

SUBJECT: LMM 27/09/22 – NRLW LORD MAYORAL CHALLENGE

MOTION:

That City of Newcastle:

- 1 Congratulates the Newcastle Knights Women's NRL team for progressing to the Grand Final on Sunday 2 October and wishes them the best of luck as they take on the Parramatta Eels;
- 2 Would welcome the honour of hosting a celebratory Civic Reception for the Newcastle Knights NRLW Team at City Hall;
- 3 Accepts the challenge from Cr Donna Davis, Lord Mayor of the City of Parramatta to wear the winning NRL team's jersey in the Council Chambers at the next Ordinary Council Meeting following the NRLW match.

BACKGROUND

Knights book Grand Final spot after stunning Dragons at Suncorp

The Newcastle Knights have capped off a remarkable turnaround season, stunning the Dragons 30-6 and booking a spot in the 2022 Telstra Women's Premiership Grand Final.

After failing to win a game in their inaugural season earlier this year, the new-look Knights stood up with stoic defence at Suncorp Stadium on Sunday, staking their claim as certified premiership contenders.



A double for fullback Tamika Upton provided the spark for the Knights while the forward combination of Millie Boyle and Caitlan Johnston laid the platform in both attack and defence for the girls in red and blue.

The Knights opened the scoring in the fifth minute when returning fullback Upton powered over the line to score, putting to bed any doubts of injury concerns.

Four minutes later Newcastle went further ahead when Boyle barged over several Dragons defenders to cross the stripe and extend the lead 12-0.

But the Dragons hit back in the 12th minute when a misguided Newcastle pass coming out of yardage was intercepted by St George speedster Teagan Berry who ran 20 metres to score and reduce the deficit 12-6.

Two minutes before half time it was Newcastle five-eighth Kira Dibb who spotted a hole in the Red V's defensive line and scooted from dummy half to score her first try in red and blue and bring the scoreline 18-6 at the break.

The second half saw the Dragons' handed repeated attacking sets on their goal line, but the Knights' desperate defence repeatedly turned the Red V away despite their greater share of possession and field position.

Former Rooster Kiana Takairangi added her name to the scoresheet with 15 minutes to play and the Knights were well on the way to their maiden NRLW Grand Final appearance.

Match Snapshot

- Dragons centre Teagan Berry has scored 10 tries in 14 NRLW appearances.
- Upton is the first Knights NRLW player to score two tries in one match.
- Knights prop Millie Boyle was enormous for the winning side, racking up 233 run metres and 28 tackles.
- Boyle has averaged 180 run metres per game this season.
- It was a day out for the fullbacks who combined racked up 461 run-metres, Emma Tonegato (244) and Upton (217).

Play of the Game

After Newcastle spent the first 20 minutes of the second half defending their try line, fullback Tamika Upton crushed any hopes of a St George Illawarra Grand Final when the athletic No. 1 scooted from dummy half and darted her way through four defenders to put the game out of reach. Upton returned to the field this week after resting for the last two weeks from a calf issue.

The Queensland Origin representative capped a sizzling semi-final performance with two tries, 217 run-metres and 11 tackle breaks.

What they Said

"We tried hard. I'm always proud of the girls. I think getting to the semi-finals against a side like Newcastle, at stages there the game was on, we just tried a little bit too hard I think. It was a try (Emma Tonegato's), she still had her finger on it...Newcastle were great and it's going to be a great Grand Final next week whoever they play...but that was a try. I don't know why we took three minutes to look at it. In the box it was a try for five minutes and it wasn't a try for the next three." - **Dragons coach Jamie Soward.**

"Certainly extremely pleased. One of our assistant coaches spoke about that period of time on our line where we just kept turning them away. The big thing for us is every week we've wanted

a performance that our community, club, family and team can be proud of and we've done that without fail and that's all today was, it showed in spades out there today.
There are probably times where we ask a fair bit of Millie (Boyle), particularly defensively but then she has two carries a set so it was quite possible the bravest performance I've seen from a middle front-rower captain." – **Knights coach Ron Griffiths.**

ATTACHMENTS

Nil