

DRAFT PROPOSAL
FOR THE
NRL INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
SUPPLEMENT

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RUGBY LEAGUE CALENDAR

February 28 – March 1	All Stars Weekend
March 6	World Club Challenge
March 13 – 15	World Club Challenge Final
March 20 – 23	Round 1: Rivalry Round # 1
March 27 – 30	Round 2
April 3 – 6	Round 3
April 10 – 13	Round 4
April 17 – 20	Round 5
April 24 – 27	Round 6
May 1 – 4	Round 7
May 8 – 11	Round 8
May 15 – 18	Round 9
May 22 – 25	Round 10

Competition suspended for Origin Cup Series

May 29 – June 1	Origin Cup Series Round 1
June 3 (Wed night)	State of Origin Game 1
June 5 – 8	Origin Cup Series Round 2
June 10 (Wed night)	State of Origin Game 2
June 12 – 15	Origin Cup Series Round 3
June 17 (Wed night)	State of Origin Game 3
June 19 – 22	Origin Cup Series Round 4
June 26 (Fri night)	Origin Cup Series Semis 1 & 2
June 28 (Sun arvo)	ANZAC Test
June 29 (Mon night)	Origin Cup Series Final

Competition resumes

July 3 – 6	Round 11
July 10 – 13	Round 12
July 17 – 20	Round 13
July 24 – 27	Round 14
July 31 – Aug 3	Round 15
August 7 – 10	Round 16
August 14 – 17	Round 17
August 21 – 24	Round 18
August 28 – 31	Round 19: Rivalry Round # 2
September 4 – 7	Round 20: Wild Card Round
September 11 – 13	Quarter Finals
September 18 – 20	Preliminary Finals
September 25 – 27	Semi Finals
October 4	Grand Final
October 25 – November 15	Biennial Four Nations International

ALL STARS WEEKEND

The All Stars Weekend will be the official opening to the season with a carnival atmosphere celebrating all aspects of the greatest game of all.

**history, heritage, cultures, speed, strength, skill,
and the modern game.**

Four teams will be selected by fans on the internet: NRL All Stars, Indigenous All Stars, Polynesian All Stars, and an U20's All Stars.

The weekend will start with two games on the Friday night: Polynesian v U20's followed by the Indigenous v NRL. The games will consist of 4 x 15 minute quarters as it is the start of the year and it is designed to be a festival atmosphere.

The Saturday will be a fan day where fans get to meet and have photos with the players, coaches, and legends of the game.

The Sunday will hold the novelty events: 100 metre dash, 20 metre dash, bench press competition, 40/20, longest drop out, and goal kicking competitions. These events will be followed by a match between the two winners from Friday night's games. The Friday night and Sunday games will be televised.



WORLD CLUB CHALLENGE

To be held one year in England and the next in Australia, and so on.

The English Super League Champions will play the Origin Cup Series Champions, and the NRL Premiers will take on the Challenge Cup Champions. These games will be held on the Friday night and Sunday afternoon of the first weekend. The following Friday night will hold the final between the winners of the first two games. The remaining NRL clubs could hold trial matches during these weekends.

*the promotion for the challenge could be billed as
The Best Club Team in the World.*



ROUND 1 AND 19 – THE RIVALRY ROUNDS

To be promoted using footage of past games with former champions going hard at it. The rivalry rounds will also benefit the Sydney teams with close proximity to the games for opposition fans. To prevent the rivalry teams meeting for a third game in the main premiership, a bye can be introduced when the teams are drawn together in rounds 2 to 18. This bye could be set up through rounds 11 to 18 to give players a break closer to the semi finals.

OPTION 1

GAME	PROMO
EELS v BULLDOGS	early to mid 80's. '84 and '86 GF's
PANTHERS v RAIDERS	early 90's. '90 and '91 GF's
MANLY v WESTS TIGERS	Fibros v Silvertails
DRAGONS v SHARKS	the Shire surrounded – a local battle
RABBITOHS v EASTS	foundation rivalry – neighbourly hatred
BRONCOS v COWBOYS	Qld's original state rivalry
B 2 v TITANS	the battle of Qld's new boys
KNIGHTS v C.C BEARS	the battle for Central Coast supremacy
WARRIORS v STORM	outpost battle: memorable '08 final – 8th beating 1st

OPTION 2

GAME	PROMO
COWBOYS v WARRIORS	same year entering the competition
B 2 v C.C BEARS	same year entering the competition
TITANS v BRONCOS	battle of the neighbours
KNIGHTS v EELS	'01 GF replay
MANLY v SHARKS	70's rivalry, '73 and '78 GF's
PENRITH v ROOSTERS	Freddy factor, '03 GF
SOUTHS v BULLDOGS	80's rivalry, '67 GF
DRAGONS v STORM	'99 GF
RAIDERS v WESTS TIGERS	greatest GF ever '89

Rounds 2 to 10

Game on!

First half of the season proper

ORIGIN

Here is an opportunity to dominate media for the middle part of the season. In regard to the proposal that the premiership will be suspended for Origin and the Origin Cup Series, it is only the points table that is suspended.

Instead of having rounds of weekends with less games, teams without rep players playing for premiership points, and the game losing some interest due to these factors – there will be full rounds every weekend with teams chasing a very lucrative championship (\$1,000,000 prize, being crowned mid-year champions, and a grand trophy to add to the cabinet).

Media domination will come from: pre-game build up to each State of Origin; each State of Origin game; Australian team selections; and the ANZAC Test. In addition, club games will create high media interest in the Origin Cup Series by way of pre-game build up, following each team's fortunes on the ladder in four conferences, semi finals, conference champions, and a final.

The media interest will build because of the design of the points system – points for a victory, tries scored, conversions, a loss by less than 7 etc. Also, with this design, every team has a chance to make the semi finals right to the last round.

State of Origin is the ultimate in the greatest game of all, but has received some criticism due to its affect on the premiership. But with the concept of a mid-year comp (the Origin Cup Series), the main premiership is not compromised – Origin will be better by having the players in camp for the duration, and fan interest will be at its highest for the whole Origin period.



**SYDNEY
CONFERENCE**



**PROVINCIAL
CONFERENCE**

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL BOYS CHAMPIONSHIPS

To be played during the Origin Cup Series, the school boys championships will be a knockout format played as the lead up game to the NRL game. As the G220 will be suspended during the Origin Cup Series due to the make-up of the Qld and NSW U20's, and remaining players undergoing tertiary, trade, or charity training, the Australian School Boy Championships replace those games.

During the early part of the season schools will play off for the final 32 positions. Week 1 will have 16 teams playing for 8 positions. Week 2 will have the next 16 teams playing for 8 positions. Week 3 will have week 1's victors play week 2's victors for 8 positions. Week 4 will have week 3's victors play for semi finals positions. The semi finals and final will be played as the lead up games to the Origin Cup Series semi finals and final.

The Australian School Boys Championships will be an exciting short-term competition for TV (possibly for FOX or the ABC) showcasing super stars of the future. It will also highlight for sports loving kids the lucrative benefits of completing Year 12. There are also possibilities of attaching academic grade requirements to play in this competition.

There are two very good positives to these championships:

- 1 the NRL's public encouragement and support of education through grade requirements to play, and
- 2 attracting young people to the greatest game of all with the lure of such a high profile young persons' competition.



Rounds 11 to 18

Game back on!

The rep players are back and the clubs set sail and make their charge for the semis

Round 19

Return Rivalry Match

ROUND 20 – THE WILD CARD DRAW

Conference Wild Card Round

The Wild Card Draw will be designed on the conference system to allow for logistics, ie travel and accommodation.

Unlike the rivalry rounds where teams from Sydney play against each other and the same for the Provincial teams (except for Penrith and Canberra), the Wild Card Draw will give a round of Provincial teams playing Sydney teams.

The Wild Card Draw will last for two seasons just like rounds 2 to 18, to allow for a fair home and away set up.

The Provincial teams will be drawn out of a barrel, the first five given home games and the next four given away games. Next the Sydney teams will be drawn out one at a time and matched to a Provincial team. The following season will see round 20 as the return match.

The Wild Card Draw is an exciting concept that will attract and captivate a large audience in the Sunday TV game of round 19. This concept will attract more media coverage two weeks out of semi finals confronting the AFL's finals campaign.

THE FINALS SERIES

With the introduction of two new teams and the future possibility of adding a further two teams, benefit should go to the top four teams not just the top two, as it stands under the current system.

But the team finishing first – ie the Minor Premiers – should receive the shield, financial benefit, and media adulation. The current finals system needs to be debated and below are some alternative examples. To help illustrate the point, the highest ranked team wins each game in the following examples:

Example 1

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
1 v 4	3 v 5	1 v 3	1 v 2GF
2 v 3	4 v 6	2 v 4	
5 v 8			
6 v 7			

Like the AFL system this guarantees the top four a second bite at the cherry.

Example 2

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
3 v 8	1 v 6	1 v 4	1 v 2GF
4 v 7	2 v 5	2 v 3	
5 v 6	3 v 4		

With this system, teams 1 and 2 get the benefit of the first week off, teams 3 and 4 play the lower ranked teams. The bonus for TV and fans is a three day spread for two weeks not just one. There will still be nine finals games but no dead Sunday in the second week.

Example 3

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
2 v 5	1 v 7	2 v 5	1 v 4	1 v 2GF
3 v 4	3 v 6	3 v 4	2 v 3	
6 v 9	4 v 5			
7 v 8				

A top nine possibly with the advent of extra teams. Team 1 will earn the first week off, and teams 2, 3, 4, and 5 will get the second bite at the cherry. The highest ranked winner in weeks one and two will earn a week off. Extra TV rights and gate money will be earned as there will be twelve finals games as opposed to nine. The extra week will allow the game to take on the AFL finals at the same time while still having a separate Grand Final weekend.

Example 4

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
2 v 7	1 v 6	1 v 4	1 v 2GF
3 v 6	2 v 5	2 v 3	
4 v 5	4 v 3		

The Super 7: a top seven with team 1 earning the first week off. Only one team dropping out in the first week of finals, then two out in the second and third week. This system will still have nine finals like the current system but will have two three-day spreads instead of one.

FOUR NATIONS TOURNAMENT

To be played every second year and rotated between Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain.



THE LOGOS

The idea behind the new NRL logo is to give a fresh approach for the new Independent Commission. A classic blue colour with silver stars each representing a club in the NRL. This displays a mix of new independence, with the stars representing an equal share of ownership by the clubs. The whole flag is water marked with the establishment year 1908.

new era – club ownership – where we began

This style can be carried through as a design 'theme' for individual club logos. The club's logo goes to the centre replacing the letters 'NRL'. The club logo is surrounded by the stars with the club's establishment year as the watermark.

This design theme can also be carried into the G220 flag, J J Giltinan Shield, Australian School Boys Championships, and the Norm Provan, Arthur Summons Premiership trophy.



BENEFITS

Under the current system each club gets 12 home games per year, but due to the unbalanced competition where the number of games in the season and the number of teams playing is uneven, there is a chaotic system where some teams play others once, but other teams play those teams twice.

Under this proposal, the draw being held over two years creates an even competition of home and away. This will create 23 home games (only one less) over two years, but with the bonus incentive each year to split the gate between semi final teams in the Origin Cup. The Sydney clubs will benefit by having more local derbies allowing opposition fans more chances to go to away games (increasing gate sales). A Sydney club will play another Sydney club 13 times per year in regular and Origin Cup games in Sydney. This does NOT count finals series games. This means a Sydney club, depending on the draw, will play between 13 and 19 games in Sydney.

The main benefits will come from increased TV revenue. The current system has, not including the under 20's, 192 premierships games, 9 finals games, and 3 Origin games for a total of 204 games for TV.

Under this proposal there will be 171 premierships games, 43 Origin cup games (including finals), 9 finals games, and 3 Origin games for a total of 226 games for TV.

As well for TV there will be 171 G220 games, 9 finals games, and during the Origin Cup Series there will be 31 Australian School Boys Championships games.

Another huge benefit for the clubs (as they are the employers) is that every player is available for every premierships game giving the club its absolute best chance to take out the title. The competition in its current form is unfair and unbalanced during State of Origin. Towards the end of the season many clubs are vying for a top eight spot where two competition points could be the difference between eighth and twelfth. Yet during Origin there are six competition points up for grabs where rep players are not playing.

Clubs will gain financial benefits from not having to transport contracted players to lower grade competitions in other states by having a proper 2nd grade competition (the G220). Player continuity and having under 20's playing with contracted, older, fringe 1st grade players will also be positives for the club and the game.

Indeed, the benefits to the game are enormous under this proposal. It will create a more marketable product split into six exciting structures that will grab and maintain the fans' attention all season:

- 1 pre season (All Stars weekend and World Club Challenge)
- 2 Rounds 1 to 10
- 3 Origin (Origin Cup Series and State of Origin)
- 4 Rounds 11 to 20
- 5 the Finals Series, and
- 6 the biennial Four Nations Trophy.

This proposal will allow the NRL to negotiate a better TV deal with the option of selling the rights as one package to the highest and best bidder, or to sell the six structures individually.

It will take the game into the future while maintaining the integrity of its past traditions. It will also capture new and young fans while satisfying the long time supporter.

In addition, this proposal has the structure set up for future expansion to the game for yet another two teams (possibly a third south east Queensland team, central Queensland, and/or a second New Zealand team from Wellington). Rounds 1 to 19 will have the teams playing each other once, followed by the Wild Card Draw to maintain the 20 round competition. For the Origin Cup Series the two new teams would replace the NSW and Qld U20's.

The benefits to the fans are endless. A spectacular opening – celebrating the game with the All Stars with opportunities to meet the players and have plenty of fun. The intrigue of watching club teams from the NRL pitted against the English Super League. An uncompromised competition with all the stars playing for all the premiership points. An Origin season of super paced, highly skilled back to back Origin games, ANZAC Test, and a brand new championship title for the teams to battle out, with every team in it to the end. An exhilarating finals series and a biennial Four Nations competition.

brehtaking entertainment
– from start to finish

IDEAS

The modern sport is under constant pressure for advertising dollars.

One sport that doesn't bow to this pressure is the US Masters Golf. The committee stands by its traditions of the game honouring history and never compromising its integrity by chasing the dollar. In doing so, Augusta the golf course is as much a part of the tournament as the golf and the players are. Result: the most watched golf tournament in the world. If they put advertising on the course it would then become just another tournament.

integrity – courage – faith in your product

THE GAME AND ADVERTISING

To integrate advertising into the game without compromising the flow of viewing is essential for financing the future of the game. For example, in the AFL whenever a goal is scored they go straight to commercial. After the commercial the umpire is signalled then the game recommences.

Opportunities for commercials in Rugby League can be found by making some subtle time adjustments. For example, game commercials are to be no longer than 15 seconds and could be aired as follows:

- scrum feeds from the ball going into touch. The clock will be stopped for 30 seconds. TV will cut straight to commercial for a 15 second ad break. The scrum must be formed within that 30 second time off. If a team has not packed the scrum within that time, a penalty will go to the opposition
- goal line drop-out restarts. When the decision has been made that the defending team has to restart with a goal line drop-out the clock will be stopped for 30 seconds. TV will cut straight to commercial for a 15 second ad break. The drop out must be taken between the 15th and the 30th second of stoppage. Taking longer will result in a penalty
- tries scored. When a try is awarded the clock will stop for 30 seconds. TV will cut straight to commercial. The goal kicker has to have the ball mounted on the kicking tee within the 30 seconds. Failing to set the ball in the allotted time results in forfeiting the right to the conversion
- pre-game, half time, and post game advertising will be business as usual.

great men accomplish
great feats

the greatest
sportsmen play
the greatest game
of all

rugby league
aspire to greatness

SALARY CAP AND PLAYER TRADING

The salary cap will be raised to \$6,000,000. This figure will ensure Rugby League and the clubs have a competitive advantage to keep Rugby Union and the AFL at bay. This raise in the cap will also stem the flow of players heading to England. Currently there are over 100 former NRL players playing in England, and if this trend was addressed and reversed it would make the NRL a stronger and better competition with positive flow on effects to the G220.

A minimum amount of between \$80,000 and \$100,000 will be set for contracted players, and salary cap concessions will be made for one club player. This, as well as an increase in the salary cap, will keep popular players at their club longer if not into retirement.

Player trading will take place between Grand Final day and the 31st of December. Mid-year transfers do not sit well with fans, and it sets a bad example of “oh things aren’t going well so we’ll flick him”. Also it is disruptive to clubs and only benefits Player Managers. Two months is plenty of time to move town and settle into new environments. This system will also keep media interest in the game in the off season.

If a player is coming off contract, the club he is playing for has the right to renew or extend his contract at anytime. If the player is planning on leaving the club or the club is planning on moving the player on, other clubs cannot approach or make formal bids or signings outside the allotted time of Grand Final day to 31st December.

This will be known as ‘Trade Period’, and while it may appear a short period of time, it takes away the disruption to clubs and fans of mid-year transfers.

UNDER 20'S AND EDUCATION

This aspect of the proposal looks at setting up partnerships with the Federal Government, universities and TAFE colleges to create a system where to be eligible to participate in the G220 each player has to be enrolled in a tertiary or trade course.

This will involve working with the universities and colleges to create flexible options to amalgamate the game, training, and education. Rules will need to be in place for all clubs to have a set amount of days or hours per week for education or training. Grade requirements or module completions will be required for all players – and there will be ongoing NRL support for young players finding education challenging.

With the NRL expecting behavioural standards from its stars saying they are role models, here is an opportunity for the NRL to take a role model stance on the importance of education in society.

Partnerships/alliances could involve G220 jersey sponsorship with university advertising, Government scholarships, and contract subsidies for education costs, for example:

- ANU / University of Canberra - Raiders
- Monash University - Storm
- James Cook University - Cowboys
- University of QLD - B 2
- Griffith University - Broncos
- Bond University - Titans
- University of Auckland - Warriors
- University of Newcastle - C.C Bears, Knights
- Wollongong University - Sharks, Dragons
- University of Western Sydney - Bulldogs, Eels, Panthers
- Sydney University - Wests Tigers
- Macquarie University - Manly
- University of NSW - Roosters, Souths

good education – well behaved
role models – bolstering the
NRL image

mixing the toughest body
contact collision team sport in
the world with exemplary off
field behaviour

enhancing junior footballers'
futures within or outside
the NRL

rugby league
it truly is the greatest
game of all

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