Catapult partners with NRL to deliver live broadcast data for State of Origin series

Catapult Group International Limited (ASX: CAT) is pleased to announce a new milestone for its Clearsky 2 tracking system with the successful delivery of live on-screen data during the broadcast of last night’s NRL State of Origin game 1, part of a new deal with the NRL and sponsorship partners across all three State of Origin matches this year.

This is a significant milestone for Catapult as it represents the first time that athlete tracking data from its Clearsky 2 solution was broadcast live for fan engagement and monetised in partnership with the NRL via a 3rd party sponsorship arrangement.

Catapult CEO, Joe Powell, said: “We believe this partnership is a compelling showcase of Catapult’s ability to work in partnership with leagues, players unions, broadcast partners and sponsors on data monetisation opportunities that importantly drive fan and community engagement.”

In conjunction with the NRL, host broadcasters Channel Nine, the QRL, NSWRL, and sponsor Telstra (ASX: TLS), the State of Origin ‘Telstra Tracker’ displayed live on-screen metrics including speed, distance covered, player and team workloads, and heat maps showing players field positioning throughout the game.

Executive Producer of Channel Nine NRL Ben Clark said, “We’re really excited to add the Telstra Tracker to our State of Origin broadcast. It has been a massive effort by all parties to make this happen, with viewers the big winners.”

“The data we’ll display will take the audience deeper into the inner sanctum of what’s available to players and coaches during a match and give everyone watching a greater understanding of what it takes to play rugby league at the ultimate level.”

Channel Nine Director of Sport Tom Malone said: “‘The Telstra Tracker had a great debut last night. In sport it’s all about access and innovation. This was both. You were getting closer to the players than ever before by knowing things like how fast they were travelling and also innovation in terms being able to tap into GPS trackers in real time.”

The solution utilises Catapult’s T6 ClearSky 2 devices and technology. ClearSky 2 is a local positioning system (LPS) powered by up to 20 receivers or beacons that generates over 1,000 live data points per second with a much higher level of positional accuracy in stadia than traditional GPS devices. The innovative solution allows the wearable data to be used for both live broadcast of metrics and as a performance tool by each side during the game.
The agreement covers the remaining two State of Origin matches via Catapult's Clearsky 2 installations at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane and ANZ Stadium in Sydney. Catapult also has Clearsky 2 installations at Etihad Stadium in Melbourne as well as a number of other multi-sport stadiums around the world, and has plans to roll out the solution into more markets.

"I think it could become a regular fixture for the NRL. We've got an arrangement to use it for this Origin series and that's all for the moment. But it's something we'd like to look at for the finals series this year and then I think a logical extension of that, maybe next year, is to bring it in across other NRL matches," Malone said.

Catapult is considered the market leader in delivering stadium solutions for live wearable data streams for sports broadcast applications, driving new insights for commentators and fans alike on how the game is played and the demands placed on players at the elite level.

According to industry website AdNews, last night's game delivered the biggest television ratings numbers so far in 2017, with a national audience peaking at 4.1 million viewers.

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For media and investor enquiries please contact:

**Bevin Shields**  
Head of Investor Relations,  
Catapult Group International  
Ph: +61 2 9199 8855