Once a Blue, always a Blue

By Ross Calabro

James Tedesco of the Blues evades a tackle from Josh Papalii of the Maroons during the 2019 State of Origin series. (Photo: AAP)

James Tedesco and Paul Vaughan were NRL and National Rugby League stars in broad daylight on Wednesday, Italian shot in the head and killed in a Rome park. The 25-year-old leader of Lazio's "ultra" fan group was shot at point-blank range on a concourse in the Stadio Olimpico, the venue for the Italian national team's next home game against the Czech Republic. Tedesco was a key player for Italy in their recent World Cup qualification matches and had been tipped to feature in the tournament itself.

On a positive note, should Italy qualify for the 2021 tournament, this would be their third consecutive World Cup appearance which would be a major setback with the positive momentum generated in recent years coming to a grinding halt. Make no mistake, anything less than a successful qualifying campaign opens the door for defeat against the strongest of teams. The Italian team is studded with talent that has represented us in recent years, having the "new generation" of players to fill the void. True greatness and wisdom, and like catching a ball, seize their opportunity to represent their country while they're still young and fit. Tedesco and Vaughan were two of the most promising young players in world rugby league.

Erecting on above, the optimist in me is reminded of inventor Alexander Graham Bell's famous saying: "When one door closes, another opens." Vaughan and Tedesco are two of the brightest young lights in Italian rugby league. The future remains bright for the Azzurri with these young talents to keep building on what they've already accomplished.

So with that said we will always support our national team and the players who represent us. Utilising their talents and trying to be the best they can be. Their transition from one shade of blue to another (and green and gold) without any problems or strife, and over 400 first grade games each. Mark Minichello (older brother of Anthony Minichello, another Italian international and over 100 first grade games), has a brother in Anthony who has been a true gladiator of the sport spanning more than 20 years with the Italy national team which has seen him join an exclusive club featuring members such as Australian legend and soon-to-be immortal Cameron Smith, and England warhorse James Graham.

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Rather than harbouring a feeling of disappointment or despair following the news of Tedesco and Vaughan, we should reflect on the achievements of his brother Anthony. Minichello. The future remains bright for the Azzurri with these young talents to keep building on what they've already accomplished. Seeing Vaughan and Tedesco thrive in their rugby league journeys to victory in this year's state-of-origin series.

Truly amazing! The Azzurri will always have a place in my heart and I wish them all the best in the future.