The State of Origin

by Sean Burke

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The State of Origin is described as 'sport's greatest rivalry', and is the yearly best of three series of rugby league football between the Queensland Maroons and the New South Wales Blues. The competition dates back as far as 1908- since the very beginnings of Australian rugby league.

Representing different teams from Australia, the competitors play for the title of State of Origin champion. The event is as big as the US Super Bowl and is considered the highest level of rugby played in the world. The event is also a competition for the individual players, who each have the chance of winning the Wally Lewis Medal for best player of the match or series. This is a major honour in the world of Australian sport- equivalent to the Heisman Trophy in American collegiate football.

The NRL (National Rugby League) is expected to kick off in Melbourne in summer 2012 after 2011 marked 30 years of the State of Origin with a big win by reigning champions, Queensland. The teams hold close competition though, with New South Wales having won 40 matches and 12 series and Queensland in a marginal lead with 43 match wins and 13 series wins. With the two teams being so closely ranked, it's difficult to know which side will pull away with the victory come match day.

Players are selected to play for the state for which they played their first senior rugby league career. In previous years, they were chosen on a basis of where they were playing their club football at any given time. Before 1982, each team would collect its players from the teams within their state, giving little consideration to the origin or background of the players themselves. Following this, however, a surge in interstate football took place and the rules began to change.

As can be expected, there is always a hot debate over where the final should be held, with 28% of almost 1000 men saying that they think the final should be held in Melbourne and 19% suggesting the final should be held in New South Wales, according to recent reward surveys. Despite this, the survey also found that over 50% of Australian's donâ€™t mind (the majority being female). With that in mind, many Australians eagerly await their favourite sporting event and with tickets on sale already, they are expecting to pull in crowds of more than 60, 000 people.

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