

Up close and personal

An interview with Donny Singe, Head Strength and Condition Coach for the Manly Sea Eagles

Few of us get a chance to see what goes on within an elite team. Director of Cadence Health, Leanne Cooper managed to steal a few minutes of Donny Singe's time and take a quick foray into his world.



Donny Singe with son Zach after the grand final win in 2008

What is your best accomplishment over the 8 years you have been with the Sea Eagles?

Team wise the biggest achievement is having fine-tuned the overall training volume and recovery methods to maximise our performance week-in, week-out.

Personally, the premiership win in 2008 was unforgettable, premierships don't come easy and it was a massive achievement for every one of us who was involved with the team.

Plus, working with the Maori side in 2008 and also the NZ national side. I am very honoured to have worked with so many talented people.

You are coming up for 10 years with the Eagles; are you still as passionate about your job as you were when Dessy first bought you back from Japan to join him in 03?

Definitely! The competitive work environment means that the challenges I face change constantly, it's very motivating! Also, that we have a clear start and finish to our season and to each week makes it refreshing, every week we have a new opponent who brings with them new challenges.

Of all the players you have had under your wing, who do you feel you got the greatest reward from?

I would probably have to say Georgie Rose. He went from being an 8-minute on-field player to being able to play 25 minutes in any one on-field time. I watched him literally become an NRL player, I was very proud to have been his trainer and proud of him.

Of all the boys, who gives you the most angst?

Choc! He won't mind me saying this. Physically Choc [Anthony Watmough] is everything you could ask for in an athlete; natural ability, strong, powerful, fast, agile, all those physical attributes you would want for in a player. But, mentally Choc gives all he has in that 80-minute game and the rest of the week he is a lunatic (albeit a lovable one).

What part of the work environment at the Sea Eagles do you enjoy the most?

The stability of the coaching crew. Dessy, Andre [physio], Geoff, the doc, all of us, we have a very strong bond. We are all highly professional, brutally honest, but willing to learn from each other, we have the utmost respect for each other.

What do you find the most challenging aspect to your role?

Probably just maintaining the mental focus with the day-in NRL schedule, it's gruelling and by the end of the season we are all generally totally spent and ready for a reprieve from footy.

What 'stone remains unturned' for you?

More premierships, back to back premierships particularly. Also to dominate the NRL for a period of time and being in the top four for an extended period of time.

Who, other than the Sea Eagles, do you respect in the NRL?

That would have to be the Melbourne Storm (even despite the salary cap issues). They are consistently great performers, have mental strength, speed, power, total professionalism from woe-to-go, day in day out!

How do you feel the players have changed their attitudes towards nutrition and its role in performance?

It's changed substantially since I started out with Manly Rugby Union back in 1993. Players have so much more knowledge now, they are informed and they understand basic nutrition and how protein, fat and carbs work. They're no longer scared or put off by dietitians and the boys are more willing to work with them, consequently they're more compliant. Another area of change has been supplements; players are well and truly beyond the 'more is better' attitude and take a tailored approach to supplements.

Do you enjoy running in the Orange Shirt?

I really do! It keeps me involved in the game and as the motivator in the team I am able to drive the boys to a degree from the field. I put in the kilometres though, on average 8 kilometres a game according to my GPS, so I do the yards with the boys as much as I can!

Just on that, can you still keep up with the boys?

Strength and endurance-wise yes; but power-wise is another issue, plus the repeatability isn't their, but it's still greater than the average person's. I can still wrestle most of them to the ground, and Dessy gives us all a run for our money, mad man that he is!

Thanks Don, that was a great insight!
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Donny's ebook on How to Become a Sports Trainer is available on his site (www.donnysinge.com.au) or from Cadence Health.

