

Saturday, December 29, 2007

SPORT



READY TO ROLL

PAGE 61



Mercury reveals Cowboys list to beef up Cutters pack

PLENTY OF GRUNT

By **STEELE TAYLOR**
steele.taylor.dailymercury.com.au

RUGBY LEAGUE: Some much-needed firepower has been added to the Mackay Cutters' playing stocks with some of North Queensland Cowboys' big guns added to the Cutters roster.

A host of Cowboys will be dual registered with the Cutters and although it is highly unlikely many of the 'big names' like Johnathon Thurston and Luke O'Donnell will actually run on to the paddock for Mackay's new Queensland Cup outfit, there are several Cowboys fringe players who will play for the Cutters each week.

Depending on form and injury, Mackay could take to the field with bustling ball-runner Sione Faumuina, formidable front-rower Sam Faust and highly vaunted halfback Anthony Watts, who is Thurston's understudy at the Cowboys.

Cutters coach Shane Muspratt said his side should be able to regularly utilise the services of John Frith, Dane Weston, Anthony Perkins and former Mackay Souths player Daniel Backo.

There was some conjecture over whether the Cowboys-Cutters registration list had been finalised but Cutters operations manager Jamie McDonald said there would only be subtle changes made to it if necessary.

The Cutters' engine room is set benefit most, with plenty of grunt added to the pack.

"There's a few front row forwards in there (on the list) so from a personal viewpoint I'm delighted," McDonald said.

With only four props in the initial Cutters squad, the club was banking on some heavy-handed support from the Cowboys and they got it in the form of Backo, Faust, Frith and Weston.

"From my personal experience front rowers tend to get injured -



DUAL REGISTERED

- Johnathon Thurston
- Luke O'Donnell
- Shane Tronc
- Aaron Payne
- Sione Faumuina
- Ben Harris
- Ben Farrar
- Anthony Watts
- Anthony Perkins
- Dayne Weston
- John Frith
- Sam Faust
- Daniel Backo
- Matt Scott - probable
- Steve Southern - probable
- Kieran Lander - probable

there's a lot of attrition there," McDonald said.

And Muspratt admitted "I had an idea that we would be getting some of those forwards so that's why I didn't sign a lot of players from out of town."

The playmaker was also delighted to have prized Cowboys' signing Watts on the Cutters' roster but he admitted a preference to play alongside import Luke Young in the early rounds of the season.

Halves Muspratt and Young have been training together for three weeks already and will form a potentially deadly combination by round one when the side confronts fellow Cowboys feeder club and competition newcomer Cairns Pride in a mouth-watering clash at Barlow Park on March 15.

The Pride's playing ranks were also bolstered by an injection of Cowboys talent but Muspratt said "I think the Cowboys have been split pretty evenly (between Cairns and Mackay)."

"But it's not necessarily about which players you have in your squad - it's how you use them."



Sione Faumuina, above, and Sam Faust, left, are two of several North Queensland Cowboys players dual registered with the Mackay Cutters.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES & AAP



Wild Oats XI surges to victory

Page 62

