

A photograph of Cameron Smith, captain of the Melbourne Storm, sitting on a blue podium and holding the NRL premiership cup. He is wearing a dark blue and purple Storm jersey with 'SUZUKI' and 'Kia' logos. The background shows a blurred crowd of spectators.

OUR STRAIGHT MATES

With Matthew Myers

Storming ahead!

Lifting the NRL premiership cup above your head is no small feat. Melbourne Storm captain Cameron Smith tells Matthew Myers about leading Australia's number one rugby league team and what goes on in the locker rooms.

DNA: How does it feel to lead such a high-ranking team?

Cameron Smith: It's a huge honour. To see my name next to a lot of players that I've always admired is weird. And I was made captain when I was only a young bloke, at 25. But there's a lot of work involved, which people don't realise, such as off-field with sponsors and all the NRL commitments interstate.

Does it ever feel like an army?

Yeah, it does, because I'm the leader of a group and below me are the senior players. Those two groups combined help run the side, then all the young blokes are what you'd probably call the infantry, with all their hard work on the field.

And you'd have to be tough, too.

At times, yeah. It's a little bit hard when you get young blokes into the system and they don't know the ropes. The best way to sort them out is to be hard on them straight away and they learn quickly enough. But I get a lot of help from the senior players.

You've captained two of Storm's premiership wins. Do you ever pinch yourself?

Mate, I actually do! When you're a young boy

I'm pretty sure you are – Hot Aussie Footy Players Shirtless comes to mind.

[Laughing] I might have to ask Billy Slater about that one because he checks it weekly to see if there're any updates of himself on there.

Anthony Quinn told us Cooper Cronk goes on gay sites to see what players are on there.

Yeah, I've been told Cooper gets on there.

Do you have any gay mates?

Well, there's the great Molly Meldrum. He's a great mate of all of ours at the Storm and obviously a great ambassador. I've known him for a number of years now and he's a great guy.

You're a good looking guy and plenty of women fancy you, but what do you think of gay guys also thinking you're hot?

I'm not sure if gay blokes would be attracted to me. If they are, I have no problem with that.

But you are good looking. Hasn't anyone offered you a modelling contract?

I appreciate that, but no I've never done that or thought about it. That's more for the Slaters and the Cronks. I'd have to get some practice walking the catwalk.

Not even underwear sponsorship?

No, I guess I've got more of a rugged look. It would have to be shaving or something. I've got a bit of a five o'clock shadow. Mate, I need a shave every bloody two hours.

What do you think the reaction would be like these days if a player came out?

Well mate, I don't think there would be too

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playing footy, all you want to do is play in a grand final and lift up the premiership trophy. When I lifted it for the first time in 2007, I thought, 'Jeez, I've just fulfilled a lifelong dream!' To do it again last year was a bonus.

Is it odd seeing yourself in the media?

It was a little bit odd at first because I was quite a shy kid when I was little. I didn't like being in front of big groups or anything like that. Now they put my ugly mug in the paper, which was a bit weird at first but as the years go by you get more and more accustomed to seeing yourself in the newspapers and on TV.

Was it weird the first time you saw your face on a trading card?

I thought that was awesome, because as a young guy I'd collect them all and couldn't wait for the new cards to come out. There are kids out there who'll now be happy to get a Cameron Smith card in their collection!

What about the different websites that post topless pics of you? Is that weird?

[Laughing] Mate, there can't be too many topless pics of me. I'm more a player suited to the '80s. I've got the hairy chest and don't really suit this day and age. It's more the buff hairless blokes they get on those websites.

much fuss about it. Given this day and age, it's pretty common to see both gay men and women around. And, of course, one of the greatest players was Ian Roberts. Just because your sexuality is different to other people, it doesn't mean you're a different person and you can't play rugby league. I don't think there'd be too many guys in our competition who would turn their back on it.

Who would you rather a beer with? Mark Webber, Shane Warne or Nathan Buckley?

Well, I've had a beer with Nathan Buckley before, but I might take Warnie. He's a great character and he's done a lot of wonderful things for Australian cricket. He's a legend in our country. It would be nice to have one night out with him on the sip.

Who would you turn gay for?

I'd have to make it a good-looking fella. Hmm... I'll say George Clooney. He's a good-looking bloke, pretty funny and laid back.

Anthony Quinn told us about Mad Mondays at the club where he had his pubes set on fire. What's your claim to fame?

I'm probably the bloke who burned them! I'm a little bit smarter on Mad Monday. I don't get any pranks put on me – I'm the one who

makes them up. But it's a really enjoyable day and we have a lot of fun, though I make sure I'm never the butt of the jokes.

Speaking of butt, have you ever dropped the soap in the showers?

[Laughing very loudly] All the time! But I make sure I'm 'back to the wall' when I pick it up – surrounded by all the boys.

Yes, let's hope there aren't any camera phones in there.

Yeah, all the camera phones have got to be put away before we jump in the tub.

All those websites must be disappointed.

Yeah, I reckon we'll have to start watching out for spies around the club looking for new website photos.

Who's been the biggest inspiration to you?

I guess footy-wise, Wally Lewis and another Queenslander, Darren Lockyer. My parents gave myself and my brother and sister a great upbringing, too, and taught us that if you ever want anything out of life you have to work hard for it. I'm very thankful for the way I grew up. It wasn't the easiest of childhoods. We're a very blue-collar family, but it paid off and it got me to where I am today.

What's fatherhood like?

It's great. We became parents again last year in March [to son Jasper] and our little girl [Jada] just turned two. There are some times when you're run off your feet, but you wouldn't give it up for the world. It's changed the way I approach life and even football. I come home after a bad day and think, 'Footy's over and I'm a dad. I can enjoy my kids.'

When your playing days are over, would you rather a coaching career, a media career or to just buy a pub?

Mate, it would be nice to have a pub, but I think I'd still like to be involved in footy. I don't think I've got the patience to be a coach, but I'm keen on having a media career. I don't mind being in front of a camera and still having my hand in the game.

What do you wear under your shorts?

Mate, always undies. I don't like the boxers, they're too bulky. I always wear my Rio undies or I wear Speedos out on the footy field.

Have you ever had a 'wardrobe malfunction' out on the field?

I've actually been dacked in the scrum.

That was probably the weirdest thing that's happened to me on the field. It was from an opposition player and it was done on purpose. I'm still not sure what he was thinking.

So you were bare-arsed?

[Laughing] Nah, he only got my shorts, not my Speedos. So I was thankful for that.

Now that would have been one for the internet sites.

Oh jeez, they would have needed a big lens on the camera to get me!

For more on Melbourne Storm visit:
www.melbournestorm.com.au