

There's nothing inherently wrong with that premise.

We all love a good redemption story, or, really we love a deserved redemption story. We all make mistakes, that much will always be true, and it is often by the virtue of being handed a second chance and then grasping it with two hands. In that regard, rugby league can often be a tremendous mirror to society, in that, as a nation, we will always pull for the 'battler-come-good' in any scenario.

On the flipside, there are those whose actions are so heinous, so numerous, or indeed both that they do not deserve the platform of rugby league for their redemption.

Matthew Lodge fits in to the second category.

The million-dollar man you don't want to be

As news broke of the prop forward's million-dollar damages bill following his vicious and undefendable assault on peaceful victims in New York city, it is astonishing to think this man is still being provided a platform by the game that has given him so much and received so little in return.

Matthew Lodge is not a rugby league player. Matthew Lodge is not an ambassador for the game I love, nor is he even a former representative of the club I have supported since childhood.

Matthew Lodge is a thug.

Matthew Lodge is an idiot, a peerless thug who used his size and aggression to overpower innocent US citizens while trashing their home, telling at least one of them that they would die tonight, all while ironically screaming he came "in peace."

There is nothing defensible in the actions of a man who uses his size to intimidate women and children, or overpower men in their own homes. Nothing at all.

Those are the actions of a grub, a coward and a bully.

Rugby League isn't the pulpit you seek

Matthew Lodge is a violent, mindless idiot who does not deserve the pulpit of rugby league to preach he is a changed man. I hope he is changed, as much as I doubt it I even hope he is remorseful of his actions and keen to make amends in whatever token way possible, but I don't care. This man does not belong in a game that markets itself as a family-friendly entertainment package, nor a game that pays tribute and homage to the women involved in it from grassroots to the top.

The sheer irony that, should he be thrown another NRL lifeline as has been reported, Matthew Lodge could take the field wearing a pink 'women in league' inspired kit would be laughable if it wasn't completely atrocious.

It is, however, entirely fathomable that a club, desperate enough, or naïve enough to think they could unlock his undoubted potential as a footballer and control his off-field behaviour, could throw

out a figurative lifesaver to Lodge and that is what upsets me the most about the current state of our game.

Right now, we live in a world where quality people are churned out for a variety of reasons, be it talent or salary cap or whatever, while some clubs will always prize talent, or the perception of it, over the quality of human being they employ to run on to a football field and represent them and, by extension, represent every single fan that club has.

Unfathomable

Lodge came through the grades at Penrith, the club I have supported now for as long as I can remember and the thought that he could have worn the first grade jersey of my football club sickens me to my core. The same jersey I and countless others shell out \$180 a hit to wear with pride, be it in the stands or the living room or down at my local pub, could so easily have rested on the shoulders of a moronic thug who clearly feels above both the law and society.

Rugby League is better than this.

Matthew Lodge needs our game more than our game needs him.