



CANBERRA RAIDERS CUP GRAND FINAL 2013

ROOS



BLUES



"Pretty good ride" for four-time grand finalist

By Andrew Johnston

RUGBY LEAGUE

HE won't attract as much attention as some of the bigger names who'll run out in this weekend's Canberra Raiders Cup grand final.

But Queanbeyan Kangaroos hooker Lee Welsh's record stands up to any comparison.

Sunday's decider will be Welsh's fourth straight grand final appearance. He is one of just three Kangaroos players along with stalwart Troy Whiley and centre Daniel Watt who can claim that honour.

It's a fair achievement for a bloke who came perilously close to giving the game away altogether before even pulling on a Kangaroos jersey.

After starting his career at Tuggeranong, Welsh spent two seasons playing bush footy in the mid-2000s before a serious neck injury put him out of action for eight months.

"I had a couple of years in George Tooke Shield with my mates and then all bar gave footy away," he said. "I hurt my neck pretty badly in



Queanbeyan Kangaroos hooker Lee Welsh will play his fourth successive Canberra Raiders Cup grand final against the Blues on Sunday. Photo: Andrew Johnston

2007 and had eight months out so it was a pretty long way back from that.

"But I was having a beer with Duck [Kangaroos prop Jeff Donald] who was running reserve grade at the

club at the time and he convinced me to go around again.

"As soon as I had that first game back, I was good to go again and it's been a pretty good ride since."

That ride has included back-to-back premierships in 2010 and 2011 followed by last year's grand final appearance in the Kangaroos' loss to Belconnen United Scholars.

Throughout it all, Welsh has maintained perhaps the lowest profile of any member of the Kangaroos squad.

"He doesn't get a lot of wraps but the people that

matter realise what he does for the team and how big a part of our team he is," Kangaroos coach Aaron Gorrell said.

"It's not always the glorified try scorers who win you game, it's the guys like [Welsh] who put in week in, week out. If you had 17 blokes like him you wouldn't lose too many games.

"He's worked hard every week, week in, week out ever since I've been at the club and to his credit, there aren't too many guys who can say they've played in four grand finals."

This weekend will likely see the 32-year-old go head-to-head with two players widely regarded as the two best rakes in the ACT competition in Blues pairing Jordie Hammond and Josh Chudleigh.

But while he may not carry the reputation of his more fancied opposites, Welsh will no doubt quite happily fly under the radar all the way to a third premiership medal.

Pete Newham and Stephen Peios will be calling this Sunday's grand final on QBNFM 96.7, on air from 2pm.

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CONGRATULATIONS ON MAKING IT TO THE FINALS!

Thump 'em!

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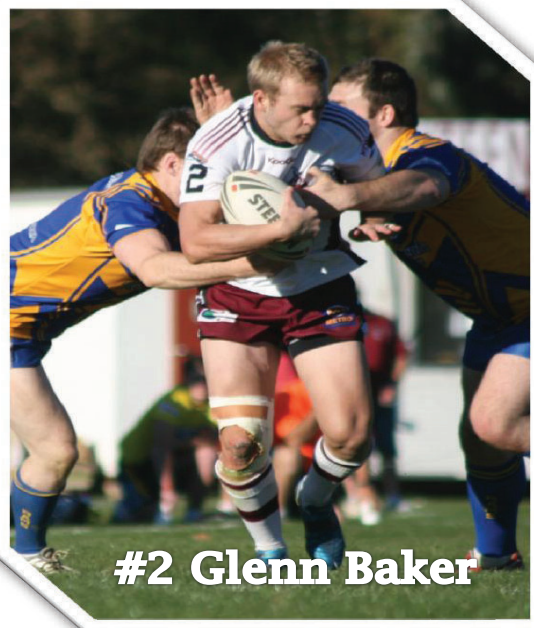
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