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A remarkable family story will unfold when England tackle Australia in the opening match of the Rugby League World Cup this weekend. For the first time, three brothers have been named in the England squad; Sam Burgess and his twin brothers Tom and George will be aiming to fol-

low Scotland's Kevin, Ian and Andrew Henderson who all represented Scotland in 2008. Spare a thought, though, for Luke Burgess, the eldest of the family of four boys from Dewsbury, who failed to make the cut despite playing alongside his brothers for their club, the South Sydney Rabbitohs.

Steve McNamara, the England coach, admitted that it was one of the toughest decisions of his career to leave Luke out of the squad. But there is no room for sentiment in professional sport and, besides, following England's surprising defeat to Italy in last week's warm up match, the coach now has weightier matters on his hands.

The inclusion of the Burgess brothers will sorely challenge the loyalties of the actor Russell Crowe, who co-owns the Rabbitohs and who was responsible for enticing Sam to join his club three years ago. While filming *Robin Hood*, Crowe watched Burgess play for the Bradford Bulls, and the deal clincher appears to have been the invitation for Sam and his mother, Julie, to visit Crowe on the film set. The other brothers all followed Sam to

Sydney in stages with Julie finally packing up and moving to Australia last year.

Crowe's influence on the boys is considerable – he has been described as a father figure – so who will he be supporting on Saturday? As I discovered when I interviewed Crowe during a Test match against Australia at Lord's, the question of whether he is a New Zealander or an Australian is such a sensitive

subject that he refused to talk about it. Since he was very critical of the Australians that day and has two cousins, Martin and Jeff Crowe, who both played cricket for New Zealand, I have formed my own opinion as to where his true loyalty lies!

Should there be any lingering sympathy for the overlooked Luke Burgess, imagine how the great cricketer Steve Waugh felt when he returned to the family home early in his career having been dropped by Australia. 'Who's taken your place?' asked his twin brother Mark. 'You have', Steve replied. Mark promptly scored a century in his first Test.

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