

Hunt has a licence to attack

PETER BADEL

BEN Hunt is primed to run riot against the Titans tonight thanks to an alcohol and junk-food overhaul that has him in the best shape of his career.

Hunt is a man on a mission tonight at Suncorp Stadium, although statistics show the Broncos halfback has made only five line breaks this year, well shy of the 23 he produced in his bumper campaign last season.

That's an 80 per cent decrease in Hunt's attacking thrust, prompting Broncos assistant coach Kevin Walters to give the No.7 a licence to run the ball at every opportunity.

The figures do not concern Hunt because, for the first time since his NRL debut six years ago, he has struck the right balance on and off the field.

On it, he has finally found a consistent scrumbase foil in Anthony Milford, whose dynamic running game has eased the pressure on Hunt to be Brisbane's primary creative weapon.

Off the paddock, Hunt has overhauled his diet and attitude, admitting the days of abusing his body with fast food and weekly sessions on the booze are over.

The 25-year-old has benefited from his more professional approach, saying he is fitter than ever as he looks to torment the Titans and steer Brisbane closer to their first minor premiership in 15 years.

"I feel so much healthier now and have more energy than ever," Hunt said.

"As I've gotten older, I felt

things had to change to help my body and stay in the NRL. I am eating better and recovering better.

"When I was younger, I'd go out on the drink every weekend. I would have junk food three times a week. Sometimes it was get on the drink Friday night and eat fast food all weekend.

"I still have a treat every now and then, but my partner has improved my diet immensely and it's helping me play better football because I'm leaner and feeling better.

"This year I probably haven't had as many standout games, but I have found a better balance. Last year I had some real highs but then I'd have lows and go missing in games."

Hunt's tackle busts have decreased from 62 to 32 this season but he has created more line-break assists (24 to 16) and improved his kick metres (315 to 418).

With Milford in fine form, Hunt has been given a licence to thrill against the Titans after a tactical discussion with Walters.

"It's been a strong part of my game, my running," Hunt said. "I've watched some video with Kevvie and he said, 'You need to run the ball a bit more in each half.'"

Broncos coach Wayne Bennett praised Hunt's ability to keep the Brisbane juggernaut rolling.

"I couldn't be happier with Ben Hunt," he said. "I really like Ben's tenacity, his attitude is great and he loves to compete."



Brisbane Broncos' leaner, meaner Ben Hunt could cause the embattled Gold Coast Titans plenty of problems at Suncorp Stadium tonight

Picture: DARREN ENGLAND

Fringe Eels ready to make mark

BRAD ARTHUR
Parramatta coach

LAST week's game against the Bulldogs was tough for us, but now we need to regroup and head to Townsville with a positive attitude.

We ended up with a few more injuries to add to our list – but there's still seven games left in the year and I am confident we can finish strongly.

Corey Norman will be back on the field in a few weeks ready to play, while Danny Wicks and Anthony Waimough are both tough players and will come back even better next year after having surgery.

Having a few players unavailable only means it's a chance for others to step up and make their mark in first grade, and I know the young players in our squad are eager for their opportunity.

The Cowboys are a very strong team, especially in Townsville, so we know our work is cut out for us on Monday night.

We came very close to beating them a few weeks back, so we are ready to change our fortunes and put in a performance that gets us over the line.

Our planning for Darwin is also in full swing with less than a fortnight until we're in the Top End.

I'm looking forward to being back at TIO Stadium and using the new facilities at the Michael Long Centre for our recovery and training.

We'll have Eels players and staff visiting schools, junior league clubs, the business community and more – it's a busy trip but the support we have been given by everyone in the Territory has been first class.

Hope to see everyone cheering for the Blue and Gold.

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BRONCOS TITANS	WEST TIGERS ROOSTERS	WARRIORS SEA EAGLES	STORM DRAGONS
TODAY, 7.05PM, SUNCORP STADIUM	TODAY, 7.05PM, ANZ STADIUM	TOMORROW, MT SMART STADIUM, 2.30PM	TOMORROW, 5PM, MCLEAN PARK, NAPIER
Darius Boyd 1 Josh Hoffman Lachlan Maranta 2 David Mead Jordan Kahu 3 James Roberts Justin Hodges (c) 4 Nene Macdonald Corey Oates 5 Kevin Gordon Anthony Milford 6 Aidan Sezer Ben Hunt 7 Kane Elgey Sam Thaiday 8 Luke Douglas Andrew McCullough 9 Beau Falloon Adam Blair 10 Nate Myles (c) Alex Glenn 11 Ryan James Matt Gillett 12 Lachlan Burr Corey Parker 13 Greg Bird INTERCHANGE Jarrod Wallace 14 Agnatus Paasi Mitchell Dodds 15 Eddy Pettybourne Dale Copley 16 Matthew White Kodi Nikorima 17 Daniel Mortimer 18 David Hala	James Tedesco 1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck Kevin Naiqama 2 Daniel Tupou David Nofaluma 3 Michael Jennings Tim Simona 4 Blake Ferguson Pat Richards 5 Brendan Elliot Mitchell Moses 6 James Maloney Luke Brooks 7 Mitchell Pearce (c) Aaron Woods (c) 8 Jared Waerea-Hargreaves Dene Halatau 9 Jake Friend (c) Sauaso Sue 10 Dylan Napa Kyle Lovett 11 Boyd Cordner Chris Lawrence 12 Mitchell Aubusson Martin Taupau 13 Aidan Guerra INTERCHANGE Manaia Cherrington 14 Sam Moa Keith Galloway 15 Isaac Liu Jack Buchanan 16 Kane Evans Curtis Sironen 17 Sio Siua Taukeiaho Brendan Santi 18 Jackson Hastings	Sam Tomkins 1 Brett Stewart Glen Fisiiahi 2 Jorge Taufua Tuimoala Lolohea 3 Jamie Lyon (c) Solomone Kata 4 Steve Matai Jonathan Wright 5 Peta Hiku Chad Townsend 6 Kieran Foran Shaun Johnson 7 Daly Cherry-Evans Jacob Lillyman 8 Jake Trbojevic Nathan Friend 9 Matt Ballin Ben Matulino 10 Willie Mason Bodene Thompson 11 Feleti Mateo Raymond Faitala-Mariner 12 Tom Symonds Simon Mannering (c) 13 Ligi Sao INTERCHANGE Siliva Havili 14 Luke Burgess Sione Lousi 15 Jayden Hodges Sam Rapira 16 Justin Horo Albert Vete 17 Josh Starling Sam Lisone 18 James Hasson	Cameron Munster 1 Josh Dugan Marika Koroibete 2 Justin Hunt Will Chambers 3 Euan Aitken Tohu Harris 4 Peter Mata'utia Richard Kennar 5 Jason Nightingale Blake Green 6 Gareth Widdop Cooper Cronk 7 Benji Marshall Jesse Bromwich 8 Leeson Ah Mau Cameron Smith (c) 9 Mitch Rein Tim Glasby 10 Ben Creagh (c) Kevin Proctor 11 Tyson Frizell Kenny Bromwich 12 Joel Thompson Ryan Hinchcliffe 13 Mike Cooper INTERCHANGE Dale Finucane 14 Jack de Belin Mahe Fonua 15 Jake Marketo Nelson Asofa-Solomona 16 Heath L'Estrange Christian Welch 17 Will Matthews 18 Drew Hutchison 19 Mark Ioane
REFEREES Adam Devcich, Chris Sutton UBET Broncos \$1.13; Titans \$6.00 TV Live Channel 9	REFEREES Jared Maxwell, Gavin Morris UBET Wests Tigers \$5.25; Roosters \$1.16 TV Delayed Channel 9, 9.30pm	REFEREES Grant Atkins, Gavin Reynolds UBET Warriors \$1.42; Sea Eagles \$2.95 TV Live Fox Sports 1	REFEREES Matt Cecchin, Chris Butler UBET Storm \$1.40; Dragons \$2.95 TV Live Fox Sports 1