

## The Greatest Rugby Player of Cook's Hill Surf Club – Syd Malcolm

**John Ramsland, Hon. Club historian**

One of the greatest rugby stars between the two wars was Cook's Hill lifesaver Sydney James Malcolm, born in Merewether on 10 December 1903. He died in 1987. His playing weight was 10stone 6 lbs (66kg). He was captain of the Cook's Hill SLS rugby football team when they won the Newcastle Premiership in 1927 when he was 24 years of age, already a mature halfback and leader.

Malcolm is considered by all Rugby Union experts as one of the greatest rugby halves ever. He was strong, mercurial and gutsy with the rare ability to read a match at a glance. In a twinkling, he could spot an opening and go through it. At the Sydney Cricket Ground in an international match against the powerful all-conquering British Lions, he beat three backs, and then went round the fullback to score a marvellous try to give Australia a rare 6-5 win. His tackling was relentless.

After working in Ipswich, Queensland, in the early 1920s where he played Rugby League, he returned home to take up the reins of the captaincy of Cook's Hill SLSC football team. Soon after the local winter season, he and Queenslander Tommy Lawton were the only players in the Waratahs that toured Britain, France and North America in 1927-28 who did not play for a Sydney Club. Injured early, Malcolm played 11 matches for the Waratahs, 3 of them internationals.



(left: with fellow Australian player Tom Perin, 1931)

(below: 1927-28 – tour of Great Britain and France)



He developed on the tour as a player of the highest class and returned to captain a strong Australian tour in New Zealand in 1931. He played 7 of the 10 matches, including internationals at Wellington and Dunedin against the All Blacks and the international match against the Maoris in Wellington (all tests).

Malcolm played the first of his 28 matches for NSW representative Rugby (Waratahs) with the Cook's Hill SLSC premiership recently under his belt. This was to be the first of his 13 games against Queensland. His greatest triumph was in 1929 when he was Australia's star player in Australia's 3-nil defeat of the All Blacks in Australia. Then he played for Australia against the British Lions in 1930.



First Bledisloe Cup Test – Syd Malcolm breaks through

He went on the first South African tour in 1933. He was injured but played strongly in the last two tests, thus confirming his reputation. In 1934, he was in the two Australian teams against New Zealand in which Australia won the Bledisloe Cup. He gave his finest displays of all in the first test that was won 25-11. Later he again played League for a few years in Queensland, but then played 59 first grade Rugby Union matches in the Sydney Competition (6 with YMCA; 12 with Glebe-Balmain,; 41 for Manly leading them to the Sydney premiership in 1932). Malcolm worked in Sydney as an oil company representative for many years.

Extraordinarily, Malcolm was one of three rugby test captains that Cook's Hill SLSC has produced. After the Second World War, outstanding utility back Dr Dick Tooth captained the Wallabies in 1957; played 10 tests for Australia and was one of the most versatile backs that Australia has ever produced. Clive Churchill captained the Kangaroo team in Rugby League on many occasions. He has been called the greatest, most brilliant fullback that the code has ever produced.