round 4 (It was the first time the club had ever conceded 50 points). Then the following week Brisbane scored 54 points when they beat Parramatta 54-14. Interestingly, the next time they faced the Storm, the Broncos won, and they lost the next time they faced the Eels. From Round 5 to Round 15, Brisbane won 10 games straight. Then from Round 22 to the Semi Final the Broncos lost 7 games straight, at the time the second longest losing streak in the club's history.

The Broncos did not start their 2006 season well, with a big 36-4 defeat by the previous year's runners-up, the North Queensland Cowboys in the first round. This was the 8th consecutive loss for the club and equalled the record for longest losing streak set in 2003. Round 2 saw the Broncos get their first win for the season and their first win since round 21, 2005 with a 16-12 victory over the Cronulla Sharks (This game is the third game in a row that the Brisbane Broncos beat Cronulla Sharks 16-12 at Toyota Park). The Broncos then went on to have a strong first half of the season, winning 11 of their first 17 games. Round 8 saw Brisbane produce the biggest comeback in the club's history when they came from 18-0 down at halftime to win 30-28 over the Canberra Raiders. But the year's biggest upset came when the team lost to the last-placed and previously winless South Sydney Rabbitohs 34-14 in Round 14.

After the 2006 State of Origin series finished, Brisbane once again entered their "Post-Origin Slump" losing 5 games straight from Round 18 - Round 23. However strong performances against the competition leaders Melbourne Storm (only losing 18-12) and a resounding victory against the Canterbury Bulldogs 30-0 the following week saw a return to form. The Broncos then defeated the injury-struck Parramatta Eels 23-0 in Round 25 and in round 26 the New Zealand Warriors 36-12.

Brisbane was heading into the finals with momentum not seen since their last premiership-winning season in 2000, but lost to the St George Illawarra Dragons 20-4 in what was at the time the highest attended Broncos game ever played at Suncorp Stadium. Brisbane bounced back in the semi-final, defeating the Newcastle Knights 50-6 and captain Darren Lockyer became the club's highest ever point-scorer with 1,077 (breaking Michael De Vere's record of 1,062 points). After trailing 20-6 at half time against the Bulldogs in the grand final qualifier the Broncos came back in the second half to get a 37-20 victory, earning a place in the 2006 NRL Grand Final.

It was the sixth time the Broncos made the Grand Final. Their opponents were the Melbourne Storm and the game was the first ever National Rugby League Grand Final not to feature a New South Wales-based club. Brisbane won the game 15-8. This saw a fitting farewell to the NRL's Number one prop Shane Webcke who retired at the end of the season. The win enabled the Broncos to maintain their perfect record in grand final matches and made Wayne Bennett the most successful coach in grand final history with 6 from 6.

On 6 December 2006, the Toowoomba Clydesdales, who had been the feeder club for the Brisbane Broncos since 1999 announced that the club was roughly A\$100,000 short to be able to field a team in the 2007 Queensland Cup and withdrew from the competition. Since then the Broncos have had multiple feeder clubs amongst the Brisbane Queensland Cup teams.

On 23 February 2007 The Broncos played against European Super League champions St. Helens in the 2007 World Club Challenge. St. Helens took the match 18-14 in the last minutes. This was followed by a poor start to the 2007 NRL season by the Broncos, who lost their captain and Five-eighth Darren Lockyer to an ankle injury after the first match against the North Queensland Cowboys. Lockyer returned to the field in Round 3 against the Penrith Panthers, but Brisbane had lost their first three games in a row for the first time since 1999. They racked up their first win against the Sydney Roosters in the traditional Good Friday match played by the two clubs. Another loss followed by a win in the Andrew Johns farewell against Newcastle in Round 6.

When, in the Round 7 replay of last year's grand-final, Brisbane were unable to defeat Melbourne, they had managed to win just 2 of their first seven games, compared to their strong starts in 2006 and 2005. Having not yet played an NRL game in 2007, Tame Tupou, the Broncos' top try-scorer for the previous season, left the club in round 7 for England. In round 11 Brisbane were at the bottom of the ladder before racking up their biggest ever win, defeating an under-strength Newcastle Knights 71-6. It was also the Knights' biggest ever loss and the most points the Broncos had ever scored in a game. This was followed up with a loss to an understrength St George Illawarra Dragons.

As a result of the team's form, coach Wayne Bennett gave the players time off during the Broncos' bye. This strategy appeared to be successful, with the team winning five successive games. However, in their Round 18 win against the Cowboys, Lockyer tore his anterior cruciate ligament, ruling him out for the rest of the season. Lockyer's injury, combined with injuries to big-name players Karmichael Hunt, Justin Hodges, Brent Tate and Shaun Berrigan, played a role in Brisbane winning just two of their last eight games of the season.

In the final round of the 2007 regular season, the Broncos suffered a 68-22 loss to Parramatta, equalling their worst ever defeat and most points conceded in a match; this was despite the team leading 16-6 at one point in the game with a chance to go further ahead before Nick Emmett bombed a certain try with the line wide open. However, the club still finished eighth after the regular season, thus making the finals for the sixteenth straight year. Brisbane's efforts did not improve the following Sunday when they played their 500th game ever and their last of the season, being defeated soundly by eventual grand final winners the Melbourne Storm 40-0. Only one year after winning the premiership, 2007 saw the second time ever that the Broncos lost more games than they won in a season of football. On 9 October 2007, the club announced the termination of the contracts of squad members Ian Lacey and John Te Reo, after they were involved in the assault of a man.

The Broncos again underwent their 'boot camp' bush training regime with the Australian Army in the 2008 pre-season. The start to the club's 21st season was a strong one with a convincing 48-12 win over the Penrith Panthers in round 1. It was also a poor return to Suncorp Stadium for Petero Civoniceva who played his first game in Penrith colours as the new Panthers captain. Corey Parker also broke the record for most goals in a match for the Broncos converting 10 goals from 10 attempts. The following week the Broncos made it two from two from the start of the season for first time since 2003, when they beat the Sydney Roosters 20-14 at the Sydney Football Stadium. This made it seven wins from nine Good Friday matches which have been played between the two clubs since 2001. The Broncos, having been in first place on the premiership ladder from round one, were knocked from that position by a round six loss to Gold Coast.

Brisbane made the signing of 2008 when they secured teenage international Israel Folau for four seasons, starting in 2009. This at a time when coach, Wayne Bennett, plus several key players including Tonie Carroll, Darius Boyd, David Stagg, Michael Ennis, Ben Hannant and Kiwi international Greg Eastwood were leaving the club.

In mid 2008, Ivan Henjak, a former rugby league player and assistant coach of the Broncos since 2006, was named as the Broncos second ever coach, succeeding Bennett in 2009. In 2008 in Bennett's last season as coach they made it to 5th place. In 2009, Henjak's first season as coach, they finished 6th place. That year was star fullback Karmichael Hunt's final year as he revealed a shock code-switch to Australian rules football for 2011. The Broncos came within one match of the Grand Final, losing to eventual grand final winners, the Melbourne Storm.

2010s

In 2010 Broncos captain Darren Lockyer took the record for most games with a single club by making his 329th appearance for Brisbane. The Broncos' amazing record of 18 consecutive finals appearances came to an end in 2010 with a final round defeat to the Canberra Raiders at home, meaning the Broncos missed the finals for the first time since 1991. All of their premierships came in that 18 year period. Their 18 consecutive finals appearances are second only to the St. George Dragons' 24 consecutive years of finals appearances (1950-1974), which netted their 11 consecutive premierships.

In February 2011, it was announced that Ivan Henjak was to be sacked from the club, only three weeks before the beginning of the season. Anthony Griffin took over as coach for the 2011 season, becoming just the third head coach in the history of the Brisbane Broncos. The Broncos defense was impregnable with 6/7 wins in their first 7 matches leaving them at the top of the ladder. He led the club to a third place finish at the end of the season, losing to eventual premiers Manly in the preliminary finals.

2012 marked the Broncos' 25th season in the NRL competition. They finished eighth on the premiership ladder, and were knocked out of the finals in the first week, losing 33-16 to the North Queensland Cowboys in Townsville.

2013 saw the Broncos finish 12th on the NRL ladder, marking its lowest ever finish in the club's history and seeing the club out of the finals for only the second time since 1991.

As of 2014, the Broncos are currently experiencing their longest premiership drought, having endured eight completed seasons without winning the premiership since their most recent success in 2006. In 2014 they just scraped into 8th place and were knocked out in their first finals game. Earlier in the season Anthony Griffin had been advised that 2014 would be his last season as Broncos coach.

After six seasons away from Brisbane where he coached St George (taking them to a premiership in 2010) and Newcastle, Wayne Bennett has confirmed that he would return to coach the Brisbane Broncos in 2015 giving hope to many Broncos fans of ending its current 10 year premiership drought.

Average Regular Season Attendance

• 1988: 16,111 (lowest home attendance)	• 1995: 35,902	• 2002: 20,131	• 2009: 34,587
• 1989: 18,217	• 1996: 23,712	• 2003: 24,326	• 2010: 35,032
• 1990: 22,709	• 1997: 19,298	• 2004: 28,667	• 2011: 33,209
• 1991: 19,463	• 1998: 20,073	• 2005: 30,331	• 2012: 33,337
• 1992: 21,687	• 1999: 22,763	• 2006: 31,208	• 2013: 30,480
• 1993: 43,200 (largest home attendance)	• 2000: 21,239	• 2007: 32,868	• 2014: 34,235
• 1994: 37,705	• 2001: 19,710	• 2008: 33,426	

RUGBY LEAGUE

Season summary

P=Premiers, R=Runners-up, M=Minor Premierships, F=Finals Appearance, W=Wooden Spoons
(Brackets Represent Finals Games)

Competition	Games Played	Games Won	Games Drawn	Games Lost	Ladder Position	P	R	M	F	W	Coach	Captain
1988 NSWRL season	22	14	0	8	7 / 16						Wayne Bennett	Wally Lewis
1989 NSWRL season	22 (1) ^[41]	14 (0)	0 (0)	8 (1)	5 / 16							Gene Miles
1990 NSWRL season	22 (3)	16 (1)	1 (0)	5 (2)	2 / 16				♦			Allan Langer
1991 NSWRL season	22	13	0	9	7 / 16							
1992 NSWRL season	22 (2)	18 (2)	0 (0)	4 (0)	1 / 16	♦		♦	♦			
1993 NSWRL season	22 (4)	16 (4)	0 (0)	6 (0)	5 / 16	♦			♦			
1994 NSWRL season	22 (2)	13 (1)	1 (0)	8 (1)	5 / 16				♦			
1995 ARL season	22 (2)	17 (0)	0 (0)	5 (2)	3 / 20				♦			
1996 ARL season	21 (2)	17 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2)	2 / 20				♦			
1997 SL season	18 (2)	14 (2)	1 (0)	3 (0)	1 / 10	♦		♦	♦			
1998 NRL season	24 (4)	18 (3)	1 (0)	5 (1)	1 / 20	♦		♦	♦			
1999 NRL season	24 (1)	13 (0)	2 (0)	9 (1)	8 / 17				♦			Kevin Walters
2000 NRL season	26 (3)	18 (3)	2 (0)	6 (0)	1 / 14	♦		♦	♦			Gorden Tallis
2001 NRL season	26 (3)	14 (1)	1 (0)	11 (2)	5 / 14				♦			
2002 NRL season	24 (2)	16 (1)	1 (0)	7 (1)	3 / 15				♦			
2003 NRL season	24 (1)	12 (0)	0 (0)	12 (1)	8 / 15				♦			
2004 NRL season	24 (2)	16 (0)	1 (0)	7 (2)	3 / 15				♦			
2005 NRL season	24 (2)	15 (0)	0 (0)	9 (2)	3 / 15				♦		Ivan Henjak	Darren Lockyer
2006 NRL season	24 (4)	14 (3)	0 (0)	10 (1)	3 / 15	♦			♦			
2007 NRL season	24 (1)	11 (0)	0 (0)	13 (1)	8 / 16				♦			
2008 NRL season	24 (2)	14 (1)	1 (0)	9 (1)	5 / 16				♦			
2009 NRL season	24 (3)	14 (2)	0 (0)	10 (1)	6 / 16				♦			
2010 NRL season	24	11	0	13	10 / 16						Anthony Griffin	Sam Thaiday
2011 NRL season	24 (3)	18 (2)	0 (0)	6 (1)	3 / 16				♦			
2012 NRL season	24 (1)	12 (0)	0 (0)	12 (1)	8 / 16				♦			
2013 NRL season	24	10	1	13	12 / 16							Corey Parker and Justin Hodges
2014 NRL season	24	12	0	12	8/16				♦			

In 2007, a 20-man legends team was announced to celebrate the club's 20-year anniversary.

Broncos Legends	
First team squad	Interchange
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Darren Lockyer - FB• 2 Michael Hancock - WG• 3 Steve Renouf - CE• 4 Michael De Vere - CE• 5 Wendell Sailor - WG• 6 Wally Lewis - FE• 7 Allan Langer - HB• 8 Shane Webcke - PR• 9 Kerrod Walters - HK• 10 Petero Cironiceva - PR• 11 Gordon Tallis - SR• 12 Brad Thorn - SR• 13 Tonie Carroll - LK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14 Shaun Berrigan - HK• 15 Andrew Gee - PR• 16 Gene Miles - SR• 17 Glenn Lazarus - PR• 18 Chris Johns - CE• 19 Terry Matterson - LK• 20 Kevin Walters - FE

South Queensland



Club information

Full name	South Queensland Crushers Rugby League Football Club
Nickname(s)	The Crushers
Colours	Aztec Gold, Navy Blue & Red
Founded	30 November 1992 (first season 1995)
Departed	1997

Former details

Ground(s)	Suncorp Stadium (40,500)
Competition	Australian Rugby League



Team colours

Records

Premierships	0
Runners-up	0
Minor premiership	0
Wooden spoons	2 (1996, 1997)

The South Queensland Crushers were an Australian rugby league football club based in Brisbane, Queensland. In 1992 it was decided that the team would be admitted into the New South Wales Rugby League competition, along with three other teams (Western Reds, North Queensland and Auckland), as part of the League's expansion plans for professional rugby league in Australia. The competition was re-branded the Australia Rugby League competition in 1995, which was the Crushers' first season.

The Crushers, whose whole existence was against the backdrop of the Super League war, were an unsuccessful club. They had to compete for support with the other Brisbane-based club, the Brisbane Broncos, who were already well-established. The Crushers only competed in the three seasons of the Australian Rugby League's premiership, winning the wooden spoon twice. Despite the wealth of star players the Crushers managed to attract, they were financially unsustainable and competitively unsuccessful, which ultimately led to their demise at the end of 1997.

On 30 November 1992, the NSWRL formally admitted a second Brisbane-based team into the competition, along with three others, from Townsville, Perth and New Zealand. The newly established Brisbane team was to be known as the South Queensland Crushers, and would enter the 1995 NSWRL competition, which had been renamed the Australian Rugby League competition (ARL).

In September 1993, the Crushers chose Bill Gardner as the coach for the team, but after a poor off-season, he was replaced by former Australian international Bob Lindner. Darryl van der Velde, an experienced rugby league coach from England, was the club's inaugural chief executive. The club had chosen Lang Park as their home ground which had been abandoned by the Brisbane Broncos in favour of QE II Stadium in 1992.

The Crushers were able to sign Queensland representative players Trevor Gillmeister, Mark Hohn and Dale Shearer, as well as three rugby union players including Garrick Morgan who had represented Australia in the fifteen-man code. The Crushers had attempted to lure former Australian international captain Mal Meninga from retirement for one more season, but failed. By the beginning of the 1995 competition, the Crushers had also signed North Sydney forward Mario Fenech, who the club named as their captain. The club's major sponsor was XXXX with Qantas announced as the sleeve sponsor.

The first season (1995)

The Crushers' first match was against the previous season's premiers, Canberra which they lost along with their next three before winning their first match 16-12 against North Sydney in Round five. An injury to Dale Shearer and the difficulties for Garrick Morgan to adapt to rugby league saw the Crushers fail to utilise much of its attacking potential. Captain Fenech was dropped to the interchange bench and lost the captaincy which was passed on to Gillmeister. The season's end was dampened after coach Lindner and Fenech feuded, resulting in Fenech being released from the final year of his contract.

In the 1995 season, the club had only won six and drew another in the twenty-two games played. In 1995, News Limited, a mass media company, began deliberating a rival rugby league competition, the Super League, and with the rival Broncos a key part of the plans for Super League, the Crushers remained loyal to the ARL competition. The Crushers believed that they would survive and be able to compete on their own. The ARL supported this despite the disappointing results of their first season because of the high home ground crowds, with supporters averaging over 21,000 a season.

1996 season

The club had bought five players from the Sydney Roosters to help them improve from their inaugural season, and Queensland representative Tony Hearn also joined the club for the 1996 season. The opening round of the 1996 season the club gathered two points because of Canberra's forfeit but the club only recorded three more wins in the entire season gathering six points on the competition ladder and took the wooden spoon for being last on the ladder. The Crushers won the second round clash against Parramatta before losing ten in a row. The Crushers then won two in a row before plummeting to lose their last eight matches.

Despite a record crowd that watched the Crushers take on the Brisbane Broncos of 34,263, the Crushers home ground support only averaged over 13,000 each game. The diminishing crowd numbers and player payments meant the club was on the brink of bankruptcy. The ARL and a mystery supporter bailed the club out with over half a million dollars in financial relief. With first-grade rugby league divided between two competitions, it would be hard for the Crushers to recoup lost money in establishing the club as it ploughed further into debt.

RUGBY LEAGUE

1997 season

The 1997 season was not much better for the Crushers, again taking the wooden spoon for the second year running. Major sponsor XXXX was replaced as the major sponsor by AVJennings. The club only won four games of the twenty-two match season. The 1997 season for the Crushers saw their home game attendances dwindle to an average of 7,000 and even with free days, which allowed supporters to come to the games free of charge, the club didn't gather support as it had in its inaugural season. The Crushers did however win their final match of the season convincingly 39-18 over the Western Suburbs Magpies (their biggest win) and along with the North Sydney Bears and Newtown Jets, the South Queensland Crushers remain one of the few defunct clubs to have won their final game.

Demise

With the unification of the Australian Rugby League and Super League competitions following the 1997 season, the new National Rugby League competition was formed. This meant that three of the twenty-two teams participating in 1997 would be axed as part of the rationalisation process aimed at reducing teams to an optimal number. With the introduction of the Melbourne Storm and the fact that the agreement between the Australian Rugby League and Super League was to have a fourteen-team competition in 2000, the future for the Crushers was inevitably demise.

In late 1997, the club's only option of survival was to merge, with the most likely contender the Gold Coast Chargers, who like the Crushers, were struggling to be able compete in the competition with the hugely successful Brisbane Broncos being the dominant team in south-east Queensland. However, the National Rugby League approved the Gold Coast team for the 1998 season, and they went alone into the re-unified competition. The South Queensland Crushers were liquidated in December 1997.

Season	Pld	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	W%	Position
Australian Rugby League season 1995	22	6	1	15	303	502	-199	27.27%	16/20
Australian Rugby League season 1996	21	3	0	18	220	496	-276	14.29%	20/20
Australian Rugby League season 1997	22	4	0	18	321	630	-309	18.18%	12/12
Total	65	13	1	51	844	1628	-784	20%	

Biggest Wins

Margin	Score	Opponent	Venue	Date
21	39-18	Western Suburbs Magpies	Lang Park	31 August 1997
20	28-8	Penrith Panthers	Lang Park	25 June 1995
19	33-14	Parramatta Eels	Lang Park	30 April 1995

Biggest Losses

Margin	Score	Opponent	Venue	Date
54	4-58	Canberra Raiders	Bruce Stadium	25 August 1995
48	4-52	Gold Coast Chargers	Lang Park	21 July 1996
44	0-44	Newcastle Knights	Marathon Stadium	23 March 1997

Longest Winning Streak: 2 matches, 30 June - 7 July 1996.

Longest Losing Streak: 10 matches, 7 April - 22 June 1996.

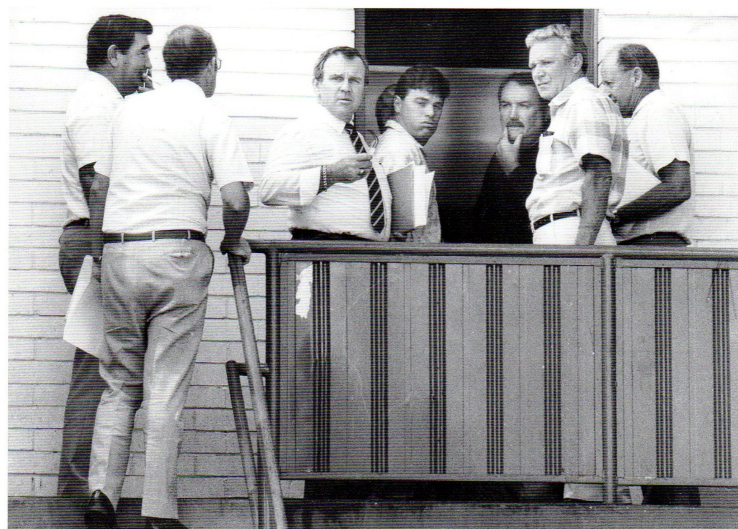


The Brisbane Broncos playing and coaching squad for their initial season. **BACK ROW** (from left): Grant Rix, Tony Schafer, Scott Lewis, Andrew Tessmann, Peter Benson, Brad Foster, Craig Marshall, Dean Sammut, Alan Cann, Grant Thorogood. **FOURTH ROW**: Mark Meskell, Michael Hancock, Colin Scott, Peter Sinclair, Terry Matterson, Brook Kennedy, Chris Johns, Brett Walters, Brad Tessmann, Greg Conescu. **THIRD ROW**: Darryl Brohman (reserve grade coach), Jason Hanrahan, David Bourke, Brett Plowman, John Plath, Brett Tengdahl, Craig Grauf, Ray Herring, Greg Manthey, Joe Kilroy, Greg Hogarth, Gene Miles. **SITTING**: Billy Noke, Andrew Gee, Andrew McCarron, Rohan Teevan, Wally Lewis (captain), Wayne Bennett (coach), Greg Dowling, Bryan Niebling, Keith Gee, Mark Hohn. **KNEELING**: Craig Teevan, Shane Duffy, Allan Langer, Gary French, Brett Le Man.

RUGBY LEAGUE



THE DAY THE BRONCOS OFFICIALLY BECAME THE BRONCOS — AT QRL HEAD-QUARTERS TO SIGN THE CONTRACT PERMITTING THE BRONCOS CONSORTIUM TO ENTER THE THEN NEW SOUTH WALES RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION ARE (FROM LEFT) BRISBANE RUGBY LEAGUE DIRECTORS TOM DRYSDALE AND BILL HUNTER, AND BRONCOS DIRECTORS/OWNERS BARRY MARANTA (CHAIRMAN), GARY BALKIN, PAUL MORGAN AND STEVE WILLIAMS (PARTLY OBSCURED).



ABOVE: Bonaparte's Hotel in Fortitude Valley, owned at the time by Broncos consortium member Gary Balkin, was the venue for a clandestine meeting with representatives of the BRL clubs on April 4, 1987. Some of the attendees included (from left) Graham Kerr (Souths), Reg Hanson (Easts), Frank Dolan (Brothers), David Green (Wynnum), Balkin, Mike McGinley (BRL) and Gordon Treichel (Wests).

BEST of BOTH WORLDS

Wally Lewis on the day he signed with the Broncos. He and Gene Miles were the two most sought-after players the new Broncos executive wanted — and nothing was going to stop them.

"I was waiting outside Porky's boardroom and could hear a fair bit of ranting and raving going on inside.

"I knew Geno was in there, and I think he'd spoken to the Gold Coast and didn't want to sign anything until he'd spoken to them again.

"I got the best of both worlds. I could play with the Broncos, play in the Sydney competition, and stay living in Queensland.

"Geno and I were happy to get the contracts because we'd not been paid for the previous three or four years with Wynnum-Manly."

POSTSCRIPT: Lewis and Miles were virtually heading to Sydney to play for Manly in 1988 before they signed with the Broncos!

According to Lewis: "We were virtually signed, sealed and delivered

I GOT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS. I COULD PLAY WITH THE BRONCOS, PLAY IN THE SYDNEY COMPETITION, AND STAY LIVING IN QUEENSLAND

"Then Geno came out and looked like he'd gone 15 rounds with Mike Tyson. I went in and Porky said, 'we've just had your mate in here and he's mucked us around'.

"Barry Maranta settled Porky down for a bit and then he jumped up, lit another cigarette and started butting in every five or six words.

"He continued until I said, 'just make me an offer and I'll find out what it's all about.

"They made me an offer and I probably could have got \$50,000 more in Sydney. So I asked for more — I think it was for an extra \$5,000 — and signed right there.

with Manly a long time before the Broncos came into the equation.

"It was only a bit of foul play by Ron McAuliffe (QRL chief) that stopped us going.

"Manly had offered us a healthy contract fee, with the same amount on top of that to be paid by a prominent businessman who supported the club.

"Ron wanted us to stay in Queensland, and said he'd match the contract. I said 'that's only half' and he couldn't match that amount.

"So he played hard ball and withdrew permission for us to negotiate with any club."

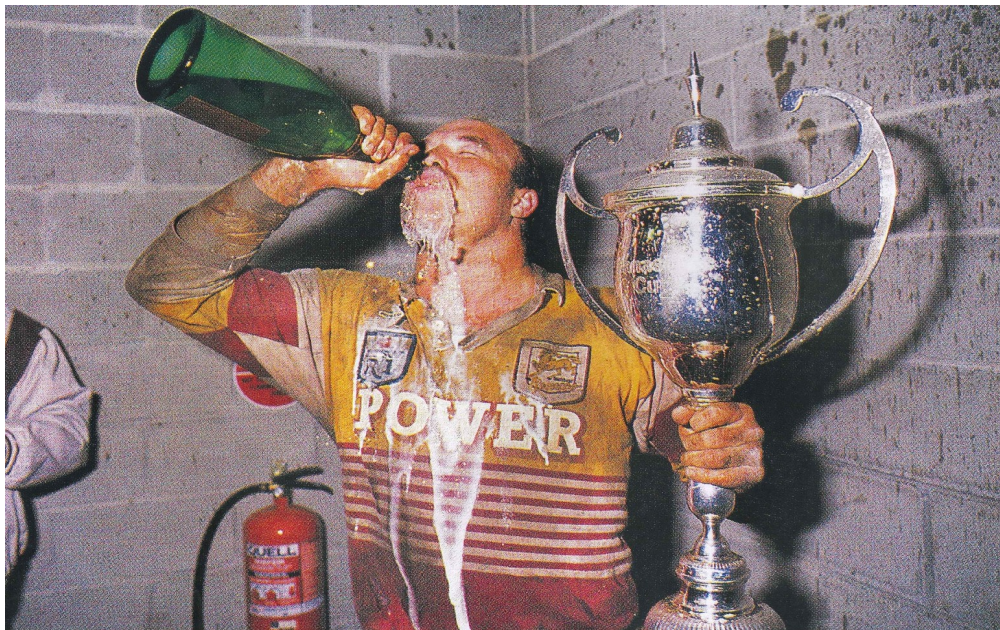


Queensland Rugby League supremo, Senator Ron McAuliffe (above), believed the state had been blessed with the emergence of players of the eminence of Wally Lewis and Gene Miles. He christened Lewis 'The Emperor of Lang Park'.

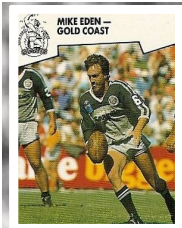


Above: Wally Lewis inspects the first Broncos jersey with Gene Miles and Greg Dowling. **Right:** Wally Lewis leads the Brisbane Broncos onto Lang Park **Below:** Wally Lewis about to score a try in the Broncos first premiership game in 1988 against the previous year's premiers, Manly, who they thrashed 44-10.





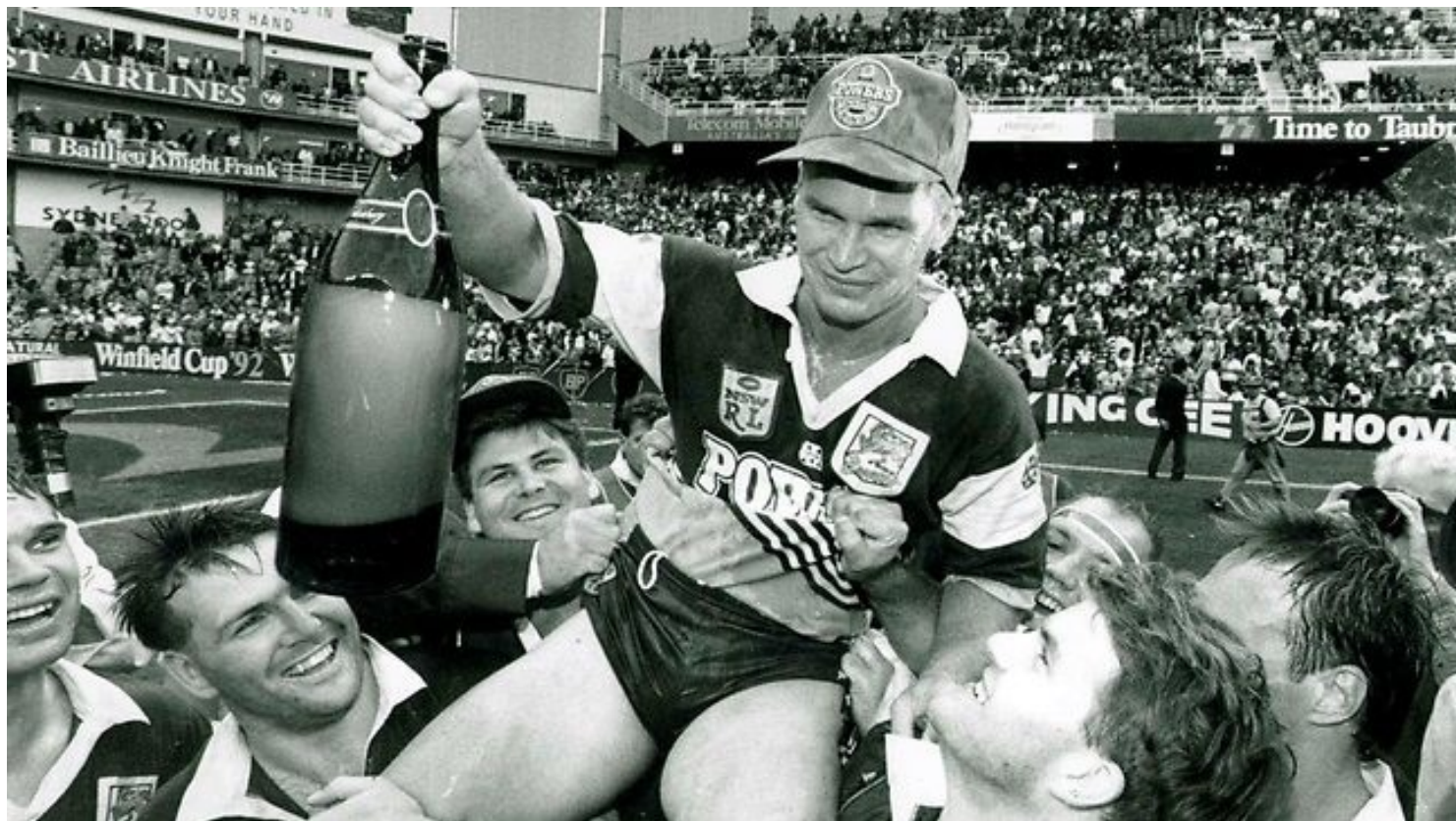
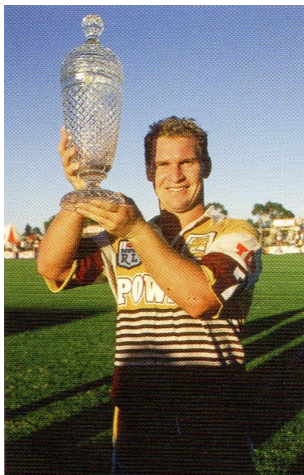
Above Left: In 1988 not only the Brisbane Broncos but a team from the Gold Coast region began in the Sydney competition which effectively became a national competition that year. Due to a clause in the Broncos' license the Broncos were the only team allowed to play in SE Qld. This was worked around with the Gold Coast-Tweed Giants being based out of Seagulls Stadium just over the border in NSW. They were coached by Bob McCarthy and Origin legend Chris Close (**Below Left**) played for them. In their first season they had a 25-22 win against the Broncos. They consistently finished near the bottom of the table. They changed their name to the Gold Coast Seagulls in 1990. **Above Right:** Wally Lewis did enjoy one triumph as captain of the Broncos when in 1989 they won the final of the last Panasonic Cup midweek competition defeating Illawarra 22-20. **Below Centre:** After salary cap restraints saw Wally Lewis leave the Broncos he played two seasons for the Gold Coast Seagulls.



The Broncos reserve grade premiership side of 1990. **BACK** (from left): Darren Plowman, Andrew Tessmann, Grant Rix, Grant Thorogood, Bob Conway, Andrew McCarron, Scott Tronc, Ashley Tupaea, Bill Gardiner (coach), Jason Hanrahan, Rohan Teevan, James Donnelly and Ray Hestring (captain). **FRONT**: John Plath, Brett Plowman, Steve Renouf, Jason Teet, Brett Le Man (partly obscured), Craig Teevan, Andrew Richards.

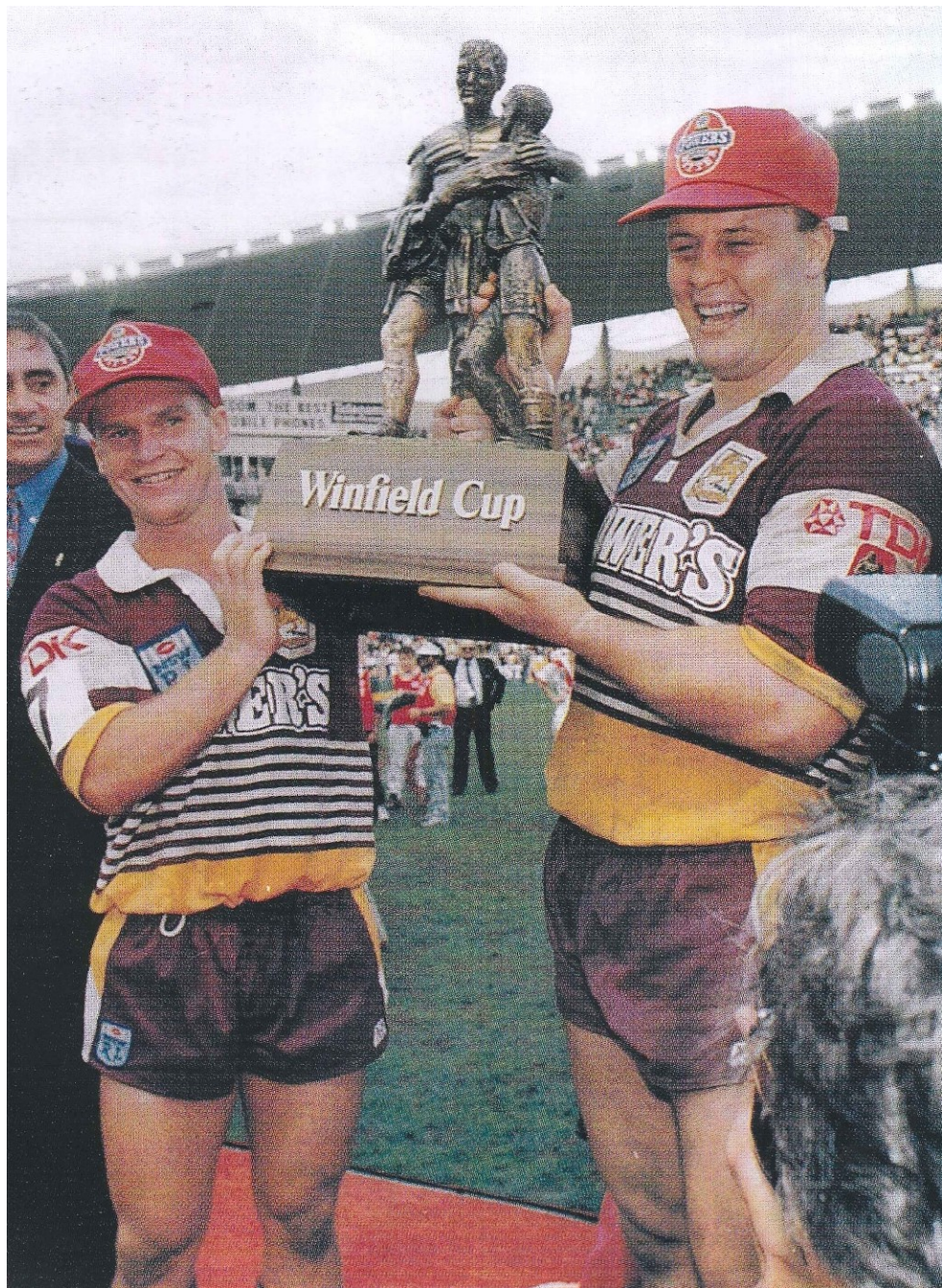


RUGBY LEAGUE



Above Left: Allan Langer with the 1991 Lotto Challenge pre-season trophy. **Above Right:** Allan Langer is chaired after the 1992 Grand Final win. **Left:** Allan Langer scores a try in the 1992 Grand Final where they beat St George 28-8. **Below Left:** Glen Lazarus runs over a St George opponent in the 1992 Grand Final. **Below Centre:** Kevvie and Alfie read about the first Broncos premiership. **Below Right:** Brisbane fans greet the Broncos at King George Square after they flew home from taking out their first premiership.





HIJACK!

Brisbane victory and a 'new order'

By NEIL CADIGAN

It wasn't a "normal" grand final day. It was an historic event, part of a weekend which might have changed the face of Australian sport forever.

The Broncos made it a double victory for the decentralisation of the major winter codes. A victory for the visionaries.

Just as the West Coast Eagles had wrestled the AFL title away from Melbourne for the first time last Saturday, the Brisbane Broncos took the Winfield Cup interstate.

Sure, Canberra had taken the Cup away from traditional territory twice and Penrith had their first victory lap last year. But this was different.

The Broncos had lost just four matches in '92. No one argued they weren't the best side, and the classiest. Saints coach Brian Smith conceded this after fulltime.

What was unexpected was the massive following that turned up. Those who predicted the Broncos would be lonely

Queensland premier Wayne Goss, a week after his big victory in his political showdown, embraced the other Wayne – Bronco Bennett – as the coach finally left the arena 45 minutes after fulltime, still smiling.

Internationals from the north seemed to converge as if at a reunion – Lew Platz, Greg Vieser (Bennett's brother-in-law), Paul McCabe, John McDonald, Mark Murray and King Vally Lewis were there.

And glory wasn't just for the show-stoppers of 3pm. Norths coach Peter Louis said farewell to the minor league with his second premiership with reserves.

"I just hope I'm still around this time next year," said Louis, who starts a one-year contract as head coach.

Ironically, the Bears' star was Noel Solomoni, also a Queenslander who was



Broncos 1992 premiership squad: **BACK ROW** (from left): Brett Galea, Peter Ryan, Mark Hohn, Gavin Allen, Andrew Gee, Julian O'Neill, Willie Morganson. **CENTRE**: Tony Currie, Kevin Walters, Brett Plowman, Willie Carne, Michael Hancock, John Plath, Steve Renouf. **FRONT**: Chris Johns, Alan Cann, Glenn Lazarus, Allan Langer (captain), Kerrod Walters, Terry Matterson, Trevor Gillmeister.

COACH WAYNE BENNETT

1992 A PREMIERSHIP YEAR

"THIS WAS A PREMIERSHIP FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING.

In 1988, we made a deliberate decision to build a strong foundation at the club and that's why we fought so hard at the start to sign guys like Wally [Lewis] and Gene [Miles].

We played off for fifth in '89 and made the semis in 1990 but I always thought 1991 was a lost opportunity for us. I really felt we could win the title that year but State of Origin killed us — as it has done for the whole 19 years. We lost four or five straight around Origin time and, even though we won our last five games against semi-final teams, we missed the top five by one win.

By '92, the team had really evolved. Wally and Geno were gone, of course, but Chris Johns, Willie Carne and Mick Hancock were well-established and Alf [Allan Langer] was, well, he was Alf. And, of course, we had recruited Lazzo [Glenn Lazarus]. Boy, Reebz [John Ribot] did a good job on that one — I still don't know how he and Paul Morgan managed to get him but I can tell you he was the jewel in the crown because he gave us the toughness and confidence to win the premiership.

In the end, the first one was an enormous relief because we were minor premiers and were expected to win."



Brisbane players after the club's win over Wigan in the World Club Challenge in 1992. (from left) Trevor Gillmeister, Kevin Walters and Peter Ryan. *They defeated Wigan 22-8.*

Below: Alfie getting attached to the Winfield Cup trophy.



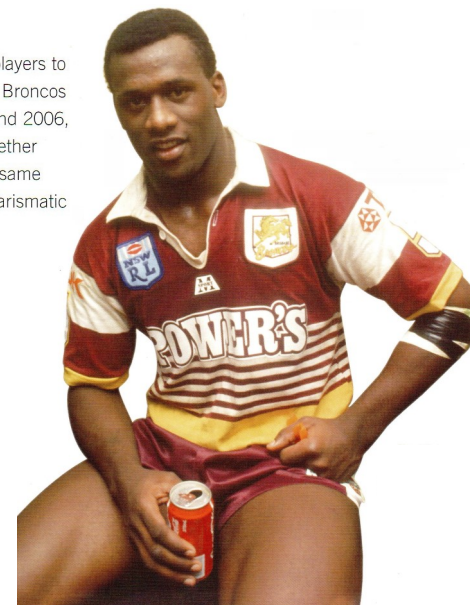


Right: Brisbane, 1993 Premiers. (Back Row): P.Ryan, A.Gee, B.Galea, P.Hauff, G.Allen, W.Sailor, W.Morganson. (Second Row): J.Plath, M.Hohn, M.Hancock, J.O'Neill, W.Carne, A.Cann, T.Gillmeister, S.Renouf. (Front Row): S.Domic, C.Johns, Kevin Walters, A.Langer (captain), Kerrod Walters, T.Matterson, G.Lazarus.



Above: Allan Langer holds the 1993 Winfield Cup trophy with Tina Turner who's song "Simply the Best" was used to promote rugby league that year.

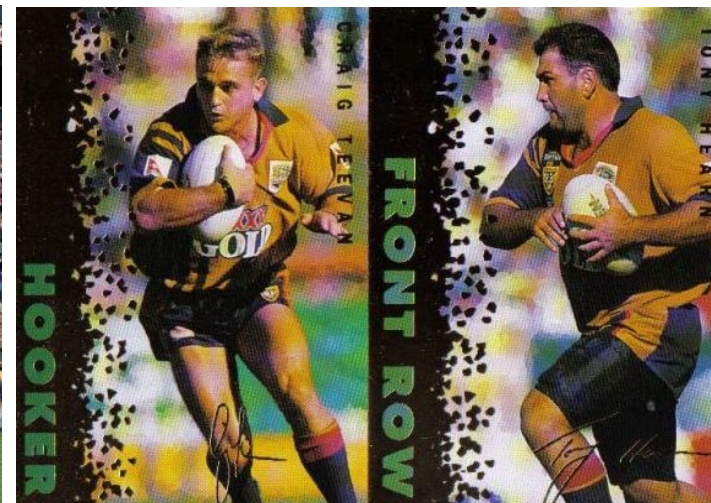
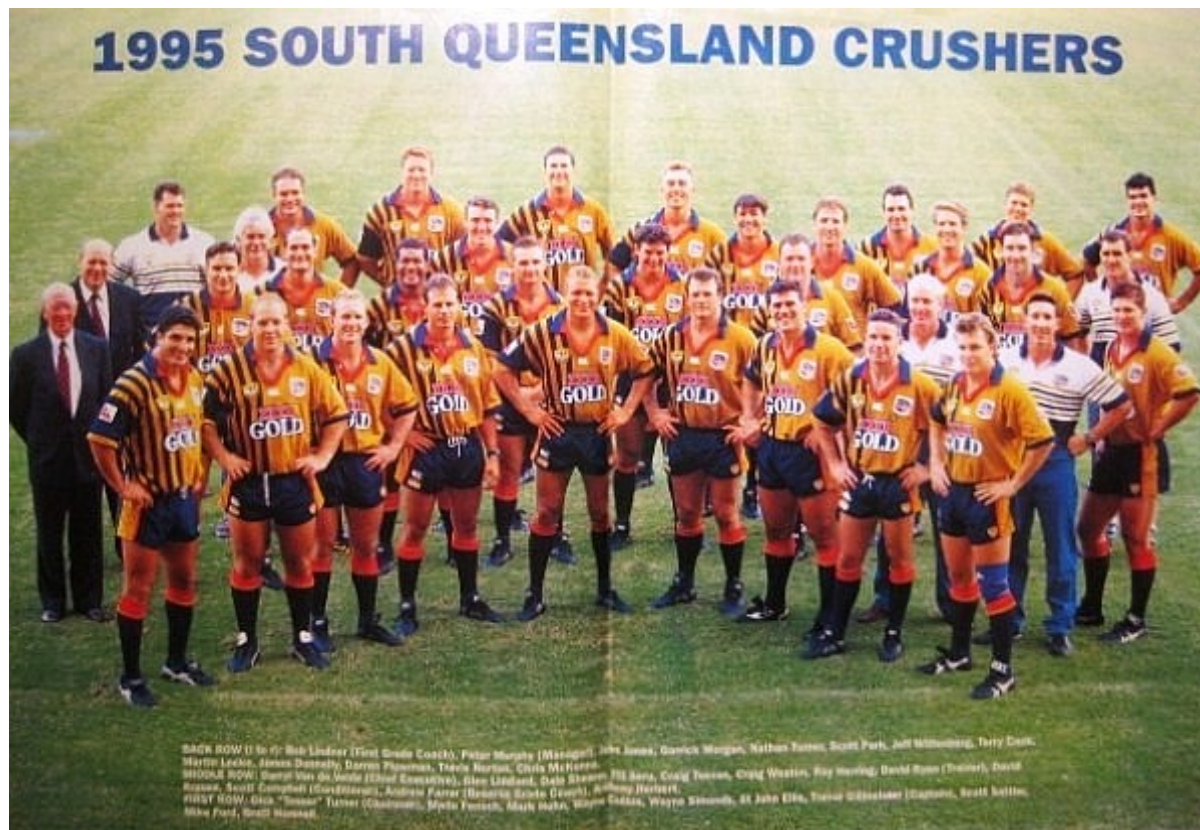
Of the 150 players to appear for the Broncos between 1988 and 2006, it is debatable whether anyone made the same impact as the charismatic Wendell Sailor.





Season 1995 started superbly, with the Broncos thrashing Cronulla 30-14 to win the Tooheys Pre-Season Challenge at Albury. The Broncos pocketed \$200,000 in prizemoney.

The Australian Rugby League competition (ARL) expanded to a 20 team competition in 1995 with two new Queensland teams, the North Queensland Cowboys and the South Queensland Crushers who were based at Lang Park. The Crushers key players were Trevor Gillmeister (**Below Left**) and Mario Fenech. Bob Lindner was their first coach. They competed between 1995 and 1997 with 1995 being their best season with 6 wins and finished 16th out of 20. They were a casualty of the Super League war, staying loyal to the ARL in 1997.



RUGBY LEAGUE



Above and Below Left: The South Queensland Crushers celebrate a try and a rare win. Their lack of talent and playing depth saw them struggle quite considerably in their last two seasons. Brisbane fans were hungry for a second team but crowds can be fickle if they are consistently beaten. In 1996 the Gold Coast Seagulls became the Gold Coast Chargers until their demise in 1998. During the Super League split of 1997 they stayed in the ARL finishing 7th of 12 teams. They defeated Illawarra 25-14 in the Elimination final before going down to Easts (Sydney City Roosters) 32-10.





BELOW: Broncos Super League squad: STANDING (from left): Wade Rothery, Darren Smith, John Plath, Michael Hancock, Phillip Lee, Wendell Sailor, Gordon Tallis, Brad Thorn, Glenn Lazarus, Tonie Carroll, Anthony Mundine, Michael De Vere, Darren Lockyer, Peter Ryan, Shane Webcke. KNEELING: Andrew Gee, Kevin Walters, Steve Renouf, Allan Langer (captain), Ben Walker, John Driscoll, Shane Walker.



Above: The Broncos celebrate a Steve Renouf try in the 1997 Super League grand final against Cronulla at ANZ Stadium.

Mascot Buck lapped ANZ Stadium — about 500 metres in distance — each time the Broncos scored a try. In 1997, when the Broncos beat English club Halifax 76-nil and scored 13 tries, Buck cantered almost the distance of two Melbourne Cups. He retired at the end of 2006.

Below: ANZ Stadium—home to the Brisbane Broncos from 1993 to 2002.





The Brisbane Broncos celebrate victory after winning the inaugural NRL grand final at the Sydney Football Stadium in 1998.



The Broncos premiership side of 1998 was: **BACK ROW** (from left): Kevin Campion, Petero Cioniceva, Andrew Gee, Michael De Vere, Wendell Sailor, Darren Lockyer, Tonie Carroll, Gorden Tallis, Brad Thorn. **FRONT:** Michael Hancock, Shane Webcke, John Plath, Allan Langer (captain), Phillip Lee, Darren Smith, Steve Renouf, Kevin Walters.

Top: ANZ Stadium during a night game in 1998 against Manly.

Above: Two great tries during the 1998 NRL grand final win against Canterbury by Gordon Tallis and Darren Smith.

Right: Darren Smith is very excited and celebrates a try with Wendell Sailor in the 1998 NRL grand final win against Canterbury.



KINGS OF LEAGUE



MUSIC to Brisbane ears... the Broncos belt out the club song after yesterday's victory but skipper Kev Walters' youngest son, Jett, lower left, reckoned they could play better than sing. Pictures: David Kapernick

Mike Colman

KEVIN Walters became a believer at Sydney's Stadium Australia yesterday. The Brisbane Broncos captain, who has known more highs and lows in his 14-season career than many experience in a lifetime, said he didn't believe in fairytales. Until the fulltime hooter. It was then, when the Broncos had beaten Sydney City Roosters 14-6 for the National Rugby League premiership, that Walters, in his last game, was converted. For the past week Walters has been playing down the

emotional element of the game. He had insisted that it was just another game. Forget that he had been with the club for 11 years, a vital part of each of their four premierships, and just aside the part the Broncos had played in helping him cope with the tragic loss of his wife Kim to cancer. And ignore the fact that four other Broncos – including Michael Hancock, the only survivor of the club's first match in 1988 – were also playing their last game in the team's colours. It was just another game. Yeah right! "I know we said that but we had to," Walters said later. "We didn't want anything to

distract from the job. There was plenty of emotion. For me it came out after the final hooter. I didn't believe in fairytales before, but I'm living one today. I can't explain what I'm going through. It's a wonderful feeling." Even taciturn coach Wayne Bennett conceded it the most emotional of the five Bronco premierships. "There was a lot of feeling out there at full-time. You could see it on their faces. We never discussed it, never talked about it, but with hicks out there like Kevie and Mick Hancock, the heart and soul of the club, well everyone wanted to say thanks to them, but 'thanks' is an

inadequate word," he said. So the Broncos let their actions do the talking. From the start, the Roosters appeared to be facing the inevitable despite most of the 99,277 crowd willing a Sydney victory. Brisbane forwards like Brad Thorn, Shane Webcke and the rampaging Gorden Tulia were too big, too strong. And as they gained momentum, wingers Wendell Sailor and Lote Tuqiri were devastating. As one spectator said: "It's like waiting for a dam to burst." That the dam didn't actually burst was due to desperate defence. Only last-ditch tackles by Roosters fullback

Luke Phillips prevented the giant wingers from scoring more than one try each. Phillips had a superb game, but it was "anything you can do, we can do better" and his opposite, Darren Lockyer, won the Clive Churchill medal for best field. Losing coach Graham Murray accused the Broncos of playing dull football. An unapologetic Bennett said: "Grand finals are lost more than they are won. We were happy to get in front and hang on." And so was the rest of Queensland. Club celebrates Page 2 News reports Sport about Leahy's view, Page 12



THE smiles say it all... coach Bennett and skipper Walters.



Brisbane wingers Lote Tuqiri (left) and Wendell Sailor after the 2000 Grand Final. Both men later transferred to rugby union, and played for Australia in the 2003 Rugby World Cup final.

BELOW: The Broncos squad for 2000: BACK ROW (from left): Ben Ikin, Ben Walker, Carl Webb, Shane Walker, Chris Walker, Luke Priddis, Kerrod Walters, Shaun Berrigan, Danny Bampton. CENTRE: Brad Thorn, Lote Tuqiri, Brad Meyers, Ashley Harrison, Justin Hodges, Darren Mapp, Michael De Vere, Harvey Howard, Petero Civoniceva, Dane Carlaw. FRONT: Wendell Sailor, Shane Webcke, Gorden Tallis, Kevin Walters (captain), Darren Lockyer, Michael Hancock, Tonie Carroll, Kevin Campion



COACH WAYNE BENNETT

2000 A PREMIERSHIP YEAR

"ANOTHER IMPORTANT YEAR FOR US. ALF HAD GONE AND

Kevin Walters had taken over as captain and moved to halfback. We started the season well but then went into a period where we would win one, lose one.

Kevie struggled with hamstring and calf injuries at that stage and I remember saying to him: 'If we can get you back out there and have you fit, we can win this premiership.' He did come back and we won seven games in a row before a bit of a hiccup against the Roosters in the last round. Then we played Cronulla in the first week of the finals in Brisbane and they led us 20-4 before we came back to beat them 34-20 and that took us straight to the preliminary final where we beat Parramatta in a tough one [16-10].

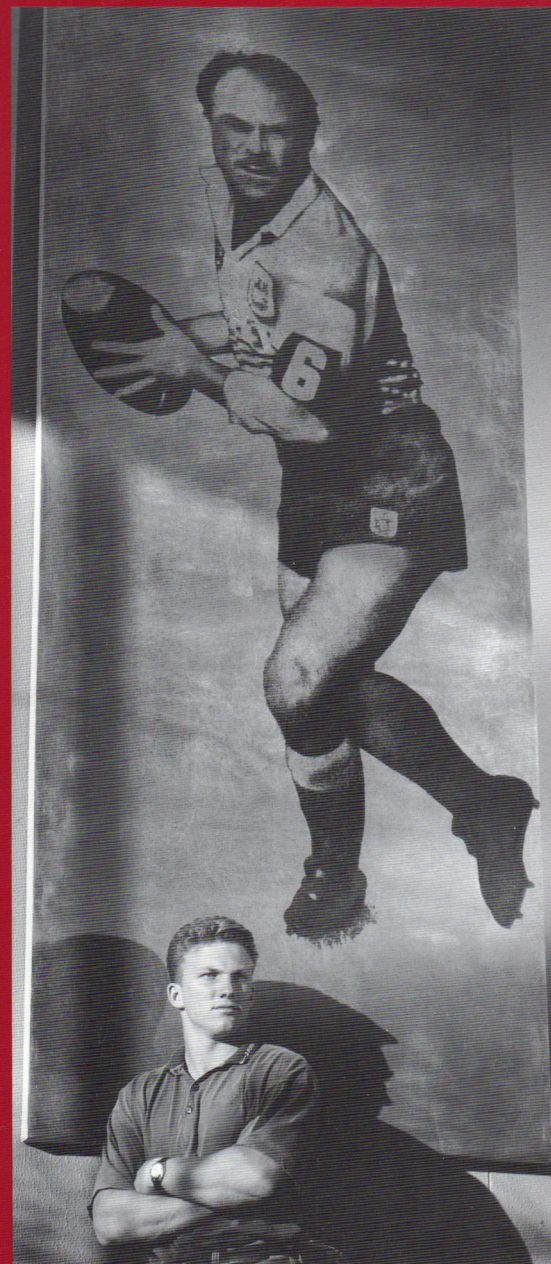
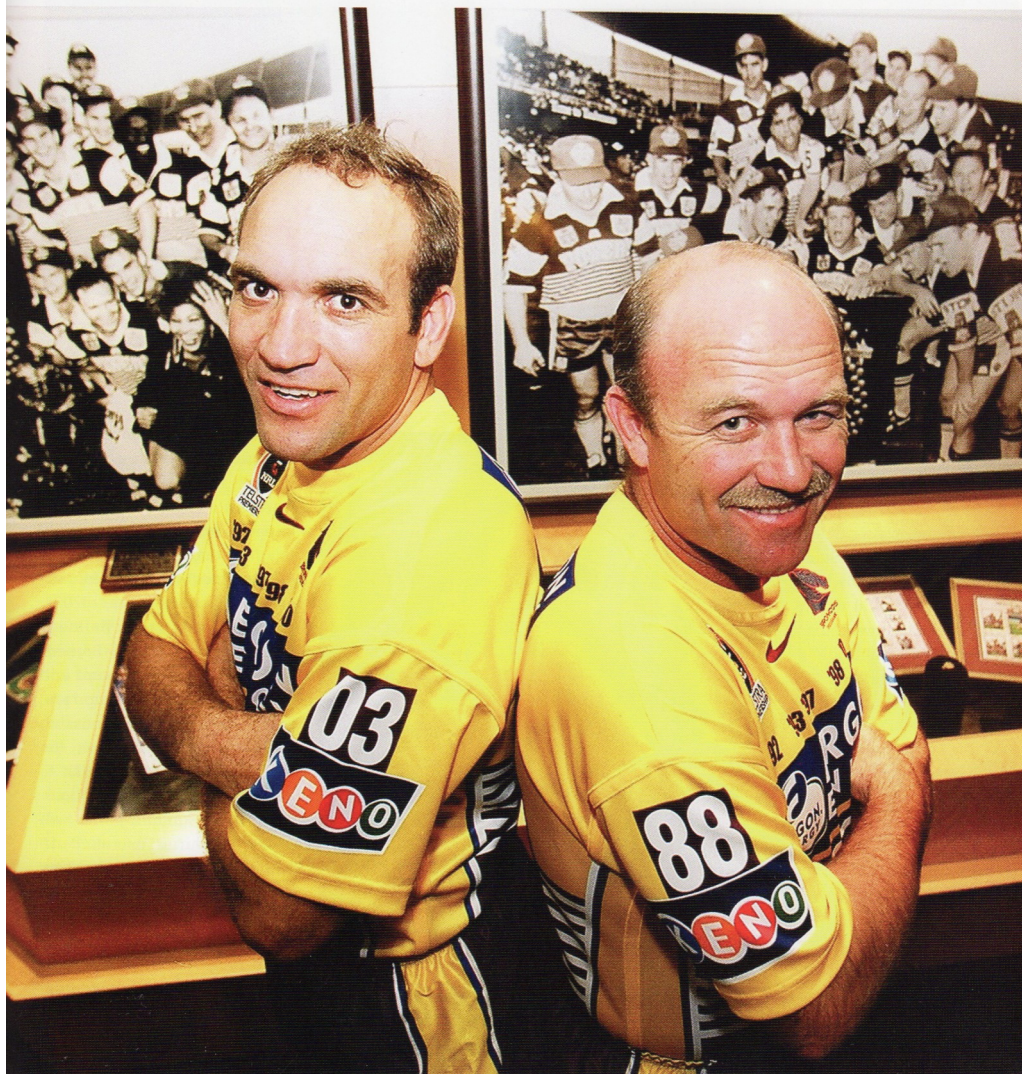
We played Easts in the grand final and we knew exactly what we had to do to win and that was not to give them any chances. It was a simple game plan but the thing was that everyone stuck to it, and we beat them 14-6.

We really changed the way we had played in 1998. With no Alf and a huge forward pack we played a game based on a big go-forward and it got the job done for us."



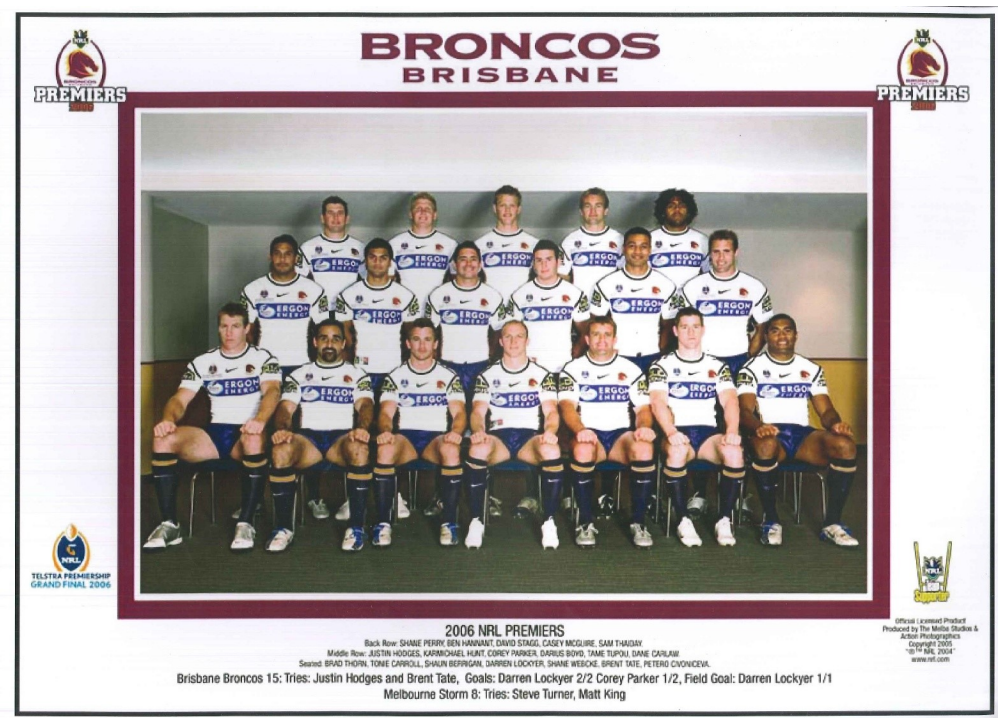
YOU WON'T FIND ONE BLOKE WHO PLAYED WITH HIM WHO WILL SAY A BAD THING ABOUT HIM BECAUSE HE WAS THE TYPE OF BLOKE YOU WANTED BESIDE YOU WHEN THINGS GOT TOUGH

The Broncos unveiled a commemorative jersey for their return to Lang Park (Suncorp Stadium), and who better to model the jersey than current captain Gorden Tallis (left) and original skipper, Wally Lewis.

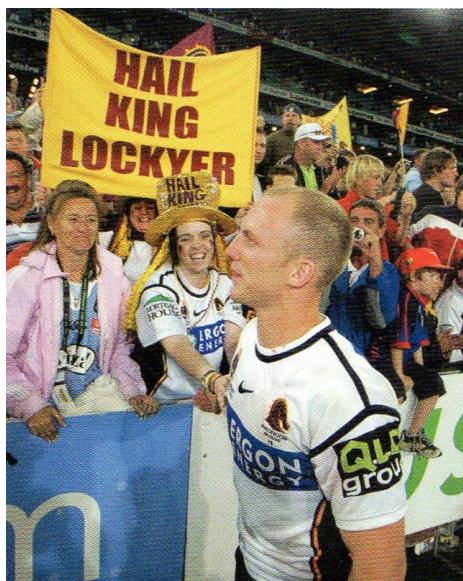


I HAVE SEEN HIM GROW OVER THE YEARS BUT I ALWAYS HAD THE FEELING HE WAS A VERY, VERY SPECIAL PLAYER. TIME HAS PROVED THAT THEORY CORRECT AND HE WILL NO DOUBT TAKE HIS PLACE AS ONE OF THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME AND CERTAINLY THE GREATEST PLAYER I HAVE PLAYED WITH OR AGAINST.

— SHANE WEBCKE



Below: Darren Lockyer greets the fans after the 2006 Grand Final win.



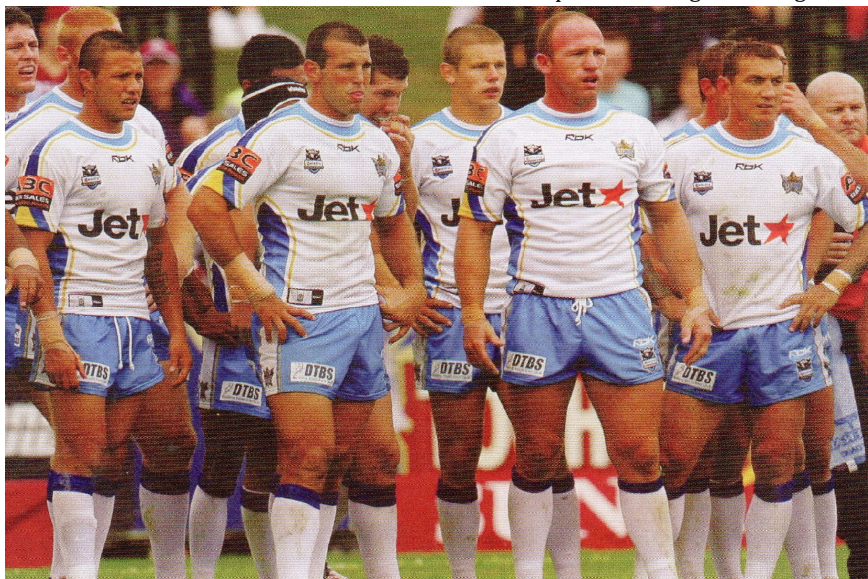
BELOW: Not only did Brent Tate score the winning grand final try, in 2006 he also reached the milestone of 100 top grade games for the Broncos.



RUGBY LEAGUE



After eight seasons without a team in the NRL on the Gold Coast, the competition expanded to 16 teams in 2007 with the introduction of the Gold Coast Titans based at Robina stadium (**Above Left**). The 2009 Gold Coast Titans (**Above Right**) have had the best finish coming 3rd. In 2010 they finished 4th but have failed to make the finals since then. **Below Left**: Some of the Gold Coast Titans players including Scott Prince, Luke Bailey and Matt Rogers. **Below Right**: The Broncos have gone nearly a decade without a premiership including some indifferent finishes. Wayne Bennett has returned to coach them in 2015 in the hope of breaking the drought.



The Rothfield Plan for the NRL Competition

On the right is Phil Rothfield's future plan for the NRL.

Normally Rothfield's Sydney-bias leads him to say a lot of things that I would disagree with but on this occasion that bias works in favour of those of us in Queensland, who for far too long have seen the NRL as too much of a glorified Sydney competition.

As a Sydney-sider Rothfield wants more rivalry games between Sydney clubs. As a diehard Queenslander I want less games against Sydney clubs so his views here are in sync with mine.

The first thing we need to correct the problem of the NRL being a glorified Sydney competition is a greater percentage of teams not based in Sydney and NSW. A Perth and 2nd Brisbane team will do just that, evening up the numbers of Sydney teams and non Sydney teams.

Jumping on this evenness if we add 2 non-NSW teams and go to 18 NRL clubs, Phil here make a brilliant suggestion of having two conferences—a Sydney conference and a non-Sydney conference. Two round robins within each conference followed by each team playing every team in the other conference once reduces the number of games played by Brisbane teams against Sydney teams and makes it feel a much more national competition. For Sydney fans it gives it more of the feel of a Sydney competition with more Sydney rivalries for them.

I do like the idea of the top four from each conference going into the finals. There's a guaranteed four teams not from Sydney and maximum of four from Sydney.

There are other advantages with this concept like reducing the number of rounds to help with elite player burnout and allow a little more room for the international season at the end of the season. Perhaps it might make enough room to bring back an Ashes tour to the UK or British Lions tour to Australia.

Additionally there is room for stand alone weekends for the State of Origin series.

I do very much like this idea (which the majority polled favoured by 70%-30%) and hope that the NRL implements this idea.

» 18 TEAMS in two conferences
» NEW teams from Brisbane and Perth
» MORE tribalism with Sydney clubs playing each other twice
» TEAMS play each other twice in one conference then play teams in opposite conference once
» 25 ROUNDS of football
» TOP four teams from each conference go into the finals
» STAND alone Origin weekends
» PLAY the Nines and City Country during spare Origin weekends

**TOMORROW
PART THREE
YOUR VERDICT
ON THE PLAN**
 » Have your say at thetelegraph.com.au

THE SYDNEY CONFERENCE

SEA EAGLES	ROOSTERS	RABBITOHS	DRAGONS	SHARKS	BULLDOGS	PANTHERS	EELS	WEST TIGERS
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THE OUT-OF-TOWN CONFERENCE

BRONCOS	2ND BRISBANE	COWBOYS	GOLD COAST	KNIGHTS	RAIDERS	STORM	PERTH	WARRIORS
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A FUTURE BRISBANE NRL CLUB — THE LOCAL CONTENDERS

There are many areas in Australia and the Pacific (PNG & 2nd NZ team) with bids vying to join the National Rugby League. Expansion has yet to be definitely confirmed as the NRL want to solidify the viability of the existing clubs before confirming expansion. If expansion goes ahead the likely time it will happen will be in 2017 or 2018 when the next TV deal begins. The general sentiment is that the frontrunning areas where the NRL will next expand will be Perth and a second Brisbane region team. The Western Pirates are happy to put in their own team or join forces with a Sydney team that wishes to relocate. I would be all for seeing a Sydney team or two “part-relocate” to help with the reduction of the too high number of Sydney teams. By part-relocate they could play half their games in another state like in Perth or Adelaide and the other half in Sydney. A Perth team would make it feel more a national competition rather than an eastern seaboard competition as well as provide another broadcasting slot as their home games would be 2 hours later than on the east coast. The second Friday game could be live every other week from Perth.

In Queensland the contenders for a spot in the NRL include Central Queensland and 3 Bids from the Greater Brisbane metropolitan area—the Brisbane Bombers, Western Corridor (led by the Ipswich Jets) and a Brisbane Brothers (Leprachauns) bid. Easts Tigers and Redcliffe Dolphins have also floated the possibility of making a bid if expansion is given the go ahead. Let’s look at the three confirmed bids from the Greater Brisbane Metropolitan area.

Brisbane Bombers

	
Club information	
Full name	Brisbane Bombers Rugby League Football Club Limited
Colours	Primary: Navy Secondary: Orange
Founded	2011
Current details	
Ground(s)	Suncorp Stadium (52,500)
CEO(s)	Nicholas Livermore
Competition	National Rugby League

Arguably, the front-running bid from Brisbane is the Brisbane Bombers. They have been the most active of the three greater Brisbane bids and have a business model not unlike that of the Brisbane Broncos. Their main strength is their corporate sponsorship pull when compared to the other bids and ultimately this may get them over the line as long term financial sustainability will be one of the strongest factors involved in the selection process. Several sponsors have publicly backed the bid, including Jersey Manufacturer – Classic, Bundaberg Rum, B105.3 (Austereo), Tabcorp, The Outdoor Furniture Specialists, Dynamic Sports Marketing. There is a proposed plan for the Bombers administration and training base to be based at the BRC’s (Brisbane Racing Clubs) Doomben facility with multiple training fields, administration, pool, gymnasium and training facilities. Billy Moore has supported the Bombers Bid and marketed the Bombers with them.

They are careful not to tread on the catchment of the Broncos who they treat respectfully but believe the local derby rivalry between Brisbane clubs will generate greater overall interest in rugby league in Brisbane. The Brisbane Broncos have had a 25 year monopoly in a rugby league mad city that is nearly 2 million in population. Sydney has 9 clubs and yet Brisbane with 2 million people only gets an NRL game once every 2 weeks. This lack of NRL games in Brisbane is ridiculous. Brisbane most definitely can support and needs a second team which will alleviate the annoying problem of just about every Broncos game being played on Friday nights. David Gyngell of Channel 9 has changed his tune since the broadcast deal and states he is in favour of a second Brisbane team which will be good for extra ratings. This support is very influential since the NRL gets most of its revenue through TV broadcasting.

The Broncos are averaging an astonishing 35 000 people per game which was the capacity of Lang Park during the 1980’s for Origin games and over twice what most Sydney clubs average. In regards to the local derby rivalry concept, the Bombers are on solid ground with their view. In AFL the Adelaide Crows had a similar monopoly before Port Adelaide entered the AFL. Rather than hurting the Crows, even they admitted that their membership and attendances were bolstered, not harmed, by the rival Adelaide team.

The main perceived weakness of the Bombers is the perception of many league fans I have met and talked to on league forums is that they are just a clone of the Broncos that’s just in it for the money. I have not found them to be this way when I have spoken with them and found them open to suggestions. These perceptions are more driven by emotion than logic and it’s difficult to counter such perceptions. The Bombers will need to engage these fans more to win them over. In speaking with Nic Livermore, he noted (and I agreed) that one of the weaknesses of the Crushers was their recruiting, particularly their spine (1, 6, 7 & 9). They want to make sure they learn from this and recruit the best they can, particularly with the spine of the team. They have an agreement to link with the Sunshine Coast Falcons at the Queensland Cup level.

My favourite Qld Cup team, Souths Logan, broke their link with Canberra after not getting enough support from them and currently link with the Broncos, though the Broncos are well stretched linking now with 5 clubs (Norths, Redcliffe, Wynnum, Ipswich and Souths). There is an opportunity there for the Bombers to link with Souths Logan should they be successful with their bid. As the Bombers would need a Leagues club they could possibly join up with the QRL that is currently investigating the option of moving their corporate offices to Davies Park due to the high rental costs at Suncorp Stadium and redeveloping it (new grandstand, leagues club on the Brisbane River and rugby league museum). A possible contribution to the redevelopment in return for sharing the leagues club with Souths might be a great way to see the old foundation club of Souths secure its future and develop Davies Park into a high quality venue (but without the mooted 10 000 seat stadium).

I do like the Bombers logo with the emphasis on the pilot rather than the plane (Essendon Bombers). It’s a very marketable name and the old school aviation look of the logo hearkens back to Brisbane’s proud aviation history with Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, Bert Hinkler as well as Brisbane being a major aviation base for the Pacific arena of World War II. On the Bombers website (www.brisbanebombers.com.au) they state: “With only 12 NRL Games a year on show in Brisbane (100+ games in Sydney), Brisbane-ites deserve more opportunities to see live games, whether you’re a Broncos supporter, Bulldogs or a League supporter without a team. Based on potential players, coaching staff, corporate dollars and a community engagement strategy second-to-none, the Brisbane Bombers will be a long-term team with success behind the scenes to maximise opportunities for victory on the field.”

Western Corridor NRL bid



Western Corridor - South Queensland [or Ipswich or Jagera] Jets

The Ipswich Jets CEO, Steve Johnson, is leading a bid to put an Ipswich team into the NRL that will play (at least initially) out of Suncorp Stadium.

The Western Corridor NRL bid was launched in August 2010 in an attempt to represent Brisbane's growing Western Corridor in an expanded National Rugby League competition. The bid is headquartered in Ipswich, Queensland and is closely associated with the Ipswich Jets.

The club's heartland region will encompass the rapidly growing areas of Ipswich, Logan and Toowoomba. Sydney Roosters CEO Brian Canavan was hired in December 2010 as a consultant to assist in developing the club's feasibility study and business plan.

It is envisioned that the club will base itself out of Springfield, this location was selected as it is geographically roughly halfway between Ipswich and Logan and is serviced by the Springfield railway line. The club will initially use the existing training facilities at Brothers Ipswich RLFC in Ipswich until a permanent training and administration facilities is built in Springfield. South East Queensland's largest stadium is Suncorp Stadium and is home to NRL club, the Brisbane Broncos. The bid has proposed that it initially play out of Suncorp Stadium while it waits for a government funded permanent stadium, similar to the Gold Coast's Robina stadium, to be built in the Ipswich region such as Springfield or Ripley.

The club will be based on the not-for-profit, community-owned model of the Green Bay Packers in the NFL. The bid has also planned the development of feeder teams in the Queensland Cup, such as reviving the Toowoomba Clydesdales, in order to provide direct pathways for players to progress into the NRL team.

The bid is also supported by Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale and the City of Ipswich. It is also backed by the rich Brothers Ipswich club, despite the launch of a Brothers Confraternity NRL bid.

One proposed name of the team is Jagera, the Indigenous Australian name for the area that the bid encompasses. My preference for a name, should they be successful, that is immediately identifiable (which Jagera isn't) and also inclusive of other areas such as Toowoomba and Logan is for them to call themselves the South Queensland Jets.

Brisbane Brothers



Justin Barlow who helped build the Gold Coast Suns has launched an audacious bid to turn Queensland's famed Brothers Leprechauns into an NRL club. A Brothers NRL club would be based at Corbett Park the Grange in the former offices of the defunct Crushers club and the former home of Brisbane Brothers. A Brothers team would be based at Suncorp Stadium, but also play games in regional markets where there is a strong Brothers influence. A Brothers entry to the NRL would play at least eight home games at Suncorp Stadium and as many as four matches at regional grounds. such as Toowoomba and Rockhampton. Brothers were a force in Queensland rugby league for decades but struck financial trouble in the late 1990s and after a failed merger with Valleys, were dropped out of the Queensland Cup at the end of 2004.

Cities with Brothers clubs and juniors include Cairns, Mackay, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Townsville and Gladstone. Barlow said. "We have an inbuilt fan base of 200,000 through Brothers clubs." The franchise would have a large reach through their Confraternity of Brothers clubs and deliver a pathway from under-7s to an NRL team. The Brothers bid team say they would expect to pull as many as 30,000 members in the first year after they were given an NRL licence. Barlow said he has major financial backers for their bid, which he said is at "investment point". He said the investors, whose identity he would not confirm, understood the not-for-profit model for the proposed NRL club, which would be majority-owned by members. "The ultimate goal for this is going to be a not-for-profit club, as its going to be owned by the fans," he said. "It's not going to be owned by shareholders or directors in a way that if it does draw a profit they walk away with a dividend. "All of the profits will get driven back into the club or driven back into local rugby league."

The Brothers bid strength is their existing large network—their confraternity of players and supporters. This could also work against them given there would be older supporters who may have hated Brothers in the pre-Broncos days. I suspect financial backing will be their main weakness. The confraternity of clubs (including the rich Brothers Ipswich club) did not come to the party to help keep Brisbane Brothers alive in the Queensland Cup so they'll be reliant more on corporate support.

I have a few suggestions for the Brothers NRL bid team. To help get those on board who used to barrack against Brothers in the past and for something much more marketable than the leprachaun I'd suggest a new logo that focuses on Brothers rather any connection with the Irish and leprachauns. To the left is a suggested logo based on brothers fighting for each other in war. I'd also ditch the butchers stripes on the jersey (though perhaps on the side of the shorts). A jersey that is modern and all royal blue might help catch the latent support of the many Valleys supporters in Brisbane. Whether they succeed or fail, I would also love to see them use the momentum of the NRL bid to put in a combined Brothers Diehards team back into the Queensland Cup.

