

Tom Magnus

.... played mainly Reserve Grade in 1929 but made his First Grade debut with Balmain in August of that year, with newspaper reports indicating that he made a solid showing. His form continued into the trial matches of 1930, but an injured knee kept him out of the opening competition rounds.

In a match against Central Newcastle at the Sports Ground in April 1930, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that; "before half time Magnus, who was playing a brilliant game, had scored a further two tries." In another trial match a few days earlier he had scored three tries against St George.

Promising winger, MAGNUS, who was kept out of last Saturday's opening competition round with an injured knee, will be compelled to rest for about five or six weeks. It is bad luck for the black and golds, which looked like having a real find in this young player.

Evening News 30 April 1930

Tom returned to the top Grade and by July the Labor Daily newspaper was speculating about the selection of an Australian "Colts" team that might take on the New Zealand national side. Tom was nominated for a wing position with Wests Alan Brady on the other wing.

The Colts team would have included the best up and coming talent in the Sydney competition with names such as Jack Why, Norm Pope, Hans Mork, Joe Pearce and Wests forward, Charlie Cornwell.

The news article noted that the wingers, Magnus and Brady are very fast, and had Magnus not been injured earlier in the season, he probably would have won a spot in the Metropolitan team that played NSW Country.

New Zealand, although not a great side, would make our youngsters show all their wares.
Writer suggests the following Colts' thirteen:—

FULL-BACK:
A. Righton (South Sydney).

THREE-QUARTERS:
A. Magnus (Balmain).
J. Why (South Sydney).
H. Hawkes (Newcastle).
A. Brady (Western Suburbs).

HALVES:
N. Pope (Eastern Suburbs).
H. Mork (Newtown).

FORWARDS:
J. Rodgers (Eastern Suburbs).
J. Pearce (Eastern Suburbs).
F. O'Connor (South Sydney).
C. Cornwell (Western Suburbs).
A. Duncan (Newcastle).
J. Davies (Newtown).

The above team would make the New Zealand play great football to win.
Each colt has done many fine things in the present season.

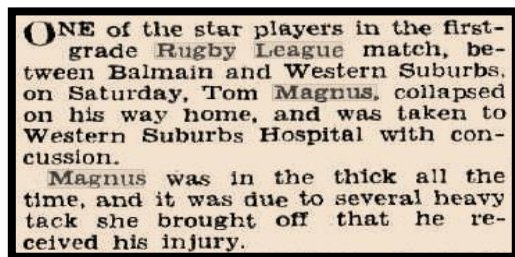
The wingers, Magnus and Brady, are very fast. Magnus was injured early in the year, otherwise he would probably have gained a place in the Metropolitan team to play the Country.

Labor Daily 24 July 1930

Tom had a fairly successful 1930 season, however he once again was sidelined with an ankle injury in the closing rounds. He did come back to make an appearance with Balmain's Reserve Grade team in a semi final against South Sydney.

He again started the 1931 season in good form and made his way into the First grade team, however he played his last First Grade game for Balmain on 27 June 1931. In a tough match against Wests he was involved in several heavy tackles and suffered concussion resulting in his hospitalisation.

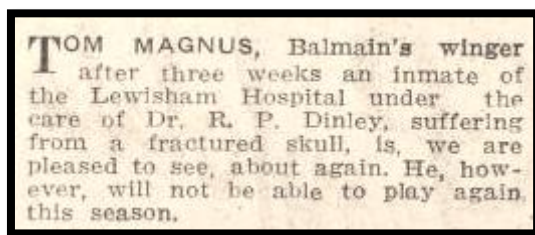
This injury was more serious than originally thought as the Rugby League News reported on 25 July 1931, that Tom Magnus had spent three weeks in Lewisham Hospital suffering from a fractured skull.



ONE of the star players in the first-grade Rugby League match, between Balmain and Western Suburbs, on Saturday, Tom Magnus, collapsed on his way home, and was taken to Western Suburbs Hospital with concussion.

Magnus was in the thick all the time, and it was due to several heavy tackle she brought off that he received his injury.

Daily Telegraph 29 June 1931



TOM MAGNUS, Balmain's winger after three weeks an inmate of the Lewisham Hospital under the care of Dr. R. P. Dinley, suffering from a fractured skull, is, we are pleased to see, about again. He, however, will not be able to play again this season.

RLN 25 July 1931

Tom's career took a different turn in 1932. The annals of the North Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club gives an account of his life beyond the football field and provides clues as to how Tom ended up in the western suburbs, and why he would have played with Wests.

Narrabeen is in the northern beaches area of Sydney and provided a complete contrast to the urban/industrial environment of inner city suburbs such as Balmain of the 1930's and 1940's. Narrabeen at that time was fairly remote with few permanent residents and with its natural beauty provided an escape (at least for a week-end) for city dwellers. It was said that more than 70% of the Narrabeen population on weekends during the 1930's were non-residents.

In the book "The Beach Comes First", which is a history of the Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club, it was noted that the 1920's and 30's were "the golden years" due to a combination of the Club's outstanding competition achievements and its wonderful social life.

Members were from all walks of life, with no distinction between the reasonably wealthy and middle class business people and the working class battlers. They came mainly from the crowded suburbs around Sydney, and all of them felt that Narrabeen was their own special paradise. Reaching Narrabeen often meant a long and complicated commute by train, tram and ferry as very few had motor vehicles in those days.

The Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club had connections to the Western Suburbs before Tom Magnus's time there. Roy Liston who became a Life Member and was a Club Captain in the early 1920's, was one of the first recipients of a Bronze Medallion.

Ken Sherwood was another member who was part of the Narrabeen SLSC March Past Australian Championship team in 1928-29. Bill Cerutti, Parramatta rugby union and Australian Wallaby was in the team in 1927-28, while Bill Keato's uncle was an ambulance officer at the Club.

Tom was first recorded as a member in the 1929-30 season. At the age of 19 he received his Bronze Medallion and took an active part in life saving activities. That season the life savers conducted

eighty three rescues with line and belt and another twenty one rescues when conditions were adverse. In 1930-31 Tom received his Instructors Certificate and was one of six Instructors that supervised the Club's Bronze Medallion candidates.

Tom Magnus had exceptional speed, so it was no surprise to see him take out the Senior Beach Sprint Score for the 1930-31 season. North Narrabeen over the years have had some exceptional sprinters including Johnny Bliss.

In the club competitions, cups were donated and presented for the yearly point score. They were presented as follows:

Senior Surf Race Point Score, Jack King first, Tas King second
Junior Surf Race Point Score, Gordon MacArthur first
Senior Beach Sprint Score, Tom Magnus first, Ken Harding second.

T. Magnus, the Balmain League winger, ran away with the beach sprint at North Narrabeen yesterday.

Daily Pictorial 24 November 1930

Tom also became Club Treasurer of the Narrabeen SLSC in 1930-31, but it was also noteworthy that he received a Meritorious Award for Bravery along with two other Club members as a result of a shark attack at the beach outside of patrol hours.

Warren Barnes, son of the President Pop Barnes; Tom Magnus, a great Rugby League player for West Sydney, and Jack Barrett would later receive a Meritorious Award for bravery in a shark attack at the beach out of patrol hours.

Source: The Beach Comes First

Tom only had a short term with the North Narrabeen Surf Life Saving Club, as the late 1920's and early 1930's was impacted by the Great Depression, when many were out of work and life became so much more difficult.

It is known that members of the Narrabeen SLSC had an association with the Good Year Tyre Factory at Granville, and it is likely that Tom was able to secure work through this connection. It is also known that he was a Rubber Worker in 1933 and that he played rugby league for the Good Year works team in 1934. This also required a move from the inner city to Croydon in the heart of Western Suburbs territory.

Tom Magnus first trialled with Wests at Granville at the start of the 1932 season. He played well in the pre-season games, however Wests had plenty of quality outside backs including Alan Ridley and Alan Brady on the wings with Frank McMillan at full-back. There weren't many games missed by the three players mentioned and so Tom Magnus was limited to six Reserve Grade and two Third Grade games in his first year at Wests.

Magnus, who showed some promise with Balmain two seasons ago, was in one of the West teams.

Labor Daily 14 March 1932

In 1933 Tom Magnus faced a similar situation to the one he encountered the year before. Wests once again had Alan Brady, Alan Ridley and Les Midson making strong claims on the wing position.

The 1933 season was one of turmoil and opportunity, with Wests Kangaroo representatives leaving for England mid-season. Wests suddenly had a problem filling the fullback position and several players were given the opportunity to fill this role including Dick Davis, Sid Elliott, and Sid Palmer, but it wasn't until round eleven that Tom Magnus had his opportunity.

For the fourth week in succession Wests has a new full-back. T. Magnus, a newcomer to first grade, has now been given the job.

Daily Telegraph 26 July 1933

Tom had previous experience at fullback and played well enough to retain his spot in First Grade until the end of the season. He also played in Wests top grade on a trip to Armidale and in the end of season night series. Tom was returning to the form that he showed when playing for Balmain and it was evident that he hadn't lost any of his speed. In a mid-year rugby league carnival he teamed up with Les Midson, Billy Knowles and Dick Davis to win the 440 yards relay for Wests.

RUNNING EVENTS
100 Yards (for Forwards).—E. Bennett (N. Sydney) 1, W. Knowles (W.S.) 2, A. Smith (Newtown) 3. Time 11.
100 Yards (for Backs).—F. Tottey (E.S.) 1, G. Bennett (N. Sydney) 2, L. Brennan (St. G.) 3. Time 10½.
440 Yards Relay.—Western Suburbs (T. Magnus, L. Midson, W. Knowles, R. Davis) 1, South Sydney 2, St. George 3.

The Sun 18 June 1933

By the start of 1934, Tom Magnus was 23 years old and still had a lot of football ahead of him. He played for Wests in the pre-season trials and then one Reserve Grade game before retiring completely from Grade football. He did continue to play that season with the Good Year rugby league team in the Business Houses competition. Tom captained the team which went on to be undefeated in the A Grade competition.



Good Year Rugby League Team - Business Houses Competition 1934

Back: H Wilkins (Selector), Sweeney, Hughes, Kelly, Maher, Watt, J Carroll (Selector)

Middle: McDonald, Connell, Magnus (C), Lawes

Front: Bean, Hackett, Miller, Gwynne

There is no further record of Tom Magnus playing rugby league after 1934. During his career he played fifteen First Grade games for Balmain and another four with Wests. He played nineteen lower grade games with Wests and an unknown number of lower grade games with Balmain. Tom was a speedy teenage sensation making his grade debut at a very young age, however he suffered a number of injuries early in his career, which appeared to disrupt his journey to higher honours.

By 1936 Tom Magnus was living in Melbourne, Victoria, and still described himself as a Rubber Worker. It is not known whether he located there as a result of a transfer with his employer, Good Year or whether he relocated independently and found work in an industry that he knew.

The next recording of Thomas Magnus was in 1949 which saw him living in Macleay St Darlinghurst in the heart of Sydney's night life district. It is likely that Tom Magnus changed his occupation some time during the period of the Second World War. He and his wife moved to the northern beaches suburb of Narrabeen soon after where they ran the Windmill Cabaret and Cafe at French's Forest.

Sydney Restauranteur for Surfers
The "Tahiti" Coffee Lounge in Hanlan Street, Surfers Paradise, was re-opened this week by Sydney Restauranteur and Caterer Mr. Tom Magnus, and his wife Bonnie.
Mr. Magnus formerly conducted the Windmill Cabaret and Cafe at

French's Forrest, Sydney. With "Tahiti" Mr. Magnus intends to feature the private swimming pool by arranging service for afternoon teas, etc., at the pool side. This service may later be extended to meals.
The Coffee Lounge will open for breakfasts at 8 a.m. and remain open until 11 p.m. for late suppers.

NOW OPEN
8 A.M. — 11 P.M. DAILY
The TAHITI COFFEE LOUNGE
HANLAN STREET
SURFERS' PARADISE
for all meals
Italian — Swedish — Australian
Proprietors: Tom and Bonnie Magnus
(Late "Windmill Cabaret & Cafe", Sydney)

South Coast News (Queensland) 11 December 1954

In December 1954 Tom Magnus moved to Surfers Paradise in Queensland where he became the proprietor of the Tahiti Coffee Lounge. He became a prominent businessman on the Gold Coast and was President of the Surfers Paradise Lions Club.



Tom Magnus - President Surfers Paradise Lions Club 1957

Tom Magnus lived the remainder of his life on Queensland's Gold Coast and died at Surfers Paradise in January 1987.