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PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE: [19/2/2025] [EMBARGO: For Immediate Release]

In memoriam: Death of North Highlands Badgers player Matt Devine**

**The [AFL/ NRL/ Football Australia/other league] community is reeling from the sudden passing of Matt Devine. The vibrant 26-year-old, who played [full-forward/ winger/ striker] with the Badgers, brought joy to many through his infectious personality and remarkable talent.**

**Matt's presence illuminated the league. He also regularly appeared on TV to talk about the sport he loved as well as his struggles with his mental health. Matt wanted to shed light on the silent battles he faced behind his success. Matt played with the Badgers for four years, scoring in the final moments of the [YEAR] Grand Final to clinch the club’s maiden premiership.**

**Badgers Chief Executive Jake Shaw says Matt’s death will be felt deeply across the community. “We offer our deepest condolences to Matt’s wife Isabel, and his children Beau and Esther. Our hearts are also with his teammates, past and present, as well as the communities he represented on his way up the ranks. Matt’s presence on and off the field were an inspiration to many and he will be greatly missed.”**

**Badgers coach Denny Smith says the news of Matt's passing has sent shockwaves through the team. “He was always a strong supporter of the younger players, as well as older players who were going through their own struggles. Matt was so passionate about this game; we’re going to continue to play the way he’d want us to play, and also support each other the way he did too.”**

**A special mental health round will be played in Matt’s honour this season, at a date to be announced. The teams will be joined by community leaders, mental health advocates, and other officials to raise awareness of mental health, prioritising player and community wellbeing and promoting support services.**

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