PENRITH PANTHERS

2023 GRAND FINALISTS

Hoping to become the first non-retrospective player to win the Clive Churchill Medal in consecutive grand finals, Edwards has remained consistent as ever with the most running meters in the league.

2 SIINIA TIIRIIVA

Building on an impressive World Cup campaign with Fiji to become a mainstay for the Panthers during his first full season in the top grade, Turuva has made the left wing position his own after Taylan May suffered a season-ending knee injury in the

Making a timely return from injury to help the Panthers overcome the Storm last week, Tago has crossed for 10 tries and set up a further eight in 15 appearances this season.

Set to bring up 100 NRL games in his final appearance for the club before joining Canterbury next year, Crichton is a proven big game player with tries in each of the past three grand finals.

Helping the side to another premiership decider with a preliminary final hat-trick, To'o's impact with the ball in hand could see him become the first winger to be awarded the Clive Churchill Medal on grand final day.

Returning from a shoulder injury that threatened to derail the Panthers hopes of reaching another grand final, Luai can expect plenty of attention in defence as the Broncos hope to exploit a potential weakness.

7. NATHAN CLEARY (C)

Producing another stellar year at club level while rising even further during the finals, a strong showing from Cleary will go a long way towards getting the Panthers over the live.

Continuing to grow in stature as one of the league's premier front-rowers, Leota has been one of the underrated success stories of Penrith's ability to nurture talent into on-field results.

Taking over as the club's first-choice hooker in 2023, Kenny may not possess the flair of his predecessor but provides the Panthers with the reliability needed to maintain success.

Getting his side on the front foot while striking fear into opposition players each week, Fisher-Harris has been integral in transforming the Panthers from regular finalists to grand final specialists in recent years.

Going from an unsung interchange player to an accomplished starting forward in the space of a season, Sorenson's career is a textbook example of the success that comes through tenacity and resilience.

Returning to his best after spending a large part of the season on the sidelines, Martin produced a match-clinching run to get Returning to his best after spending a mago particle with the Panthers into a fourth consecutive grand final last Friday.

Joining exclusive company in bringing up 200 first grade games for Penrith this season, Yeo earned high praise from Phil Gould as the best player recruited to the Panthers throughout the storied career of recruitment officer Jim Jones.

INTERCHANGE

Brought back to the NRL to provide cover in the halves following a stint in the English Super League, Cogger's first grade resurrection has seen him earn a long-term deal at Newcastle and potentially a grand final ring.

Working his way through the grades before cementing a place on the bench this season, Smith will be looking to finish the year with a new contact and a premiership.

Playing his final game for the Panthers ahead of a move to the Roosters in 2024, Leniu has emerged as one of the most impactful interchange players in the league.

Potentially going from a wooden spoon to premiership glory in one year, Garner's ability to play in the forwards and backline could prove invaluable in the event of injury on Sunday evening.

RESERVES

Recapturing the form that saw him reach the heights of Origin five years ago, Peachey has flourished in his return to Penrith with 10 tries in 15 appearances this season.

Dependable to a fault, Eisenhuth has been a tremendous depth player for the Panthers over the past three seasons with his ability to fill in across the forward pack when called upon.

Making the most of a long road to first grade following stints with Newcastle and a debut with Brisbane, Hosking has relished the opportunity to be part of a successful team in 21 appearances.

21 LUKE SOMMERTON

Going from a back-up reserve grader to earning a first grade debut over the course of a year, Sommerton will be hoping to see more time in the NRL with a development contract for 2024.

Scoring five tries in as many appearances this season, Jenkins has provided strong depth in the backline and will push for regular game time in the coming years.

Rising to become one of the great modern coaches of the league after qualifying for his fifth grand final in 17 seasons as a first grade coach, Cleary will be looking to do what no coach has done since Jack Gibson by leading a side to three consecutive

ROAD TO GLORY: PENRITH

HOW THE PANTHERS MADE THEIR WAY TO ACCOR STADIUM THIS SUNDAY

Already creating history as only the second team in the NRL era to qualify for four consecutive grand finals, the Penrith Panthers will be aiming to become the first club in 40 years to record three straight premierships on Sunday evening.

Beginning the year with doubters following the departure of several key players and a golden point loss to St Helens in the World Club Challenge, coach Ivan Cleary put aside a shaky start to have his side back on top of the competition ladder at the start of the representative season. Winning 13 out of 14 matches between Magic Round and the end of August - despite star halfback Nathan Cleary missing six weeks with a torn hamstring - a shock loss to Parramatta in the penultimate round threatened to prove costly when Jarome Luai was forced from the field with a shoulder injury.

Managing to recover with a dominant win in the final round to claim the minor premiership for the third time in four years, a clinical finals performance over New Zealand allowed Luai to recover in time to defeat Melbourne and secure a place in the premiership decider. Coming into the grand final as strong favourites off the back of current form and past deeds, victory will see the Panthers enter the rugby league pantheon as one of the greatest teams of all time.

GAMES: 26 | WINS: 20 | LOSSES: 6 | POINTS SCORED: 715 | POINTS CONCEDED: 322 | FINISHED: 1ST

ROUND 1 - PANTHERS 12 v BRONCOS 13

Getting their premiership defence off to a fast start with first points of the night, a brace of tries to Herbie Farnworth and an Adam Reynolds' drop goal saw the Panthers go down at home in the opening round.

Panthers 12 (Crichton, Luke tries. Cleary 2/2 goals) Broncos 13 (Farnworth 2 tries. Reynolds 2/2 goals. Reynolds FG)

Establishing a 16-0 lead midway through the second half, the Panthers had their opponents measure, despite a late fightback, to open their 2023 account.

ers 16 (Crichton, Tago, To'o tries. Cleary 1/3, Crichton 1/1 goals) Rabbitohs 10 (Johnston, Tass tries, Mitchell

ROUND 4 - PANTHERS 16 v EELS 17

Nathan Cleary produced one of the moments of the season to nail a two-point field goal with second remaining to send the match into golden point, but it was Mitchell Moses who had the last laugh in a gripping grand final rematch. Eels 17 (Cartwright, Hands tries. Moses 4/4 goals. Moses FG) Panthers 16 (Edwards, Hosking tries. Cleary 3/3 goals.

ROUND 5 - PANTHERS 53 v RAIDERS 12

Isaah Yeo celebrated his 200th NRL game in style as the Panthers piled on 40 second half points; Jaeman Salmon, returning to Canberra for the first time since the infamous 'weak-gutted dog' barb, made his feelings known as the Panthers hit a half century on full-time.

12 (Whitehead, Young tries. Fogarty 2/2 goals)

ROUND 6 - PANTHERS 44 v SEA EAGLES 12

Dylan Edwards more than rose to the challenge in a muchanticipated battle of the fullbacks, finishing with four tries for the first time in his career, as the Panthers celebrated the Easter weekend with a victory at home. Cherry-Evans 2/2 goals)

ROUND 7 - PANTHERS 16 v KNIGHTS 15

Silencing a vocal Newcastle crowd via a Nathan Cleary field goal in golden point, the Panthers were below their best but flexed their premiership credentials when it mattered most. Panthers 16 (To'o, Salmon tries. Cleary 3/4 goals. Cleary 2

ROUND 8 - PANTHERS 18 v RABBITOHS 20

Stephen Crichton's hat-trick looked to be enough to get the Panthers home, however two tries in the final six minutes saw the Rabbitohs rally the ANZAC spirit to clinch victory. goals) Panthers 18 (Crichton 3 tries. Crichton 3/4 goals)

ROUND 9 - PANTHERS 8 v TIGERS 12

The Tigers claimed their first win and the biggest upset of the season to defeat the reigning premiers in the rain; Nathan Cleary had an opportunity to tie the game up only for Tigers rookie Jahream Bula to produce a match-defining tackle

Tigers 12 (Wakeham, Nofoaluma tries. Wakeham 2/4 goals) Panthers 8 (Peachey try. Crichton 2/2 goals)

ROUND 10 - PANTHERS 18 v WARRIORS 6

Conceding an early try to the much-improved Warriors, coached by former Penrith assistant Andrew Webster, the Panthers secured a hard-fought win with a late four-pointer to interchange prop Spencer Leniu. Panthers 18 (Edwards, To'o, Leniu tries, Cleary 3/4 goals)

ROUND 11 - PANTHERS 48 v ROOSTERS 4

Returning to the top of the premiership ladder with an emphatic victory on home soil, underrated forward Scott Sorenson announced himself as Viliame Kikau's heir apparent with a brace of tries.

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ROUND 12 - PANTHERS 15 v BRONCOS 4

In a top of the table clash kicking off the league's annual Indigenous Round, the class of Nathan Cleary shone through as the Broncos struggled to make an impression on the scorehoard without Adam Reynolds

FG) Broncos 4 (Cobbo try. Staggs 0/1 goal) ROUND 14 - PANTHERS 26 v DRAGONS 18

Nathan Cleary's week went from bad to worse when the NSW halfback suffered a calf injury that ruled him out for the rest of the Origin series: club debutant lack Cogger filled the breach in his NRL return with a classy try-assist to get the Panthers home.

Panthers 26 (To'o 2, Turuva, Leota tries. Crichton 4/5, Cleary 1/1 goals) Dragons 18 (Ravalawa 2, Lomax tries.

ROUND 15 - PANTHERS 30 v ROOSTERS 6

Having dismantled their eastern suburbs rivals at home a month earlier, the men from the west did likewise on the road as Roosters-bound prop Spencer Leniu had the last laugh over Jared Waerea-Hargreaves. Crichton 5/6 goals) Roosters 6 (Tedesco try. Keary 1/1 goal)

ROUND 16 - PANTHERS 23 v COWBOYS 27

Standing tall without their representative stars prior to Origin II, the Panthers went beyond 80 minutes but couldn't prevent an individual piece of brilliance from Scott Drinkwater in golden point. tries. Townsend 3/4 goals. Townsend FG) Panthers 23 (Tago

2, Salmon, Jenkins tries. Cogger 3/5 goals. Cogger FG)

ROUND 17 - PANTHERS 20 v KNIGHTS 12

The decision to back the club's depth reaped rewards for the Panthers as rejuvenated utility Tyrone Peachey crossed for a double to put the Knights' season on life support. Panthers 20 (Peachey 2, Edwards, Salmon tries. Cogger 2/4 goals) Knights 12 (Ponga, Hastings tries. Hastings 2/2 goal)

ROUND 18 - PANTHERS 34 v STORM 16

Clawing back a 0-14 deficit to run out emphatic victors away ROUND 26 - PANTHERS 18 v EELS 32 from home, pundits declared it was only a matter of who the Panthers would beat on grand final day to claim a third straight premiership.

Panthers 34 (Tago 2, Crichton, Martin, Hosking, To'o tries. Crichton 5/6 goals) Storm 16 (H. Grant, Asofa-Solomona tries. Meaney 4/4 goals)

ROUND 20 - PANTHERS 24 v DOLPHINS 14

Establishing an early lead only for a few nervous moments to arise when Hamiso Tabuai-Fidow put the Dolphins in front in the 55th minute, a brace of tries to rookie Thomas Jenkins got the Panthers out of jail against the league's newest team.

Panthers 24 (Tago 2, Jenkins 2, Leota tries. Edwards 2/2, Cogger 0/3 goals) Dolphins 14 (Nikorima, Lemuelu, Tabuai-Fidow tries. Isaako 1/3 goals)

ROUND 21 - PANTHERS 44 v BULLDOGS 18

Tearing their undermanned opponents to shreds with a 24-0 lead inside the opening quarter, Nathan Cleary made a successful return from injury as the Panthers geared up for another run towards September.

Garner tries. Cleary 6/8 goals) Bulldogs 18 (Alamoti, Averillo, Skelton tries. Burton 3/3 goals)

ROUND 22 - PANTHERS 28 v SHAKRS 0 Holding their long-standing rivals to nil for the third time since both clubs joined the league in 1967, the Panthers could have piled on even more points if not for the Sharks brave goal line defence.

Panthers 28 (Luai, Yeo, To'o, Turuva, Martin tries. Cleary 4/5 goals) Sharks 0

ROUND 23 - PANTHERS 26 v STORM 6

Snapping into gear with three first half tries after conceding the opening four-pointer, the Panthers were far too strong for a Storm side missing several of their primary attacking players.

ROUND 24 - PANTHERS 24 v SEA EAGLES 12

Facing a Manly side fighting to stay in touch with the top eight, the Panthers held their nerve in a match that saw reserve grade hooker Luke Sommerton make his NRL debut. Panthers 24 (Crichton 2. Turuva, To'o tries, Cleary 4/5

ROUND 25 - PANTHERS 40 v TITANS 14

Exposing the gap in class between the premiership contenders and also-rans, the Panthers soared home with three late tries to turn a close contest into a one-way affair Panthers 40 (Edwards 2, Yeo, Peachey, Jenkins, Martin, Crichton tries. Cleary 6/7 goals) Titans 14 (Haas, Khan-Pereira, D. Fifita tries. Campbell 1/3 goals)

A shoulder injury to Jarome Luai sent a shockwave across the entire league as the Panthers hopes of going three-in-arow were dealt a major blow; the Eels closed out a season of missed opportunities on a positive note with former Penrith lower grader Maika Sivo bagging four tries. Eels 32 (Sivo 4. Gutherson 2 tries, Gutherson 4/6, Brown

0/1 goal) Panthers 18 (Peachey, Cleary, Martin, Jenkins

ROUND 27 - PANTHERS 44 v COWBOYS 12

Securing their third minor premiership in four years after Brisbane paid the price for resting players two nights earlier, the premiers were on song in attack to the delight of the Penrith faithful.

Sommerton, Cleary tries. Cleary 6/8 goals) Cowboys 12 (Neame, Laybutt tries. Drinkwater 2/2 goals)

QUALIFYING FINAL - PANTHERS 32 v WARRIORS 6

Securing a week off with a clinical performance played before a sell-out crowd at the foot of the mountains. Nathan Cleary orchestrated the victory to perfection with a personally tally of 16 points.

PRELIMINARY FINAL - PANTHERS 38 v STORM 4

larome Luai successfully returned from injury on a historic night which saw the Panthers record their biggest ever win in finals football enroute to a fourth straight premiership

decider. 7/8 goals) Storm 4 (Olam try. Meaney 0/1 goal)