

Wayne Bennett

Born on New Year's Day in 1950 he is among the most successful rugby league coaches of all time.

Now at the St George Dragons, he led the Brisbane Broncos from their inception to dominance of the NRL. A former policeman, he has also coached Australia and Queensland, and even provided Kiwis coach Stephen Kearney with assistance when New Zealand won the Rugby League World Cup.

He is equally famous for his taciturn manner, reluctance to smile and straight-shooting. What is less well-known is that his alcoholic father deserted the family when Wayne was just 11. Four years later he was already working as a policeman.

An avowed non-smoker, drinker or gambler, Bennett played his own football as a winger and represented Queensland seven times between 1971 and 1972. He also played two tour matches for Australia on the 1972 tour of New Zealand before playing in England for Huddersfield.

In 1986 Bennett made his coaching debut for Queensland at State of Origin and even though the Maroons were beaten 3-0 he was retained as coach for two more years.

In 1987 he moved to the Winfield Cup Premiership as co-coach of the Canberra Raiders, who lost the grand final to Manly 18-8, but Bennett won that year's State of Origin.

He was appointed to be the first coach of the Brisbane Broncos when the club was formed in 1998, the same year his Queensland side white-washed NSW 3-0, but Bennett quit his rep side to focus on the Broncos.

The Broncos won back-to-back premierships in 1992-93 and in 1994 he was awarded the Order of Australia. The following year he was back as Queensland coach but pulled out when players aligned with the Super were refused selection.

Bennett resumed rep coaching in 1998 with Queensland and was also given the honour of coaching Australia when he replaced Bob Fulton.

He won his fourth premiership with the Broncos in 1998 and his fifth in 2000, and returned again to State of Origin level in 2001, famously recalling Allen Langer to the Maroons for the deciding third game, which Queensland won.

In 2006 he became only the second person – after Tim Sheens - to coach 500 premiership games. He also signed on to continue coaching the Broncos for a further two years. His sixth premiership made him the most successful finals coach in history.

In 2007 he was made a life member of the Broncos but refused to make an acceptance speech and in February 2008 he quit the club. That year he also became assistant coach and advisor to Kearney, who was preparing for the centenary test against the Kangaroos. Bennett was retained for the world cup, which the Kiwis won.

The Bennett era at St George saw him return to Suncorp in 2009 with the Dragons and for the first time coach against the club he helped build. St. George beat the Broncos convincingly

Wayne is also known for his unemotional approach and TV coverage of NRL matches typically shows him sternly watching the game without any signs of emotion, and Bennett has also stated openly that he hates the media commitments of a coach.

He will give in-depth interviews but has also been known to be hostile to the press, avoid questions and even refuse to answer them. So to have him here is a great coup.

But there is also much more to the man than many people know.

His brother Bob coached New Guinea, his wife Trish is the sister of his former teammate and one-time Kangaroo captain Greg Veivers. Wayne has won a Queensland Father of the Year award for helping raise two of his children with disabilities. When he appeared on Australian Story on ABC in 2001 to talk about his family life it was one of the most popular programmes in the show's history. He has published his biography *Don't Die With the Music In You* – which has become one of the best selling books about rugby league in history. Bennett's second book, *The Man in the Mirror* was released in 2008 just after the Kiwis' World Cup triumph.

What they say about him...

"If you want to be mentally tough, do as Wayne Bennett says: Follow your beliefs and don't give in to yourself." - **Steve Waugh**

"He stands below Jack Gibson, which is somewhere just above God." – **Roy Masters**

"Wayne Bennett and Queensland go hand in hand... I enjoy coaching against quality coaches, and Wayne Bennett is that." – **Phil Gould**

"I don't know how he does it. He's like a father to all the players and anyone's got problems on or off the field he'll fix them if he can."

- **Allen Langer**

"He believes in himself and his players, and he always will." – **Darren Lockyer**

