

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

Newsletter

6th September 2017

#186

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Thank Goodness That's Over

By David Kemeys

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



THE FINAL round of the regular season rolls around and the 13th placed Warriors take on the 15th-placed Tigers at Leichhardt.

It was all supposed to be so much different.

A Kiwis spine, a this and that, it's so long ago I can't remember why we had so much reason to hope and expect good things.

Instead we slumped to a new record for most consecutive losses.

Normally at season's end you'd trot out all the reviews for the players, but there seems little point.

I thought David Fusitu'a was pretty good in a poor side, though I still can't figure out why, when you have such an outstanding winger, you try to turn him into a centre.

Simon Mannering turned in another year of guts and toil, and if we could bottle what he has and feed it to the others we would not be in the mess we are.

Things have gone so poorly, it's easier to remember the lows – and considering there were so many of them - that is saying something.

Watching Kieran Foran look like a world-beater in his debut, and then look like an extra, was horrible.

The bitter cold having traipsed to Hamilton to watch us play like cats against the Dragons was particularly galling, while losing to Newcastle was not a lot of fun either, while leading the Panthers Heaps to Not Many and then totally collapsing was a sickener, but none of those was as miserable as watching Shaun Johnson get crippled again.

Ata Hingano showed glimpses of the skill set that has him so highly-rated, just don't do a Tui Lolohea and fail miserably to deliver on that promise.

Beating the Roosters 14-13 was awesome, but how many games later it just leaves you wondering how you could defend like that one week, and like Girl Guides thereafter.

Ken Maumalo might get a pass mark, but it's hard to find too many others with much to celebrate.

Poor Roger Tuivasa-Sheck must wonder why he bothered, and there is already talk he will be out the door as soon as he can when the final year of his three-season deals is up next year.

It was a year when we farewelled Manu Vatuvei, and what can you say about him? He had been a huge part of the club for so long that I can recall having to hold my son's hand as we climbed the grandstand stairs when he first started coming to games, now he helps me up.

Ben Matulino, Ryan Hoffman, Kieran Foran, Charlie Gubb, Tuimoala Lolohea all gone.

Some will mourn, others will suppress a wry smile.

About the best thing you could say for this season is that it's over.

Hard to see anyone stopping Melbourne, and I don't care.

Will I give up on the Vodafone Warriors? Will I bollocks.

See you in 2018 for more misery!

It Just Gets Worse

I reckon if a Warrior won Lotto he wouldn't be able to find his ticket. We have no kind of luck, and get stuffed all those who bang on about every club having its trials.

Sure it's true to a degree, but our list of disasters has to be written on the back of a roll of wallpaper, rather than an envelope.

So was I surprised when Shaun Johnson and Kieran Foran got ruled out of Sunday's season-finale against the Tigers? Was I bollocks.

Both failed fitness tests and did not even make the plane to Sydney.

Poor Jonson only made it back the week before against Manly, and anyone could see he was struggling after taking a few knocks, but he still managed to stay the distance that day.

Foran has been a big disappointment to many this year, ongoing back problems, shoulder niggles, hamstring, and I hate to say it, but plenty will be glad to see the back of him.

We have heard plenty about how much the young players have soaked up from him, he has failed to deliver on the field.

What Would You Do If You Had No Warriors To Bag Though Chris?

Our old mate Chris Rattue has been hammering the keyboard again, but as I always say, he probably doesn't believe half the shit he writes, just whacks the articles out to get a reaction.

But this time he has called for our beloved Vodafone Warriors to call it a day because they are damaging the game in New Zealand, and there is, he says, no hope on the horizon.

"It's time to shut down the club down, and let other NRL clubs and Aussie-based Kiwi stars blossom on this side of the Tasman again," he wrote.

And they call me negative!

I did love this line though..."Sadly, the Warriors are in terminal decline, but will be allowed to dawdle on, wrecking dreams, sucking up the oxygen."

You can read everything he had to say here: [Chris Rattue article](#) but be prepared to gag on your Weet-Bix because it takes a fair bit of swallowing.

To be fair to the poor bloke, he, like many fans, has clearly had a bit of a gutsful, but steady on Chris, the future isn't that bleak – we hope.

No Excuses For The New Boss

Fun to also read at the weekend that our new CEO Cameron George is strictly a "no excuses" man. He might be about to have a miserable time then as they do the annual season review – though blowing the dust off the last one and admitting we were even worse and no one is quite sure why, might speed things up a bit.

Apparently he's waiting for that review before making any changes.

"Everyone's view is that we're failing, and rightly so, because of the results. I do have some views that will be proven right or wrong, once a review is concluded but until then, it wouldn't be proper of me to enforce those in an immediate sense, but what I can assure the staff and people that support the club, is that what needs to change will change."

Bugger me, he's likely to be a very busy boy then isn't he?

For most of us long-suffering fans, 2017 began with promise, stalled quickly, then when we thought it couldn't possibly get any worse, it did.

The truth of the matter is that it is now hard work being a fan. We have all suffered years of torment from the detractors, who never seem to tire of telling us how terrible our team is, and question our loyalty.

But if there was one line in the story I was reading that gave me hope it was this one: "We need to have an environment at the club that doesn't accept excuses."

Fair enough, but excuse me if I have a degree of cynicism, because I have heard that before.

"I don't enjoy working in environments where everyone has an excuse for what has occurred. We're a football club and we need to win."

I have banged on many times that I actually don't mind if we lose, beaten on the day by a better side, but what I can't stomach is watching a lack of effort, so I am already swinging in behind the new boy, who had this to say.

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“People want to see effort, they want to see every player, every coach and every person wearing a Vodafone Warriors shirt putting in an effort to achieve better things. I have no doubt that if we’re seen to be putting in effort up to everyone’s expectations, the results will come.”

Hallelujah.

Glenora Crowned Champions

The Glenora Bears won their first SAS Fox Memorial Premiership title since 1999, downing Pt Chevalier Pirates 26-0 at Mt Smart.

Bears prop Kurt Bernard was first to score, halfback Phil Kingi adding the extras, and hooker Zac Tippins went over, with Kingi again converting to push it to 12-0 early.

Pt Chevalier hooker Tevita Latu didn’t help things, getting sin-binned, and the Bears scored a minute later through second rower Fatani Manukia to make it 16-0.

Interchange prop Graeme Sua-Poe scored before half-time, so the Bears were 22-0 up at the break.

Quarter of an hour into the second half Glenora did it again, winger James Taumata crossing, and that was all she wrote.

The final minutes were ugly, Latu off for the second time, along with Glenora second rower Manukia, leaving both sides to finish with 12 players.

Glenora captain Kingi said Pt Chevalier have been the pinnacle of the Fox Memorial for the past five years. “They’ve really set the standard for playing top-footy, so full credit to the boys for their hard work on the field to get us the win.”

Otahuhu Back In The Big Time

The Otahuhu Leopards beat Bay Roskill 34-20 at Mt Smart to ensure they return to the Fox in 2018, revenge for the south Auckland side relegated to the Sharman Cup last year.

Otahuhu stormed to the minor premiership with only three losses through the competition rounds but bay Roskill put up a spirited showing, although Otahuhu’s fitness got them through.

Otahuhu captain Connor Purcell said: “Fitness has played a huge role in our performance this season.

We knew we were fit and ready... and that’s what got us over.”

Returning to first division has always been the goal. “We worked hard all season, we’ve just won the Sharman Cup and it’s a great feeling knowing we’ll be back in the Fox next year.”

All Hail Rewa Wahine

The Manurewa Marlins Wahine beat Richmond 30-0 in the ARL Women’s Premiership grand final.

It took 17 minutes before any points were scored, through prop Grace Tautuhi, but that was the only try scored in the first half.

Manurewa hooker Krystal Rota showed why she was named Auckland’s Women Player of the Year, got it to 8-0, halfback Kimiora Nati adding the extras, before the floodgates opened with

Jocephy Daniels, Kere Matua and Maitua Feterika all crossing.

Manurewa captain Sarina Fiso-Clark said winning was surreal. “To play alongside our men’s premier-ship finals really shows women are starting to get recognition for their hard work on and off the field.”





[ISP finals] NRL experience brought in

by Richard Becht

SIX NRL players return to bolster the Vodafone Warriors' line-up for Sunday's Intrust Super Premiership semifinal against Newcastle at UOW Jubilee Oval in Sydney (7.05pm kick-off local time; 9.05pm NZT).

Halves Mason Lino and Ata Hingano, wing Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad and forwards Charlie Gubb, Isaiah Papali'i and Jazz Tevaga were all on duty for the club's injury-ravaged NRL side against Wests Tigers at Leichhardt Oval last Sunday.

On the same day the under-strength Vodafone Warriors, second in the regular season, lost 20-36 to third-placed Penrith leaving them in a sudden-death playoff against the Knights this week. Seventh-placed Newcastle eliminated sixth-ranked North Sydney 40-18 last week.

With the Vodafone Warriors' season over, ISP coach Ricky Henry has call on all eligible players this week.

He has named influential captain Lino and Hingano in the halves, Nicoll-Klokstad on the right wing, Gubb as one of the starting front rowers, Papali'i in the second row and Tevaga on the bench.

It means the Vodafone Warriors have 15 players with NRL experience in their squad including five on the extended bench. Of the starting line-up, the only players who haven't appeared at NRL level are prop Daniel Palavi, second rower Ofahiki Ogden and centre Junior Pauga.

Pauga has appeared in all 23 matches so far while Ogden has missed only one match and Palavi has been used 18 times. Sam Cook, the only other player to appear in all 23 matches, is on the extended seven-man bench.

The Vodafone Warriors took over full control of the side in 2014. Loose forward James Bell has the record for most appearances over the four seasons, this week's match being his 64th while Lino will be playing his 54th match in the grade; Lino also has the record for most points with 378 including 142 this season.

Centre Matt Allwood plays his 49th ISP match for the club this week.

VODAFONE WARRIORS

v

NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS

UOW Jubilee Oval, Kogarah

7.05pm, Sunday,
September 10



Vodafone Warriors

1	Zac Santo	12	Isaiah Papali'i
2	Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad	13	James Bell
3	Matthew Allwood	Interchange:	
4	Junior Pauga	14	Jazz Tevaga
5	Bureta Faraimo	15	Chris Satae
6	Mafoa'aeata Hingano	16	Albert Vete
7	Mason Lino (C)	17	Ligi Sao
8	Daniel Palavi	18	Toafofoa Siplely
9	Manaia Cherrington	20	Sam Cook
10	Charlie Gubb	21	Semisi Fotu
11	Ofahiki Ogden	Coach Ricky Henry	

At the Vodafone Warriors Game in Sydney



A Balmain legend Paul Sironen played 246 games for the Balmain Tigers and 21 games for Australia and 14 games for New South Wales in State of Origin.



Great to catch up with Ivan Cleary former Warriors coach and good mate.



Ex Warrior Tui played 52 games for the club before moving to the Tigers earlier this year. He had a solid game for the Tigers.



My old mate Benji Marshall Who flew down from Brisbane with his wife to support his younger brother who made debut for the Tigers on the night. Benji played 201 games for the West Tigers, 54 games for the Dragons plus 11 games for The Brisbane Broncos. Next year it's back to the West Tigers. He also played 27 games for the Kiwis



On my flight over to Sydney had the pleasure of the company a former All Black coach John Hart. He was director of football at the Warriors for awhile. Had a great chat to me on the plane and I was very impressed that you read the newsletter every week. Good on you
John

This photo was taken on my plane ride over.



Michael Vella 159 games for Parramatta Eels, 11 games for Australia and 10 games for NSW in State of origin and 121 games for Hull Kingston Rovers in the UK. He also overcame thyroid cancer. On the right Nathan Cayless 259 games for the Parramatta Eels and 39 games for the Kiwis. In 2008 he captained the Kiwis to beat Australia in the RUGBY LEAGUE World Cup final in Brisbane. If you go to my Facebook page you watch an interview I did with him.

This photo was taken at the Parramatta game on Friday night!

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At the Vodafone Warriors Game in Sydney



NZRL legend and former Mangere East Hawks player Olsen Filipaina played 77 games for West tigers, 8 for Eastern suburbs and 18 for North Sydney as well as 28 games for the Kiwis. He has a book coming out soon.



Two great Vodafone Warriors supporters who front up to every game in Sydney. The guy on the right drove an hour and half each way to the game. Now that's a real fan. He also cant wait for next year to become a member again.



Always great to catch up with Paul Whaitira who had 5 games for the Warriors, 6 for the Storm, 62 for the Panthers and 58 for the West Tigers. He also played 16 games for the kiwis and now does a lot of public speaking and it's very good at it



Ben Matulino, Tuimoala Lolohea and Sam Lisone.



Ken Maumalo, Tui and David Fusitu'a.



Roger tuivasa-sheck, Tuimoala Lolohea and Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad.



Simon Mannering, former warriors coach Ivan Cleary and club legend Stacey Jones.



Stacey Jones & Kieran Foran catch up with a couple of intellectually handi-capped rugby league players from New South Wales who will be touring New Zealand later this year.



Loyal fans cheering on the boys!



By Miles Davis



Vodafone Warriors after their final NRL game of the season. Photo www.photosport.nz

Warriors Summation

THE SEASON is finally over and we can at last get some relaxation on a weekend rather than fretting over the Vodafone Warriors. By any measure it has been a disappointing season and one where the team has frankly let itself and the fans down. I am sure that no-one is more aware of that than the team itself but that does not mean fans cannot be critical as they vent their disappointment. It also does not mean that criticism should rise to the level of hysteria emanating from some quarters.

There are many that have declared the club is not fit to be in the NRL and should withdraw. What? Really? On what grounds do these lunatics base their claims? Winning is the aspiration for any professional sporting outfit and their supporters but to throw in the towel after a poor season is ridiculous. What it indicates to me is that outside of the hard-core fan base, the Vodafone Warriors attract a lightweight and naïve supporter with no grasp on reality. Sadly they seem to have the loudest voice at moments like this.

To see how real fans support their club you have to look no further than the team at the bottom of the table, the Newcastle Knights. They have just picked up the wooden spoon for the 3rd season in a row yet had over 20,000 fans at their final game versus Cronulla. The atmosphere was magnificent and although their team lost the fans made a noise all day long. That is how you do it.

No one is expecting Vodafone Warriors fans to be over the moon with the season gone and it is fine to vent but to give up is as great a sin as a fan as it is as a player. New Zealanders generally struggle with the concept of supporting a team that doesn't win regularly as most have been brought up on the magnificent All Blacks who tend to be victorious on most occasions. This is not what sport is generally like and the sooner the floating supporter understands that the sooner they will start to enjoy the little victories that make up life for most teams.

There are those who feel that coming second in a contest makes you a loser. That winning is the only thing that counts. That is utter bollocks and simply outlines the lack of maturity and understanding of those who espouse that view. Sport is a reflection of life and is supposed to teach you lessons to help you along life's highway. In any contest there will be only one winner. In a league of 16 there will be 15 who don't reach the mountain top. Not winning does not make them losers but their attitude in handling defeat and a determination to work harder next season makes them winners.

A desire to win should be in the heart of everyone but the inability to handle defeat is a sign that personal growth is not what it should be. By all means have a good moan about the Vodafone Warriors poor efforts but then get ready to support them next season and the season after. They are going nowhere and neither should they. Unlike those who say they should pull out of the NRL who should go and live elsewhere where their miserable attitude may be more welcome.



By Shane Hurdell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

NZRL Boss and Former Kiwi Visit Hawke's Bay



Alex Hayton

Nigel Vagana

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS: New Zealand Rugby League chief executive Alex Hayton and wellbeing and education manager Nigel Vagana mix and mingle with spectators during a visit to Hawke's Bay last weekend.

NEW ZEALAND Rugby League chief executive Alex Hayton and wellbeing and education officer Nigel Vagana visited Hawke's Bay last weekend.

Rugby League Hawke's Bay chairman Mike Tamati said the main purpose of the pair's visit was to see if they could offer any assistance in the wake of the death of Tamatea women's team player Katiana Waikato the previous week. Waikato died in Hawke's Bay Hospital two days after she collapsed following a knock she received in a tackle during a match against the Dannevirke Tigers.

"The visit went well. It was a good opportunity for a lot of people to open up and let go some things. It was quite beneficial with plenty of dialogue," Tamati said.

Although the Tamatea women had the bye they had representatives catch up with Hayton and Vagana as did referees, members of Waikato's family and representatives of the Bay's other clubs.

Vagana recalled his early days with the Warriors when there was a mishap which resulted in a fatality. He shared some of the ideas which teammates found useful then and members of the Hawke's Bay league fraternity were happy to take them on board.

"After the get together Alex and I spoke about lots of league-related issues and Nigel was available for plenty of selfies with fans. I couldn't have been happier with the day," Tamati added.

The only women's game on Saturday saw Hastings Rugby and Sports beat Dannevirke Tigers 36-22.

The hot topic of conversation after the fourth round in the premier men's competition was Dannevirke Tigers ending Tamatea's unbeaten run with a 36-22 victory. Tamatea were short of players, so short that coach Jason Robinson, a former Hawke's Bay Unicorns and Hawke's Bay Magpies speedster, had to play.

Defending champions Bridge Pa pipped winless Napier Panthers to remain the only unbeaten team in the comp. Kahuranaki

beat Omahu Huia 36-22 in the other match.

Reserve grade encounters saw the Waka Leonard-coached Maraenui maintain their unbeaten run with a 36-12 victory against Clive, Bridge Pa beat MAC 50-16 and Flaxmere beat Omahu Huia 28-16.

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One of coach Robinson's sons, Dennon Robinson, played centre for the Hastings Boys' High School 1st XV rugby side which beat St Pats Silverstream of Wellington 47-17 in their Palmerston North-hosted Hurricanes final. The Hastings team remains unbeaten after 19 matches this season and will take on Blues champions St Kentigern College in their national Top Four semifinal in Palmerston North on Friday.

The other semifinal will see Chiefs champions Hamilton Boys' High School play South Island champions Southland Boys' High School.

The first of three meetings in the Hawke's Bay Racing Centre's Spring Carnival was staged on Saturday and it saw Auckland jockey Grant Cooksley ride Close Up to victory in the feature \$200,000 Tarzino Trophy race.



EXPERIENCED HAND: Tamatea coach and former Hawke's Bay Unicorns and Hawke's Bay Magpies speedster Jason Robinson took the field when he realised his team was short on numbers during their 36-22 loss to the Dannevirke Tigers.

"I'm honoured to be the patron of the Prostate Cancer Foundation. We have a great team at head office, some wonderful ambassadors and awesome volunteers. We're all working hard to raise awareness for prostate cancer so that men go get checked. Help us out! Get behind Blue September" - **Sir Peter Leitch**



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70 Years Ago: Keeping A Promise

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)



IN 1939 the Kiwis had been forced to abandon their tour of Britain because of the outbreak of the Second World War. They played only two matches, beating St Helens and Dewsbury, and then assisted the local war effort by filling sandbags to protect a hospital while they waited for their passenger liner to be painted grey and fitted with an anti-aircraft gun. Their tour had largely been funded by supporters, who lost their money cold. NZRL president and Kiwis tour manager Jack Redwood promised every penny would be repaid when another Kiwis side returned to Britain as soon as peace was restored. Redwood proved to be a man of his word.

After Great Britain had toured Australia and New Zealand in 1946 – travelling from England to Australia on the aircraft carrier HMS Indomitable – the Kiwis were invited to return the compliment in 1947-48 with the added bonus of also playing matches in France for the first time. Co-managed by Redwood and West Coast pioneer Lance Hunter and captained by Canterbury publican Pat Smith, this team included only one survivor from the aborted 1939 venture, Auckland wing Arthur McInnarney. The courageous McInnarney had been wounded during the war but recovered and returned to rugby league action.

All of the 26 players came from Auckland, Canterbury and West Coast, the three strongest provinces in the post-war years. No-one quibbled there were seven West Coasters, for that comparatively tiny district had inflicted the most decisive defeat (17-8) of the Lions' entire 1946 tour of Australasia. There would have been an eighth Coaster had Wigan not beaten the reintroduction of the international transfer ban and signed mercurial stand-off Ces Mountford. But there was still a Mountford in the squad, for Ces's brother, Ken, was one of the chosen loose forwards. They opposed each other when the Kiwis beat Wigan 10-8 at Central Park.

Smith's Kiwis went desperately close to winning a fiercely contested Test series in England, the dominant rugby league nation for nearly 30 years. They were edged out 11-10 in the first Test at Leeds, won the second 10-7 at Swinton and lost the decider 25-9 at Bradford. They accounted for an impressive Wales combination 28-20 at Swansea. They then crossed over to France for two Tests, winning the first 11-7 at Paris but losing the second 25-7 at Bordeaux. In all, they played 35 matches, the first of them on September 6 and the last on January 25. They won 20 of them, lost 13 and drew the other two, scoring 509 points and conceding 344.

Earlier in the year Smith had persuaded brilliant young All Blacks halfback Jimmy Haig to leave his native Otago, switch to rugby league and work at his Prebbleton Hotel on the outskirts of Christchurch. But Haig suffered a broken leg early in the tour and with back-up Rex Cunningham also injured, the Kiwis switched Ken Mountford to scrum-half for the first two Tests. Vice-captain and first-choice stand-off Abby Graham was another casualty. With Wigan's blessing, Ces Mountford offered his services but the tour management decided not to add him to the team. In hindsight, the "Blackball Bullet" could have made the difference.

That this amateur team matched it with the British semi-professionals was achieved by a combination of Auckland backline brilliance and South Island forward power. That was never more evident than in the Test victory in Paris when the Kiwis fielded five West Coast forwards, Ken Mountford, Charlie McBride, Arthur Gillman, John Newton and hooker Bob Aynsley alongside captain Smith, who alternated between prop and hooker on tour. A fit-again Haig and West Coast wing Jack Forrest complemented Aucklanders Warwick Clarke, Len Jordan, Ron McGregor, Maurie Robertson and Des Barchard in the backline.

Coach of the Kiwis was Aucklander Tom "Scotty" McClymont, whose long association with New Zealand teams extended back to his own debut as a player in 1919. But McClymont did not believe sport should be played on Sundays, which just happened to be the case in France. It was left to Smith to prepare the Test teams in that country; as far as is known McClymont did not even attend the matches. Many years later Ron McGregor, who had moved on from being an outstanding midfield back to become an outstanding NZRL president, told me that McClymont's beliefs were known before the tour and had not caused any problems in camp.

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If there was a single highlight it must have been the sensational try which helped carry the Kiwis to their Second Test victory over Britain at Swinton. Already 3-0 up after a 50-yards try by Forrest (not known as Nippy for nothing), the Kiwis attacked again from their own 25-yard line. McBride started the move and linked with backs Jordan, McGregor and Forrest as the ball was relayed to the left flank. Forrest next sent it back infield to McGregor, who found Robertson 30 metres out. Incredibly, front-rower Smith loomed up at his shoulder and he gave it to big second-rower Newton, who surged the last 25 yards to score under the crossbar.

The 1947-48 Kiwis stayed in a bleak hotel at Ilkley in Yorkshire. Their tour allowances were meagre. They put up with very rudimentary transport in war-battered England and France, plus two long sea voyages. They were subject to the same food rationing as the locals but shared their Christmas parcels with their hosts. Anyone who has experienced the savagery of a British winter knows what a muddy, exhausting slog it must have been. Smith led his men in 29 of the 35 games, Jordan and Robertson played 27 each, and Newton 26. Yet legend has it Newton and Haig were leaning on a rail as the ship berthed back home and one said to the other, "I wish they would turn this bloody boat around so we could do it all over again."

2017 SOUTHISLAND PREMIER RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION



TITANS

WHALERS

9 Sept - Forsyth Barr Stadium - 4pm Kick-Off

Free - Entry Gate E - Open 3:30pm

THE BOG
irish bar

Feast

By Barry Ross



SYDNEY RUGBY League fans are set for a feast of football this weekend with three of the four final series games to be played at Allianz Stadium which is just a few kilometres from the Central Business District. All three are attractive games but without a doubt the first one should be a beauty. The Roosters and the Broncos clash at 7.55pm and this could be a tight and fierce encounter. With their home ground advantage the Roosters will be favourites, but to me it is a fifty fifty game. Darius Boyd will probably miss the game because of hamstring worries and this will definitely weaken the Broncos, but Wayne Bennett will have his team well prepared. The big names in both sides will be powerful weapons but some unsung players could turn the tide for their respective teams. One of these is 33 year old Roosters fullback, Michael Gordon. The veteran did the job on Saturday against the Titans when his team appeared likely to be beaten and so lose the chance to play at home on Friday night. He scored a vital try in the 70th minute against the Titans and landed all of his four shots at goal which was the base for the 20-16 win. He is a good kicker under pressure and there will be plenty of that on Friday night. Since round 10 this year, Gordon has landed 43 of his 50 attempts for a 86 percent success. Before round 10, he was only kicking at 68 percent success with 23 from 34. For the season he has landed 66 goals from 84 attempts for close to 79 percent success. Gordon made his first grade debut with Penrith in 2006 and the Roosters are his fourth NRL club along with the Panthers, Sharks and Eels. He has scored 1,520 points (85 tries, 590 goals) in his 223 first grade games. Winger, Jordan Kahu, 26, will handle the Broncos kicking duties. He missed two of his four attempts on Thursday night against the Cowboys but is usually a reliable kicker and has kicked more goals than Gordon in 2017. He has 174 points this season from 9 tries and 69 goals. Kahu made his first grade debut in 2013 and now has 429 points in his 77 first grade games. The battle between the forwards will have a major bearing on the result of this game and there is not much between both packs.

The only game out of Sydney this weekend is the 4.10pm kickoff in Melbourne between the Storm and Parramatta. There is no doubt the Storm have been the best team by far this season. They won the minor premiership by six competition points, have scored more points, 633, than any team and have leaked the least points against them, 336. That is a match average this year of 26-14 in their favour. A verbal spat broke out between the two coaches on Saturday with the Eels Brad Arthur complaining about the Storm's excessive wrestling tactics and Craig Bellamy countering by accusing the Eels players of laying on the tackled players far too long.

When Melbourne skipper, Cameron Smith, runs out on to the field he will set a new record for first grade matches with 356 games to his credit. On Saturday night last, he equalled Darren Lockyer's 355 games. Smith, 34, shows no sign of slowing down or losing form and when he will retire is not known,

Back in Sydney at 7.40pm on Saturday night, Manly take on the Panthers. There was plenty of niggles in their clash at Manly's Lottoland and with much more on the line this weekend, that will continue. The Panthers missed Matt Moylan in their 28-12 loss to Manly and after the announcement on Monday that he will take time off from football for personal reasons, he will again be missing this week. The story about Moylan leaving Penrith next year broke a few days before the loss to Manly and this certainly did not help the Panthers preparation. The mail is that Moylan will move to another club next year and already several such as the Knights, Sharks and Tigers, are showing plenty of interest. The Panthers forwards will have to improve greatly after their efforts at Lottoland if they are to defeat Manly this week.

The Sunday match between the Sharks and Cowboys should also be an entertaining affair with some good attacking men in both sides. The Sharks will be hoping that Jack Bird (shoulder), Wade Graham (leg) and Sam Tagatease (calf) are available. Evergreen Sharks forwards Paul Gallen, 36 and Luke Lewis, 34 will continue their consistently good form this year. The Cowboys will be no easy beats but last year's Premiers, if they can cut down their handling errors, have the stronger all round team and should win.

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There will be some interesting games to begin the 2018 season. English clubs, Wigan and Hull, will play a Super League match at Wollongong's WIN Stadium, 80 kilometres south of Sydney on 10 February. Then six days later, on 16 February, they will feature in a double header at Sydney's ANZ Stadium. South Sydney will play Wigan, while St. George/Illawarra will meet Hull.

The Charity Shield between Souths and the Dragons will be played the following weekend and it may be played outside of Sydney. Mudgee and Tamworth have already been mentioned as possible locations. Over in Perth at the city's new \$1 billion, 65,000 seat stadium, Souths and Canterbury will host a double head in round one of the 2018 competition. Western Australia is an Aussie Rules state with two teams, the West Coast Eagles and the Fremantle Dockers, playing in the national AFL competition. The NRL will put plenty of effort in making sure the double header is a success.

The Toronto Wolfpack defeated Whitehaven 36-18 at their home ground, Lamport Stadium in Toronto on Saturday. The attendance was 6,134 and the Wolfpack probably only have to win one of their remaining two games this year, to gain promotion to a higher league in 2018.

Kurt Kara Retires

By Glen Dwyer - Media Officer Newtown RLFC

HERE IS a heart-warming family photo taken at Henson Park after fulltime in the Newtown versus North Sydney Intrust Super Premiership match, played on Saturday, 26th August 2017.

Newtown Jets player Kurt Kara is accepting the offer of an after-match drink from his little son Nikau.

His wife Nicole is to the left of little Nikau.

Kurt had just announced his retirement from rugby league after that game.

He had played more than 150 NSW Cup and Intrust Super Premiership matches for Newtown spread over seven seasons (2011 to 2017).

Prior to that he had also played in the Waikato rugby league competition, with the New Zealand Warriors NYC and then with Western Suburbs in the NSW Cup.

Kurt has been a much-admired personality with the Newtown Jets and he will certainly be missed.

In 2012 when the Newtown Jets won the NSW Cup premiership title, Kurt played in the grand final despite having undergone extensive surgery on a badly-lacerated ear five days before the game.

Kurt was never selected to play in a NRL competition game but he has been the sort of player who is the heart and soul of a semi-professional rugby league competition like the NSW Cup / ISP NSW.

The game of rugby league will always need this class of wholehearted, dedicated and selfless player.

The photo was taken by Michael Magee Photography.



Home Again – What's Changed?

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)



HOME AGAIN after six weeks in Europe. My wife Shirley and I arrived back to a cold, wet and windy Christchurch after a 48-hour journey from Frankfurt which included three flights and excruciatingly long stopovers in Hong Kong and Sydney. After finding our own way around the south of England and to Belgium and Berlin, we joined four other New Zealanders, five Aussies, an Indian family from London, two Canadians and 26 Americans for a coach tour of the Alpine countries. And it all worked with the precision of a Swiss Rolex or even a Black Forest cuckoo clock.

There were visits to Brighton, Bruges, Brussels, Berlin, Bratislava and Bern, and Shirley will testify that there were also weekly exclamations of “Bugger” from yours truly after learning the result of the latest Warriors game. As I gazed upon the mighty Matterhorn, the jewel in the crown of the magnificent Swiss Alps, I did not need to have actually seen the matches live to know the Warriors have an enormous mountain of their own to climb in 2018. I could feel David Kemeys’ pain in his newsletter comments as the number of consecutive losses grew to record proportions.

I have read at least one respected scribe gave up on the Warriors when they lost to the Bulldogs at Dunedin in round 3. Indeed, they were a worry from their first-round struggle to beat the Knights at home. But in my view they were gone from round 10, that horrendous collapse from a 22-point halftime lead against a Penrith side which was then languishing near the bottom of the table. That was the game which was to have been played in Christchurch, until the Panthers pulled the plug very soon after the Kaikoura earthquake. There was little chance of the Warriors recovering from that shocker.

One tends to become distracted when out of one’s comfort zone. Being able to step onto a hotel balcony and look at the sunrise giving the Matterhorn a golden glow tends to turn one’s attention to other things. So my Warriors internet watching drifted from eagerly catching up with progress scores in late July to overlooking their Manly game until several hours after the final whistle a month later. Belatedly learning they had succumbed in golden point time produced another “Bugger” before getting on with some serious sightseeing. Needless to say, none of the Yanks on the bus appeared to be concerned!

On a more heartening note, we had also escaped the country during six weeks of pre-election political bribery from the various parties promising everything and more in the expectation the mug public would fall for it and vote them into power. In the age of the internet, we could not escape all of it. Interestingly, the Nats and then Labour have suddenly discovered, seven years after the first of the destructive earthquakes, that Christchurch is struggling to rebuild and offered to throw hundreds of millions of dollars to complete projects which were overly optimistic in the first place.

It seems not too much has changed. The Anglican cathedral is still a wreck and refuge for the pigeons, with no decision yet about a rebuild or restoration. We saw some truly awe-inspiring cathedrals while overseas, reducing ours to little more than the status of a country church. Not to mention several brilliantly rebuilt cities (Berlin, Munich, Cologne) which were bombed into near oblivion during the Second World War. If our mob had been in charge of the job they would still be dithering over who should cart away the rubble before the first brick was laid.

A plan has been proposed for the new rugby stadium (disguised as a multi-use facility). One problem: it will cost nearly half a billion dollars and the city council has only half that amount to pay for it. So the Nats offered \$120M, and Jacinda popped into town to trump that with \$300M. The only voice of reason came from Press newspaper columnist Johnny Moore, whose day job is owner of a bar-restaurant that would clearly benefit from having a large covered stadium close by. But Moore stated the obvious in saying the debt would burden rate payers for generations to come.

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Moore claimed only rugby union would make any real money. The already wealthy New Zealand Rugby Union, which wanted a bigger and even more expensive stadium without offering any financial contribution, increased its pressure on the city council by allocating a 2018 Test match against Argentina to Nelson instead of Christchurch. Nelson's Trafalgar Park is apparently no better than Christchurch's AMI Stadium, which was taken from rugby league and given to the Crusaders after the earthquakes. One astute newspaper letter writer called that "All Black-mail".

At least there was some good news. Manly has agreed to play NRL games (presumably against the Warriors) in Christchurch for at least the next two years. Prominent at the media gathering was Manly and former Warriors utility Lewis Brown, a proud Cantabrian who remembers AMI Stadium as the Addington Show Grounds. Over 20 years ago his mother would drive him there for ball boy duties. It was fitting, then, that Trish Brown again drove her son to the announcement he would be returning to his childhood field of dreams as a successful professional with 200 NRL games to his credit.

Mt Albert 90th Birthday Celebrations

By Brent Gemmell

THE WEEKEND got off to great start with the Friday Golf being played in glorious weather, quick feed and a good supply refreshments making for great day of ambrose golf. This was followed up with a prize giving at the MARL clubrooms and the normal burglars taking out the prizes, no names mentioned, Nigel Rattray & co.

This was followed with the actual gala dinner held on Saturday night at Alexandra Park. With a 190 people in attendance the evening was a great success. Night was MC'ed by Mick Curran, on his best behaviour until the comedian pretty much opened up floor. Then with an impassioned speech from club

president Mark McClay the formalities were down. Then it was on to a very enjoyable buffet meal & old war stories swapped over a few drinks and wrapped with a complimentary DVD capturing the history & stories over the last 90 years, told by some of the true legends of the club to all in attendance.

The weekend of celebration was wrapped up on Sunday with a 1pm Masters game @ Fowlds Park, then back into the club for the Warriors game and what was supposed to be the McGregor vs Mayweather fight. Unfortunately I was unable to make the third and final leg of the weekend, so photos of the game.



Mike & Brian McClennan & Steve Howells sharing stories of the 1980's.



1



2



Mick & Jane Curran, Pauline Cooper, Serena Turnock, Trevor Turnock, Haymes Pouesi, Bob Almond, Bruce Adamson, Tom Stead, Helen Muir, Andrew Anderson & Ricky Stevens. Good mix of past players and administrators and partners.



3

1: Shane Cooper & John Ackland doing their best for the camera.

2: Michael McKenzie, Mick Curran & Jarrod Tua (Past & Present Players)

3: Quick Burger, Beer and 18 Holes of Ambrose Golf at Camberline to commence celebrations.



By Miles Davis

Reon Edwards

NEW NZRL Chairman Reon Edwards is excited by the prospect of leading the game forward in New Zealand. He has a long and passionate involvement in the game both as a player and administrator. First playing as a junior then working his way up to Premier league in Canterbury where he was to win a Premiership Grand Final with Halswell Hornets in 2000. When the rigours of the game got too much for his body he joined the committee of the Marist-Western club.

From 2009-2013 he was on the NZRL's southern zone board and was Chairman of the CRFL from 2011 to 2015. In 2015 he joined the NZRL board and has been interim-Chairman since the resignation of Gary Fissenden in June.

As well as a corporate and rugby league background, Reon also has commercial governance experience as a board member for Ngai Tahu Tourism and Ngai Tahu Seafoods.

He believes that his good relationship with districts and zones will be a big help in his duties as NZRL Chairman.

Edwards has taken over at an exciting time for rugby league in New Zealand with the country being a co-host for the World Cup later this year, along with Australia and Papua New Guinea. "We've got a big year ahead with a lot to deal with in the game as we work to grow the game in New Zealand. We've got a World Cup to get people excited about the game and hopefully we can build off the back of a successful World Cup."

Another priority was to build on the healthy numbers in the juniors game by keeping them involved as they reached their teenage years "It comes back to creating a quality experience for kids and making sure it's fun, enjoyable and an inviting environment."

Another problem he was keen to tackle was the loss of hundreds of young players every year to Australia as they chased lucrative NRL contracts. He is keen to create pathways and meaningful local competitions to either retain players or make it more attractive for them to return should their NRL dreams not be fulfilled.

A challenging but exciting time ahead for the new Chairman of New Zealand Rugby League but one which could be enhanced by two things – a win for the mighty Kiwis in the upcoming Rugby League World Cup and a top 8 season for the mighty Vodafone Warriors next year. After all, everyone loves a winner.

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



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Doom & Gloom

By John Holloway



RIGHT, BACK from the far reaches of Alaska and just in time for one more shot. If you believe the Herald writer Chris Rattue its all over for the Warriors and they should be dismantled, cancelled, packed up and shipped offshore. Well I happen to work for the same outfit as Chris (albeit in advertising rather than Editorial) but prefer to put faith into some of the more balanced articles that our venerable publication has put forward over the last week or two. I cant help but wonder what Chris has to say about the 3 teams that finished below the Warriors ie the Tigers, Titans and luckless Knights. Or for that matter Dessys Bulldogs and Russells Rabbitohs in touching distance above us. I can't help wondering what is going thru Raiders fans minds, not to mention Ricky Stuarts sleepless nights agonising over what went wrong. The green machine in my view and that of many more qualified punters were set for a stellar year but tumbled ingloriously to the bottom 8. The irony is that Warriors fans often bemoan the lack of size and grunt in our pack these days yet todays Sydney press puts forward the notion that Canberras pack was too big! yup not nimble enough... I gotta tell you Shannon Boyd, Josh Papalii, junior Paulo and aggressive young giant Tapine would walk into my team no questions asked. Coach Mary McGregor is another facing mad Monday as I write, also ruing what might have been as his promising Red V Dragons were bashed by the Bulldogs to fall at the last 8 hurdle. Cruel brother cruel. My point is we are not alone in the stakes of despair. There appears at present to be a bit of a gap between haves and have nots ie top 8 bottom 8. Bellamys machine like Stormtroopers look clinical, the Roosters are strutting their stuff, The Eels are very slippery, the Sharks have the great players in the key positions and bashful Bennetts Broncos are nobodys mug. Not much past these 5 to catch the eye for mine in the September bunfight but Its looking like an entertaining few weeks heading into the big dance shoot out. Getting back to our boys, no doubt this is a very low point and clearly some overhaul of club management (already underway), strategy and player personel is required. It is a bit sobering (and I like a drink) looking ahead because the immediate promise is somewhat watery. It's a long bow to draw but I am seeing the hints of Kearneys work trying to break through if only for three quarters of each game. The hard truths are around our inability to hand pick from a wide range of quality recruitsif you want a premiership ring would you come here? If your family and friends are all in Sydney/Brisbane would you come here, if you wanted to improve your football ability would you come here. Until we are a winning side these roadblocks remain in place. At this point some say that we are having to pay over the odds to get takers which means they come for the money rather than good footballing reasons. Does this make a happy marriage? Upshot is we have to largely rely on what we have got with a dash of incoming flavour. I am reasonably buoyed by what Harris and Pulu will bring, I would really welcome a Josh Jackson perhaps to halve Mannerings tackle load and free him up in his last years to enjoy a bit more running latitude, he deserves it. I would also toss in the thought that perhaps Tohu Harris might make a Captain? No disrespect to TVS but in my humble opinion he would enjoy the benefit of release from that responsibility and fullback is not a great possie to lead from. An A grade quality centre would certainly assist his efforts. Looking back I see a record littered with coulda, shoulda, woulda results and the odd close call that might have changed the complexion of this conversation. A few players were diamonds unfortunately too many were stones beit thru inexperience or inconsistency or just lack of care. That's got to change. Its fair to say that this post season is probably my least enthusiastic in terms of savouring the season ahead but I am happy to be surprised. Hopefully Santa will come down the Penrose chimney with some footy goodies. Tragic or not I am a Warriors fan, , come the summer I will be back. Amen.

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Vodafone Warriors ISP Get Second Chance Next Week

By Richard Becht



PENRITH GRABBED an early lead and stayed ahead throughout to beat an under-strength Vodafone Warriors side 36-20 in tonight's week one Intrust Super Premiership finals clash at UOW Oval on Sydney.

Ata Hingano, Mason Lino, Isaiah Papali'i, Charlie Gubb, Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad and Jazz Tevaga were all on NRL duty with injuries biting into the club's playing resources.

With a reshuffle line-up, the Ricky Henry-coached Vodafone Warriors conceded two early tries to fall 0-10 behind, recovered to 8-10 and later to 14-24 but couldn't make up the leeway as the Panthers prevailed to advance to week three of the finals.

The second-placed Vodafone Warriors have a second life, though, and will face Newcastle next week as they look to stay alive. They'll also have their full complement of eligible players available including the sextet on NRL duty tonight.

In tonight's playoff, Tony Satini got the Panthers on their way in the first minute of play, strolling through would-be Vodafone Warriors tacklers to cross for the opener.

Prolific try-scorer Maiko Sivo followed suit with halfback Darren Nicholls making amends for his earlier miss on goal with a successful conversion attempt at the second time of asking.

Down by 10 points early, the travelling 'hosts' rallied to score their first four-pointer through outside back Matt Allwood before nippy pivot Sam Cook sliced through on the short side to draw the Vodafone Warriors back to within two points.

Wayward shots on goal from the kicking tee ensured the Vodafone Warriors stayed behind despite the sides scoring two tries a piece.

Back-to-back tries to Christian Crichton (33rd minute) and Satini (39th minute) before the halftime siren ensured the Panthers took a healthy 12-point lead into the sheds and, despite some Vodafone Warriors resistance, set the tone for much of the play of the second period.

Jed Cartwright's try just two minutes after the resumption of play maintained Penrith's momentum at the change of end, as the tough-to-tackle outside back somehow found his way to the line.

A runaway four-pointer to Zac Santo gave some hope to the New Zealand side in its quest to turn around the deficit but their efforts proved in vain as the Panthers again stamped their authority.

A light-stepping run from Penrith's five-eighth Jarome Luai saw the nippy half go in for the side's sixth try, with Nicholls slotting his third conversion of the afternoon from the ensuing shot on goal.

Just as Satini bagged his brace inside the first-half Luai brought up his double as he streaked away to score untouched.

To their credit, the Vodafone Warriors played through until the final moments of the match, crossing for a late consolation try to Ligi Sao to bring the concluding margin back to 16.

The Panthers join the Wyong Roos with a direct ticket through to the preliminary finals after the minor premiers accounted for the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs 34-26 on Saturday at Allianz Stadium.

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Warriors Among Stars Waiting To See Where They Fit In Rugby League World Cup Selection Puzzle

David Fusitu'a was part of the Kiwis squad for the mid-year test in Canberra. Photo www.photosport.nz

As we know, the NRL season ended last weekend for eight clubs including the Warriors so the next time you see some of the game's biggest stars on the field, they'll be wearing national colours at the Rugby League World Cup 2017.

However, the landscape for international rugby league is different for RLWC2017 compared with previous tournaments because of the new RLIF eligibility rules.

The new rules will make the teams outside the traditional big three of Australia, New Zealand and England stronger than ever before and be particularly beneficial for like Samoa and Tonga, who play two pool matches in New Zealand during RLWC2017.

Some of the Warriors' best players this season are waiting to see where they fit into this new selection puzzle over the next month.

Prop James Gavet is eligible to be selected for Samoa if he's not named in the Kiwis squad that will be announced in early October.

It's a similar situation for David Fusitu'a, who was part of the Kiwis squad for the mid-year test, and Solomon Kata, who played for New Zealand in last year's Four Nations.

Both outside backs are eligible for Tonga if they are overlooked by New Zealand.

The new eligibility rules will also allow the likes of Titans star Jarryd Hayne to play for Fiji, who he represented in the 2008 World Cup, despite playing centre for NSW in this year's State of Origin series.

A full list of player eligibilities from clubs not taking part in the 2017 NRL finals series below.

Warriors (16)

Bunty Afoa (Samoa), James Bell (Scotland), Bureta Fairamo (USA), Kieran Foran (NZ), David Fusitu'a (NZ), James Gavet (Samoa), Ata Hingano (Tonga), Shaun Johnson (NZ), Solomon Kata (Tonga), Issac Luke (NZ), Simon Mannering (NZ), Ben Matulino (Samoa), Ken Maumalo (Samoa), Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (NZ), Albert Vete (Tonga)

West's Tigers (12)

Josh Aloiai (Samoa), Tuimoala Lolohea (Tonga/NZ), Matt McIlwrick (NZ), Kevin Naiqama (Fiji), David Nofoaluma (Samoa), Moses Suli (Tonga), Sauaso Sue (Samoa), Elijah Taylor (NZ), James Tedesco (Italy/Australia), Alex Twal (Lebanon), Malakai Watene-Zelezniak (Tonga), Aaron Woods (Australia).

Continued on next page...

South Sydney Rabbitohs (10)

George Burgess (England), Sam Burgess (England), Thomas Burgess (England), Robbie Farah (Lebanon), Campbell Graham (Scotland), Bryson Goodwin (NZ), Robert Jennings (Tonga), Alex Johnson (PNG), Siveni Moceidreke (Fiji), John Sutton (Fiji).

St George Illawarra Dragons (14)

Leeson Ah Mau (Samoa), Euana Aitken (Scotland), Josh Dugan (Australia), Tyson Frizell (Australia), Siliva Havili (Tonga), Tim Lafai (Samoa), Nene McDonald (PNG), Taane Milne (Fiji), Jason Nightingale (NZ), Russell Packer (NZ), Hame Sele (Tonga), Tariq Sims (Fiji), Paul Vaughan (Italy), Gareth Widdop (England).

Newcastle Knights (10)

Dane Gagai (Australia), Danny Levi (NZ), Chanel Mata'utia (Samoa), Pat Mata'utia (Samoa), Peter Mata'utia (Samoa), Sione Mata'utia (Samoa), John Ralph (Wales), Daniel Saifiti (Fiji), Jacob Saifiti (Fiji), Joe Wardle (Scotland)

Gold Coast Titans (11)

Joe Greenwood (England), Jarryd Hayne (Fiji), Konrad Hurrell (Tonga), Ben Nakubuwai (Fiji), Agnatius Paasi (Tonga), Nathan Peats (Australia), Eddy Pettybourne (USA), Pat Politoni (Tonga), Leivaha Pulu (Tonga), Dan Sarginson (England), Jarrod Wallace (Australia)

Canberra Raiders (11)

Kurt Baptiste (PNG), Shannon Boyd (Australia), Masivesi Dakuwaqa (Fiji), Josh Hodgson (England), Joey Leilua (Samoa), Josh Papalii (Australia), Junior Paulo (Samoa), Jordan Rapana (NZ), Joseph Tapine (NZ), Kato Otio (PNG), Elliott Whitehead (England).

Canterbury Bulldogs (15)

Brad Abbey (NZ), Greg Eastwood (NZ), James Graham (England), Asipeli Fine (Tonga), Danny Fualalo (Tonga), Rod Griffin (PNG), Will Hopoate (Tonga), Josh Jackson (Australia), Sam Kasiano (Samoa), David Klemmer (Australia), Brenko Lee (Tonga), Michael Lichaa (Lebanon), Rhyse Martin (PNG), Marcelo Montoya (Fiji), Tyrone Phillips (Fiji).



James Gavet has been one positive for the Warriors this season.



Solomone Kata has represented both New Zealand and Tonga at international level.



Meninga Launches RLWC2017 Street Mural In Darwin

KANGAROOS COACH Mal Meninga has praised a giant mural unveiled in Darwin today of Australian stars Cameron Smith, Will Chambers and Allana Ferguson for highlighting the diversity within rugby league.

The 40 metre Rugby League World Cup Street Mural of Smith, the Kangaroos captain, Chambers, a Nhulunbuy junior, and Ferguson, who plays for the Jillaroos, was commissioned by the Northern Territory Government to celebrate the first international to be played in the Top End.

Through the support of the Northern Territory Government, Darwin will host a Rugby League World Cup 2017 (RLWC2017) quarter-final on Friday, 17 November and visitors to the city for the match will be greeted by the mural on the corner of Bennett and Cavanagh Streets in the CBD.

A collaboration led by well-known Darwin artist David Collins and Jesse Bell, featuring designs by Shaun Lee and East Arnhem Land's Gayili Marika Yunupingu, the mural will be in place until after the RLWC2017.

"It is great, the artists did a fantastic job," Meninga said after joining NT Minister for Tourism and Culture Lauren Moss, RLWC2017 CEO Andrew Hill and the artists involved to officially launch the RLWC2017 Mural in Darwin.

"Will, being a Territorian, would obviously be thrilled at having his caricature up on the wall but there is also Allana and for me it shows the diversity of the game - more than just the elite level with Cameron and Will."

The mural also features local junior and senior players and a wheelchair player.

"It is not just Cameron Smith or Will Chambers, it is everyone who can be involved in our game," Meninga said.

The Australian coach also attended the NT NRL's Frank Johnson Medal awards night on Monday and said he was looking forward to returning to Darwin with the Kangaroos during the World Cup.

"It is the first time that an international rugby league team has come to Darwin in 109 years and I know the team will be looking forward to it," Meninga said.

"We have got a tough game initially in Melbourne, where we take on the English, who are ranked third in the world, so they will want to kick off their World Cup preparation in the best light. But we are out to win it and we will want to win every game, including this game."

The RLWC2017 will be contested from 27 October to 2 December and features 14 nations playing 28 matches in 13 cities across Australia, New Zealand and in PNG.

Photo credit: Helen Orr.



Otago Whalers v Aoraki Eels

By Nolan Ratu

THE OTAGO Whalers returned to their winning ways with a resounding 40-22 victory over the Aoraki Eels in Timaru on Saturday. The Whalers travelled to Timaru with plenty to play for, knowing that a win was the only way to keep their campaign alive. The Eels were previously undefeated, with a win and a draw so far in the competition, and were top of the table heading into the contest.

The Eels came out firing, trying to put the pressure on the Whalers right from the outset. They scored the first try of the match, right under the posts, but were soon put on the back foot when the Whalers scored three tries of their own through their skilled backs.

Centre Terrence Reid was the first to score, beating multiple defenders with elusive footwork and pace on his way to the line. Willie Time was the next try scorer, getting on the outside of the defense and skirting down the right edge to score in the corner. The third try came through Jordan Ruatoe on the left wing, with a full stretched dive to find the line in the corner.

Unfortunately for the Whalers, their three tries went unconverted, and so when the Eels scored their second try of the match and succeeded with their conversion, they tied the scores at 12-12. At this point, both sides realized they were in a real contest.

Willie Time was able to score again, cutting back on the inside of Taua Piri and beating the fullback on his way to crossing under the posts. The converted kick brought the score line to 18-12 where it remained until the whistle sounded for half time.

The Whalers stepped it up a notch in the second half, and again the backs were in the limelight. The backs dominance was assisted by the immense work rate of the forward pack, with Manassah Kutia defending strongly and Hagan Free supporting those defensive efforts and taking an incredible 25 hit ups in the match.

Terrence Reid grabbed his second try of the match to extend the Whalers lead, busting two tackles to break the line and find his way to the tryline on the left edge.

Man of the match Taua Piri's direction in the halves was crucial and he used his option runners well to upset the opposition defensive line. Hyrum Martin was a beneficiary of Piri's attacking skills, getting a good ball on the right side and then busting through two tackles on a barnstorming run that took him all the way to the line to score.

At 30-12, the Eels were at risk of fading away if they didn't retaliate soon, so it was fortunate for them that they were able to score the next two tries and narrow the gap to 30-22.

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The Whalers fitness levels really shone through in the last period of play. They were able to increase the pace, largely due to the efforts of hooker Sam Johnstone whose pace and footwork out of dummy half was too much for the Eels marker defense. Johnstone regularly caught the opposition off guard and grabbed massive metres through the middle of the field with his incisive runs.

Otago were next to score, with prop Ricki Allan seeing the opposition drifting and throwing a dummy before running towards the line and fending off a tackle before getting the ball down.

The final scoring act came through Hyrum Martin, scoring his second try of the match by deceiving the defense with a dummy before cutting back towards the posts with pace to cross the line.

The Whalers outclassed a strong Aoraki side that have proved a lot already in their first year in the South Island Premier Competition. Otago will now look ahead to their clash against Tasman at Forsyth Barr Stadium on Saturday.

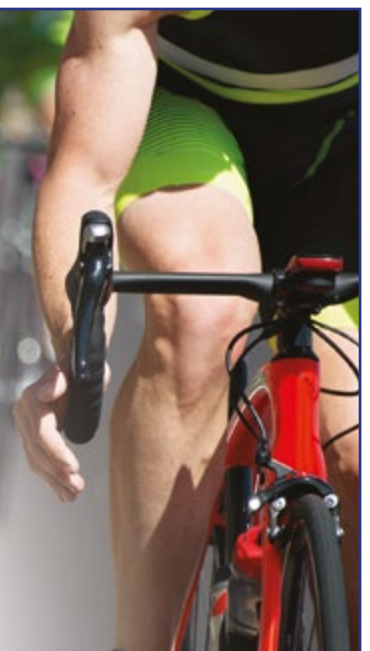


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Waikato League Player Will Go Down As One Of The Greats In Sydney Club History Books

By Mike Bain

Originally from Stuff.co.nz

NEVER LOSE sight of your dream no matter what. That's the advice from 27-year-old Cambridge man Kurt Kara who continues to pursue his dream of playing in the NRL.

Kara started his career playing rugby league for the Warriors U20 squad.

Newtown's Kurt Kara will go down in the history books of the club as one of their greats.

He then left New Zealand to join the Sydney NRL feeder club, Newtown Jets.

Now six years on he's still playing reserve grade and accepts his dream may not be fulfilled.

But he hasn't given up and he plays every game for Newton as though it will be his last.

Kara recently notched up 150 games for the Jets and the club was keen to recognise his long service.

It was fitting that the milestone 150th game was against the Warriors. After the match players from both teams recognised Kara's efforts by performing a haka for him.

Newtown Jets head coach Greg

Matterson has been guiding Kara's career for the past six seasons.

He plays him as a number nine, but knows he would make a great running forward, "but this is where we need him".

"Kurt's a great player, he puts everything on the line and you can't ask for any more."

Club sponsor Terry Rowney is more than happy with Kara's work for the club.

"Our club was kissed on the arse by a rainbow the day he came to Newtown.

"Mate, he's tough when he is playing, giving everything for the jersey and a great ambassador off the field.

"I think the tribute haka at the end of the 150th game in his honour said it all."

Rowney likened him to league great Tommy Raudonikis.

"You never had to question him as to how much effort he put into a game.

"Kurt is like that, good, bad or indifferent, he gives the team everything he has."

Kara remains humble about the accolades and, despite offers from other clubs, remains loyal to Newtown.

"When my playing days are over, if I still haven't played NRL, I won't have any regrets.

"I have given the game everything and if this is where I am meant to play, then I am still happy."

Kara is planning his career path beyond league and is looking to settle back into the Waikato with his family.

"My goal is to encourage young boys especially Maori to be the best they can be, and sport may be one path where they can achieve," he said.

Kara was also named in the New Zealand Maori 2013 World Cup rugby league squad.

The team was supposed to be included in the 2013 Rugby League World Cup tournament but unfortunately the initiative did not go ahead.



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Reader Mail

Good afternoon Sir Peter,

JUST WANTED to thank you once again for your generous hospitality and friendship in the Stacey Jones Lounge last Sunday. I travelled up with three other members from Wellington on the day of the Manly game, and as always you rolled out the red carpet for us, treating us to a wonderful luncheon as well as all the usual laughs, banter and camaraderie that you and your club are known for! For one of our group it was the first time meeting you, and he was touched by your generosity and humbleness. Us four are all part of the Lyall Bay Dads Club you featured in your newsletter a few years ago – a group of local dads who get together on Friday nights to watch the NRL games together and work on projects to strengthen our local community. As a very small token of our appreciation for all that you thanklessly do, we presented you with one of our caps, and a Hunters jersey (a couple of our guys play for the club, as did the likes of Simon Mannering and Charlie Gubb).

Thanks again to you and your team for all that you do for Warriors fans and the game in general,

Shaun Chait (Wellington)



RUBY AND Nico Tauri would like to thank Sir Peter for the T Shirts we were so excited when our Matua Rob Burns gave them to us.

GOOD MORNING Sir Peter, hope you are well? Just wanted to thank you again for your kindness and overwhelming generosity the other day. Levi showed all the photos to his teacher and class!! Thank you so much, take care, Anita



IT'S BEING reported by League Central that Broncos forward Adam Blair and Sharks back Gerard Beale have both agreed to terms to join the club next year. This is still unconfirmed by the Warriors.





THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE FINALS WEEKS 1 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

- Sharks captain **Paul Gallen** says the Sharks aren't as potent as they were last year, something the team has only recently come to grips with – but it hasn't taken away from their motivation to go back-to-back.
- The Eels are light on finals appearances in their team but their experienced players aren't worried. **Michael Jennings**, **Beau Scott** and **Frank Pritchard** are the only players at the club with more than 10 finals games under their belts and will be called on to lead the charge against competition giants Melbourne.
- It doesn't happen very often in the NRL but the Roosters have managed to go from second-last to second in a season. Co-captain **Boyd Cordner** says that was always the plan in 2017, and they have done it before in 2012-13 – the year the Roosters last won a premiership.
- The Sea Eagles are going into the finals full of enthusiasm following their drubbing of Manly, and plenty of that has to do with the form of fullback **Tom Trbojevic**. The 20-year-old, who will play his first finals game on Saturday, is confident his side can give the competition a shake.

PLUS... The **Top 8** finals runs, **The Analyst** susses out what the Panthers need to fix to beat the Sea Eagles and a **Storm** minor premiers poster.



INSIDE | NRL, NYC AND RESERVE GRADE TEAM LISTS | MICHAEL JENNINGS | BOYD CORDNER | STORM HONOR PREMIERS POSTER NEWS + SHARKS CAPTAIN OF GOING BACK-TO-BACK + TEAM HATES BACK REPLACES TEST YOURSELF ON 2017 | FULL SEASON STATS | TOP EIGHT FINALS CHARGES

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