

'We'd like to put it behind us': New York victims of vicious Matt Lodge attack haven't seen a cent of \$1.6m compensation

By Neil Breen • Sport Reporter

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The victims of NRL star Matt Lodge's New York rampage have launched a scathing attack on the game's boss Todd Greenberg and the Brisbane Broncos for allowing him to play without paying any of the \$1.6m in compensation he owes them.

Joe Cartwright, Ruth Fowler and their then nine-year-old son Henry were assaulted and held hostage by Lodge in their Upper Westside apartment in Manhattan in the early hours of October 16, 2015.

Exclusive CCTV vision obtained by Nine News shows Lodge holding Mr Cartwright in a vicious headlock before unleashing several blows to his head.

"It's something we'll live with for the rest of our lives," said Joe Cartwright and Ruth, who have moved out of their apartment.

During the 15-minute ordeal, Ms Fowler and Henry locked themselves in the bathroom. Lodge continuously shouted abuse and punched a hole in the door.

"It was really difficult in the aftermath for all of us including a nine-year-old boy that asked not to be killed," Ms Fowler told Nine.

"We're trying to move on. We'd like to put it behind us. We've moved away from the home where the incident occurred. It's obviously something that will live with us for the rest of our lives."

Lodge spent two weeks imprisoned at New York's infamous Rikers Island. In December 2016 he entered a plea dealing and was found guilty of assault but escaped a prison sentence when a New York judge granted him a conditional discharge after he performed community service and had treatment for anger and alcohol abuse. He was sent back to Australia.

However, at the conclusion of a subsequent civil case last year brought against him by the victims - German tourist Carolin Dekeyser, Mr Cartright, Ms Fowler and their son – he was ordered to pay them \$1.6m.

He has been signed to a \$100,000-a-year deal by the Broncos but has not paid a cent of the money he owes the victims.

"We feel that everybody's allowed a second chance – we don't want Matthew Lodge not to play, that's not really what we're looking for," Mr Cartwright said.

"We're looking for him to take responsibility for his actions, to have some justice in this.

"You're allowed to have a second chance, you're allowed redemption. But you can't receive redemption unless you feel a sense of remorse, a sense of responsibility."

Angering the couple, comments by Broncos CEO Paul White who washed his hands of Lodge's legal requirements saying it was a civil matter between him and "the claimants".

"He's done his time," Mr White said. "He's paid an enormous price."

Mr Greenberg also said Lodge had served his penalty to rugby league by sitting out two seasons from the NRL and that the NRL did not get involved in civil matters.

Lodge forced his way into their apartment after Mr Cartwright went to the aid of a German tourist he was pestering.

"Mathew Lodge made a very grave error of judgement some years ago, a very poor decision. No-one at the rugby league and the NRL, nor at the Broncos, condones any of that behaviour," he said in an earlier interview with 9NEWS' Cam Williams.

"In saying that though, rugby league is a sport that provides a second chance to people. Rugby league is a sport that helps people grow up, it is also a sport that allows young men to come in and be better back within their communities and I think that is the opportunity with Matthew Lodge.

"Ultimately though, the decision and accountability rests with him and he needs to take this second chance and do everything he can with it."

In response however, Mr Cartwright wasn't as convinced.

"The brand, the league is representative of their players and if this is how they want to represent their brand then shame on them," he said.

"It sounds as though he's being made out to be the victim. He's not the victim. He's not the victim at all. We're the victims."

They are also angry Lodge had seemingly impressed rugby league bosses with his rehabilitation but has never made attempts to contact them or apologise.

"He has never reached out to us," Mr Fowler said.

Mr Cartwright said: "He's not reached out to us personally in any form or any way."

Lodge's night of carnage began when he accosted Ms Dekeyser, a German tourist, and her friend at 4am. He trapped them on the building's vestibule and said to Ms Deseyker: "Do you think you're going to die? Tonight is the night you are going to die."

Mr Cartwright's family lived in a ground floor unit. He came to the front door of the apartment block to help Ms Deseyker. Lodge then entered the building and forced his way into Mr Cartwright's apartment.

Nine's CCTV vision shows he terrorised them for 15 minutes before nine armed police officers arrived and arrested him. The level of violence is shocking.

"Henry our son was terribly traumatised by the event and still is," Mr Cartwright said.

"He's still afraid. At night loud sounds wake him up. He's concerned by what's around him ... Henry is not the same child he was before the event."

The victims' lawyer, Renan Varghese of Wigdor LLP on Fifth Avenue, dismissed Mr Greenberg's claim the civil matter was not the NRL's responsibility.

"I would just ask Todd Greenberg and the National Rugby League what they want to league to be known for," Mr Varghese said.

"Is it an organisation that protects women, that protects families and cares about the wellbeing of its fans, or is it an organisation that's willing to protect any of its players no matter what they do as long as they help the bottom line. I think the people of Australia deserve that answer."

Lodge is expected to take to the field for the Broncos on Thursday night in the NRL season opener against the St George Illawarra Dragons.