



14 December, 2006

Media release

Billy's Christmas present arrives early this year

A visit to his local fruiterers, Toscano's Victoria Gardens, between training sessions today gave Melbourne Storm star full back Billy Slater a chance to stock up on bananas, as more reasonably priced fruit returns to markets nationally.

Nobody is more aware of the devastating effect Cyclone Larry had on the Australian banana industry when it tore through far north Queensland back in March than Slater, who originally hails from Innisfail, a town where members of his family still live.

"Returning home after the Cyclone and witnessing the devastation first hand was heartbreaking. The cyclone had extensive repercussions for my family and friends who all worked in the banana industry. Some of my mates have gone without income for months" said Slater.

"To walk in to my local fruit shop today and see an abundance of bright, healthy looking bananas harvested from post cyclone plants, with the news that their delivery to the markets nationally will continue into the New Year, is the best Christmas present I could wish for my family and friends." Slater added

As an athlete, whose grueling training schedule requires a high carbohydrate diet to fuel his energy needs, the news that bananas are back comes as a double blessing.

"With my training schedule, bananas have always been number one on my shopping list as it is with many athletes.

Slater said that he had not been deterred by the high price of bananas.

"My mindset was that, even at their highest price, there was simply no other fruit or snack that could provide me with the energy and nutrients that a banana does.

"But the forecasted drop in banana prices into the New Year will certainly be welcomed by my hip pocket though...and it will mean I will be able to enjoy even more as part of my diet" rejoiced Slater.

So with bags of bananas in tow, it was a very content Billy Slater who left his local Melbourne fruiterer yesterday to return to Melbourne Storm's afternoon training session.

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Video and audio news release details follow on page 2

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Video News Release

TX to all metros & all regionals, 1000 - 1015, Thursday 14 December, Optus Satellite
D1 / T 15 / Slot 5

Audio News Release

Various interviews with Saul Eslake, ANZ Chief Economist, plus banana growers and traders: Audio & transcript available for download at www.quotable.net.au/bananas