

Round 1: Storm vs Tigers Preview

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STORM vs TIGERS PREVIEW Olympic Park, Melbourne
Friday 16th March 2007
Kick-off 7.30pm

166 days, and approximately 10 hours is how long we will have waited, when kick off finally arrives this Friday night. It will be the time when every moment of 2006 will truly be behind us and a new chapter can begin for the Melbourne Storm and all their fans. The Melbourne Storm now enter their 10th season in the NRL and a new rollercoaster of moments and events await us all.

Form:

Storm:

The Storm's form in 2006 was nothing short of spectacular. They finished the season as the minor premiers winning 20 of their 24 games and were 8 points clear of the 2nd placed Bulldogs. They were grand finalists narrowly losing in a heartbreaking grand final against the Brisbane Broncos.

The Storm's form the trials in 2007 bear a strong resemblance to their results in the trials in 2006. This year in their first trial they racked up a 32 to 6 victory against the new kids on the block the Titans, this was followed by a narrow 20 to 30 loss to the Manly Sea Eagles and a bruising 46 to nil defeat over the Broncos.

Tigers:

The Tigers were suffering from the dreaded grand final hangover having a poor season in 2006. Losing key playmaker Benji Marshall to a season ending shoulder injury and injuries to other key players including Brett Hodgson derailed the Tigers even further finishing outside the top 8 in 2006. The Tigers' results in the trials were not as promising either. Narrowly losing to the Roosters 4 to 10, followed by a victory over Queensland Cup team Souths Logan 20 to 10, and finishing up with a 4 to 26 loss to the Canberra Raiders.

History:

The Storm have won 9 out of 13 games against the Tigers and have won all six games against them at Olympic Park Take a Punt: My tips for the first try scorer would be Billy Slater, Anthony Quinn and Ryan Hoffman for the Storm and Paul Whatuira and Dean Collis for the Tigers. All eyes will be on the number 6's in this game. Inglis v Marshall, 2 of the most exciting players to watch in the NRL are sure to have everyone on the edge of their seats for the entire game. Benji Marshall makes his return to the NRL after suffering a season ending shoulder injury last year. He is a player full of class but expect him to be a bit rusty after such a long lay-off and a new half combination with John Morris.

Playing predominately in the centres and fullback last season, rising star Greg Inglis makes his debut in the number 6 jersey for the Storm partnering up with halfback Cooper Cronk. Another player that will be eagerly watched having caught everyone's eye in the trials this year will be the young Israel Folau who makes his first grade debut for the Storm on the wing. The Storm definitely have the upper hand heading into the game, playing their season opener at the Graveyard. The Storm boast one of the most imposing home ground records in the competition having only lost one game at home all last season. The Storm have the attacking prowess in players like Slater, Inglis and King to rattle the Tigers and rack up a big score. If they can replicate the defence they displayed in 2006, they are sure to contain anything that the Tigers will throw at them.

My Tip: Storm by 14 +