

RLWC 2017

Sir Peter Leitch Club Newsletter

22nd November 2017

#197

KIWIS ✓ FIJI



Fiji celebrate the final whistle.



New Zealand and Fiji after the match.



Nelson Asofa-Solomona gets tackled.



Joseph Tapine going for it.



Jarryd Hayne on the move.



Jared Waerea-Hargreaves in action.

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.nz

That Was Hard to Take

By David Kemeys

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



IT IS not hard to understand why, given how disappointed we all are, but it took no time at all for the knives to come out for David Kidwell. I got so fed up with it I turned the radio off, but the papers were not far behind.

Kidwell should “fall on his sword”, pretty much everyone said, something Tony Veitch banged on about endlessly on radio.

Let's be honest, losing 4-2 to Fiji was horrible.

Losing to Tonga was not great, but the magnificent effort from their fans made it bearable, almost, god-dam it, enjoyable despite the result.

Against Fiji we were just awful in almost every aspect of the game.

The unforced errors had my wife Judith bellowing at the TV with helpful advice like “get him off”, and “he's useless”.

Now Judith is not given to outbursts, so she must have been pretty upset at what she was watching.

Two straight losses to second tier teams.

Kidwell has said he wants to take some time to think through his future, and that he still believes we made some advances – but he was on a complete hiding to nothing advancing that with fans furious about the loss.

You just can't hide from his record, three wins in 10 tests, six losses and a draw – including four straight to Australia.

I have defended him repeatedly, but even I was left mightily unimpressed by what I witnessed.

I will say this, I still did not see Kidwell out there dropping the ball, falling off tackles and generally looking like a headless chook.

He did the right thing, I do not care what anyone says, when test captain Jesse Bromwich and back-rower Kevin Proctor were caught up in a cocaine scandal.

You can not have it both ways. We all screamed it was not good enough, but then half of us turned around and berated Kidwell for taking action.

Would I have preferred they were there, hell yes, but they got, in my opinion, what they deserved.

Kiwis halfback Shaun Johnson didn't escape either, being labelled in one report as “petulant and paranoid”, when he said some people, and sections of the media, have had it in for the Kiwis and coach David Kidwell.

Quite frankly, I have a strong suspicion that is right. Some of what has been written has long left a doubt that those behind it could not wait for the Kiwis to fail.

Meanwhile Kidwell insists criticism is short-sighted and was very critical of the lack of support from the public and media. I'd add the NZRL to that one, because their promotion of the tournament has been beyond ordinary.

He remains convinced there are positives. “We have built something here, we want good people who want to represent this jersey and know the standards and values when they come in.

“It's hard when no one had any faith in the team we had assembled and the group of men that wanted to wear that jersey with the pride and respect that it deserved.”

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Sadly I did not see much evidence of pride and respect on Saturday night in Wellington.

Bluey Nails It

Former New Zealand coach Brian McClennan did not mince words. He blasted the Kiwis as dumb, and is one of those who expects the axe to fall on Kidwell.

I thought he was excellent, but perhaps it was just because I was in a pretty similar headspace to him after our loss.

Speaking on Sky Sports, Bluey said he was shocked by how bad we were.

"I'm stunned, that was a really poor effort by a Kiwi team," McClennan said.

"They don't look like a team to me, they look like they're trying to solve problems on their own. Kicking it on the fourth or third, trying to rake the ball out. Isaac Liu, in front of the kicker when they could have got a repeat set early in the second half. Schoolboy errors."

Hard to disagree.

McClennan doesn't think Kidwell can survive. "I think it probably will be the end I'm sad to say."

But what he said that really touched a nerve with me was this, "they've got to fix this for the good of the game".

Here bloody here.

I don't want to watch another one like that. I am not an All Blacks supporter who expects to win every game. I realise we will lose our fair share, but the manner of this one left a lot to be desired.

"Unfortunately, this Kiwis team has a soft underbelly, they don't rise up and play tough and they're not an intelligent team that can handle those tough periods."

Gum Is Dumb

There is nothing worse than people who bang on about how they did this or that for however many years.

But that's exactly what I'll do now. I was in the media for a more than 30 years and I could have given Kiwis captain Adam Blair some sound advice as he headed for the microphone straight after the game.

Lose the gum!

He can say what he wants, after all, he is the captain, but standing there chewing away on gum was always going to add to the impression he was to nonchalant about the whole thing.

Talking to Sky Sport's Monty Betham, he did knock me over when he said: "It's not a negative for us. We're going to build something here and we've got some great young talent coming through."

Not too many sitting in front of the TV were going to be buying that one.

Former Kiwis coach Brian McClennan watched it all unfold too.

"I'm surprised by how Blairy talked at the end there - it's bizarre. He's just got it wrong - whoever is teaching him this, you've got it wrong - you've got to wear your heart on your sleeve all the time, you're representing your country."

Budgie Lets Fly

Every man and his dog has put the boot in, among them one writer who described the state of the game as a “trainwreck”, and “in total chaos”.

“Rubbish and leaderless” were also thrown about. Clearly a man who is hurting.

Don't forget not long ago we were the number one ranked side in the world.

Chuck in a bit of Colombian marching powder, the team-hoppers, and ruling body that can't – or won't – accept things are pitiful right now, and we are all left to wonder why anyone would bother.

I totally agree that there appears, for whatever reason, to be a lack of leadership across the game.

I fear the public won't accept anything less than a clear-out.

Names like Howie Tamati and Sir Peter are being bandied about as men who could at least bring leadership skills to the game.

Come On Tonga

Working on the basis that if you can't say something positive, say nothing at all, I will move on to Tonga, who beat Lebanon 24-22 in their quarter-final in a game that everything ours didn't - tries.

It was their first quarter-final ever, and despatching Lebanon means they will play their first semi-final ever in Auckland this weekend.

Do whatever it takes to get there because it will be amazing.

The Tongan fans have made incredible, the best thing about the tournament by far.

They will meet England, and after they beat the Kiwis you would have said they were a good bet, but after the way, even though they won, that they played against Lebanon, they will be huge underdogs.

Full credit to Lebanon, they were bloody good, and the game was a great spectacle.

But every time Jason Taumalolo got the ball he responded to the massive cheers by carving out metres.

Cedar's halfback Mitchell Moses still looked the best player on the park though.

Tongan coach Kristian Woolf must be over the moon with his side, though less happy with their porous defence going into a semi.

Tonga's kicking game was less than stellar, and there will be some work going into that this week.

But a great game, and an even better occasion, is in store at Mt Smart.

So if it can't be the Kiwis, go Tonga!

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By Miles Davis

Down to Last Four

Photos: Grant Trouville / NRL Photos

THE RUGBY League World Cup is down to the last 4 and has certainly provided value for money and entertainment so far although perhaps that value may be harder to appreciate if you are a Kiwis fan.

Australia were predictably dominant against Samoa who would have been disappointed with some of their performances in the tournament. Their sole positive result was a draw against Scotland, a side that were thrashed by the Kiwis and Tonga and although they wouldn't have been anyone's favourites to win the tournament there was much more expected of them than they produced (one could also wonder how a tournament could allow a team to progress to a quarter-final with 2 defeats and a draw).

The Tonga v Lebanon clash was a classic with Lebanon pushing the Islanders far harder than many expected. It could be argued that Lebanon were unfortunate not to win the tie with several key decisions going against them. The tournament needed Tonga to progress with their fans and team's style of play exciting the wider audience but the Lebanese side earned themselves a lot of new admirers and have really stepped up on the International stage.

England were comfortable enough in their win over Papua New Guinea but were sloppy to the extreme. Their inability to complete their sets will be a major concern for coach Wayne Bennett. If they perform like that against Tonga they will be watching the final from their armchairs. Their first up performance against Australia was gritty but they seemed to have regressed since then.

Then there was the disaster that was the Kiwis. Firstly let's admit that Fiji thoroughly deserved their win. They worked hard on defence for the full 80 and looked increasingly confident of victory as the game progressed. They gave all the credit for their victory to God but to me it was the players on the field who deserved all the praise.

To say the Kiwis let themselves down is an understatement. In the 2 games they needed to step up they went missing in action and were unable to counter the challenges presented to them. Against Tonga they were comfortably ahead but crumbled as their opposition fired up. Against Fiji they were even worse, never gaining the upper hand and looking lost for ideas and inspiration when it was needed. Worst of all though was their post-match reactions.

Shaun Johnson was obviously hurting after the game but his comment that the doubters had got their way with the Kiwis exit was uncalled for and way off the mark. Those who doubted the Kiwis ability to go far into the tournament wanted to be proven wrong. They wanted the Kiwis to win but doubted their ability to do so. Sadly they were proven correct in their belief.

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David Kidwell is a likeable and hard-working man who obviously cares deeply for the Kiwis but his post-match comments were baffling. I am all for trying to look at positives but there are times when you have to be brutally honest and take it on the chin. Instead he touted the young talent that emerged and how the future looked bright. The only reason for any brightness is that it is now arguably darker than ever before in the land of the Kiwi. I know his name is Kidwell but he did not kid well with his post-match comments, he fooled no-one.

Worst of all for me was skipper Adam Blair. His lackadaisical, gum-chewing demeanour straight after the game was bad enough but his comments were even worse. He asserted that it was a great game to watch, was not a negative for the Kiwis and that the result was great for the game. Whilst there may be many fans around the world that enjoyed Fiji's win and inspired more Fijians to play league the Kiwis' responsibility is to lift the game in this country and they miserably failed to do that. The result is a major negative for New Zealand rugby by league both in terms of attracting more players and more money from sponsors and ticket sales. His whole attitude smacked of someone who didn't really care about the game, seeing it as just another run on the park to add to his bank balance. Most fans admire a calm demeanour of their side's leader after a crushing defeat but they also expect an indication that the pain they are feeling is shared by that skipper. The only defence I can offer is that perhaps Blair was in total shock and was speaking on auto-pilot. The person who showed the right emotion and said the right things was of course Simon Mannering. Such a shame that he is not still the leader. I often get the feeling that if New Zealand could clone another 16 of him the Kiwis and the Warriors would never lose another game.

Where to from here? I would be exceedingly surprised if Kidwell keeps his job. There were already questions over his tenure before the tournament and after it the drums will be beating even louder for his dismissal. As I said he is a good man with a passion for the Kiwi jersey but sometimes that is not enough and there is a desperate need now for a new face in charge.

There will naturally be a rebuilding period and there is no doubt that New Zealand still produces more of its fair share of young rugby league talent so the resources will be there. What is less certain is how much support there will be from fans and sponsors. The hard-core will always be there but is New Zealand rugby league is to really flourish and grow they need to bring the fringe supporters on board. Here's hoping that by the time the next World Cup comes around the stands are full of Kiwi fans bringing the passion, noise and colour provided by the Tongans and that the team on the pitch responds in kind.

Congrats to the Kiwi Ferns on their stunning performance so far and good luck for Today!

The Kiwi Ferns take on PNG today for Round 3 of the RLWC at Southern Cross Stadium in Sydney.



Special congratulations to Georgia Hale on being selected as captain of the Kiwi Ferns.



New Zealand's Danny Levi after the loss.
Photo www.photosport.nz

By John Coffey

Kiwis Now Third Best In The Pacific!

IN LITTLE more than a week the New Zealand Kiwis have plummeted from being ranked second in the rugby league world to be only the third best Pacific regional team at the World Cup. Consecutive losses to Tonga (28-22) at Hamilton and Fiji (4-2) at Wellington have not only eliminated the Kiwis from the tournament – this country's worst result since the current format was adopted in 1995 -- but shocked and embarrassed their legion of loyal supporters throughout the country. They then claimed the fans had not backed them.

No matter how long or how warmly coach David Kidwell and captain Adam Blair speak of their pride in the new unity developed within the camp, it is results on the field which count most, especially at a World Cup. A 38-8 victory over struggling Samoa and 74-6 hammering of minnow Scotland offered promise, and there was much to admire in their 16-2 halftime lead against Tonga. But the entire campaign abruptly imploded as the Kiwis were humiliated by their Pacific rivals. In their last 120 minutes they scored just one try.

Losing to Tonga was almost understandable, given the influx of forward and finishing power the Mate Ma'a received from the late enlistments of Andrew Fifita, Jason Taumalolo, Sio Siua Taukeiaho, Manu Ma'u and David Fusitu'u. Tonga emerged a worthy winner from a clash between two fully professional outfits. Fiji, however, had few influential NRL players yet was markedly the better side in Wellington last Saturday. It went within a whisker of scoring three tries, while the Kiwis seldom threatened the Fijian goal-line.

It was an extraordinary scoreline from the two highest scoring sides in the competition, especially as the game was played in perfect conditions. The only other try-less encounter in 15 World Cups since 1954 was Great Britain's 6-0 win over France at Castleford in 1960 when fullback Ray Dutton kicked three penalty goals. Similarly, only one of the Kiwis' previous 359 Tests was try-less, at Perpignan in 1965 when Roger Garning kicked three penalty goals and Jack Fagan one as France beat New Zealand 6-2.

No-one gave Fiji a chance, despite averaging 56 points against Wales, United States and Italy. Fiji lost Sydney Roosters prop Kane Evans with a broken wrist in the first game but, to a man, never took a backward step. Captain Kevin Naiqama might not have been born in the islands (Sutherland NSW actually) but his emotion has been evident during every anthem and he was not alone in openly weeping after victory over the Kiwis had been achieved. Clearly, the wrong captain cried at fulltime, and the wrong one chewed gum.

It will take the Kiwis considerable time to restore themselves in the eyes of the public. They conceded the initiative to Fiji through a series of penalties, turnovers, poor kicks and missed tackles in the opening quarter. By the end only harassed fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and second rowers Joseph Tapine and Simon Mannering had their reputations intact. Tapine was New Zealand's best player until a knee injury forced him off and he was the bravest when he returned to try and salvage the match.

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Fiji advances to a third consecutive World Cup semi-final against Australia (at Brisbane on Friday night), and for the first time has been joined by Tonga, which plays England at Mount Smart on Saturday (6pm). The Fijians must avoid the trap Tonga fell into last Saturday. After experiencing the euphoria of beating New Zealand, Tonga dropped its guard in the Christchurch quarter-final against Lebanon and was a tad fortunate to win 24-22. This was the best game of the tournament, with both teams scoring four tries.

Aussie legend Brad Fittler has surely enhanced his prospects of becoming NSW's next State of Origin coach by moulding a modest Lebanon squad into a proficient team. Don't be too surprised if Fittler lobbies for Mitchell Moses to wear the Blues number six jersey in the near future. Moses and Robbie Farah exposed the kicking weaknesses in the Tongan halves and a penalty goal was all that split the two teams on a day out that will long be remembered by the Tongan community in Christchurch. Even their Prime Minister joined them.

Meanwhile, the Kangaroos had been predictably clinical in disposing of Samoa 46-0 on a sweltering Friday night in Darwin. Left wing Valentine Holmes created a World Cup record by scoring five tries (the overall Test record is six, by Kiwis loose forward Hugh McGahan against Papua New Guinea at Carlaw Park in 1983). Coach Mal Meninga seems to have his side improving through the tournament, something which was once a feature of Kiwis teams, and Australia remains a very warm favourite to retain the title.

On Sunday England, bolstered by the return of Sam Burgess, beat PNG 36-6 but made too many mistakes for a potential World Cup champion. The equally erratic Kumuls had little going for them in Melbourne: they were far away from their passionate home crowd, had to contend with an English referee and, especially, lost inspiring fullback and captain David Mead to a head knock in just the second minute. The England v Tonga semi-final is shaping up to be a closer contest than that between Australia and Fiji.

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Good luck to the All Blacks playing against Wales this Sunday!





By Shane Hurndell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

Tough Choice For Kiwis Fans Now

Fiji's Tui Kamikamica in action.

Photo: www.photosport.nz

FIJI OR Tonga ... who will Kiwi rugby league fans support at the business end of the World Cup? That's a decision most of us without English or Aussie heritage will have to make in the coming days in the wake of the Kiwis earlier than anticipated exit courtesy of Fiji's upset 4-2 quarterfinal win in Wellington on Saturday night. While it still hurts that the Kiwis won't be in the top four it's time to accept it and get behind one of the remaining teams.

To me it's an easy choice. I'm going with Tonga.

With the likes of Jason Taumalolo, David Fusitu'a, Manu Ma'u, Konrad Hurrell and Sio Siua Taukeiaho Tonga has more "Kiwis" than Fiji. The fact they are "hosting" England in their semifinal at Mt Smart on Saturday night means us Kiwis will get another opportunity to see them play in front of us which will make it easier to relate to them should they beat England and progress to the December 2 final in Brisbane.

Hopefully Tonga's supporters will turn out in force at Mount Smart like they did in Hamilton when Tonga upset the Kiwis 28-22 on November 11. They dominated 85 per cent of the crowd on that occasion and there's no reason why they can't better that on Saturday night.

While Fiji didn't have the same magnitude of support when they took on the Kiwis there was still a decent representation at the Cake Tin. Those who strategically placed themselves at either dead ball line end of the ground were rewarded for their efforts too.

While we're talking crowds the turnout of Kiwi supporters in Wellington was just as bad as it was in Hamilton. Less than 10,000 New Zealand supporters among the 12,000plus fans at the Cake Tin wasn't good enough.

Yes the Kiwis hadn't played well but this was still a World Cup tournament fixture which we seldom get so when we get it we must turn out. One hopes these poor turnouts from New Zealand fans don't jeopardise our chances of hosting future World Cup fixtures.

Although the Kiwis campaign is over we must not forget our Kiwi Ferns are still in action at their World Cup. The Tony Benson-coached outfit has been impressive in their pool games to date thrashing Canada 50-4 and the Cook Islands 76-0.

It will be an upset, yes almost as big as the Kiwis loss to the Fijians, if the Kiwis Ferns don't reach the December 2 final, which will be played as the curtainraiser to the men's in Brisbane. It has been awesome to see the Kiwi Ferns games live on Sky Sport.

Winger Honey Hireme's six try-haul against the Cook Islands on Sunday was tremendous. Centre Shontelle Woodman impressed with her options and distribution to Hireme.

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Scrumhalf Kimiora Nati's goalkicking has been a highlight of the Kiwi Ferns games to date and her defensive workrate against the Cook Islands was superb.

Forwards Krystal Murray, Lilieta Maumau and Ngatokotoru Arakua have been powerful on the carry. Benson has enough ammunition to win a likely semifinal against England and push defending champions Australia should both teams reach the final.

Benson's troops should complete an unbeaten run in pool play when they take on Papua New Guinea in Sydney on Wednesday from 8.30pm our time. Once that match is out of the way our attention will turn to the men's semifinals.

See you at Mount Smart on Saturday. COME ON TONGA.

If you're on the North Shore today England have an open training session from 10am at QBE Stadium in Albany.

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NRL Hijacks The “Pacific” Tests

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)



WHEN THE French picked the pockets of their South African counterparts by using whatever means were necessary to pinch the hosting rights for the 2023 Rugby Union World Cup in London last week there were accusations of corruption usually associated with FIFA, the world soccer body. Angry South Africans were adamant monetary or other bribes got the French over the line. One commentator even mentioned “brown paper bags”, a hangover from union’s sham-amateur era.

On the same day, with much less fanfair, the NRL and Campbelltown City Council jointly opened ticket sales for the “2018 Pacific Test” next June 23, “with the first two clashes confirmed. Fierce rivals Tonga will take on Samoa and Papua New Guinea will clash with Lebanon!” Apparently there will be a third match, so far without any known participants, but for which the NRL and Campbelltown (western Sydney) council are quite happy to accept ticket money.

One might ask where in the Pacific is Lebanon situated? As far as I know the closest is a colony of ex-pats in Sydney, not too far from Campbelltown. And where was Fiji in the announcement, which was made as Tonga, Samoa and Fiji were all preparing to compete in last weekend’s World Cup quarter-finals? Then there are the Cook Islands, who might be keen on a game as well. Another report said England could not yet confirm its participation. England? Oh yes, Britannia once ruled the (Pacific) waves.

Admittedly, the NRL has hosted “Pacific” Tests for a few years now. Last May Tonga beat Fiji 26-24 and England beat Samoa 30-10 in a Campbelltown double-header that attracted 18,271 fans. But they were part of a “rep weekend” which also incorporated the Anzac Test and City v Country. That has been scrapped. In 2018 one of the State of Origin fixtures has been moved from Wednesday night to a stand-alone weekend. That freed up June 23 for the “Pacific Test(s)”. There is also a free weekend in England’s Super League.

The Kangaroos will obviously not be involved on June 23 because they will be playing for their Origin teams. What, then, of Andrew Fifita and his NSW career? What, then, of the Kiwis? What, then, of the former Kiwis now wearing Tongan jerseys? The NZRL is keen to host more Tests, though it seems we have committed to yet another three-Test series

against England in England late next year. No doubt preceded by a one-off game against Australia? That has worked well in the recent past, hasn’t it?

Maybe the NZRL is negotiating behind the scenes for England to play New Zealand on June 23. If the Kiwis are to be assembled for a home match that weekend there are precious few other opponents left now the NRL and a Sydney suburban council have rounded up Tonga, Samoa, Lebanon and Papua New Guinea for their “Pacific” showcase. The NRL has cleverly kept their clubs’ best Polynesian players close to home. They would not want them wandering off to Mount Smart or Waikato Stadium would they?

It was interesting to watch the reactions of Fox Sports NRL360 host Ben Ikin and three experienced Sydney journalists to the happenings in Hamilton when Tonga beat both Samoa and New Zealand in front of their fabulous fans. Great for the game, they all agreed. But when a viewer emailed a suggestion the NRL be reduced to 20-22 rounds to allow more representative football co-host Paul Kent was horrified. The NRL competition produces the billion-dollar television contracts which finance the game, he said, and cannot be touched.

Nor would they believe the emergence of more and more NRL players who are not eligible for NSW or Queensland would diminish Origin as the jewel in their crown. They did not know, nor would they care, that former Kiwis and Queensland coach Graham Lowe likened Tonga’s victory over New Zealand to the first-ever Origin game, when ex-pat Queenslanders went home to beat up on their former NSW team-mates. Former Kangaroos prop Mark Geyer told Radio Sport from Sydney that he experienced similar emotions.

But if the NZRL was considering a “Kiwi Origin” between New Zealand and Tonga on June 23 they have been trumped by the NRL announcement. With Samoa also booked in at Campbelltown, Jarryd Hayne’s suggestion of fielding a combined Pacific team would also not be possible. The face of international rugby league cannot change while it is in the clutches of the NRL, an organisation formed to administer the Australian club competition. Another case of the golden rule – he who has the gold makes the rules.



THE FIJIAN forwards certainly did the job against New Zealand at Wellington. Before the game I had some doubts about whether the Bati pack could hold their own with the Kiwi six but they were more than equal to the task. In such a tight match, the Fijian defence was very impressive and was the base for their victory. New Zealand were far from their best but the focus should be on Fiji's gutsy effort rather than on negative aspects of the Kiwi performance. The New Zealand Rugby League should analyse their team's World Cup performances when the dust settles and no doubt they will do this. But for the moment all credit is due to the Fijians who were playing their first ever Test with New Zealand.

Ashton Sims deserves plenty of wraps for his game against the New Zealand pack. Almost 33 years of age, many thought Sims' best was far behind him, but he ran for 143 metres, made 23 tackles and gave everything he had in the tough forward battle. Sims has played 228 first grade NRL games with St. George/Illawarra, the Broncos and North Queensland. He has been playing in England for the past couple of seasons and has tallied 90 matches with Warrington. Next year, he will strip with the Toronto Wolfpack. At fullback, Fijian captain, Kevin Naiqama, was a great inspiration to his team-mates. He ran for a game high of 201 metres from his 14 runs. Another man to make a big impact in the game was in the New Zealand front row. Jared Waerea-Hargreaves was not an automatic selection for the Kiwi squad but on Saturday he never stopped trying. Nearly 29, he made 36 tackles and ran for 102 metres.

Down at Wellington, Lebanon also stood up to be counted. Maybe the Tongans were on a letdown after their great effort against New Zealand last week and maybe they were over confident. Whatever the reason, the Lebanese really played well and made the Tongans struggle for their 24-22 victory. He may be close to 30 now, but Lebanon and Parramatta prop, Tim Mannah, still has plenty to give whatever team jersey he wears. In this World Cup he ran for 463 metres in his 46 runs and these were mostly where it is toughest, up the middle. To average more than 10 metres each time he carts the ball up is a valuable asset team for any player. Lebanon's good form in the World Cup will probably lead to their coach, Brad Fittler, scoring the NSW State of Origin job next year.

The two semi finals this weekend should be great matches. Jarryd Hayne will be doing his best to upset the Australians in Brisbane on Friday night. At Mt. Smart on Saturday, England will have a real fight on their hands against Tonga.

After two rounds of the Women's World Cup, it looks as though Australia and New Zealand will fight out the final. In the first round, it was a strong all round team effort that gave New Zealand their 50-4 victory over Canada. New Zealand second rower, Teuila Fotu-Moala was one of several impressive Kiwis. She scored two tries, while her aggressive defence was a feature of the match. The Kiwi girls were even more impressive against the Cook Islanders. Honey Hireme finished with six of the 14 tries in this second game. In their first two matches, the New Zealand ladies have totalled 130 points to just four against. The Aussie girls have scored 96 points to just four against in their first two games.

There have been some terrific stories to come out of the Women's World Cup. One of these is Australian winger, Meg Ward. The 23 year old works as a firefighter with the Australian Air Force at Katherine, 320 kms south east of Darwin in the Northern Territory. It takes her three hours or more of travel time each way to play in the Northern Territory Women's competition at Darwin each weekend. She made her Test debut for Australia last Thursday against the Cook Islands and scored one of her team's 11 tries, while she crossed for two more in the 38-0 win over England on Sunday.

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Away from the World Cup, Manly coach Trent Barrett, celebrated his 40th birthday last Saturday with his family at the southern NSW coastal town of Kiama, 120 kms south of Sydney. Just last week, Barrett signed a contract extension, which will see him remain as Manly coach until the end of the 2020 season. Former Cronulla, CEO, Lyall Gorman is now the Manly CEO and he has been in his new job for just a week or so. Gorman, who came from the Wanderers A-League soccer club, was appointed as Cronulla boss in November 2014 and played a key role in the Sharks ' 2016 Premiership win.

Manly Chairman Scott Penn will probably be interviewed by the Integrity Unit in the next few days as the NRL completes its salary cap investigation of the Manly club. Penn has publicly stated that there are no issues at his club and he expects things to be wound up soon.

The Sea Eagles five eighth, Blake Green, has not been at any training session since the club began preparing for the 2018 season. He is still under contract to Manly but is keen to take up an attractive offer from the Warriors. Where Mitchell Pearce decides to play next season will no doubt have an input as to whether Manly release Green or not.

After 22 qualifying games in close to two and a half years, Australia finally won a place as one of the 32 countries in the 2018 Soccer World Cup in Russia next June/July. The Aussies will be based at Kazan which is around 830 kms south east of Moscow. It is the eighth largest city in Russia and has a population of about 1.2 million. The weather could be hot and humid during the World Cup.

Last Saturday, before a crowd of 81,909, the Wallabies were beaten by England at Twickenham, but on Friday night at North Sydney Oval the Australian girls retained the Ashes when they scored a good win in the first of three Twenty/20 games. This Thursday (23 November) in Brisbane, the first of five Test matches will begin to decide the Mens Ashes.

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



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Instagram



Twitter

AT THE GAME IN WELLINGTON!

Some of my family showing support for their uncle.





Kiwi Ferns Settle First Game Jitters Against Canada

*By Brooke Hurdell
NZRL*

FULLBACK APII Nicholls-Pualau starred for the Ferns as she continued to cause havoc with the ball in-hand, while halfback Kimiora Nati was a shining light with a clinical performance.

The Kiwis got off to the perfect start with winger Honey Hireme crossing for the first try of the tournament courtesy of some nice lead-up play from Nicholls-Pualau.

Their lead was short lived, however, as they were unable to withstand the pressure from Canada with back-rower Megan Pakulis barging her way over from dummy-half.

The Ferns regained the lead just moments later with speedster Atawhai Tupaea streaking down the right-hand touchline for their second try of the contest.

Kimiora Nati converted to take a handy 10-4 advantage after 15 minutes.

The Kiwis continued to force an array of handling errors with some brutally absorbing tackles but were unable to extend their lead with some costly mistakes of their own.

Despite the valiant efforts of Canada to level the scores, Ferns centre Shontelle Woodman eventually found a breakthrough after palming off a host of defenders before passing inside to Hireme for her second try of the contest.

Nati polished off a dominant first-half performance with her second conversion as the Ferns went into half-time with a 16-4 lead.

New Zealand earned an attacking raid off the first-set thanks to some barnstorming runs from their forwards, and Hireme looked to have completed her

hat-trick only to knock the ball on as she dived in the left-hand corner.

Teuila Fotu-Moala continued her dominance as she brushed off defenders to burst through the middle-third, and their momentum couldn't be stopped as Lilieta Maumau added her name to the scoresheet.

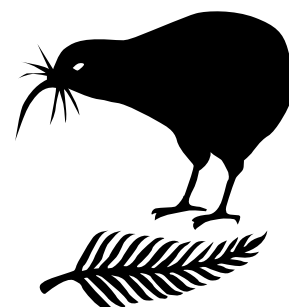
Brimming with confidence, the Ferns soon found themselves on the attack again with Krystal Murray providing significant impact off the bench with a try of her own.

Nati continued her strong day with the boot as she converted to take a comfortable 28-4 lead after 55 minutes.

Fotu-Moala was rewarded for her determined efforts with a four-pointer before Nicholls-Pualau scored their fourth try within a relentless 11 minute period.

Fotu-Moala and Mama both grabbed their second tries in the closing stages to round off a dominant 50-4 victory.

New Zealand 50 (Hireme 2, Fotu-Moala 2, Maumau 2, Tupaea, Murray, Nicholls-Pualau tries; Nati 7 goals) Canada 4 (Pakulias try)



**NEW ZEALAND
RUGBY LEAGUE™**



Krystal Murray scores a try
Photo: NRL Photos

Runaway Win For Kiwi Ferns Against Cook Islands

By Brooke Hurdell
NZRL

THE FERNs ran in 14 tries in a near-perfect performance with speedster Honey Hireme crossing for six tries in a clinical display of rugby league.

Halfback Kimiora Nati put in another strong showing as she led her team around with her pin-point kicking game and combined strongly with halves partner Raecene McGregor, who crossed for two tries of her own.

Cook Islands enjoyed a promising opening stanza with their threatening attacking raids causing havoc for the New Zealand defence, but it was the Ferns who broke the deadlock with a right-to-left shift at the opposing end which gave Hireme the first try of the contest.

Hireme found open space in the ensuing set with a burst down the left-hand touchline, and a second try was looming for New Zealand but winger Atawhai Tupea couldn't maintain possession in the opposite corner.

While the Cooks Islands were desperately searching for a quick reprieve, the Ferns were brimming with confidence and rampaging front-rower Lilieta Maumau extended their lead after she brushed off a host of defenders on her way to the try-line.

Kimiora Nati converted from in-front to take a 10-0 stranglehold after 20 minutes.

New Zealand continued their dominance with their forwards laying a strong platform through the middle-third, and Shontelle Woodman took full advantage as she added her name to the scoresheet just moments later.

Nita Maynard was providing significant impact off the bench with some darting runs out of dummy-half, and a break through the middle was finished with a quick play-the-ball for fellow interchange player Krystal Murray, who crossed for their fourth try.

Hireme and Woodman were causing trouble for the Cook Islands right-edge defence as they combined for three tries within a relentless five minute period, with Hireme grabbing her hat-trick courtesy of a some brilliant inside play from Woodman.

Murray was denied a second try in the closing stages of the first-half, but it made little difference as the Ferns dominated proceedings to take a 38-0 lead at the break.

New Zealand five-eighth Raecene McGregor split the defence in the early exchanges of the second-half and was brought down just metres out from the try-line, with Hireme capitalising on the broken defence and crossing for her fourth try of the game.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

Hireme eventually grabbed her fifth try after being previously denied by the video referee with Nati unable to convert as the Ferns took a 48-0 lead after 50 minutes.

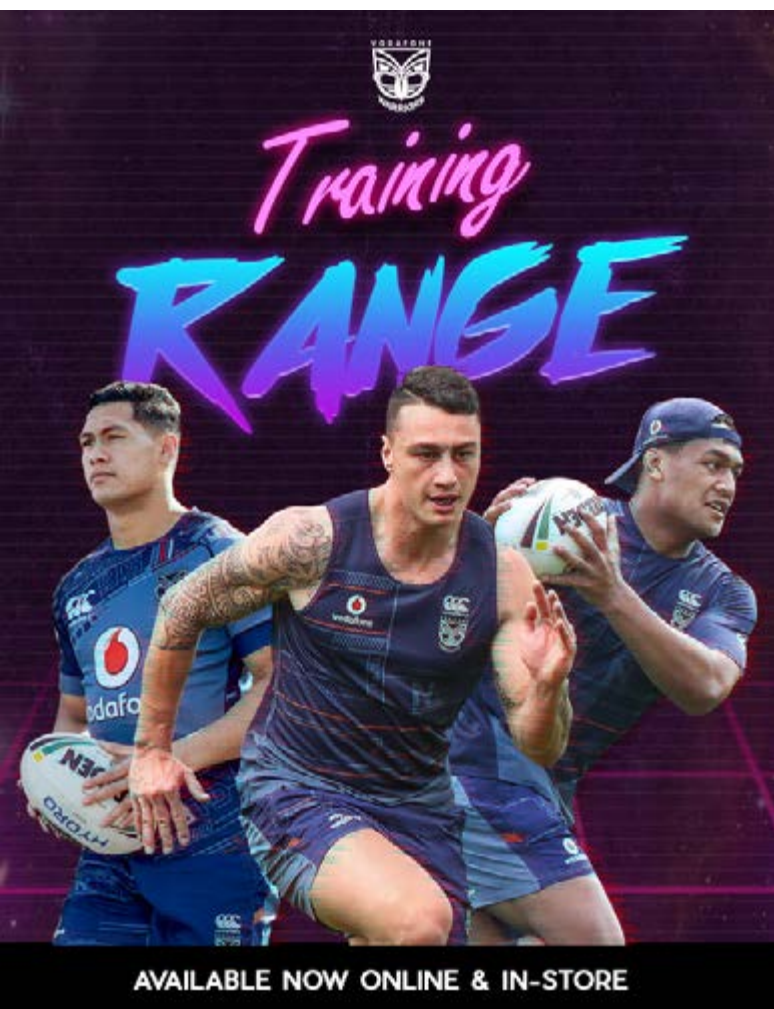
Fullback Apii Nicholls-Paulau was putting in another stellar performance with some evasive runs and tireless efforts from the back, and soon turned provider for McGregor with a brilliant offload that put the five-eighth over from close range.

McGregor raced away for her second try off the following set before Maynard snuck her way over the try-line just five minutes later.

The Cook Islands were valiant despite trailing on the scoreboard as they continued to fight hard for valuable field position and were frantically scrambling in defence, but the left-side attack of the Ferns couldn't be stopped as Hireme sprinted away for her eighth try of the tournament.

Murray scored her second try with a bulldozing run from 30 metres in the closing stages out before her team backed it up with some committed goal-line defence to hold out the Cook Islands and finish with a dominant 76-0 victory.

New Zealand 76 (Hireme 6, McGregor 2, Woodman 2, Murray 2, Maumau,, Maynard tries; Nati 10 goals) def. Cook Islands 0



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Canada Prepare For Australia After Historic Win

CANADA RAVENS players will have little time to celebrate their historic win over Papua New Guinea as they prepare to face Australia in the next round of the Rugby League Women's World Cup at Southern Cross Group Stadium on Wednesday.

The Ravens, whose players have backgrounds in rugby union and American football but boast little previous Rugby League experience, recorded their first World Cup triumph on Sunday night when they downed the Orchids 22-8 in a hard-fought match that virtually guarantees them a place in the semi-finals.

The jubilant Canada players soaked up the atmosphere after their win, posing for photos on the field and signing autographs for fans.

"It just shows where we can be as a country in the years to come," Ravens five-eighth Stevi Schnoor said. "Every game we are getting better because we have such a steep learning curve."

Canada coach Mike Castle said his players were now looking forward to the challenge of playing the Jillaroos on Wednesday.

"I think this is a huge opportunity for us to learn and keep developing," Castle said. "These are some of the most proud athletes I have ever had the opportunity to work with and we will do some recovery, get back on the paddock in the next couple of days and see what we can build on and where we can improve."

In the other matches at Southern Cross Group Stadium on Wednesday, New Zealand will be looking to continue their impressive form heading to the semi-finals when they meet the Orchids, while England will be aiming to bounce back from Sunday's 38-0 loss to Australia when they play Cook Islands.

Kiwi Ferns winger Honey Hireme is the leading try scorer of the tournament after adding a record six-try haul on Sunday to the double she scored against Canada last Thursday, while team-mate Kimiora Nati is the leading point scorer after kicking 10 goals against Cook Islands and seven against the Ravens.

Tables after the completion of Round 2 Pool matches:

POOL A	WON	LOST	DRAW	FOR	AGAINST	DIFF	POINTS
AUSTRALIA	1	0	0	96	4	+92	4
ENGLAND	1	0	0	36	46	+10	2
COOK ISLANDS	0	1	0	4	134	-130	0
POOL B	WON	LOST	DRAW	FOR	AGAINST	DIFF	POINTS
NEW ZEALAND	1	0	0	126	4	+122	4
CANADA	1	1	0	26	58	-32	2
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	0	2	0	16	58	-42	0

Round 3 Draw

Wednesday, 22 November at Southern Cross Group Stadium

England Women v Cook Islands Moana (1.45pm AEDT)

Australia v Canada Ravens (4pm AEDT)

NZ Kiwi Ferns v PNG Orchids (6.30pm AEDT)



Unpredictable RLWC2017 Sets Stage For Exciting Semi-Finals

THE RUGBY League World Cup 2017 can lay claim to being the most competitive and unpredictable in the tournament's 63-year history with this week's semi-final match-ups featuring giant-killers Fiji and Tonga against Australia and England.

Fiji and Tonga survived enthralling quarter-final battles to claim semi-final berths with two-point victories over New Zealand and Lebanon respectively; while Australia and England qualified comfortably with convincing wins over Samoa and Papua New Guinea over the weekend.

Fiji's 4-2 win over the Kiwis was the second time in a week (the first being Tonga defeating New Zealand), that a second-tier nation has defeated a tier-one nation.

Australia and Fiji will meet at Brisbane Stadium this Friday night (24 November); while Auckland's Mt Smart Stadium will play host to Tonga and England on Saturday (25 November) to determine who will contest the 2017 World Cup final at Brisbane Stadium on Saturday week (2 December).

RLWC2017 Chief Executive Andrew Hill said: "The performances of Tonga and Fiji to make the semi-finals undefeated, and the brave efforts of the Lebanon side which had just five NRL players, has broken new ground for the sport.

"The cultural challenges and exciting brand of football on display have captured the imagination of Rugby League fans around the world with television ratings highlighting the global appeal of the game.

"And hearing the players speak so passionately about playing for their countries and inspiring the next generation of Rugby League players in their communities has been incredibly pleasing."

Over 6 million people in Australia have watched the broadcast of the World Cup to date on the screens of Seven, and a further 10.9 million live streaming minutes. 2.2 million alone tuning into the Australia-Samoa clash, including 788,000 live streaming which continues to rate the number 1 non news show on Friday evenings.

Millions more have watched overseas via BBC in Britain, Sky in New Zealand, BeIN Sport in France and other rights holders in PNG and the Pacific.

More than 280,000 fans have attended matches, with five sell-out games – three in Port Moresby, one in Hamilton (NZ) and another for Darwin's first Test match on Friday night when the Kangaroos beat Samoa

ROLL OF HONOUR - Year: Winners/ Runners-up – in Host Country

SEMI-FINAL ROUND

Friday, 24 November 2017

7pm AEST Australia v Fiji

Brisbane Stadium

Saturday, 25 November 2017

6pm NZDT Tonga v England

Mt Smart Stadium, Auckland

1954: Great Britain/ France - in France

1957: Australia (1)/ Great Britain – in Australia

1960: Great Britain (1)/ Australia - in England

1968: Australia/ France – in Australia and New Zealand

1970: Australia/ Great Britain – in England

1972: Great Britain/ Australia – in France

1975 (2): Australia (1)/ England - worldwide

1977 (2): Australia/ Great Britain - Australia and New Zealand

1985-88: Australia/ New Zealand - worldwide

1989-92: Australia/ Great Britain - worldwide

1995: Australia/ England – in Great Britain

2000: Australia/ New Zealand – in UK and France

2008: New Zealand/ Australia – in Australia

2013: Australia/ New Zealand – in UK and France



Samoan Pack Strengthened For England Clash

MATE MA'A Tonga will be strengthened for their historic first Rugby League World Cup semi-final appearance with the return of forwards Sio Siau Taukeiaho and Peni Terepo for the clash with England at Auckland's Mt Smart Stadium on Saturday.

Both missed the two-point quarter-final victory over Lebanon last Saturday and will return fit and fresh with Roosters' big gun Taukeiaho starting and aggressive Eel Terepo returning to the bench.

England have gone with the same 17 that were successful against Papua New Guinea in Melbourne but made two changes on their reserves list. Jonny Lomax and Scott Taylor replace Stefan Ratchford and George Williams in the four listed reserves.

In the other semi-final, to be played in Brisbane on Friday between Australia and Fiji, there have been no changes to the top 17 in either side.

The Australians have chosen the same line-up that disposed of Samoa 46-0 in the quarter-final in Darwin but have made two changes to their reserves list with Tom Trbojevic and Josh Mansour replacing Cameron Munster and Ben Hunt.

The Fijians, taking on the Kangaroos for a third time in World Cup semi-finals, have again selected their top outfit with no changes throughout their 21-man squad after success in Auckland against the Kiwis.

This weekend's semi-final teams are:

AUSTRALIA v FIJI at Brisbane Stadium, Friday 24 November at 7pm (8pm AEDT)

Match officials – Referee: Gerard Sutton; touch judges: Michael Wise, Chris Kendall; video ref: Bernard Sutton.

AUSTRALIA

- 1 Billy SLATER
- 2 Dane GAGAI
- 3 William CHAMBERS
- 4 Joshua DUGAN
- 5 Valentine HOLMES
- 6 Michael MORGAN
- 7 Cooper CRONK
- 8 Aaron WOODS
- 9 Cameron SMITH (c)
- 10 David KLEMMER
- 11 Boyd CORDNER
- 12 Matt GILLET
- 13 Joshua MCGUIRE
- 14 Wade GRAHAM
- 15 Jordan MCLEAN

16 Reagan CAMPBELL-GIL-LARD

17 Tyson FRIZELL

18 Felise KAUFUSI

19 Tom TRBOJEVIC

20 Joshua MANSOUR

21 James MALONEY

FIJI

- 1 Kevin NAIQAMA (c)
- 2 Suliasi VUNIVALU
- 3 Taane MILNE
- 4 Akuila UATE
- 5 Marcelo MONTTOYA
- 6 Jarryd HAYNE
- 7 Henry RAIWALUI
- 8 Ashton SIMS
- 9 Apisai KOROISAU
- 10 Eloni VUNAKECE
- 11 Viliame KIKAU
- 12 Brayden WILIAME
- 13 Tui KAMIKAMICA
- 14 Joe LOVODUA
- 15 Jacob SAIFITI
- 16 Junior ROQICA

17 Ben NAKUBUWAI

18 James STORER

19 Salesi Faingaa

20 Sitiveni MOCEIDREKE

21 Pio SOKOBALAVU

ENGLAND v TONGA at Mt Smart Stadium, Auckland, 25 November at 6pm NZ (4pm AEDT)

Match officials – Referee: Matt Cecchin; touch judges: Chris Butler, Robert Hicks; video referee: Ben Thaler.

ENGLAND

- 1 Gareth WIDDOP
- 2 Jermaine MCGILLVARY

Continued on next page...

3 Kallum WATKINS
4 John BATEMAN
5 Ryan HALL
6 Kevin BROWN
7 Luke GALE
8 Chris HILL
9 Josh HODGSON
10 James GRAHAM
11 Samuel BURGESS
12 Elliott WHITEHEAD
13 Sean O'LOUGHLIN (c)
14 Alex WALMSLEY
15 Thomas BURGESS
16 Ben CURRIE

17 James ROBY
18 Jonny LOMAX
19 Chris HEIGHINGTON
20 Mark PERCIVAL
21 Scott TAYLOR

TONGA

1 William HOPOATE
2 Daniel TUPOU
3 Michael JENNINGS
4 Konrad HURRELL
5 David FUSITUA
6 Tuimoala LOLOHEA
7 Mafoa'aeata HINGANO

8 Andrew FIFITA
9 Siliva HAVILI
10 Sio Siua TAUKEIAHO
11 Manu MA'U
12 Sika MANU (c)
13 Jason TAUMALOLO
14 Sione KATOA
15 Peni TEREPO
16 Tevita Pangai JUNIOR
17 Ben MURDOCH-MASILA
18 Sam MOA
19 Manu VATUVEI
20 Joe OFAHENGAUE
21 Samisoni LANGI



Hale To Make Debut As Captain For Kiwi Ferns

KIWI FERN stand-off Georgia Hale will captain her team for the first time in New Zealand's third and final pool match of the Rugby League Women's World Cup against PNG tomorrow at 6.30pm (AEDT).

While this is Hale's first Rugby League World Cup, the PNG match-up will be her fifth international Test having played at the 2015, 2016 and 2017 ANZAC Tests.

Aieshaleigh Smalley also joins Hale as the starting prop for her first international Test in the black jersey. She credits the support of her Otahuhu Leopards team and family in Auckland for being able to represent her country in the sport she loves.

"I'm so grateful to be where I am today, I just cannot wait to run out on the field in front of my family and friends who have flown across to Sydney to support me,"

"My three-year-old son Kayson will also be there to cheer me on so I can't wait to make him proud," she says.

If the Kiwi Ferns win their game against PNG tomorrow, they will finish top of Pool B and will play their semi-final against the team ranked second in Pool A on Sunday November 26.

Kiwi Ferns v PNG
November 22, 6.30pm (AEDT)
Southern Cross Group Stadium,
Sydney

1 - Raecene McGregor
2 - Atawhai Tupaea
3 - Maitua Feterika
4 - Amber Kani

5 - Hilda Peters
6 - Georgia Hale (Captain)
7 - Racquel Anderson
8 - Aieshaleigh Smalley *
9 - Krystal Rota
10 - Kahurangi Peters
11 - Teuila Fotu-Moala
12 - Louisa Gago
13 - Sharlene Atai

14 - Nita Maynard
15 - Annetta-Claudia Nuuausala
16 - Bunty Kuruwaka-Crowe
19 - Lilieta Maumau
21 - Ngatokotoru Arakua
22 - Apii Nicholls-Pualau



Billy's Great Night Out At The League

*By Bridget Rutherford
Christchurch Star*

NOT EVEN a broken leg could stop Halswell Hornets' Billy Spivey from going to cheer on the Kiwis as they thumped Scotland 74-6..

Billy, 7, broke his femur about three weeks ago after crashing his motor-cycle and has to be in a wheelchair until November 16.

His mother Nicola said originally the Halswell family had bought tickets to the pool play match at AMI Stadium in the general stand.

But they had to buy new tickets in the wheelchair seating area at the bottom of the City Care Stand so Billy could still go, she said.

Ms Spivey, Billy and his three-year-old brother, Benji, sat together. Dad Hamish and some friends were also allowed to sit with them.

Ms Spivey said it was "awesome" to sit there because it was close to the action.

Billy's Halswell Hornets gold team, which his dad coaches, won junior team of the year at the Canterbury rugby league awards. He was the second highest points scorer.

Ms Spivey is the junior club captain.

Last week, Billy chatted to Kiwis star Shaun Johnson after the team's open training session at Linfield Park.

"It was cool. He said 'I hope your leg gets better,'" Billy said.

The Kiwis playmaker went on to score a try and kick nine conversions during Saturday's match to become the Kiwis highest ever points scorer.

The win has set the Kiwis up for a crunch match against Tonga in Hamilton on Saturday after they beat Pacific rivals Samoa 32-18 on the weekend.

Ms Spivey said after the game the family got to meet Kiwis utility Elijah Taylor, who recognised Billy from last week's training session.

Some of the Kiwis officials also recognised him, and gave Billy the thumbs up and a wave as the team walked onto the field, she said.

Billy said he wants to play for the Kiwis when he grows up, and the NRL premiership-winning Melbourne Storm because he has the same name as their fullback Billy Slater.

Ms Spivey said while their friends joked about their kids being named after well-known rugby league players, it was not intentional.

In Wellington: Makin Some People Happy



Cass is a very happy chap just picked up three flags and tickets for the game.



I met these two Swedish guys Anders Jonson and Jan Holmgren who are on holiday.



Josh is Another lucky winner of tickets to the game.



Just gave the minister of Sport one of the RLWC plates we had done courtesy of Gary Clarke plastics in Christchurch.



Just gave Haromi tickets to the game and flags. She is one happy punter.



Just gave Kiwi flag to the mayor of Chatham Islands Alfred Preece.



Just gave Kristen (magic) to his mate 3 tickets and 3 flags for the game.



Just gave my first flag away to this lovely young lady Jade lundon.



Just made These three people very happy with three complimentary tickets to the game.



Just meet these Catalans dragons fans. Great people over for the RLWC.



Ken Stirling, Raymond Baxendale, Kevin Tamati and Tony Coll, all former Kiwis, with the RLWC.



Look who I just caught up with. Fran and Gordon all the way from Leeds in the UK.

In Wellington



These two Frenchmen rushed off to Rebel sport to get these jerseys there was a group of 50 of them staying at our hotel.



Tracey also managed to score some tickets to the game.



A big thank you to Rydges hotel in Wellington I owe you all a massive thank you to all the staff that bent over backwards to make my stay very pleasant.



The view from my hotel room in Wellington.





PLATINUM COVERED			GOLD UNCOVERED			BRONZE LOWER SOUTH		
CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE
Adult	70	80	Adult	50	60	Adult	25	35
Child	15	20	Child	15	20	Child	15	20
Family	155	165	Family	115	125	Family	65	75

PLATINUM UNCOVERED			TRIBE			BRONZE UPPER SOUTH		
CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE
Adult	65	75	Adult	50	60	Adult	25	35
Child	15	20	Child	15	20	Child	15	20
Family	145	155	Family	115	125	Family	65	75

GOLD COVERED			SILVER			SIR PETER LEITCH LOUNGE		
CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE	CATEGORY	PRE-PURCHASE	GATE
Adult	60	70	Adult	30	40	Adult	99	109
Child	15	20	Child	15	20			
Family	135	145	Family	75	85			

SKYCITY Double Header Prices Confirmed

RUGBY LEAGUE fans will be able to attend next year's historic SKYCITY Double Header NRL extravaganza at Mount Smart Stadium for as little as \$25, while children's tickets have been set at \$15 for all seats throughout the stadium.

The two-game event is the first ever staged outside Australia with the Vodafone Warriors and the Wests Tigers hosting fifth-round games involving premiership winners Melbourne and beaten grand finalists North Queensland on Saturday, April 7.

A cast of many of the game's biggest names is guaranteed when the Vodafone Warriors take on the Cowboys in the main game with the Tigers meeting the Storm in the curtain-raiser.

"Our fans are incredibly important to us and we were very mindful about doing everything we could to keep the ticket prices down for the SKYCITY Double Header," Vodafone Warriors CEO Cameron George said.

"While hosting an event like this means we have a lot of extra costs to meet, our goal is to fill up the stadium on what promises to be an incredible, historic game day at our house."

An exclusive pre-sale opportunity for 2018 members runs from November 27-December 1. Members will be sent an email and ticketing link later this week that will contain all of the information they need to purchase their exact seat for the two-game event when the pre-sale opens at 9am next Monday.

From December 4-8 there will also be an additional pre-sale opportunity for Wests Tigers, North Queensland, Melbourne and Vodafone Warriors members as well as those who registered on the wait list for tickets (2018 members do not have to register).

For those wishing to take their game day experience to the next level, the club's 19th man, Sir Peter Leitch, will be hosting a lounge.

Included in the \$99 package is a gold covered seat in the West Stand as well as access to the Stacey Jones Lounge where you'll be entertained by one of the best in the business.

Sir Peter Leitch Club members will have an exclusive pre-sale opportunity to secure their places in the lounge from November 27.

Any remaining tickets will go on sale to the public from December 11 along with the rest of the event.

Club members will be entitled to a 10 per cent discount on any tickets purchased.

SKYCITY DOUBLEHEADER

Saturday, April 7, 2018 @ Mount Smart Stadium, Auckland

5.00pm - Wests Tigers v Melbourne Storm

7.30pm - Vodafone Warriors v North Queensland Cowboys

Vodafone Warriors Snare Green For Three Years

By Richard Becht



SEASONED STANDOFF Blake Green has been secured by the Vodafone Warriors on a three-year contract.

Signed until the end of the 2020 NRL season, the 31-year-old is moving to Auckland after helping the Manly Sea Eagles surge to sixth this season from 13th in 2016.

He's the Vodafone Warriors' eighth new signing after Tohu Harris (Melbourne), Leivaha Pulu (Gold Coast), Gerard Beale (Cronulla), Adam Blair (Brisbane), Peta Hiku (Warrington), Matiu Love-Henry (Brisbane) and Agnatius Paasi (Gold Coast).

"We're delighted we've been able to sign a player of Blake's calibre," said Vodafone Warriors CEO Cameron George.

"He wasn't off-contract but became available through circumstances. It couldn't have worked out better for us. He's a terrific player and his experience in winning titles and playing so much finals football will be of huge benefit to us.

"His presence will add both depth and intense competition among the halves, which is exactly what we're after. On top of that his background at a number of clubs in the NRL and Super League makes him an ideal mentor for our young halves."

The Vodafone Warriors will become Green's sixth NRL club and his eighth in all counting Hull Kingston Rovers and Wigan.

He began his first-grade career with Parramatta in 2007 before establishing himself with Canterbury-Bankstown in 2010 following just 19 games in two seasons with Cronulla in 2008 and 2009; he had his first taste of finals football with the Sharks in 2008 and has now appeared in a total of eight NRL finals matches plus Super League play-offs and two Old Trafford grand finals as well as the Challenge Cup final at Wembley.

His one-season stint with the Sea Eagles in 2017 followed two with Melbourne when he played in the 2016 grand final and was in the Storm side stopped one win short of the decider in 2015 by eventual premier North Queensland.

Green spent four seasons in the English Super League with Hull Kingston Rovers and the Wigan Warriors from 2011-2014, savouring the Challenge Cup-Super League grand final double with Wigan in 2013. He won the Harry Sutherland Trophy as man of the match in the Super League decider at Old Trafford while he was in the grand final again in 2014 when Wigan lost to St Helens.

Green has played a combined total of more than 200 top-grade games in the NRL and the Super League.

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter

Hi Sir Peter

THANKS FOR the 2 x tickets to the Kiwis v Tonga game on Saturday in Hamilton.. My mate Sean Henry and I had an awesome experience..

Those Tonga's supporters were on fire.. I owe you a soft drink..



Congratulations To Fiji On Their Win Tonight

MY TEAM My Family #Kiwis for Life still 100% in support of the #Kiwi Legacy So much negative hurtful comments will come from a variety of people over this #Kiwis Team What went wrong was it an individual or a management issues a team with so much talent what went oh so very wrong a lot of questions to be asked and Answered I feel for Former #kiwi Players who were watching the game tonite it was their Pride Legacy everything they fought so hard for

I also feel for people such as yourself who give everything to support this Team i've also read several negative comments which mention our beloved #Warriors ie 'same issues as our Warriors' Thankyou Sir Peter for being the type of Support System the rest of #Kiwi Supporters need right now Travel back to Auckland Safely

Regards

Joyce

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www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz

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The Newsletter Team

Here is the team that help me put together the newsletter each week. We have a number of fantastic contributors who send in content each week that along with my editorial gets wrapped up by our graphic designer and sent out by our distribution man to your inbox.

Sir Peter Leitch - Editor
David Kemeys - Editor at Large
Hayden Woodhead - Graphic Designer

John Deaker - Correspondent
John Coffey - Southern Correspondent
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