

VODAFONE



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

## Newsletter <sup>12<sup>th</sup> July 2017</sup> #178

### So Long Legend, And Thanks For The Memories

By David Kemeys

Former Sunday Star-Times Editor, Former Editor-in-Chief Suburban Newspapers, Long Suffering Warriors Fan



**I**T IS as we all knew. The days of being blinded by the sunlight flashing off Manu Vatuvei's gold teeth are over.

The big fella is off to Salford in the English Super League, having been granted an early release from the contract he had with us to the end of the 2018 season.

It is a strangely empty felling, given I have been cheering for the bloke for a decade.

"Manu is a club legend," managing director Jim Doyle said. "We didn't make this decision lightly but after years of service we didn't want to stand in his way."

I can't say anything this week that I did not say last week, so farewell Warrior No 115, and thanks for the 226 appearances, some of them great, some not, but you will always be "The Beast" to me, even if, having come to know you a little bit, it is the most ill-suited name they could possibly have given you.

I will miss your presence, I will miss your smile, I will miss your laughter.

I will miss your carries, I will miss your all or nothing approach, and I will miss your tries.

It is going to be a long time before anyone overhauls that all-time try-scorer record of

152.

"This wasn't an easy decision to make," Vatuvei said.

"I've loved my time here alongside my brothers.

I will never forget this club and just want to say a massive thank you to the club and the fans for their support over the years."

At least we will have the chance to say goodbye on Friday night, when Manu will be honoured before he goes.

*Eternal Heart of a #Warrior by Joyce Putohe*



# Good Luck Manu!

By Sir Peter Leitch



**I**HAVE HAD a long association with Manu Vatuvei, from when he first came to the Vodafone Warriors before going on to play 226 games for the club. But I really got to know him in 2005 when he was selected to play for the Kiwis and I was the football manager.

We kicked off with a match in Sydney, then back to Auckland for a game, then seven games in the UK, playing in a final the Kiwis won 24-0 over Australia, with Manu scoring two tries.

We then toured together with the Kiwis in 2006, so I really got to know him very well.

I also had the experience of organizing his testimonial, which was a great honour for me.

Manu is such a very humble and family-orientated person, who is just a lovely guy blessed with an infectious smile and he will be sadly missed around the club.

But as one door closes another opens, this one in Salford for Manu.

I wish him the best as he goes about another chapter in his life

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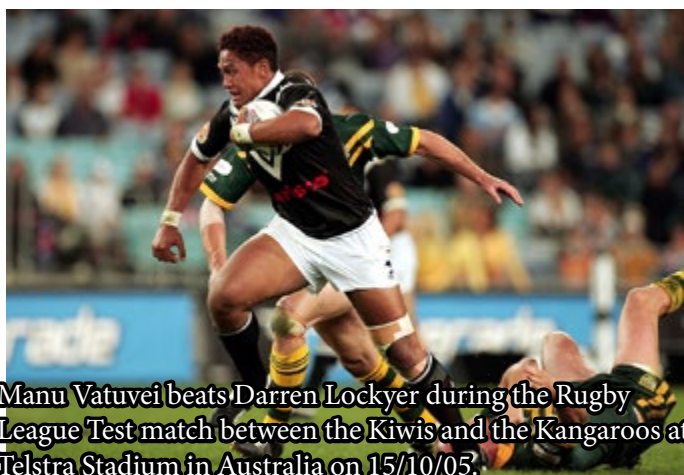
## Former Warriors coach Daniel Anderson shares a thought on Manu:

Manu was one of the first inductees of the NZ Warriors Academy. His dad brought him to every training session and Manu was committed to being the best player he could be from a young age.

He was a powerful rugby league player at age 14 and has grown into a NZ Warriors Hall of Famer.

Congrats on your time at the Warriors and good luck in the future.

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Manu Vatuvei beats Darren Lockyer during the Rugby League Test match between the Kiwis and the Kangaroos at Telstra Stadium in Australia on 15/10/05.

Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)



Manu Vatuvei at the Kiwis welcome home at Ericsson Stadium.



The 2005 Kiwis reunion.

**Catch Manu on TV 1's  
Breakfast this Friday morning!**



*By John Deaker*

# There'll Only Ever Be One Beast!



Manu Vatuvei. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

**A**S SPORTS fans we like to make comparisons between players and particularly talented young players often get compared to being reminiscent of great players. A "young Hadlee, a young McCaw, a mini-Jonah." Most of the time the comparisons are unfair and unrealistic. Even long before his retirement we've seen many young players compared to Manu 'The Beast' Vatuvei but those of us that have loved watching him over the years know there can only even truly be one 'Beast'.

From the time Manu debuted for the Warriors back in 2004 it's been his combination of size, speed and power that have set him apart from his team-mates and his opponents. There's more big, strong, powerful wingers in the NRL these days but for many years 'The Beast' was unique and gave the New Zealand Warriors an X-factor that made other clubs jealous and fearful of taking us on.

The respect Vatuvei had from opponents was something that shouldn't be under-rated. Too often people this side of the Tasman have been inclined to dwell on his weaknesses or even perceived weaknesses that resulted from a couple of very poor games. They've failed to acknowledge that despite any down-sides to his game Manu is a player opposition teams would love to have had on their side and someone that all other NRL teams had to keep a special eye on containing when they lined up against the New Zealanders.

Like Jonah experienced with the All Blacks, the fact that Manu has been so big and powerful has often led to him receiving more criticism than he should. Even this week he's been accused of being inconsistent. Yet those of us who watched most of his games closely would argue the exact opposite ; particularly considering the inconsistent nature of the team around him Manu did extremely well to maintain his high standards over a long period. Statistics also supported his consistent value when he became the first player in NRL history to score at least 10 tries in 10 consecutive seasons.

No statistics can accurately describe Manu's greatest value to the Warriors though: The inspiration that he's been to young league players and supporters over the years. Without the presence and perseverance of men like Manu Vatuvei and Stacey Jones ( not to mention Sir Peter Leitch of course! ) we simply wouldn't have a New Zealand Warriors club in existence still.

It is a sad way for Manu to depart the club mid-season. The club's eye to the future may be understandable. However, with Kieran Foran only here for one year I believe it's the best chance the club will have of pushing for a title in the next few years. 'The Beast' could still have been a key part of that push for a title this year. Our wingers coming through have potential but currently they are still pretenders. We can only wish Manu well overseas and emphasise to him this week that regardless of the sad timing of his departure he will always be remembered as one of the greatest Warriors of all time.



## Our Fate In The Eight

Really interesting to see the league writers go to town at the weekend, analysing our final eight games in the lead-up to finals footy.

We are talking David Skipwith for the Herald, and Marvin France for Stuff, and they were agreed on a couple of points but wildly different on another couple.

At the end of the day it just wouldn't be a Warriors season without a sort of mathematical equation about making the eight now would it?

Both blokes have 28 points as the cut-off.

Both blokes say we need another five wins.

Both blokes say that means we will have to win on the road, and beat some of the heavyweights.

Marvin thinks we will.

David doesn't, although he does not dismiss it totally.

Marvellous Marvin reckons our post-Origin record since 2012 and lack of consistency doesn't inspire confidence, but says it is not beyond us, though takes a look at the injury list and doubt creeps in.

Doubting David seems hung upon injury and our inability to win away from Mt Smart, and though he does not write us off, between the lines it is easy to see he has some pretty strong reservations.

Us poor beleaguered fans have seen it all before, and doubtless will again.

But heading into this weekend's second bye we were sitting in 10th, four points outside the eight.

We have four at home and four away to come, so plenty of us will have our crystal balls out trying to figure out all the permutations.

It all starts this weekend when the Panthers come to town, and surely we can not be as dire as we were when we met the Mountain Men across the ditch, blowing a handsome lead and defending like revolving doors.

On the downside, the Panthers were many people's tip as a dark horse to get a lot done this year, including me. They are still capable of turning on a performance, but I believe our chance for revenge will be taken.

That means we will then head to North Queensland,

where the Cowboys are showing they can in fact go well without the best player in the game, Johnathan Thurston, who is out with a season-ending injury. A win in Townsville would be a real bonus, but realistically does not seem that likely.

And that means we will face the reigning premiers, the Sharks, in Round 21 at home, still in with a shout, but with things starting to look increasingly tight.

The Sharks can be incredible, but they can also be a bit off their game, but only the most cheerful of optimists would see us winning this one, even at Mt Smart. Sadly I think we might have to endure endless radio ribbing about "still a mathematical possibility".

The pessimist in me sees us going into our final five needing four wins.

The optimist in me sees us getting them.

The Knights in Newcastle still won't match us, and the Raiders, who are a much better side than their position might indicate, especially having lost three golden-point games, will arrive at Mt Smart with plenty to play for in terms of their own finals bid, but it just feels like we are due against the Green Machine.

So we will go back to back – Newcastle, Raiders, and even if we don't, we will beat the Rabbitohs in Australia too. I base this solely on the fact they will have nothing much to play for, and I hate them.

So we will have two to go and need two points, none of which we will get against Manly, because let's face it, we could kick-off now, run up 247 points, and still lose to those bastards. There seems to be something about the Sea Eagles that allows them to come and crap all over us anytime they want to.

All of which means we will go into the last day of the regular season facing the Tigers in Australia, needing to win, and we will. So there you go, job done - 28 points.

Then again we could play like tarts and get hammered repeatedly, or we could play like men possessed and win all of them.

And I thought it only sensible to check all the Aussie papers and sites for you – not one believes we will make it.

It's the beauty of the game is it not?

### How Good Is This?

I'm a sucker for a story like this one, and fair enough given how much bad press NRL players can get, shagging dogs, snorting who knows what, and generally behaving like fist rate arses.

So well done to our very own Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad.

He has done something in the spur of the moment that reflects really well on him, and for anyone who does not know what, just hit the link and prepare to feel good.

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=4&objectid=11887811](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=11887811)

### Shopping Not Done Yet

A lot of the NRL clubs, us included, are keeping their options open for next year in terms of player recruitment.

The mess that is no one really knowing what the salary cap is, means clubs are eyeing recruits at the same time as they are waiting on the cap to be cleared up.

Except if you are Manly of course.

There are apparently about 100 NRL players off-contract for 2018 and beyond. Not too flash if that is how you make your living really.

There is no end in sight to the squabble over the cap, with the NRL and Players' Association in negotiations, but a final outcome appearing a long way off, although the governing body did tell clubs back in April to aim for a cap figure of \$9.14 million, including allowances for a 30-man squad and six development players.

Except if you are Manly of course.

It is thought, which is to say I read it on a website, that the Bulldogs, Cowboys and Roosters are believed to have already committed around \$10 million and might need to urgently shed talent to bring them under the cap.

Probably all go to Manly.

So far our shopping list is Tohu Harris, Leivaha Pulu, Manaia Cherrington and Zac Santo, so I can only imagine we have cash to splash, especially with Ryan Hoffman and Manu Vatuvei off the books.

It has to be a forward we are eyeing surely, if it is true we did have interest in Jason Taumalolo, Jesse

Bromwich, Adam Blair and Nelson Asofa-Solomona. Then again, that could all be rubbish too. Who would know, certainly not me.

The other possibility is of course bringing in someone to replace Kieran Foran, but we are apparently no longer pushing for Cronulla five-eighth James Maloney, a signing I said from the get-go would only happen shortly after the Mad Butcher gave up supporting the Vodafone Warriors and hell froze over.

### Mainly Manly

I should not be so unkind to Manly, neck-deep in the latest NRL salary-cap scandal, especially when their coach Trent Barrett says the Sea Eagles will be cleared.

Right, that's that all cleared up then.

Apparently he sought assurances from Sea Eagles chairman Scott Penn after media reports landed the Money Sea Eagles front and centre in the brown stuff over cap breaches, and lo and behold, he swears there's nothing dodgy going on.

Right, that's that all cleared up then.

If you haven't followed this, there are allegations of cash being handed over in plain brown bags in a city park.

Anyone else smell a fat rat when Manly went from total rubbish to title contenders in the time it takes that fat bloke to bump you out of the way in the queue at Fritz's Wieners at Mt Smart?

Barrett is defiant, despite previous breaches costing clubs points penalties before. "We've got nothing to worry about," he said.

I'll say it again.

Right, that's that all cleared up then.

So there's cash in car parks, top-up payments by multiple unnamed clubs, and allegations of undisclosed cash from third-party sponsors.

This all comes at a time when allegations of trading inside information to help punters beat the bookies, and players betting on their own performances, again hit the headlines.

This was big news last week, with police alerting the NRL the New South Wales Organised Crime Squad was on the job again.

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Last September coppers investigated match fixing, and while they couldn't prove it – yet, now they suspect players betting on themselves, and the insider information scam.

You can do two years for that in Aussie, and we all know how effective the ban on players and officials betting on games has been.

Yeah, right.

Meanwhile back at Manly, Eagles officials can expect a visit from the boys in blue to pick up documents and computers.

NRL chief executive Todd Greenberg must be wishing he had a holiday booked, and apparently NRL officials are “in regular dialogue with police on matters relating to the game”.

I bet they are.

### **Nines Blame Heaped On Warriors**

They will be spitting tacks at Warriors headquarters after Duco Events promoter Dean Lonergan blasted the club for sinking the NRL Auckland Nines.

Now I have some links with Deano, who is a bloke I always enjoy being around, and who deserves a lot of praise for what he has achieved with Duco. Many years ago he pleaded with me not to run a story about the deal Duco was doing to get the Nines started, because it had the potential to blow the deal and scupper the event. We held off, much to the annoyance of the reporter involved.

The deal was done, but now, according to the Daily Telegraph, the Nines won't happen 2018 and Lonergan was on Radio Live at the weekend, blaming the Warriors sub-standard team.

“The disappointing thing was the Warriors pissed on the Nines this year and that really annoyed me,” he said.

Fair enough, it did not do much for me either. But much as I like Dean, this one might be drawing a pretty long bow.

Players have a stand down at the end of the season, and with the World Cup final on December 2, that means heaps of top players would miss the event in 2018.

Also, much as I wanted to see the big names out

there, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck was dealing with a knee reconstruction, and Shaun Johnson had a groin injury.

Even Deano is not actually that convinced: “Would it have changed the crowds? I don't know and I don't think so. But it impacted on what happened going forward.”

The Nines is not done yet, though we probably won't see them in Auckland again, which is a shame. Perth and Brisbane are reportedly the favourites, and there is even talk of inviting English Super League and international teams, while negotiations between the NRL and Duco are continuing.

### **New Vodafone Warriors Memberships Manager**

The Vodafone Warriors are pleased to appoint Shani Willemsen as their new Memberships Manager. After working last year as a game day intern, Shani joined the Vodafone Warriors full-time in August 2016 as a Memberships Coordinator. In her new role, Shani will lead the Memberships Team in providing excellent service for over 17,200 Vodafone Warriors members across New Zealand, Australia and abroad. Congratulations Shani!







# Kata and Luke return for Vatuvei's farewell

*by Richard Becht*

**B**LOCKBUSTING CENTRE Solomone Kata and first-choice hooker Issac Luke will return to action for the Vodafone Warriors in Friday night's round 19 clash with the Penrith Panthers at the temporarily re-named "Manu Vatuvei Stadium".

Luke missed his side's round 17 loss to the Sea Eagles in Perth with a shoulder injury while Kata is back after a two-game absence following the death of his brother in Tonga.

With veteran back-rower Ryan Hoffman sidelined due to a foot complaint, Bunty Afoa will once again start in the second-row.

"It's certainly been a tough time for Solomone and his family and our thoughts and prayers go out to them," Vodafone Warriors coach Stephen Kearney said.

"We are really happy to have him back and I know he's very keen to play.

"Issac's shoulder has healed well and he's ready to rip in too."

Sam Lisone, who missed the Sea Eagles game due to a family engagement, will return on an extended bench which includes Ata Hingano, Ligi Sao, James Gavet, Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad, Chris Satae, Jazz Tevaga and Mason Lino.

In other team news, departing Vodafone Warriors legend Manu Vatuvei has been named in the No 5 jersey for the final time.

The iconic winger confirmed on Monday his exit from the Vodafone Warriors after signing with Salford in the English Super League.

He leaves New Zealand on Sunday but will be farewelled in style by Vodafone Warriors fans on Friday night.

Vatuvei's new contract precludes him from being able to play against the Panthers. But Kearney has honoured him all the same by naming "The Beast" in the No 5 jersey he made his own in 226 games for the club.

The NRL has also given the Vodafone Warriors special dispensation to include Vatuvei on the team list, although Ken Maumalo, in jersey No 21, will actually start.

"While Manu isn't contractually able to play for us on Friday night, I really wanted to honour him by including him in our team list," Kearney said.

"He's one of the club's greatest players and we are really looking forward to giving him a fitting send-off on Friday night.

"He won't play but he'll certainly run down the tunnel before kick off one last time."

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Among the festivities planned for Vatuvei's farewell, the Vodafone Warriors will be giving out inflatable hands at the gates and in the membership clubrooms as a tribute to "The Beast's" signature try-scoring celebration.

Members are also being encouraged to check in at the membership clubrooms where a small number of limited edition Vatuvei posters will be available on a first in, first served basis.

Vatuvei's teammates, meanwhile, will have his name, Vodafone Warrior number and signature embroidered into their playing jerseys. They will warm up in special Canterbury tees with Vatuvei #115 on the back.

Before kick off, Vatuvei will also walk onto the field he's graced for more than a decade one last time.

### VODAFONE WARRIORS

1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (c)  
2 David Fusitu'a  
3 Blake Ayshford  
4 Solomone Kata  
5 Manu Vatuvei\*  
6 Kieran Foran  
7 Shaun Johnson  
8 Jacob Lillyman  
9 Issac Luke

10 Ben Matulino  
11 Bodene Thompson  
12 Bunty Afoa  
13 Simon Mannering  
Interchange  
14 Mafoa'aeata Hingano  
15 Sam Lisone  
16 James Gavet  
17 Ligi Sao

18 Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad  
20 Chris Satae  
21 Ken Maumalo  
22 Jazz Tevaga  
24 Mason Lino

*\*Manu Vatuvei's selection is honorary only. please note he will not play against the Panthers. Ken Maumalo will start on the left wing in jersey no 21.*



A large, vibrant poster celebrating the farewell of Manu Vatuvei. The central image shows Vatuvei in his Vodafone Warriors jersey, surrounded by other players in action. The text "FAREWELL CLUB LEGEND MANU VATUVEI" is prominently displayed in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "THIS FRIDAY KICK OFF 8PM". The top right corner features the hashtag "#THANKYOU MANU". The bottom left corner mentions "MT-SMART STADIUM MANU VATUVEI STADIUM". The bottom right corner shows the Vodafone Warriors logo and the Panthers logo. The bottom of the poster includes a list of sponsors: NRL, Vodafone, Canterbury, Skycity, Woodstock, A, Flava, Harvy Norman, CSG, Suzuki, and Wendy's.

**FAREWELL CLUB LEGEND MANU VATUVEI**  
**THIS FRIDAY KICK OFF 8PM**

**#THANKYOU MANU**

**MT-SMART STADIUM MANU VATUVEI STADIUM**

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**Sponsors:** NRL, Vodafone, Canterbury, SKYCITY, WOODSTOCK, A, flava, Harvy Norman, CSG, SUZUKI, Wendy's





**C**ONGRATULATIONS TO Robert Whittaker for his great win over Cuban Yoel Romero on Saturday American time, giving him the UFC interim middleweight division title. Romero won a silver medal in freestyle wrestling at the Sydney 2000 Olympic games. The fight was in Las Vegas before 12,834 fans and Romero was the heavy favourite. But Whittaker narrowly won the contest with a 48-47 scorecard from all judges. Born in south Auckland in December 1990, 26 year Whittaker lives at Menai in the southern Sydney suburbs. An electrician before he became a professional fighter, Whittaker holds black belts in Karate and Hapkido. He attended Menai High School from 2003 to 2007 and has been a big Rugby League fan since he took up the sport as a five year old. He played junior football with Riverwood, Kingsgrove and the Menai Roosters and is a keen South Sydney fan. He praised Rugby League on Sunday in both pre fight and post fight TV interviews, while he has trained with Souths on a couple of occasions. Although New Zealand born, Whittaker fights under the Australian flag and has a prominent Southern Cross tattoo on his chest and a Maori tattoo on his shoulder.

I was invited to attend a St. George/Illawarra reunion at St. George Leagues club on Saturday 1 July. Rugby League Immortal and Australian Team of the Century member, Graeme Langlands, has had some health problems over the past year and so I picked him up at his nursing home to take him to the reunion. It was a great occasion and a real pleasure to be in the company of many great Rugby League people. Steve Edge, who played in the first State of Origin game back in July 1980 and who was a member of six Grand Final winning teams, was the informative and entertaining MC. There were around 80 at the function, including current Dragons coach, Paul McGregor who had made a special effort to attend after his team had played on the Gold Coast the previous night.

I selected a team from the players who were enjoying the day and it is an excellent side. Here it is, including a strong bench. Fullback Graeme Langlands (45 Tests), wingers John King (15 Tests) and Eddie Lumsden (15 Tests), centres Paul McGregor (4 Tests) and John Riley (1 Test), five eighth Billy Smith (26 Tests), halfback Steve Morris (1 Test), lock John Raper (39 Tests), second rows Rod Reddy (17 Tests) and Ben Creagh (2 Tests), front rows Craig Young (20 Tests) and Michael Weyman (1 Test), hooker Steve Edge (1 State of Origin for NSW). The bench consists of Graeme Wynn (5 games for Australia on 1980 tour of New Zealand), Bruce Starkey (NSW 1979 and two Grand Final wins with St. George), Roy Ferguson (around 200 first grade games with the Wests Magpies then St. George), John Jansen (over 100 games with St. George including the 1977 Grand Final win).

Blockbusting Parramatta winger, Semi Radradra, was at his devastating best against the Storm in Melbourne on Saturday night. He scored a try and ran for 201 metres in his 12 runs at an average of around 17 metres each time. He had close to one hundred metres in the first 15 minutes of the game. Now 25, 190 cms and 105 kgs, Radradra has played 85 first grade games and has 70 tries from these games. In round two this season, at Wollongong on 12 March, he collected four tries in the Eels 34-16 win over the Dragons. The 22-6 victory against the Storm was important to the Eels as it moved them to eighth position on the ladder, four competition points clear of the ninth placed Penrith Panthers. It was Parramatta's third successive win and their fifth from their last six games. Obviously the Storm missed their six State of Origin men, but they still lead the ladder and the State of Origin period is now finished. Missing from the Storm side against the Eels were Cameron Smith, Cooper Cronk, Billy Slater, Will Chambers, Tim Glasby and Cameron Munster. Barring injury these talented players will be available for the Storm in the run down to the play offs. The Storm has a bye this weekend and if the Sharks can beat the Titans at the Gold Coast on Saturday night, they will be on 28 competition points, alongside Melbourne.



*Graeme Langlands (age 75), John Raper (78), Billy Smith (74). Between them, they have 110 Tests for Australia and 16 Grand Final wins with St. George.*

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I was sad to see that Australia's oldest Test captain, Wally O'Connell, passed away on 28 June at 94 years of age. Born at Paddington in Sydney on 6 April 1923, Wally played 88 first grade games with the Roosters from 1942 to 1948 and then 34 games as Manly captain/coach from 1950 to 1952. In 1945, he was a member of the Roosters Premiership winning side and in 1949 he was captain/coach of Wollongong club, Collegians. He captained Australia in one of his 10 Tests and that was at Leeds on 9 October 1948 in the 23-21 loss to Great Britain.

The Toronto Wolfpack remain unbeaten at the top of the English League One table after their 62-10 defeat of the University of Gloucestershire All Golds in Toronto last Saturday. Quinn Ngawati, a big 18 year old forward, became the first Canadian-born man to play with the Wolfpack after coming off the bench in the 62nd minute. Ngawati has a New Zealand father and a Canadian mother. The evergreen Fui Fui Moi Moi, scored one of Toronto's 11 tries. This coming Saturday, the Wolfpack play the Hemel Stags in Toronto. Hemel is about 40 kms north of London.

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## **ARL Results for Saturday July 8**

### **SAS Fox Memorial: Round 13**

Richmond 6 Howick 50  
Glenora 30 Papakura 0  
Te Atatu 40 Marist 12  
Pt Chevalier 34 Northcote 16  
Mangere East 14 Mt Albert 30

### **Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Plate: Round 9**

Pakuranga 8 East Coast Bays 30  
Waitemata 16 Manukau 10  
Hibiscus Coast bye

### **Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Premiership: Round 9**

Papatoetoe 24 Ellerslie 28  
New Lynn 18 Bay Roskill 42  
Manurewa 28 Ponsonby 41  
Otara 34 Otahuhu 24



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# Countdown To The Cup

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years),  
NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



**N**OW THE State of Origin series is over the countdown can begin in earnest towards two other 2017 season highlights of greater importance to most New Zealanders – the NRL Grand Final at Sydney on October 1 and the World Cup tournament starting later that month in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and culminating with the final at Brisbane on December 2. While the World Cup promises to be a glittering affair involving 14 nations it will be contested without two of the most popular and influential players of the last decade.

Kangaroos halfback Johnathan Thurston and Kiwis wing Manu Vatuvei could have aspired to ending their representative careers with a lap of honour at Suncorp Stadium. At least they can both look back on past World Cup victories, Vatuvei in Australia in 2008 and Thurston in Britain in 2013. Although neither planned it that way, they exited the representative scene on personal highs. (Interestingly, Thurston this week left the door slightly ajar if the Cowboys agree to him answering an emergency call from Queensland in 2018. He might be back!)

Thurston had already seriously damaged his shoulder before kicking the goal which carried Queensland to victory in Origin II at Sydney last month. Vatuvei left the Test arena in even more memorable circumstances. His last two clashes with the Kangaroos resulted in victories. In the first of them, the 2014 Four Nations final at Wellington, he scored two tries. In his swansong, the 2015 Anzac Test at Brisbane, he crossed for two more tries and was awarded the Charles Savory Medal as Man of the Match. They were the last of his record 22 Test tries.

Meanwhile, Kangaroos coach Mal Meninga and Kiwis counterpart David Kidwell will be in countdown mode for the World Cup, hoping their senior men stay fit and healthy. Australia is already without Thurston, Greg Inglis and Matt Scott because of season-ending injuries but Meninga has had the highly competitive Origin series to find suitable replacements. Kiwis forwards Jesse Bromwich and Kevin Proctor are out of contention for disciplinary reasons and utility back Peta Hiku has been released by Penrith and gone to the British Super League.

As of last weekend, the most notable Kiwis on the NRL injury list were Penrith centre Dean Whare (jaw) and Warriors hooker Issac Luke (shoulder). Whare fractured his jaw in a head clash against the Rabbitohs but does not require surgery and is expected back in round 22. Luke was listed as “indefinite” and his return will be awaited with some anxiety. Youngster Brandon Smith, the Melbourne Storm rookie who was Luke’s understudy for the Anzac Test, has had wrist surgery that will sideline him for at least the rest of the regular season.

Jason Nightingale, who was not required for the Anzac Test, has enjoyed a memorable couple of weeks. His third try-scoring treble this season carried him past 100 career tries and placed him in the celebrated company of fellow centurions Vatuvei and Nigel Vagana. At the other end of the experience scale, giant prop Nelson Asofa-Solomona has re-signed with the Storm until the completion of the 2019 season. Asofa-Solomona would almost certainly have made his Test debut in May had injury not forced his late withdrawal from the squad.

A World Cup is not always the best stage to blood newcomers, though Stacey Jones did not suffer from his Kiwis debut in the spine-tingling 25-24 victory over Tonga at Warrington in 1995. Who, then, have the best chance of breaking into Kidwell’s Kiwis? Without Bromwich and Proctor there are forward vacancies. Broncos prop Herman Ese’ese was coming into the reckoning until he got off-side with club coach Wayne Bennett over a projected move to the Knights. Addin Fonua-Blake (Manly) and James Gavet (Warriors) have also made an impact.

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Penrith second-rower Corey Harawera-Naera is a true rookie, having only made his debut in round four. Born in Auckland, he grew up in Northland alongside current clubmate James Fisher-Harris. As youngsters they dreamed of wearing Warriors jerseys but, unfortunately, Penrith's talent scouts found them first. Fisher-Harris has already played a Test for the Kiwis as a replacement against Scotland at last year's Four Nations. But while Fisher-Harris has been buffeted by injuries this season, the 22-year-old Harawera-Naera has arrived in style.

Fewer uncapped backs have put their hands up for the World Cup, but Roosters centre and wing Joseph Manu merits consideration. Born in Hamilton and raised in Tokoroa, Manu, 21, scored his fifth NRL try in the 14-12 win over the Rabbitohs last Friday night. He is still a work in progress, as was shown when former Kiwis centre Bryson Goodwin stepped him to score, but he is quickly fulfilling the promise displayed in 2016 when he was selected for the NYC Team of the Year and the Junior Kiwis and made his NRL debut against the Warriors.

## The Craziest Game I've Ever Seen

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years),  
NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



**S**ALFORD HAS been in our news recently, in reference to the signing of Warriors and Kiwis record try-scorer Manu Vatuvei. Various claimed to be a metropolitan borough within Greater Manchester or a city in its own right, Salford's two major claims to fame have been hidden from view. Firstly, Salford was the model for Weatherfield, the fictional town which includes Coronation Street. Secondly, traditional "Irish" song Dirty Old Town is actually about Salford. It was written in 1949 by Ewan MacColl, who was born and raised there.

But what is undeniably real in Salford is the local rugby league club. Formed in 1873 and named Salford six years later, the club switched rugby codes in 1896, the second year of the breakaway Northern Union. From 1901 until 2011, Salford played at The Willows. It moved to what is now the A J Bell Stadium in 2012. Success has been fleeting. Salford won its first Championship in 1913-14, three more in the 1930s, and the last two in the 1970s. Only once have Salford fans savoured a Challenge Cup triumph, and that was away back in 1938.

Times are good in Salford at the moment. Last year the club avoided relegation by the barest margin – two unconverted tries in the last two minutes to level the scores at 18-18 and then a winning field goal in the first minute of golden point which consigned Hull Kingston Rovers to second division football. But Salford is currently running second behind Castleford in the Super League and faces a Cup semi-final against struggling Wigan later this month. The current squad includes former Kiwis centre Junior Sa'u and notorious Aussie Todd Carney.

Salford's finest hours were orchestrated by New Zealander Lance Todd, who toured with the original 1907-08 All Golds and stayed in England to play for Wigan. He was manager-coach of Salford from 1928 until 1940, masterminding three of its six Championships and its only Challenge Cup. In 1934 Todd took his players to France, where rugby league was just getting started. It was there that their red shirts and brilliant football caused them to be described as Diables Rouges (Red Devils). Once a nickname, Salford Red Devils is now the official name.

When Salford won its two most recent Championships in the 1970s it was owned by wealthy businessman Brian Snape. He was a man with vision, building a restaurant and nightclub at The Willows to attract a whole new generation of fans and using what was then little known technology to provide the finest playing surface in the country. He also signed the very best and most spectacular rugby union players such as Welshmen David Watkins and Maurice Richards and Englishmen Mick Coulman and Keith Fielding. The Red Devils won with flair.

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The 1971 Grand Slam Kiwis had won the first Test against Great Britain at The Willows in the famous match when Dennis Williams, at 18 years and one day, became rugby league's youngest ever Test player and scored a try the first time he handled the ball. Four weeks later they returned to take on Salford in what I have always regarded as the most remarkable match I have seen. Salford led 26-0 at half-time (Watkins alone had scored three tries and four goals for 17 of those points) and 31-5 soon afterwards. But they eventually got home by just 31-30.

I'm not privy to what Kiwis coach Lory Blanchard said at half-time. Tour photographer Rhys Morris had a guess: "If you want to look like a complete pack of fools just go out and play the same as you have done in the first half," wrote Morris. I suspect Lory did not bother with that many words to lift his battered bunch. Centre Bernie Lowther (knee) and prop Doug Gailey (gashed forehead) were casualties. Great Britain captain Chris Hesketh and Watkins were in total control of the midfield backs and Coulman was rampant among the forwards.

After the teams swapped converted tries for 31-5, the Kiwis suddenly sprang into life. Wing Mocky Brereton crossed for a legitimate try, only for the touch judge to rule it out and later claim Brereton had brushed the corner flag. Brereton's fellow outside backs, Phillip Orchard (two), Roy Christian and substitute Bob McGuinn, scored from a series of stunning attacks. Prop Henry Tatana converted them all, and also a try of his own. After the most scintillating 25 minutes of international rugby league I can recall it was 31-30 with eight minutes left!

The Salford spectators, thrilled by the superb attacking skills of Watkins in the first half, were equally generous in applauding the Kiwis revival. But only up to that point. Salford had never beaten New Zealand on five previous tours and with defeat looming again the crowd applied raucous pressure to the match officials. Prop Robert Orchard appeared to cross for a winning try, only to be denied by the referee. The referee also ignored the home side blatantly off-side at every play-the-ball. The match-deciding penalty was never blown and so it ended at 31-30. Unforgettable.

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*By Miles Davis*

## 3rd Lions Test

Captains Kieran Read and Sam Warburton with the DHL series trophy the drawn test and series. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

**W**ELL THAT'S it for another 12 years but how will this Lions tour be remembered? Lions fans will remember it fondly as for just the 2nd time in history the touring side avoided a series defeat. Whilst there was a slightly flat feeling as the final whistle heralded a draw I have no doubt that the visiting fans will have woken the next morning in a more positive mood than All Black fans. To have held the best team in the world in their own back yard is something to be proud of. Granted the All Blacks were not their usual clinical self at Eden Park but credit must be given to the Lions for their committed effort that put the normally unflappable World Champions under pressure.

The Lions fans brought joy to retailers (especially publicans) all over the country and an atmosphere to stadiums rarely experienced in New Zealand and it seems a shame that we have to wait over a decade for their next visit.

The only downside is the negative attitude displayed by much of the New Zealand media and their reluctance to give the Lions credit for their achievement. Written off for much of the tour by many rugby scribes there was scant praise for a drawn series with much of the focus being on the perceived failings of referees and mistakes made by the All Blacks. This focus was shared by many All Black fans on social media. Granted there are legitimate questions to be asked about some of the decisions in the 3rd test (I am tired of TMO's deciding the fate of a game, when that penalty was given it should have stood) but surely the main focus should be on how well contested the series was and how well the Lions performed.

The All Blacks to a man are magnificent ambassadors for New Zealand as well as being by far the best side in the rugby world. Their media and fans would do well to follow their example.

Sadly with the All Blacks failing to achieve the anticipated series win the same media are now turning on their team. Questions about Hansen's future are a ridiculous over-reaction and highlight the unrealistic (and arguably arrogant) expectation that the team should win every single game. The All Blacks suffered losses to key players throughout the series yet unearthed more young talent that augurs well for the future. The All Blacks deserve the respect and admiration of fans and media but also their support when things very occasionally don't go their way. Take it from a Pom, they are still without a shadow of a doubt the best side in the world, have the greatest depth and in Steve Hansen have a coach that any other side in the world would snap up without hesitation.

So rather than bemoan failings of players, referees and coaches let us celebrate two teams who provided a magnificent series that captivated us to the final whistle.





By Miles Davis

All Stars Kevin Tamati in action during the rugby league match between a Kiwi All Stars team and an Invitation Team at Mt Smart Stadium, Auckland, on Saturday 15 July 2006.

Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

# Kevin Tamati

**H**AWKE'S BAY was the birthplace of Kevin Tamati but it was further south that he was to set out on a memorable rugby league career.

In 1972, after being out of school for a couple of years, he was looking for a move away from his home district to give his life a kick-start. His original plan was to attend the Mormon College in Hamilton but had not managed to save enough money to do so. He therefore decided to head to the bottom of the South Island and get himself some work at Ocean Beach freezing works in Bluff. As fate would have it his long-time girlfriend Tira was on his train heading to Wellington and they both decided to spend some time there. Booking into a hostel he found work there and although originally intending to spend just a short time there, set down roots (marrying Tira in the process).

Tamati had never played league but took it up first playing for Petone then Upper Hutt and Randwick. He soon developed a deep love for the game and found himself wanting to pursue it as far as he could. It wasn't long before he made the step up to representative rugby being selected for Wellington. He went on to make over 50 appearances for his adopted province.

He was given his first Kiwi cap in 1979 and in 1982 took the opportunity to move to England and sign for Widnes. Over the next 3 seasons he made 96 appearances with the highlight being the 1984 Challenge Cup Final. Tamati and his Widnes team-mates took on a highly fancied Wigan side which included fellow Kiwi Graeme West and his cousin Howie. Widnes prevailed 19-6 with Tamati going close to winning Man of the Match being edged out by Joe Lydon (Lydon scored 2 tries but Tamati had a hand in both of them).

After his stint with Widnes he returned to New Zealand and played for Northcote Tigers on a Saturday then flew down to Wellington to play for Randwick on the Sunday. In 1985 he returned to England after signing for Warrington. He had immediate success with the Wolves winning the 1986 Premiership Final at Elland Road, defeating Halifax 38-10. It was one of several finals he took part in during his 3 year stint with Warrington for who he played over 100 games.

When he hung up his boots he turned his attention to coaching taking over the reins at Salford in 1989. Salford were then in the 2nd Division and in his second season Tamati led them to the Championship losing just one game all season. He followed that up with the Premiership final beating Halifax 27-20.

On leaving Salford in 1993 he took over at Chorley Borough where he stayed for 5 seasons before taking over at Whitehaven.

As well as playing 34 games for the Kiwis, including 22 tests, he also coached New Zealand Maori. He was inducted into the NZRL Legends of League in 1995.

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Whilst many people remember Kevin Tamati for dishing out a bit of discipline to Greg Dowling in 1985 it is more fitting to remember a fully committed and talented player who took a passionate approach and desire to win to every side he played for.

For those wanting to know more about Kevin you can watch a series of interviews below.

Kevin Tamati talks Part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xLovh4XTZw>

Kevin Tamati talks Part 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anrNIuX1N88>

Kevin Tamati talks Part 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YynKIJPzc9U>

Kevin Tamati talks Part 4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqbEeAljLQA>

1984 Challenge Cup Final Widnes v Wigan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HXVlYYzKsw>

1986 Premiership Final – Warrington v Halifax <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xoZw-VSB5A>

1991 Premiership Final Salford v Halifax <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xoZw-VSB5A>

## Rugby League Northland Premiership Wrap - Round 13

By Ben Francis



**T**HE OTANGAREI Knights are one win away from securing the Rugby League Northland minor Premiership after defeating the Moerewa Tigers 56-28.

The Tigers were missing a number of players and played the match with 10 players - at one stage they only had eight which made things difficult.

The Knights scored six first half tries to lead 34-6 at the break.

The second half was a different story as the Tigers stepped it up a gear and closed the gap to 38-24, however it was not meant to be as the Knights ran away with the match in the final 15 minutes, scoring three tries to finish the match.

Meanwhile the Takahiwai Warriors returned to the winners circle by beating the Hikurangi Stags 36-10.

The Warriors scored three first half tries to lead 12-4 at the break, and they scored four more in the second half to secure the win.

The other game saw the Portland Panthers ease past the Hora Hora Broncos 56-8.

With the top four already confirmed with one round to play, a number of teams are playing for pride but the minor premiership is still up for grabs.

If the Knights defeat the Hikurangi Stags, they will win the minor premiership - however a loss will mean the Warriors will have a change to finish top. They also need to beat the Panthers in Portland.

The other match of round 14 will see the Northern Wairoa Bulls face the Hora Hora Broncos.

The Tigers will have a much-needed bye before the finals.

# Mate It Could Be Worse

By John Holloway



**T**RACKING INTO the last quarter of the season it is plain that The mighty Warrior are battling as usual to make the top 8. But last nite (I write this monday morning) as I watched yet another heartbreak for Nathan Browns Knights I was thinking well it could be worse we could be Newcastle fans. Only 2 wins for them this year with so many brave showings that came to nought. A cruel trick of fate up 18/10 against the Bulldogs with only a few minutes to go they lose to a Mbye chargedown runaway on the buzzer. 20/18. A couple of uncharacteristic key mistakes clearly upsetting one of the seasons finds newbie stand off Brock Lamb. They have a young side light on experience but looking to build and bulk up next year. With the four Matautia brothers and the Saifiti twins a year older bolstered by a full season from Hodgkinson and recruits like Kenny-Dowell and the exciting tyro Kaylen Ponga signed they will go places. You heard it from High-Tackle first they will do much better in 2018. Only a couple of other matches in an Origin affected round. The Roosters battled past the Rabbitohs 14/12. The full strength Panthers held off the Manly 16/8 aided by ref Peranaras 14 -4 penalty advantage that raised a fiery outburst from Seaside's Coach Trent Barrett...could be a ten grand fine comin up! Bellamys belters couldn't cover the loss of Smith, Munster, Cronk, Glasby and Slater, fighting hard initially but capitulating eventually 6/22 to the full strength Eels. Getting back to our Homies the table has us 10th spot at this point level with the Blue Mountain Panthers, I note that some well fancied sides lie below us including the Green Machine, Russells Rabbitohs, Dessys bedazzled Bulldogs, Ivans toothless Tigers and the tilting Titans. So as I say it's a not so bad mate it could be worse.

The State of O beckons ... State versus State, Mate versus Mate, ladies bring a plate and a bit like the Lions/ABs 3rd test decider all over again eh...mind you less likely to be a draw with the golden point extras on the menu. I like the addition of Munster to the Queensland squad no doubt his club Captain Cam Smith had a word in Coach Walters ear as many expected DCE to be next cab on the rank....considering the Manly fire crackers recent outstanding form it is a talking point call. At Suncorp with the injured JTs legacy on the line I think the Maroons might as they say these days, out-passion the more favoured Blues but don't put the house on it. All will be revealed Wednesday night (last nite as you read this?).

Back to business in round 18 albeit with the last of the BYE rounds in place before the race to the top 8 tape gets real. Overall the current Leaders list looks pretty solid to me with the target for the rest of us hopefuls being to oust the Dragons or the Eels off their 7th and 8th placings. As the prophets say, this is easier said than done.

Difficult to predict what the various coaches will do in terms of backing up or nursing Origin players so results perhaps a little harder to pick but here goes. Rickys rocky Raiders will have their home crowd urging them to get desperate against the dawdling Dragons. You would have to surmise that the luckless Knights are destined for more doom and gloom from Bennetts "back on the horse" Broncos. The Titans can be dangerous but even at home are not fancied against the sharp-toothed Sharkies who are starting to show big dance tendencies. The Sea Eagles should be just too good for Clearys turnstyle Tigers and slammin Sam Burgess and the rickety Rabbits will have their work cut out against the far North Rustlers who are coping well in the master-schemer Thurstons absence. So that leaves the Friday nite outing for the Faithful at Penrose headquarters. The scratchy Panthers on the prowl will be a huge handful for the Warriors at the fortress. Our crew need the big turnout and the full noise support to bring this one home, The Butchers Stacey Jones Lounge will be buzzing, the Fanzone will be alive with mates to meet and fantastic foodie outlets treats, get your gears on and get down....be there or be square. Kia kaha mighty Warriiioooooorrrrrss.

Ps. I hear that the Warriors recruitment team were interested in the Storms young giant Asofa-Solomona but he has resigned with Melbourne, likewise a possible play for bruising Bulldog Kasiano fell flat when the Storm got his signature too for 2018. No doubt the famous Bellamy recipe will revive Big Sams form and fortune. C'est la vie.





**JUBILANT WINNERS:** The Clive women's rugby team celebrate their first Hawke's Bay Championship title in three seasons.



*By Shane Hurndell  
Hawke's Bay Today  
Sports Reporter*

## Spot the League Players

**I**T WAS definitely evident ... the higher standard of play in Hawke's Bay's women's championship rugby final last Friday night than in previous seasons.

And the fact several of the players on display during Clive's 23-7 win against Taradale at Farndon Park had played league earlier in the year was a contributing factor. Clive flanker Laurae Blake and substitute forward Jessica Bennett and Taradale fullback Sylvia Bockman all played for the Mid Central Vipers team which finished third at the national women's league tournament in Auckland at Queen's Birthday Weekend.

This trio along with Clive's 8, 9, and 10 combo of 48-year-old Deidre Hakopa, Shaylee Tipiwai and 2006 World Champion Black Fern Amy Williams and Clive's substitute hooker Lisa Ropiha all played for the Hawke's Bay women's league team earlier this year in the Mid Central competition.

While it's not unusual for the bulk of the women in the Bay's rugby competition to play league this is the first year their rugby commitments have followed league ones as in previous seasons their league pursuits have been confined to the traditional Spring Comp which begins in August.

When men's league was at its highest level in the Bay during the mid 1990s it was because club league was played on Sundays which allowed those who wanted to to also play union on Saturdays. Several players are switching between codes this season and it will be interesting to see what they opt for on Saturday when club rugby is on at the same time as the Unicorns first rep league fixture of the season.

It will also be interesting to see how many members of the Hastings Boys High School 1st XV rugby side turn out for the Unicorns on Saturday. Because of the school holidays they have a break from Super 8 play

on Saturday.

Last weekend the unbeaten Hastings side recorded their fifth consecutive Super 8 win and 14th victory for the season with a 32-0 win against New Plymouth Boys' High School in atrocious conditions in New Plymouth. The country's No 1 ranked secondary schools side have scored 810 points while conceding 50.

Can't wait for this weekend. Heading up to Auckland to watch the Warriors take on the Panthers on Friday night.

Hoping to see the Warriors gain revenge for that 36-28 loss on May 13 at Pepper Stadium. I'm still having nightmares from the second half on that night when the Warriors conceded 30 unanswered points after leading 28-6 at halftime.

Total commitment and focus for 80 minutes will be a must for the Warriors if they are to secure victory this week. The Panthers again looked sharp when they beat the Sea Eagles 16-8 last weekend.

It was awesome to see Kiwis winger Dallin Wattene-Zelezniak make that 70 metre run in the second half. Hopefully he won't have too many of those on Friday night and he spends most of the game in defence mode.

On Saturday morning it will be a quick drive back to the Bay to watch the Hawke's Bay Unicorns take on Wellington in their first Mid Central inter-provincial competition match of the season from 2pm at the Hawke's Bay Regional Sports Park in Hastings.

I'm expecting to see several regular rugby players turn out for the Unicorns and I will have a review of the match in next week's newsletter.



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# NZ 16S Gear Up To Face NZ Maori 17S

*By Brooke Hurdell  
NZRL Digital  
Content Producer*

**N**EW ZEALAND Rugby League have named their New Zealand Resident 16s side to take on the Maori Rugby League 17s later this month.

The 18-strong squad will set out to follow in the footsteps of Steven Marsters and Chanel Harris-Tavita who were instrumental in the NZ Resident 16s team that last took to the field in 2014, both of whom went on to earn a spot in the Junior Kiwis this year.

These players have been identified as the best talent at 16s level from across New Zealand.

New Zealand Resident 16s Head Coach, Andrew Auimatagi says “I’m really excited about the talent we have named this year.

“They all impressed us in the early stages of their playing careers and have worked hard to be named in the final team to play the NZ Maori 17s in a couple weeks time.

“As it will be the first time for many wearing the New Zealand jersey, it is important for us (as staff) to teach the players about what it means to take those first steps on our representative pathway,” he says.

The re-introduction of this anticipated match into the NZRL calendar is something New Zealand Rugby League’s National Talent Manager, David McMeek-en believes will strengthen the pathways for young rugby league players.

“The return of this fixture is a great opportunity for the boys with aspirations to play for their country – it also adds a lot of prestige to the occasion.

“This game will be a challenging and competitive fixture as our NZ 16s gear up to face a strong NZ Maori

17s team, many of whom are also boys that have been through the NZRL pathways,” he says.

To watch the live stream of the game follow the @NZLeague Facebook page.

NZ Resident 16s v NZ Maori 17s

Rotorua, Puketewhero Park

July 22

2017 NZ Resident 16s team:

Akarana: Christian Tuipulotu, Jyris Glaumuzina, Nathaneal Sasagi, Temple Kalepo, Jona Polota-Kopa, Junior Tuleisu; Counties: Aamon Dean, Brian Lealii-fano, Diaz Taihia, Kaya Cuthers, Marco Talagi, Semisi Tapa, Xavier Stevens-Teo; Southern: Caius Fa’atili, Griffin Neame, Leroy Ferguson; Upper Central: Ray-na Whakaari; Auckland Vulcans: Caleb Pese,

Andrew Auimatagi - Head Coach

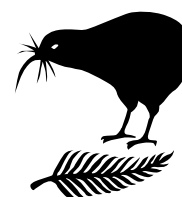
Cody Walker - Assistant Coach

Mel Mather - Manager

Tania Harris - Assistant Manager

Jason Clarke - Trainer

Emile Vollenhoven - Physio



**NEW ZEALAND  
RUGBY LEAGUE™**





# TAKE YOUR Rugby league CLUB TO THE WORLD CUP... AND WIN

*By Daniel Fraser  
New Zealand Media & PR  
Manager RLWC 2017*

**F**IJI DEFENCE Forces have put in a commanding performance to well and truly stamp their authority on the competition, running away with a thumping 40-6 victory over New Zealand at Winter Sporting Complex on Sunday evening.

Despite the first half being a tug of war battle with both teams defending their line with sheer determination, Fiji came out firing in the second 40 minutes with five unanswered tries to claim their second consecutive victory.

The opening exchanges of the contest were entertained by some brutal defensive efforts from both sides as they both looked to lay a strong platform for their skillful outside backs - and it was Fiji who looked the most threatening, causing constant havoc for New Zealand's defence.

Not shy to throw the ball around, Fiji were showcasing their incredible natural talent with a well-executed backline movement almost paying dividends, only for New Zealand's defence to hold strong and force an error.

Despite both teams playing an attacking brand of football, consistent handling errors would ruin their respective chances of claiming first points - matched with some physical collisions holding out any chance of a breakthrough try throughout the first 20 minutes.

Enjoying the majority of possession, it was inevitable that Fiji would claim the first try of the afternoon, as fullback Aaron Joshua Vadika burst through before offloading to Marika Takilakibau who crossed to the left-hand side of the posts.

New Zealand were putting pressure on Fiji and were desperately looking for an immediate response, and a quick break through the middle-third saw Robert Brockhurst reap the rewards with a try.

More razzle dazzle football saw a wave of momentum behind Fiji as they were looking to regain the lead, and it wasn't long before Ekemasi Vesivalau was on the receiving end to score their second try.

Just when New Zealand were looking to close out the first half with an attacking raid on the opposition goal line, Fiji fullback Joshua Vadika showed pure speed to pounce on a loose ball and evade a host of defenders, with winger Lefani Takikalou supporting on the inside and evading several scrambling defenders to cross for Fiji's third try.

After an erratic opening 40 minutes with both teams offering their dynamic attacking prowess, it was Fiji who was holding onto a slight 12-6 advantage.

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Fiji were pressing to extend their lead with multiple attacking raids on New Zealand's goal line, but they were unable to take full advantage with further handling errors coming at a costly price.

New Zealand weren't doing themselves any favours with simple errors seeing them cemented in their own-half, and a penalty right in front of the posts was too good to refuse for halfback Illikena Niuvusa Niumataiwalu who slotted the two points to take an eight-point lead after 45 minutes.

Moments after extending their lead, some quick thinking from Niumataiwalu saw him stab a grubber past the defensive line, before offloading to Takikalau who crossed for his second try of the game.

Niumataiwalu was unable to convert from the sideline with the score quickly racing out 18-6 with 25 minutes remaining.

Fiji were brimming with confidence after their fourth try, and fullback Aaron Josh Vadika bursted through the line off the kick-off, before quickly evading his counterpart and headed towards the right-hand corner, with the cover defence able to cut him down but only for Vadika to offload to Takikalau who worked his way over to complete his hat-trick.

Illikena Niuvusa Niumataiwalu capped off a brilliant performance with a try of his own in the last 10 minutes, but that wouldn't be the last of their tries with Samalila Vala and Rotate Rakauro Tobe joining in on the action with two brilliant long-range tries, with Fiji running away with a commanding 40-6 victory over a valiant New Zealand outfit.

New Zealand fullback Cole Ware spoke of his disappointment in their loss but was always knew the the quality of Fiji.

"It's a bit hard to swallow but we knew Fiji would come out and play some freestyle footy and that's exactly what they did, it was a hard game to lose," he said.

The defeat was New Zealand's second in the Festival of World Cups after they went down to Australia in the opening match.

Rugby League World Cup 2017 tickets and information at [www.rlwc2017.com](http://www.rlwc2017.com)



THERE'S  
15 WEEKS  
TO GO!



## Hockey NZ Calling For Volunteers To Assist With World League Final

**H**OCKEY NEW Zealand is looking for volunteers to assist in the FIH Women's World League Final, which is being held in Auckland from 17-26 November at the North Harbour Hockey Stadium.

If you are interested in being part of this high-profile event, please register your expression of interest to become a volunteer before 31st August.

[CLICK HERE to register expression of interest](#)

North Harbour Hockey will be managing the volunteer schedule, and will be in contact to confirm your involvement.

For any specific queries around the online registration form please email [support@hockeynz.co.nz](mailto:support@hockeynz.co.nz)

The FIH Women's World League Final will see the world's top eight teams hit New Zealand shores for 10 days of action packed hockey.

The World League Final is the culmination of four competition rounds played over two years, giving nations from all over the world a chance to compete for the overall championship.

As hosts the Vantage Black Sticks Women gain automatic qualification, while the other seven competitors are determined by results at two World League Semi Final events in Brussels and London.

The FIH Women's World League Final is proudly supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED).

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### Whoops... we missed out some photos from last weeks game against the Bulldogs. Here they are!



James Graham the captain of the Canterbury Bulldogs rugby league team was ecstatic to receive his copy of my book what a ride mate.



Was great to catch up with these guys on Saturday at the NYC game all good guys.



Was nice to catch up with the ex Warrior player Brad Abby after the game.



Watching The NYC team with this rugby league legend George Peponis.





# Kia Toa Tigers Tame The East Coast Eagles To Retain Premiership

*By Ricki Allan*

*Otago Rugby League*

**T**HE KIA Toa Tigers were crowned back-to-back Premiers on Saturday, beating the East Coast Eagles 52-20 in the final.

The Tigers went into the encounter as favourites, charging into the final with a five-game unbeaten streak.

It did not take them long to open the scoring, with their lethal combination of Vila Apuula and Shane Unahi testing the Eagles' defence before getting the ball out to Josiah Mani on the wing to score.

Mani, has been a standout in his first year with the Tigers, regularly scoring tries and showing his impressive pace and footwork.

He showed that pace on a dash down the sideline before passing to Joel Taniora, who ran in under the posts to score.

The Eagles' strong forwards kept them in the contest in the early stages of the game.

Lock Cameron Brown was their first try-scorer, busting through multiple defenders on the line to score under the sticks.

As expected, the Eagles props provided a real attacking threat, with Marcel Taani taking the ball to the line before offloading to Tipene Wairepo to score. Minutes later, William Jackson pushed through multiple defenders in a barnstorming run to the try-line to level the score.

It looked as if the Eagles might take the game away from the Tigers and hooker Sam Johnstone helped them gain the lead for the first time, showing excellent footwork to break through the line and go 40m before being brought down by Tigers fullback Ryan Tapsell.

Daez Mulipolathen had a good follow-up run and

offloaded to Owen Draper, who scored to give the Eagles the lead.

However, that was the last time the Eagles scored, with the Tigers levelling the scores minutes later through centre Lamen Pere.

Pere has been one of the top performers this year for the Tigers, his strong ball-carrying ability and determined defensive efforts outstanding.

The halftime score was 20-20.

The second half would be a much different story, with the Tigers lifting their attacking game and running in six unanswered tries.

With quick and elusive wingers on both sides of the field, the halves pairing of Apuula and Taua Piri manipulated play to exploit the Eagles' edge defence, allowing their wingers to score five tries between them.

Cooper Keach was a standout on the right wing, scoring two tries, including a long-range try from a smart intercept.

Josiah Mani was equally impressive on the left wing, scoring two more tries in the second half to bring his tally to three in the match.

The Tigers' team unity and experience was the key difference between the sides, with several leaders among the group stepping up in the second half.

The Eagles pack had worked hard to keep them in the contest but their efforts took a toll and they were unable to sustain that level of defence for the full 80 minutes.

The impressive performance from the Tigers caps off two seasons of dominance in the Otago Rugby League competition.

# Black Sox In Control At World Champs

By Jayden Moore, Black Sox Manager

**PART TWO** of the previous days rain affected game between Japan and New Zealand commenced at 4am NZ time with the Golden Homes Black Sox eager to take control. The Black Sox needed to start well and erase the 1-0 deficit in order to take the game, a game that would go along way to helping them finish first in section B at the men's world championships in Whitehorse, Canada.

Japan made the interesting but not surprising pitching change of replacing starting pitcher Hayami Takahashi with Kento Okazaki. The tactic of mixing their pitchers is a common theme with Japanese sides but one that failed as the Black Sox jumped all over Okazaki with four runs in the bottom of the 3rd inning, stunning their opponents early.

Kento who had played for the Mount Albert Ramblers club last season was familiar to the Black Sox hitters and particularly that of Nathan Nukunuku who is the player/coach for the Auckland based side.

Campbell Enoka got the Black Sox underway by getting on with a fielders choice followed by a single to whizz kid Cole Evans. Up steps Nukunuku who cleared the table with his first home run of the day, a huge shot over the right field wall to give New Zealand the lead.

Tyrone Bartorillo continued his magnificent hitting form when he drove the ball off field and over the fence for his fifth homerun of the tournament. Bartorillo collected his 11th RBI at the championships and all through home runs.

Bottom of the fifth and in control Nukunuku hit his second bomb and 5th RBI to extend the lead.

The Black Sox kept the foot on the pedal with catcher Zane Van Lieshout grabbing his first hit of the tournament driving in the 7th run of the game. That was followed by Campbell Enoka who finished the game early with an outfield double to bring in the 8th run of the game run ruling the world number two with an impressive 8-1 win.

Black Sox Head Coach will be pleased with the outing and relieved that the bats are awakening as the side edges closer to playoffs.

Pitcher Josh Pettett put in a solid performance in cold and wet conditions and staking his claim as the ace of the pitching staff. Pettett took 8 strikeouts and gave up 4 hits over the shortened 6 inning game.

The Black Sox will play 2013 silver medalists Venezuela at 11:30 NZ time today.

---

**Keep up with Sir Peter Leitch! Click the icons to follow him on:**



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# Reader Mail

Bonsoir Sir Peter,

**H**ERE FIND enclosed dedicace especially made for you with agreement of Steve and Sam ! After the CATALANS loose against WIGAN tonight.

Have a nice week-end.

--

Pascal RODRIGUE



**C**HOICE BUTCH. Here's those photos I promised in the jersey I won from you. Blinking selfies. Anyway cheers and have an outstanding week.

**I**BUMPED INTO this guy at the Swinton Lions match today, his name is Mike Johnson we got chatting basically because he was wearing a Vodafone Warriors shirt!

He explained his son Dan Johnson lives in Wellington NZ and is involved with some coaching for kids with learning difficulties and how they are struggling with funding etc...obviously I mentioned I know a great guy in NZ who might have an influence or know the people to speak to

Finally, another nail biting win for Swinton v Halifax 13-12 sunshine in Manchester so we are all happy in our house, expect your all happy after the win against the dogs too

All the best mate, looking forward to catching up soon!

Cheers, Gary Hankinson



## 2017 Otago/Southland Premier Final

Sandy Point - July 15 - 2:30pm - Invercargill



The Battle in the Deep South







## THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 19 ISSUE...

NRL, HOLDEN CUP, INTRUST SUPER PREMIERSHIP, INTRUST SUPER CUP AND RON MASSEY CUP TEAM LISTS, PREVIEWS AND STATS + SCORES AND RESULTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY!

### INSIDE

- It's been a baptism of fire in a leadership position for 21-year-old Newcastle captain **Sione Mata'utia**. We sit down for an in-depth interview about keeping his team-mates motivated, learning captain qualities on the job and his goal to lead the club into a successful era again.
- Panthers winger **Josh Mansour** says he is still not 100 per cent following his return from an ACL injury, but his aim is to work his way back into the Kangaroos side for the World Cup – however Lebanon coach **Brad Fittler** hopes he will play for the Cedars instead.
- This season's best buys are not the usual crop of superstars you would expect. We comb through each team to find the standout players, including **Nathan Brown** (Eels), **Josh Addo-Carr** (Storm) and **Cameron McInnes** (Dragons).
- **Tyrell Fuimaono** is only 21, but the Rabbitohs second-rower has a big future ahead of him – especially when he explains his attitude upon joining the club. "I try to be as likeable as possible. When I first came to this club, I wanted to train really hard and play the best football possible so people would respect me."

**PLUS...** The **Top 8 infamous interviews**, **The Analyst** tracks the rise and fall of the Raiders and **Valentine Holmes** and **Jarryd Hayne** posters.



### ROUND 19

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### Contact details

Editorial: [maria.tsialis@news.com.au](mailto:maria.tsialis@news.com.au)

Advertising: [bowie.phillips@news.com.au](mailto:bowie.phillips@news.com.au)

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# Heart of a Warrior

Passionate fans don't come much bigger or more involved than the former manager, ambassador, charity patron and butcher. By **WILL EVANS**

**W**HEN a young Auckland butcher began sponsoring a local rugby league club, he could never have imagined the incredible ride the game would take him on.

"Unbelievable. It's been a terrific journey and one I've absolutely enjoyed," Sir Peter Leitch, affectionately known to all and sundry as 'The Mad Butcher', tells *Big League*.

Leitch first got involved with Mangere East Hawks in 1971. That grassroots association fostered a deep passion for the game, which has seen him become one of its most recognisable and enthusiastic figures.

"I was talking to a few guys from the club the other day, and I asked them, 'would you ever have thought I'd become the Kiwis manager, ambassador for the Warriors, and the 19th Warrior? They said, 'no way!'"

Leitch counts some of rugby league's icons among his personal friends. But his enduring humility and loyalty to his working-class roots – along with old-fashioned business savvy – are exemplified by a classic yarn where he pulled one over on an Immortal for the benefit of his beloved Hawks.

He talked Wally Lewis into speaking at a small fundraiser "of about 100 people". When he arrived, more than 1,000 people were there.

Lewis said: "And you can't afford to pay me after this?", to which Leitch replied, "that's how you do business".

True to form, 'The King' and 'The Mad Butcher' remain great mates to this day.

Leitch's relationship with the Kiwis began with the Graham Lowe-coached sides of the 1980s – "they used to ring me up say they

needed some meat for the hangi," he recalls – but it wasn't long before Leitch had official roles with the nation's flagship teams.

"The highlight of my career was in 2005 when I was the Kiwis' manager and we beat Australia 24-0 (in the Tri-Nations final)," he says.

The Warriors' official ambassador, he was heavily involved as the club made the 2002 and 2011 Grand Finals, taking then-New Zealand Prime Minister John Key to the latter.

"Everyone wanted to interfere and I had to tell them where to go. We sat in the grandstand and had a great time.

"There's no question [the Warriors have] lifted the profile of rugby league – in those early days, nobody wanted to talk to me because I was 'that league bloke'.

"I'd go to butchers' conferences and there would be snide remarks, but now everyone wants a piece of you."

A tireless worker for grassroots rugby league and a sought-after public speaker, the affable Leitch is equally synonymous with championing countless charitable causes. The institutions and individuals he's lent his time to over the years would number in the hundreds, if not thousands.

"It's about making a difference. I don't like people thinking I'm some big benefactor, but if we all give a little we can make a difference.

"I recently gave someone a signed Warriors jersey and you'd have thought I'd given them a million dollars."

Leitch is also the patron for 'League 4 Life', which is modelled on the Men of League Foundation.

"It was the brainchild of [Warriors CEO]

Jim Doyle, and it's a fantastic concept," Leitch says.

"We're very proud to be the charity of the Rugby League World Cup in New Zealand."

Awarded a QSM in 1991 for community service, and knighted for services to business and philanthropy in 2010, Leitch's favourite accolade emphasises his unpretentiousness.

"Some years ago [Reader's Digest] did a survey and I was voted one of the most trusted people in New Zealand – that was pretty cool."

The Warriors also retired their No.19 jersey in his honour, and the team's greatest supporter has a message for those who send social media and the airwaves into meltdown after each loss.

"No one died. It's only a game," Leitch says.

"I believe that if you wake up in the morning, it's a beautiful day."

He admits that the Warriors ending their title drought would be a dream come true – but it's not the be all and end all.

"Winning the premiership would be a bonus, but I'm not going to cry myself to sleep if we don't.

"I enjoy the fellowship. The club is about the people – we've got wonderful people in the office, a great CEO in Jim Doyle, and a good bunch of players. It would be a bonus, but it's not all about winning."

For now, Leitch's focus is on the end-of-year World Cup, which New Zealand is co-hosting for the first time. Unsurprisingly, he's busy spreading the gospel.

"This is massive for rugby league and I hope the sporting people of New Zealand support it. I hope every game is a sell-out. It's really going to put rugby league on the map."







## #NRLWarriorsPanthers

15	6	0	24	Roger TUIVASA-SHECK (C)	1	Dylan EDWARDS	7	1	0	4
16	8	0	32	David FUSITU'A	2	Josh MANSOUR	5	2	0	8
13	4	0	16	Blake AYSHFORD	3	Tyrone PEACHEY	15	5	0	20
11	1	0	4	Solomone KATA	4	Waqi BLAKE	15	3	0	12
15	6	0	24	Ken MAUMALO	21/5	Dallin WATENE-ZELEZNIAK	14	5	0	20
11	2	0	8	Kieran FORAN	6	Matt MOYLAN (C)	15	7	0	28
16	4	42*101		Shaun JOHNSON	7	Nathan CLEARY	16	5	57	134
15	0	0	0	Jacob LILLYMAN	8	James TAMOU	16	2	0	8
15	1	5	14	Issac LUKE	9	Mitch REIN	4	2	0	8
9	1	0	4	Ben MATULINO	10	Reagan CAMPBELL-GILLARD	16	1	0	4
16	4	0	16	Bodene THOMPSON	11	Corey HARAWIRA-NAERA	12	6	0	24
9	0	0	0	Bunty AFOA	12	Isaiah YEO	15	2	0	8
14	2	0	8	Simon MANNERING	13	Trent MERRIN	16	1	0	4

### INTERCHANGE

6	1	0	4	Mafoa'aeata HINGANO	14	Sione KATO	3	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	Sam LISONE	15	Leilani LATU	16	2	0	8
12	2	0	8	James GAVET	16	Tim BROWNE	11	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	Ligi SAO	17	James FISHER-HARRIS	5	0	0	0

### RESERVES

6	6	0	24	Charnze NICOLL-KLOKSTAD	18	Moses LEOTA	5	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	Chris SATAE	20/19	Tyrone MAY	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	Jazz TEVAGA	22/20	Viliame KIKAU	9	1	0	4
0	0	0	0	Mason LINO	24/21	Sitaleki AKAUOLA	7	0	0	0

(Honourary team member) Manu VATUVEI 5

\*Field Goals: S Johnson 1

### COACHES

Stephen KEARNEY Anthony GRIFFIN

PENALTIES	SCRUMS
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8	5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12	9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16	13 14 15 16

PENALTIES	SCRUMS
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8	5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12	9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16	13 14 15 16

42 BIG LEAGUE 2017 Round 19

**DATE:** FRIDAY, JULY 14  
**VENUE:** MT SMART STADIUM  
**KICK-OFF:** 8PM (NZ)  
**REFEREE:** GAVIN REYNOLDS  
**ASSISTANT REFEREE:** ALAN SHORTALL  
**TOUCH JUDGES:** NICK BEASHEL & CHRIS McMILLAN  
**SENIOR REVIEW OFFICIAL:** LUKE PATTEN  
**REVIEW OFFICIALS:** STEVE CHIDDY  
**FOX LEAGUE:** 5.30PM (AEST)  
**LIVE RADIO:** ABC, TRIPLE M

	WARRIORS	PANTHERS
Position (Points)	10th (18)	9th (18)
Points For	317	326
Points Against	343	317

ATTACK		
Tries	55	53
Completions	80%	75%
Tries 0-20m	34	29
Tries 21-50m	9	11
Tries 51-100m	4	2

DEFENCE		
Tries	60	55
Tries 0-20m	22	24
Tries 21-50m	17	12
Tries 51-100m	9	11

MATCH AVERAGES		
Tries Scored	3	3
Tries Conceded	4	3
Points Scored	20	20
Points Conceded	21	20
Hit Ups/Runs	176	173
Tackles	319	306
Metres Gained	1578	1580
Handling Errors	4	5
Offloads	7	11
Line-breaks	4	4
Goalkicking	79%	90%

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**  
 Played 38, Penrith 21, Warriors 16, drawn 1

**AT MT SMART STADIUM**  
 Played 17, Warriors 9, Penrith 8

**WINNING FORM 2017**  
**WARRIORS:** WLLWLLWLLWLBWLB Streak – 1 loss  
**PENRITH:** LWLWLLLLWLBWLBLLW Streak – 1 win

**PAST 8 CLASHES**  
**2017 – PENRITH D. WARRIORS 36-28** at Pepper Stadium  
**2016 – WARRIORS D. PENRITH 20-16** at Mt Smart Stadium;  
**PENRITH D. WARRIORS 30-18** at AMI Stadium, Christchurch  
**2015 – PENRITH D. WARRIORS 24-10** at Pepper Stadium  
**2014 – PENRITH D. WARRIORS 22-6** at Sportbet Stadium;  
**WARRIORS D. PENRITH 30-20** at Mt Smart Stadium  
**2013 – PENRITH D. WARRIORS 28-24** at Mt Smart Stadium;  
**PENRITH D. WARRIORS 62-6** at Centrebet Stadium

**BIGGEST HEAD-TO-HEAD WINS**  
**WARRIORS D. PENRITH 52-8** at Ericsson Stadium, 2001  
**PENRITH D. WARRIORS 62-6** at Centrebet Stadium, 2013

**NEXT CLASH**  
**WARRIORS:** v North Qld at 1300SMILES, 7.30pm Saturday July 22  
**PENRITH:** v Gold Coast at Pepper, 3pm Saturday July 22

**CASUALTY WARD**  
**WARRIORS:** Albert Vete (arm) – Rd 22; Ryan Hoffman (foot) – Rd 23  
**PENRITH:** Peter Wallace (groin) – Rd 20; Dean Whare (jaw) – Rd 22; Sam McKendry (knee), Bryce Cartwright (knee) – indefinite

Courtesy of our friends at Big League Magazine

NRL Preview

# High stakes at Mt Smart

## Mt Smart Stadium Friday, 8pm

**Form:** There have been two different Warriors teams this season – the one that wins most of its games at Mt Smart Stadium (six from seven in 2017) and the one that has managed a single victory from nine games on the road. The Panthers have won five of their past seven games, but it took them until last Saturday night to claim their first victory for the season over a top eight opponent.

**History:** The Panthers have generated an impressive record over the Warriors in recent seasons, winning seven of the past nine encounters, but they've managed just three wins from their past nine visits to Mt Smart. The Panthers produced an epic get-out-of-jail performance when these teams met in Round 10, 2017, climbing from a 28-6 half-time deficit to win 36-28. **Danger sign:** Penrith will need to be on full alert to combat the attacking skills of Warriors captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck,

who has crossed for a try in his past five games. The Panthers' biggest threat could come from the unpredictable Tyrone Peachey. **Best Bet?** Both teams are scrambling for a place in the top eight so expect a clash of high intensity. Look to a Warriors/Panthers or Panthers/Warriors outcome in the Half-time/Full-time Double. **Money-spinner:** Players to consider for First Tryscorer are Ken Maumalo, Dallin Watene-Zelezniak or Waqa Blake.

## DYLAN EDWARDS



**6**  
tackle-breaks in Round 18

### HEAD-TO-HEAD LEADERS

AVERAGE METRES	AVERAGE TACKLES	LINE-BREAKS
Dylan Edwards 189	Simon Mannering 44	Corey Harawira-Naera 10
Roger Tuivasa-Sheck 177	Mitch Rein 40	Dallin Watene-Zelezniak 10
Ken Maumalo 162	Peter Wallace 36	Roger Tuivasa-Sheck 9
Josh Mansour 160	Bodene Thompson 34	Matt Moylan 8
Trent Merrin 137	Trent Merrin 31	David Fusitu'a 7

### STATS

### NRL FANTASY

#### FANTASY POINTS

Shaun Johnson	58.8
Simon Mannering	58.0
Dylan Edwards	52.9
Nathan Cleary	49.8
Trent Merrin	46.7



## HOLDEN CUP

**DATE:** FRIDAY, JULY 14 **VENUE:** MT SMART STADIUM **KICK-OFF:** 5.45PM (NZ)  
**REFEREE:** PHIL HENDERSON **ASSISTANT REFEREE:** DAMIEN BRADY  
**TOUCH JUDGES:** ANTHONY ELLIOT & ANTOINETTE WATTS **FOX:** 3.30PM (AEST)

## WARRIORS V PANTHERS

Lee TURNER	1	Caleb AEKINS
Israel OGDEN	2	Brian TOO
Melino FINEANGANOFU	3	Richie MUNCHOW
Dean KOUKA-SMITH	4	Mose FEILO
Gibson POPOALII	5	Daniel BROWN
Kane TELEA	6	Sam MARTIN-SAVAGE
Chanel HARRIS-TAVITA	7	Dean BLORE
Kenese KENESE (C)	8	Tom SKINNER
Eiden ACKLAND	9	Meni LUKE
Tayhler PAORA	10	Stefano HALA
Jerome MAMEA	11	Reed IZZARD (C)
Joseph VUNA	12	J'maine HOPGOOD
Chris SIO (C)	13	Mitch KENNY
14 Lewis SIO, 15 Soane HUFANGA, 16 Kelepi LUI, 17 Sheldon ROGERS, 18 Troy PULUPAKI, 20 Keanu DAWSON, 21 Mark GRAHAM, 22 Keanu LAUMATIA-PAKI, 23 Isaiah PAPALI'I, 24 Javvier PITOVAO		14 Ray MAROUN, 15 John KAUFUSI, 16 Mitch REVELL, 17 Carl WINTERSTEIN, 18 Vondel WILLIAMS-LIOLEVAE, 19 Jesse ABBOTT, 20 Toby WESTCOTT, 21 Ben CARTWRIGHT, 22 James CONROY, 23 Jamon WORMLEATON
Grant POCKLINGTON		David TANGATA-TOA

**WISHFUL WARRIORS...** The last-placed Warriors have had an extra week to prepare for Penrith after their loss to Manly in Round 17. The rested Warriors will be relying on resilient players like centre Dean Kouka-Smith to make an impact. He ran 147 metres in his last game and is a scoring threat.

**PANTHERS OVERPOWERED...** The Panthers went down to the Sea Eagles at Pepper Stadium in Round 18. Penrith couldn't capitalise on their possession and their 54 missed in tackles didn't help. They were forced to play catch-up after Manly scored first. Centre Mose Feilo scored under the sticks and they were in again just before half-time, but still trailed. Stefano Hala at prop had a big game, running 214 metres and making 18 tackles.

– SAM PASFIELD

Courtesy of our friends at Big League Magazine

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