

***Try, try, try again***



***West winger in a league of his own***

***Ben Drzyzga***

***Newcastle Herald***

***18 June 1998***

About this time every year a story appears about the freakish try-scoring habits of West Suburbs winger Brett Cullen in the Newcastle Rugby League (NRL)....and this year is no different.

After 13 competition rounds, Cullen has blitzed the field and has already posted 23 tries, despite missing two games with a broken hand earlier this year. That is 11 more than his nearest rivals, Lakes winger Adam Hall, the leading try scorer with Cullen last season, and Waratah Mayfield centre Grant McKellar.

Cullen is well on his way to picking up his fourth consecutive NRL try-scoring trophy, since joining West from the lower grades of Western Suburbs in Sydney. During his debut NRL season, Cullen scored 23 tries to win the award from Rosellas team-mate and now Newcastle Knights flyer Jason Moodie, who scored 18 tries.

When Cullen bagged five tries against North Nelson Bay a couple of weeks ago he registered his 100<sup>th</sup> first grade try for the club. West captain-coach Tony Price believes the 28 year old is the best finisher he has ever seen in the NRL.

“Without doubt”, Price said, “and he just doesn’t make any mistakes. He’s probably not the quickest in the club but he’s quick off the mark, has a good turn of speed, and he’s very strong and very fit. He also has the ability to sniff out a try”.

Price went on, “We give him free rein to do what he wants and he seems to know when a break is going to be made. He knows who to back up, and who not to”

Cullen paid tribute to the classy West sides over the years that have contributed to his success. “When you play in a good side plenty of opportunities arise. I suppose that I have been fortunate enough to be on the end of all of it. It’s really going well at the moment”

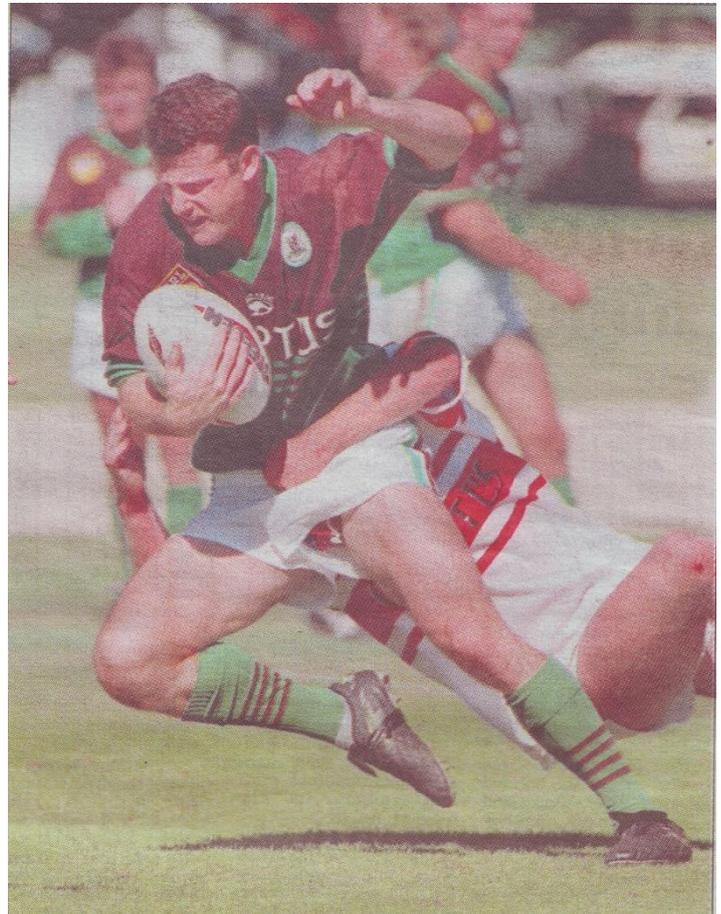
He said that he had not missed too many games over the past four seasons through injury, which he believes is the reason that he has tallied so many tries in such a short space of time.

“I like to keep pretty fit so that enables you to run around and back up pretty well”, he said. “I’ll give Stan Barwick, our fitness coordinator, a rap for that. But I just like to be where the ball is because that is where the action is”

In his career at the Rosellas, Cullen has been shifted around the backline, filling in at fullback, centre and wing. His past few games for West have been in the centres but he said he was enjoying his time on the wing outside representative players such as Price, Paul Skovgaard, Les Smith and Shane Johnson.

“It enables me to move around a bit more and I can sort of please myself”, Cullen said of his time on the flank. “I’ve played centre the last few weeks with West and I enjoyed that. It allowed me to do a little more on defence and get a bit more involved”.

Cullen is in camp in Sydney with the NSW Residents side, which will play its Queensland counterparts at the Sydney Football Stadium as a curtain-raiser to the third State of Origin tomorrow night. He is joined on the team by West team-mate Paul Skovgaard, North Nelson Bay hooker Scott Robinson, and former South Newcastle mentor Richard Jones, who is coaching the team.



It is Cullen's third consecutive appearance for the Blues. He has been a regular in Newcastle and Country teams since joining the NRL, and you can sense he loves being in camp and is eager to showcase his skills in the State's biggest rugby league arena.

"You really want to play at the highest level you can and this is what it is at the moment", Cullen said. "It is always enjoyable to come out for a week with the guys and play in a match such as this. All the fans should be revved up for the main game so hopefully people get there pretty early so they'll be there while we are playing".

Cullen is hopeful of adding to his impressive tally when Western Suburbs meet fourth-placed Cessnock in a crucial game for the Goannas at Harker Oval on Sunday.

---

*Brett Cullen played 195 games for West from 1995 to 2004, including 182 First Grade games. He scored 230 tries all up, which included 226 First Grade tries...a club record (well ahead of second placed Garth Ross with 132 First Grade tries).*

*Brett was a member of winning First Grade sides in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2004.*

*He also coached West's Reserve Grade winning team in 2005.*

*Brett was announced as a winger in West's "Team of the Century" in 2010.*

### **West Legend – Brett Cullen**

#### *2 Points of Interest*

- 1. Action photos of past players are very hard to find...indeed Brett Cullen does not have one. The action photo of Brett Cullen in Newcastle colours came from a scan of a 1998 Newcastle Herald saved by the late Len Hore*
- 2. Brett Cullen was responsible for West players having a "number". During a chance meeting with Brett in a local supermarket Brett asked the possibility of obtaining a West number, as he had just been informed of his Rochdale Hornets number in the UK...so you can thank Brett for your playing numbers!*

