

# SAYING GOODBYE

I remember the first time I went to Parramatta Stadium. It was a cold winter's day in July and dad took my brother's and I to watch the Eels.

I was new to rugby league at that point, but I still remember being very excited. I remember holding my dad's hand as we walked to our seats. I remember cheering on my favourite player Clinton Schifcofske and waving my blue and gold flag that dad had bought me for the occasion. I remember the smiles on plenty of faces as the Eels posted a win and I remember standing on my chair pretending to know the words to the team song at the end of the game.

A lot has changed since that day. I am no longer an eight year old with blue and gold ribbons in my hair. Parramatta Stadium is now Pirtek Stadium and Clinton Schifcofske has long since retired. But one thing that has not changed is the feeling of home that I get when I walk to my seat at Pirtek Stadium. That will never change.

This Monday night will be an emotional night as we not only say goodbye to Pirtek Stadium for the last time, but we also say goodbye to season 2016.

I would be lying if I said that this had been an easy year. In fact, I will probably put it down as one of the most challenging years I have ever faced as an Eels fan. We have faced challenges off the field, seen the departure of plenty of fan favourites and seen our fair share of controversy.

Despite these challenges though, one thing has remained constant and that is the resilience, courage and bravery that our men in blue and gold have played with every single week. If the players had clocked off 14 weeks ago I would not have blamed them. I would have understood. But they didn't clock off - they kept putting in, playing for each other and defied the odds so many weeks.

I want to say thank you to this team and let them know how proud of them I am. They absolutely exceeded my expectations.

Another man that deserves credit is our coach, Brad Arthur who I nominate as coach of the year. The belief that he has instilled in this team is something very special and I know that it will hold us in good stead for years to come.

# TO PIRTEK STADIUM

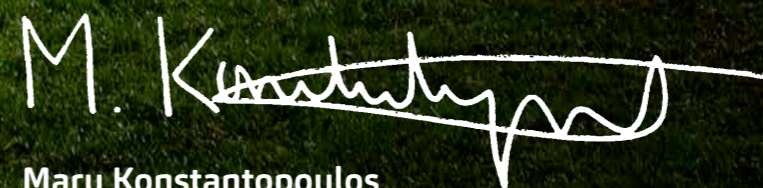
I hope you all join me on Monday night and fill up Pirtek Stadium one last time and say goodbye not only to our fortress but also to this season.

When I think about 2017, I allow myself to smile. I know that Brad Arthur will be at the helm for another 3 years. I know that Corey Norman will be there too. I know that the best is yet to come for players like Clint Gutherson, Bevan French and Kaysa Pritchard. I know that for the first time this season there is quiet in the front office at our club and I know that my club has the most committed fans in the league.

That sounds like a recipe for success to me and I can't wait to be part of it.

Let's send Pirtek off with a bang shall we. I look forward to seeing you all there for the last hurrah.

And I promise, the best is yet to come.



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