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### **Banned Carney considering NFL**

Adrian Prosenko | February 22, 2009

TODD CARNEY has met NFL scouts to discuss an offer to trial in the US during his NRL ban.

The NFL scouts of Australian-based NFL OzPunt are taking a delegation of eight locals, headed by former Sydney Swan Nick Davis, to the US in March for a month of trials in front of gridiron coaches. Carney met OzPunt representative Paul Shepherd in Goulburn on Thursday about the possibility of joining them.

The former Canberra five-eighth is deregistered from the NRL for 2009 and, with no other football options available to him, agreed to discuss the opportunity.

"We just had a chat about what it's all about," Carney told *The Sun-Herald*.

"I haven't got anything on at the moment so I thought I'd check it out."

The 22-year-old is in rugby league purgatory after visa problems prevented him from joining the English Super League, while the NRL won't register him this season following his termination from the Raiders after his involvement in several off-field incidents.

While Carney's main goal is to reignite his rugby league career, his manager David Riolo conceded the NFL offer could provide an outlet for a client with dwindling options in 2009.

"If [OzPunt] came back and said they want to take him to the States to trial with some NFL teams in March and April - and Todd's not playing rugby league or union or anything else - we'd go and have a look," Riolo said.

"But in qualifying that, it's not his deadset goal to play in the NFL. If something happened down the track, it would be a bonus while he's not playing rugby league.

"But rugby league is still his first love and he wants to get back into the NRL."

OzPunt officials believe Carney could make it as a kicker in American football, but the young playmaker will only get an invitation if he convinces them he's serious about a code switch.

"We believe there is an opportunity for Todd in the States," Shepherd said.

"We're more than happy to talk further if know he's committed to playing in the NFL.

"We don't want to be seen as a stop-gap option for anyone; we're only interested in people committed to the opportunity we can offer them."

It's understood that seven NRL clubs have expressed an interest in recruiting Carney from

2010. However, it appears he'll have to sit out the 2009 NRL season.

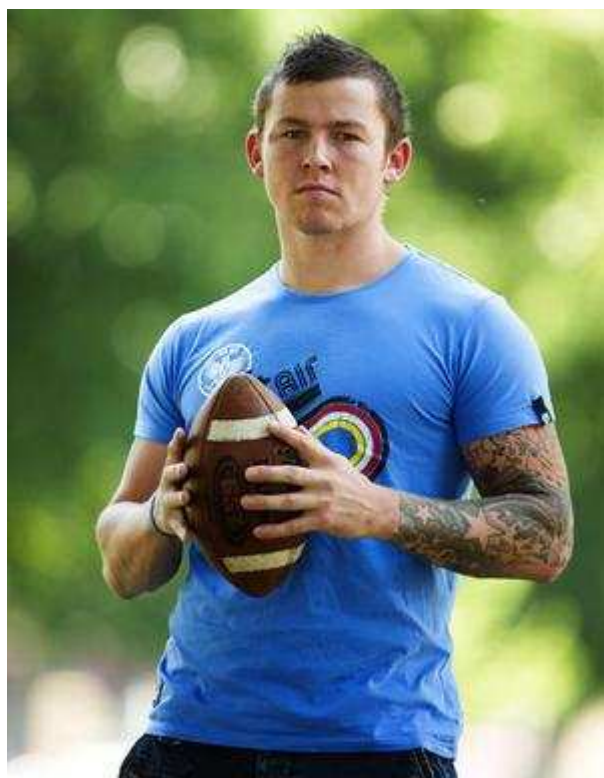
Penrith coach Matthew Elliott, who coached Carney when at the Raiders, said the youngster had already paid a sufficient price for his indiscretions.

"For Todd, it's hard to disassociate myself because I have a personal attachment to the kid," Elliott said. "I think he should be allowed to play NRL and the club to have first choice of his services is Canberra.

"I'm not for a minute saying he should be allowed to play for the same level of income he was receiving. Not only has he paid the price for his actions - he's not in jail, he's not in court for anything - he will continue to pay that price for a long time.

"He will go from being 'The disgraced Todd Carney' to 'The once-troubled Todd Carney'; he's got years before he's described in a positive manner.

"We're denying a kid an opportunity to earn income in an area in which he's best at. He's played his part in that, no doubt ... but I think the punishment has outweighed the crime."



Limited options ... Todd Carney could try out for gridiron; above right, in Goulburn with OzPunt's Paul Shepherd.

Photo: James Brickwood

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