

Australian Rugby Player Cory Paterson Kicks Up A Storm In US

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Article by: James Hooper

NEWCASTLE forward Cory Paterson has returned from a tour of American NFL clubs with an invitation to return from the Oakland Raiders.

Paterson was put through his paces as a potential NFL punter and retains a dream of one day changing codes and countries.

However, the 21-year-old has pledged his immediate future to the Knights after returning from a two-week tour with Australian NFL scouts OzPunt.

Paterson ventured to Dallas, Phoenix, San Francisco and Los Angeles and trialled with the Oakland Raiders NFL outfit in California.

What blew him away most was the sheer number of coaches and trainers at the Raiders, along with the size of their training fields, gymnasium and their overall organisation.

He was invited back by Oakland but a scheduled trial with the Arizona Cardinals was cancelled.

After returning home to Australia last Friday, Paterson ruled out an immediate switch to the NFL.

"I was never going over there to sign anything, I was always just going over there for a look - that's what I did," Paterson said.

"It opened my eyes a lot. In the future, I would like to go over there and have a look at having a go - but at the moment the NRL is my passion. I still want to achieve as much as I can here before I try and go and do anything over there.

"But the set-ups there were just awesome.

"There's a coach or a trainer for everything. Oakland had, like, 85 staff working for them.

"You'd ask a question and they were pointing you off to some other expert."

As revealed in *The Sunday Telegraph* last March, Paterson was identified as a potential superbout during a Knights trial in Cessnock last February.

Between touring NFL facilities and general sightseeing, Paterson attended colleges and met kicking gurus, including the coach regarded as the Graham Arnold or Daryl Halligan of the NFL - Gary Zauner - in Phoenix.

The session resulted in the long-time NFL guru posting a blog singing Paterson's potential, yet also pinpointing some weaknesses.

"Later in the lesson I introduced Cory to the one-step drill. He struggled early because he tried to just mash the ball," Zauner wrote.

"We emphasised and worked on technique and he quickly made a couple of adjustments.

"He nailed a couple of kicks down the middle.

"Once again Cory was a quick study and did it exactly like I wanted him to and he nailed another kick right

down the middle.

"However, this kick had better elevation and a better rotation."

Other highlights of Paterson's trip included a couple of beers with actor Sean Penn in San Francisco.

Paterson's father, Don, appeared in the documentary *The Third Wave*, which Penn directed and helped fund.

"It was great, Sean's a good bloke. I also went to Alcatraz, too, which was awesome," Paterson said.

"The food almost got me though, everything is just massive. I had to portion myself otherwise I would have put on 10 kilos."

The only problem was the airline lost his bags in transit to the US. Paterson spent his first three days in Dallas minus boots, but that didn't stop him from punting an NFL ball with college kicking gurus.