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# State of Origin II: NSW the architects of their own blues

ANALYSIS

By [Jon Healy](#)

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VIDEO: Queensland produced a stunning comeback to sink the Blues in Origin II (Photo: AAP) (ABC News)

Queensland produced a stunning effort to win State Of Origin II, but we have to talk about what on earth the Blues were doing in that game.

New South Wales had the game in hand, and they let it go.

How many times do they need to be told? If you give this Queensland side an inch they will take a mile.

Apparently the Blues decided that a Game I loss was like cutting Samson's hair and Johnathan Thurston, Billy Slater, Cameron Smith and Cooper Cronk were completely stripped of their class by the events of May 31.



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PHOTO: Queensland trailed 16-6 at the break and looked down and out. (AAP: David Moir)

Leading 16-6 at half-time, it looked like the Blues would run home, but not on a conveyor belt.

No, they needed to play the sort of game they played in the series opener — don't let up when the foot's on the throat, push down.

Instead, they got comfortable. Josh Dugan said as much.

"We sort of put the cue in the rack trying to defend the lead rather than play the footy that got us in front," he told the ABC.

He also admitted they "felt comfortable" with a 10-point lead at half-time.

It beggars belief.



PHOTO: The Maroons looked cooked at half-time, but there is no way the Blues should be thinking that way. (AAP: Paul Miller)

As much as Queensland's series-levelling victory was a vintage, never-say-die Queensland win, the mindset expressed by Dugan sounds like a parody of NSW's thought process pre-Mark Coyne, pre-Dane Carlaw, pre-Darren Lockyer in 2006.

But it was not simply a matter of thought process — the tactics were askew as well.

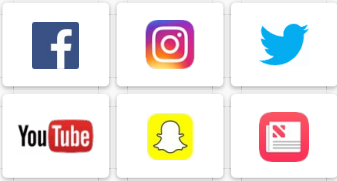
Running Tyson Frizell at Thurston, fresh off his injury lay-off, was a clear tactic in the first half and it worked a treat.

Not only did Frizell take ownership of that right corridor, he belted Queensland's saviour so regularly and with such ferocity that the champion five-eighth's already clipped right wing was all but cut off.

Before the first half-hour of the game was in the books, Thurston's right arm was about as useful in defence as a phantom limb.



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PHOTO: Johnathan Thurston looked shot to bits in defence, but was hardly singled out. (AAP: David Moir)

Every time he was called on to make a tackle he either struggled mightily or failed completely.

But, when Frizell left the field, the Blues apparently couldn't find any other members of their gargantuan forward pack to run at JT.

Skipper Boyd Cordner singled out Thurston once early in the second half, but that was about it.

Blues legend Andrew Johns was apoplectic after the game and may have burst a blood vessel when coach Laurie Daley told the Nine Network no messages came from the sidelines to send more traffic Thurston's way.

## A return to the Blues of old

Either as a result of (or perhaps simply on top of) those tactical errors came panic moves that this Blues team appeared to have outgrown after a couple of incredibly strong years.

The return of Jarryd Hayne gave the Blues access to one of the game's most dangerous attacking weapons, but also a huge fan of being 'the guy'.



PHOTO: Jarryd Hayne made a series of errors in the second half after a strong performance in the first half. (AAP: Paul Miller)

In the first half, he looked off a wide-open Brett Morris 10 metres from the tryline and was bundled into touch. No major problem, just a slight misread of the defence.

Then came the second half.

After Dane Gagai had scored the first of his two tries on the night, with the scores tight at 16-12, the Blues had the Maroons on the ropes yet again.

Queensland were aiming up, but NSW should be confident enough at this point in this series to know it doesn't have to score all its points in one go.

Not Hayne though. With the Maroons' up-and-in defence rushing his inside men, Hayne received a pass with a man absolutely on his hammer.







PHOTO: Boyd Cordner's side fell into old habits in the second half of Origin II. (AAP: Dan Himbrechts)

With tackles in the barrel, he needed to catch the ball, go to ground and trust the attack that had already scored 44 points inside two games could add four more with momentum on its side.

“ Instead, he tried a squatting, no-look, around-the-back flick pass at speed and under pressure to a man 10 metres away.

It would have been a miracle if the ball had hit its mark. It didn't.

To be clear, the Blues did not lose the game because of Hayne, but the second half of Origin II was a return to the sort Blues performance that has lost them so many series in the past decade.

And, with one of the biggest deciders in Origin history coming up in three weeks, it is not good enough if they want to end this Maroons dynasty with an unprecedented second win at Lang Park in one series.

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