

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

31st January 2018

Newsletter #202

GO GET'EM GEORGE

By David Kemeys

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



AT THE risk of being seen to blow smoke up the bum of the boss, Warriors chief executive Cameron George gets my vote for having the guts to take aim at New Zealand Rugby over the Etene Nanai-Seturo affair.

You may well never have heard of Etene Nanai-Seturo, given that pretty much no one gives a fat rat's arse about Sevens, but he turned out for New Zealand in Sydney this weekend, where the All Blacks Sevens or whatever they are called this week, finished, actually I don't know, or care enough, to bother to find out,.

What is really interesting is that the youngster did so despite being signed to a contract with the Warriors.

Now George was not a happy camper and did not hold back on letting New Zealand Rugby know it, calling their handling of the issue "disrespectful", and threatening to go to court about it.

Fair enough. Don't let anyone fill your head with nonsense about it being a tricky situation or a complex issue. It isn't. Nanai-Seturo, who to be fair, is only 18, is contracted to us.

Now there is all this talk that he is going to play for the Chiefs in Super 423 or however many clubs they have playing this year to widen the game to Mongolia.

That's all very well, but when he was 15 he signed a five-year contract with the Warriors, and even I can do that maths.

I have no idea what he got in return for his signature, but I am willing to guess it was a not a colouring-in book and a bag of pop corn, and last time I looked,

you couldn't just send a letter saying you "resign" from a contract.

He has, apparently, never asked for a release, and I am not in the least bit surprised George has thrown a wobbly, though he called it being "disappointed" with the conduct of New Zealand Rugby.

"The Warriors would never treat another sporting body in the manner that we have been treated," he was quoted in the Herald on Sunday as saying. "There should be a mutual respect between sporting organisations but there has been nothing like this here."

You don't have to be a genius to know that a league v rugby legal battle is unlikely to come out in league's favour, given the power rugby wields in this country, but this stinks.

"I don't care if it is New Zealand Rugby. We will do what we believe is right," said George.

And all I can say is "good on ya".

Before everyone jumps up and down and asks what the difference is between the young fella, and Ngani Laumape, Glen Fisiiahi or Sam Lousi, I can tell you. They all asked to be released.

It was no surprise that our old mate Chris Rattue, saw it differently.

I will get to the good stuff, where he says Nanai-Seturo was faced with "the pipeline which leads to the world champion All Blacks...or the loser league outfit", which he described as choosing between "fresh snapper or fish fingers". Say what you like about Rattue, but that's a good line.

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Here's the thing though Chris, he chose the fish fingers.

Chris is kind enough to get in behind us, saying he is "all for anyone prepared to take on the arrogant national rugby body", but he soon resorts to type, writing that it is all our own fault for being rubbish in the first place...which much as it pains me to admit it, is a fair enough kind of point.

"Here is my serious and heartfelt recommendation to any outstanding young football player who is considering joining the Warriors. Don't."

The rest was just a litany of putting the boot in about what a lot of failures we all are, how no one ever measures up, makes it, stands up, or lives up to their potential.

Sadly it looks like we will never know what Nanai-Seturo could achieve on a league field.

Don't get me wrong, I do not wish any ill for the young man, but equally, he signed a deal with the Warriors, and the club was entitled to believe it meant something.

Flush that down the dunny, and what is the point of contracts at all?

Three Cheers

Now by way of complete departure, I am going to totally back something the man I so often malign, Chris Rattue. He praised World Darts for removing the walk-on girls from televised events, and said all sports cheerleaders and their ilk should go the same way.

I have to say I absolutely agree.

This whole SkyCity cheerleading thing gets right on my wick.

Yes I know you can say they train hard, the choreography is amazing, blah, blah, blah.

I don't care. Put on some five minute games of women's nines or something, just anything other than skimpily-clad young women waving pom-poms about.

It's embarrassing.

RTS Understands The Time Is Now

Roger Tuivasa-Sheck is back again as captain and he was in the weekend papers too, with a pretty simple message, that this is a crucial season for him and the Warriors.

Anyone looking for pre-season action at Mt Smart would have been disappointed, with the boys all away in the bay of Plenty for some team bonding, intense gym sessions, and full-contact training.

They stayed together at a holiday camp, an exercise designed to get them to muck in together and hopefully find ways to win away from Mt Smart.

I have said it many times, I don't care if you win away from Mt Smart, just win at home first please.

"I spoke about trying to get into some good routines away from home, practicing the small things. We need to find good habits," RTS said. "We have a lot of away games."

More Misery For Manu

It is well-known that I have a soft spot for The Beast, Manu Vatuvei, now with Salford in the UK Super League.

Poor Manu has suffered a suspected serious Achilles injury, which will be a huge blow to him, not to mention Salford, given Manu managed five tries in eight games last year, after leaving us in July.

Salford head coach Ian Watson said: "It's terribly unfortunate Manu has sustained an injury this close to the start of the season. He has been terrific for us since signing and he is a massive asset for the club."



Salford Red Devils Media Day 2018



By Shane Hurndell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

AWESOME GESTURE FROM ABs CAPTAIN READ

The Rugby Championship - New Zealand All Blacks Captains Run
Photo www.photosport.nz

TOP MARKS to the Warriors coaching staff for inviting All Blacks captain Kieran Read to address the team during their pre-season camp in Papamoa last week.

And an equal amount of marks go to Read for accepting too. It's no secret the mental side of the Warriors game left a lot to be desired in 2017.

There were far too many second half meltdowns on their way to their 13th placing with seven wins from 24 games. Under Read's captaincy and also when he was vice captain to Richie McCaw there have been numerous occasions of the All Blacks having to fight back or stay ahead in tight battles to secure victory and the mental fortitude displayed in these encounters has been outstanding.

A long-time Warriors fan, Read, said he believed the tools to use mental strength to cope with pressure was transferable across sporting codes.

"All elite level sport, it comes down to the mental side and that's what separates the really top and those who sit just under that.

"We do pretty well at the All Blacks and speaking to a few of the boys here, they're pretty keen to get a little bit of inside knowledge and if that can rub off on them, that'd be great," Read told media during the visit.

It will be interesting to gauge the impact of Read's visit when the Warriors NRL campaign begins in March. Just as big a concern as the Warriors second half meltdowns last year were the number of occasions they allowed opposing teams to establish big leads and there was little in the way of an acceptable fight back.

Should the going gets tough for the Warriors this season they only need to think back to the November 25 World Cup semifinal at their home ground, Mount Smart Stadium, between England and Tonga when Tonga almost pulled off the most memorable comebacks in World Cup history when losing 20-18 after trailing 20-0 with eight minutes remaining.

I was thrilled to hear of Read's visit and I hope there can be more cases of the All Blacks helping out the Warriors as well as the Kiwis in future. News of Read's visit was the start of a memorable weekend of sport in Hawke's Bay.

The highlight was the annual Allan and Sylvia Potts Memorial Classic athletics meeting which doubled as a Gold Coast Commonwealth Games qualifier in many events. Rio Olympics bronze medallist in the pole vault Eliza McCartney and world champion shot putter Tom Walsh were among the competitors.

Less than five minutes drive from that Hastings venue the annual Hawke's Bay Dewar Cup polo tournament was played. One of the country's best players, Angus McKelvie, was in the winning team for the fourth consecutive year and scored five goals as Morningstar beat Kihi Kihi 6-4 in the final.

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At the other end of the experience scale 16-year-old Hawke's Bay-based player Waitakeo Banks proved he is a player with enormous potential in the code with his contribution to the Morningstar effort.

On Saturday night Auckland brothers Ryan and Scott Baker finished first and second respectively in a spectacular North Island TQ Championship at Meeanee. On Sunday Hawke's Bay United scored a much-needed 2-0 win against Auckland's Eastern Suburbs in a ISPS Handa Premiership soccer fixture.

Across the road from the polo more than 300 fitness fanatics competed in the country's longest-running crossfit competition, Judgment Day. All of these events along with Read's visit to the Warriors pre-season camp reminded one of how neat it is to be a sports fan in New Zealand.

COMMISSIONERS

By Barry Ross



THERE ARE some changes coming up for the ARL Commission. Formed in February 2012, the Commission is the official controlling body of Rugby League. Before that it was the Australian Rugby League Board of Control for many years. All 16 NRL clubs plus the NSW and Queensland Rugby Leagues, are members of the Commission. The original members from 2012, are John Grant, Catherine Harris AO, Ian Elliot, Peter Gregg, Wayne Pearce OAM, Gary Pemberton AC, Dr. Chris Sarra and Jeremy Sutcliffe. Queenslander, John Grant has been the Commission Chairman since its formation. He will step down in a few weeks, along with the only other original, Catherine Harris.

It is interesting to examine briefly, the achievements of the original appointees.

JOHN GRANT played three Tests for Australia at the 1972 World Cup as a centre/winger and seven games for Queensland. He has had a very successful business career, firstly as an engineer with the Brisbane City Council and then as the Head of his own information technology company, Data3, which at one stage had an annual turnover of around \$800 million. **CATHERINE HARRIS** is the Chair of Australia's largest produce retailer, Harris Farm Markets, as well as being a Director of the National Gallery of Australia, the Australian Ballet and the University of NSW Business School. **IAN ELLIOT** is a former Chairman and Chief Executive of the George Patterson company, which was, in his time, Australia's largest advertising agency. **PETER GREGG** was

Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of Australian Corporate giant, Leighton Holdings. He resigned from the Commission in February 2014 and has had some hiccups in the past year or so. He, along with another businessman, had a criminal trial adjourned from November 2017 until October this year. **WAYNE PEARCE** He played 19 Tests for Australia from 1982 to 1988, 16 matches for NSW and 193 games for Balmain. He worked for about 10 years as a commentator with Fox TV and runs his leadership and team performance consultancy, "Wayne Pearce Advantage." **GARY PEMBERTON** He is a former Chairman of Qantas, Billabong and Racing NSW. He retired from the Commission on 31 October 2013. **DR. CHRIS SARRA** is an educationist with Aboriginal and Italian heritage. He holds a Master of Education, a Bachelor of Education and a Diploma of Teaching and in 1998 became the first Aboriginal Principal of the Cherbourg State School in Queensland. He is Chairman and Founder of the "Stronger Smarter Institute," which aims to build positive cultural identities for Aboriginal children. **JEREMY SUTCLIFFE** He is the Chairman of CSR which is a prominent and successful company in both Australia and New Zealand. It is a leading building products company in both countries, while its other arm is sugar refining.

A decision of the final makeup of the new incoming Commissioners will be made in the next week or so. Three of these will probably be George Peponis OAM, Bruce Hatcher and Peter V'landys AM. **DR. GEORGE PEPONIS** graduated with a medical

degree from the University of NSW in 1978, while still playing with the Bulldogs. He set up a practice at Five Dock in 1979 and still attends his patients there, 39 years later. One of the most highly respected men in Australian Rugby League, George played eight Tests for Australia at hooker and captained the team in three of these matches. Born in Tripoli Greece, he migrated to Australia with his family when he was just 18 months old. He played seven matches for NSW and 132 first grade games with the Bulldogs, including the 1980 Grand Final when he captained the Bulldogs to an 18-4 win against the Roosters. A former Chairman of the Bulldogs Rugby League club, he was Chairman of the 2017 World Cup and is currently the Chairman of the Bulldogs Leagues club and Chairman of the NSW Rugby League. **BRUCE HATCHER** As a player, Bruce was a talented centre with the Eastern Suburbs club in the Brisbane competition, before injuries forced him to end his promising career. He is the Chairman of the Queensland Rugby League, Deputy Chairman of the Queensland Academy of Sport, as well as a Director of MTAA Super Funds and the Brisbane Markets Limited. He had a long and successful career as a chartered accountant and also ran a successful family business. **PETER V'LANDYS** grew up in the Wollongong area, 80 kms south of Sydney and played Rugby League with the local Western Suburbs club. This club is where Test greats such as Bob Fulton, Steve Roach, Jason Ryles, John Dorahy, Garry Jack, Brett Stewart and Glenn Stewart, played their junior football. Peter Vlandys represented Illawarra under 18s from the Wests Wollongong club. He completed a Bachelor of Economics at Wollongong University and then moved to Sydney for work in the mining and leisure sectors. In 2004, he was appointed as the Chief Executive and a Board

Member for Racing NSW and before that, from 1988 to 2004, he was the Chief Executive for the NSW Harness Racing club.

DR. GARY WEISS was appointed to the Commission around August 2016, replacing Ian Elliot who resigned after four years. At that time, Gary was Chief Executive of Ariadne Australia, as well as Chairman of Ridley Corporation and Secure Parking. Previously he had been a Director of Brisbane Broncos Ltd and a member of the Roosters Chairman's club for more than two years. Along with Wayne Pearce and Chris Sarra, Gary will finish up as a Commissioner next year, 2019.

TONY McGRATH came on board in July 2014, to replace Peter Gregg. Tony is a former partner of KPMG and is the co-founder and Chairman of McGrathNicol, one of Australia's most highly respected restructuring and advisory firms. Tony's term on the Commission will end in 2020. **MEGAN DAVIS** was appointed to the Commission in July 2017 and will end her term in 2020. She has held some very important positions including Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations. A proud Cobble Cobble woman, she is a Professor of Law at the University of NSW and a Commissioner for the NSW Land and Environment Court. Her father played Rugby League and she is a passionate fan of the game, who follows the Cowboys. **PETER BEATTIE** was also appointed to the Commission in July 2017 and will finish in 2020. The Honourable Peter Beattie AC, was Premier of Queensland for nine years between 1998 and 2007, while he is currently the Chairman of the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Organising Committee.

RUGBY LEAGUE BILL

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)



LEGENDARY CANTERBURY rugby league personality Bill Whitehead – aka Rugby League Bill – is still receiving visitors at the Elmswood Rest Home in Christchurch. Bill is in the hospital section of the large complex. The entrance is down a short drive way at 41 Colwyn Street, off Aorangi Road. At 86, Bill has lost none of his sharp wit and is keen to see his many old mates.

BLACKBALL'S LAST KIWI GOES "HOME"

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)



FORMER KIWIS front-rower Robin Scholefield died in Hokitika on January 20. His funeral was held in Greymouth last Friday, and he was interred in the Blackball cemetery. It was fitting that the man known as "Big Schoie" be laid to rest in Blackball because he was the last of that famous coal mining town's eleven New Zealand representatives. In 1965 he became Kiwi number 437, playing against the Kangaroos and touring Britain and France.

Historians know Blackball as the birthplace of the Labour Party, an event which followed the 10-week 1908 "crib time" miners' strike. It was a town where the workers tended to be more militant than any others in the country. It also once had a pub named the Hilton and still has a salami factory. But Blackball, situated 29km north of Greymouth, has also been one of the most respected names in rugby league, particularly during and after the Second World War.

During the war mining was designated as an essential occupation. The coal that was blasted from the hills around Blackball was needed for the war effort. It was hard work and made those who toiled underground naturally strong. Their major recreation was, appropriately, the toughest of the football codes, for their club had been a foundation member of the West Coast Rugby League in 1915. Blackball Domain was a daunting venue for their rivals.

In 1943 Blackball beat the top Wellington and Canterbury clubs before taking on Auckland champion Manukau at Carlaw Park. Led by the great Steve Watene, Manukau won 23-9. A Blackball side which included three Mountford brothers, Ces, Bill and Ken, produced many brilliant moves but was hampered by a lack of possession and eventually steamrolled by Manukau's massive pack. The Auckland Star reported Blackball won only two scrums.

Seven years later Blackball thrashed Canterbury champion Sydenham 53-13 for the Thacker Shield and again set its sights on Auckland, where Mount Albert had won all of the major trophies. This time there was no doubt about the size, power and team-work of the Blackball forwards, who scored eight of their side's nine tries in a 35-15 walkover. Current or future Kiwis forwards Bob Aynsley, Bill McLennan and Bob O'Donnell claimed two tries each.

Blackball's Kiwis Roll of Honour had begun with American-born inside back Johnny Dodds and formidable forward Jim Calder (Quentin Pongia's grandfather), who toured Australia in 1930. A rich post-war line began with hooker Anynsley, second-rower Charlie McBride and centre Bill Mountford in 1946, followed by loose forward Ken Mountford and fullback Ray Nuttall for the 1947-48 tour to Britain and France, and later prop Bill McLennan (1951-57), second-rower O'Donnell (1952) and outside back Les McNicol (1955-56).

McBride was described on the first of his two British tours as the best forward in the world, while "Ginger" McLennan made 84 appearances for the Kiwis, a total exceeded only by his former West Coast and Kiwis team-mate Jock Butterfield (99) and Auckland centre Tommy Baxter (94).

But arguably the greatest Blackball product of all never played for his country. Ces Mountford was signed by Wigan in early 1946, just before the international transfer ban was reintroduced. Mountford, dubbed the "Blackball Bullet", was a mercurial five-eighth in a truly golden era for rugby league in the north of England. In 1947 Ken and Ces Mountford opposed each other when the Kiwis beat Wigan 10-8. Ces later returned to New Zealand to coach and manage Kiwis team and serve as NZRL secretary.

So 23-year-old Robin Scholefield had plenty to live up to when he ran onto Carlaw Park for the 1965 Kiwis trial. At 16 stone, 7 pounds, he was a big man for his era and he proved to be a real stand-out that day. So much so that he was selected for the first Test against Australia alongside fearsome prop Maunga Emery (Stacey Jones' grandfather) and slick Wellington hooker Colin O'Neil. Australia won a close encounter 13-8.

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Scholefield was forward reserve when the Kiwis levelled the two-Test series 7-5 a week later.

It had been a rapid rise for Scholefield, who only made his West Coast debut in 1964. He attended the national coaching school that year and played in the last inter-island match for South against North in 1965. Scholefield subsequently appeared in seven games in Britain and two in France on the 1965 Kiwis tour but could not separate the long-standing front-row pairing of 31-year-old Emery and 30-year-old Sam Edwards for the Test matches.

In 1969, with the mines and mills steadily disappearing from the West Coast landscape, the Blackball club amalgamated with Ngahere, its less illustrious but equally proud rival from across the Grey River. As a mark of respect to the local industries, the new club was named Waro-Rakau, meaning wood and coal. Prolific goal and field goal kicking fullback Don Ladner (1969-70) and 1980s scrum-half Gordon Smith were Kiwis from the combined club.



JMET JACK Lovett-Hurst. He is a massive Vodafone Warriors fan and loves Shaun Johnson and has just completed the New York marathon. Jack has Muscular Dystrophy and is a great man, it was a real privileged to meet him.

- Sir Peter Leitch

[Click here to watch the full interview with Jack](#)

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Turning up the heat at Camp Papamoa

By Richard Becht



VODAFONE WARRIORS players couldn't escape New Zealand's furnace-like weather grip during their sweltering four-day camp at Papamoa last week.

For the experience was a cocktail of sweat, sun, sand, surf and sunscreen by day with no respite in the evening as they bunked down together in their baked cabins at their camp ground at the southern end of Papamoa Beach.

It's fair to say they were literally under the blowtorch in every sense as they sharpened up their preparation ahead of the trials and the 2018 NRL season.

On the programme were team meetings and strength sessions at the impressive Adams Centre as well as training runs on an adjacent field in the Blake Park precinct. On the first full day there was also a grueling workout in the sand and surf at Papamoa Beach.

Off the field the players and staff ate together in true camp style and mucked in gathering dirty dishes and doing the washing up. No job was too big or too small while in downtime – of which there was little – players integrated with holidaymakers in various ways, including playing volleyball with the many kids there.

On the final night there was a special treat when All Black captain Kieran Read spent the night in camp, first with a presentation about his story and then mixing with the players and staff afterwards. He stayed the night and watched the Vodafone Warriors in their opposed session on Friday morning.

This was a camp but no holiday at all on Bay of Plenty's famed coastline region.

The players had trained at Mount Smart Stadium on Tuesday morning before travelling to their camp destination in a convoy of mini buses, arriving in Papamoa around 4.00pm before going straight into a long team meeting followed by dinner at Blue Biyou overlooking the ocean. A perfect setting.

As the region woke up to a stunning sunrise on Wednesday, the day started for the players with the backs having breakfast at 6.00am and the forwards at 6.30am before separate strength sessions for each group at the impressive University of Waikato Adams

Centre for High Performance at Blake Park in Mount Maunganui.

The beach session that followed was searching. Starting at 1.30pm, the temperature hit 30 as the players first toiled in a full-on defensive session in the sand.

Then they broke into their inter-squad red, blue, green and yellow teams to indulge in some ultra-competitive surf lifesaving races which put the rugby league players to the test (and, in many cases, took them well outside their comfort zone).

With the generous support of the Papamoa Surf Life Saving Club, the teams contested a series of races on surf skis and in twin-hulled four-man surf canoes.

The beach was packed on a glorious summer's day, many people intrigued – and a little incredulous – seeing the bare-topped Vodafone Warriors players ripping into their defensive work in the sand and then swapping their rugby league skills for surf lifesaving events.

The second full day again started at 6.00am before a team meeting followed by a full day at Blake Park with a field session in the morning, pool recovery and then strength and video sessions at the Adams Centre ahead of dinner and Read's appearance.

For just a few minutes, the All Black captain was in a Vodafone Warriors rugby league jersey bearing his name and famed jersey number. After his presentation, the 32-year-old Read's Vodafone Warriors counterpart Roger Tuivasa-Sheck presented him with the NRL club's home jersey, which the All Black skipper quickly whipped on much to the joy of the players.

After being introduced by new recruit Tohu Harris – an ex-rugby union player himself – Read talked to a captivated gathering of Vodafone Warriors players and football staff about his story, offering numerous insights in a presentation focused on performing under pressure. Throughout he fielded an array of questions from many of the players.

Mention of Read's Papakura roots drew a passionate response from 'Kura' Vodafone Warriors James Bell and Jazz Tevaga, who later posed for a special photo opportunity with Read.

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After a group shot with all the players, Read said he had always been a Vodafone Warriors fan and had welcomed the chance to speak to the players.

The Vodafone Warriors wound up the camp with a rugged opposed field session at Blake Park on Friday morning before the convoy headed back to Auckland.



Anthony Gelling, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Albert Vete with All Black captain Kieran Read



Nate Roache working out in the University of Waikato's Adams Centre



All Black captain Kieran Read at training



Isaiah Papalii training in the gym



Captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck taking part in the surf lifesaving challenge



Solomone Kata and David Fusitua wrestling at Papamoa Beach



Squad and staff with All Black captain Kieran Read



Adam Blair runs in from the surf at Papamoa Beach



Tohu Harris and RTS talk to Kieran Read after training



Water boy Shaun Johnson provides refreshments



Blake Green in action at training



Squad with Papamoa Surf Lifesaving Club



Young squad member Hayze Perham warming up before training



Phil Blake and Gene Ngamu. Warriors v Wests 1995
Photo: www.photosport.nz



By Miles Davis

The Originals - Phil Blake

IT ONLY seems like yesterday but it was almost 23 years ago that the Vodafone Warriors first burst onto our sporting landscape. I was fortunate enough to be one of the almost 30,000 at Mt Smart on 10th March 1995 when the fledgling NRL (then the ARL) side took on the Brisbane Broncos. A friend of mine had corporate tickets which involved copious amounts of free alcohol. Unfortunately I was on a drinking hiatus at the time (Doctor's orders not by choice) so probably remember more of that night's historic events than most of my companions who were no such restraint.

Reflecting on that memorable night the other day I found myself wondering about that original squad, where they had come from and where they are now. So I have decided to profile them in the Mad Butcher's magnificent newsletter.

First cab off the rank would have obviously been Vodafone Warrior No. 1 and original skipper Dean Bell but seeing as I already profiled him last year this week the focus will be on Vodafone Warrior No. 2 – Phil Blake.

Blake was actually born in London but moved to Australia when still a youngster. He attended the Christian Brothers College (now St Paul's Catholic College) in Manly and was selected to play for Australian Schoolboys in 1981.

Signing for the Sea Eagles he made his debut in 1982 in Round 12 at Brookvale Oval against the Roosters. During his first season he displayed his versatility by playing at five-eighth, half-back and centre. He scored 9 tries that season including one in his side's Grand Final loss to Parramatta. Such was the stellar nature of his first year that he was named Dally M Rookie of the year.

In 1983 he cemented his place as Manly's starting half-back and scored a club record 27 tries in just 23 games (he was also the top try-scorer in the league that season). The Sea Eagles once again made the Grand Final and were once again beaten by the Eels who picked up their third consecutive title.

1984 saw him used by coach Bob Fulton as a utility instead of his favoured half-back spot, more often than not playing in the centres. This impacted on his try-scoring feats resulting in just 11 tries from 23 games compared to his record-breaking feats of the previous season.

In 1985 he broke his arm in the first round and missed the next 7 games. Again used in various back-line positions he managed just 3 tries from 11 games. At the end of the season he travelled to England to play for Warrington before returning to Manly for the 1986 season. Once again he ended up the league's top try-scorer (tied with Garry Schofield) with 13 tries. Despite his form he was overlooked by the Kangaroos for their tour of Great Britain and France.

In 1987, after 93 games for Manly, he was surplus to requirements and signed for the South Sydney Rabbitohs. Over the next 4 seasons, mainly playing at five-eighth, he notched 75 games and 37 tries. In 1989 he steered his side to the minor Premiership but was unable to lead them to the Grand Final as they went down 32-16 to Canberra in the Preliminary Final. His time at South's included a sojourn to Wigan in 1989 where he managed 7 tries in 11 appearances.

The next two seasons saw stints with North Sydney and Canberra before a two-year stay at St George where he managed 29 games (15 tries).

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In 1995 he made the sensible decision to join the Vodafone Warriors in Auckland and played full-back in their opening game against the Broncos. He cemented his name in Vodafone Warriors history by scoring their first try. The move to Auckland seemed to re-invigorate his sense for the try-line as he scored 8 tries in his side's first 4 games. The Vodafone Warriors managed to finish 10th (out of 20) that season and only missed out on the play-offs due to a 2 points deduction for exceeding interchange replacements in their round 3 win over Western Suburbs.

Despite his talents and try-scoring feats Blake was never to play for the Kangaroos and won only one State of Origin cap.

When the Rabbitohs were re-admitted to the NRL in 2002 Blake was appointed as their sprint coach and when Craig Coleman was sacked at the beginning of the 2003 season he took over as coach until Paul Langmack was appointed as a permanent replacement.

In 2006 he went to the dark side and became assistant coach for the Southern Districts Rugby Club in New South Wales and a year later became head coach of the Manly club.

In 2008 Blake suffered a health crisis that could have cost him his life.

He had been suffering from chest pains and problems breathing. His GP originally thought he was suffering from pneumonia and prescribed antibiotics. When the pain continued he was sent for a CAT scan and more than 20 blood clots were discovered on his lungs. He had to have a nurse visit him twice a day to administer injections and blood-thinning medication until a cause for the clots was discovered. The cause was a mystery and as Blake said at the time "The concerning thing is even the people at the hospital couldn't understand why this happened. I keep my-

self fit, I train most days and have a balanced diet."

Blake's health problems resurfaced in 2010 when he was forced to undergo a triple bypass. Not a man to be held back he was soon back coaching at Manly taking them to the club semi-finals. His reward was a call from then Wallaby coach Robbie Deans who appointed him to help his defence coaching. In 2011 he joined the Western Force as defence coach and while there had another stint as temporary coach taking over from Richard Graham during the 2012 season until Michael Foley took over in 2013.

In 2014 it was back to the UK when he joined Leicester Tigers as defence coach. Unfortunately he was found guilty of betting on a couple of Tigers' games and was banned for 6 months by the RFU (the first person to suffer this sanction).

He had bet on his side's games with Toulon and then Newcastle. In a statement to the RFU Blake said

"I am, of course, aware that it is not appropriate, in most jurisdictions, to gamble against one's own team, but I was not aware of the exact regulations that pertain in the UK. I saw some very favourable odds on Tigers to beat Newcastle and thought that there would be little harm arising from my betting on Tigers to win, as, obviously, it is my professional duty to try and do everything possible to ensure that Tigers did, in fact, win. No-one could be more sorry than myself that this incident has taken place. Having my whole career on the line for a minimum gain is something I will regret for the rest of my life."

The Tigers did not renew his contract but in 2016 he was appointed defence coach for rivals Wasps. At the end of his first season Wasps finished top of the Premiership and were ranked 1st in tackle efficiency.

Whilst Phil Blake is still at Wasps working his magic there will always be a warm welcome for him at Mt Smart.

Phil Blake try for South's v Tigers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndCH9nSxGnE>

Phil Blake career highlights <https://www.facebook.com/rugbyleaguevideos/videos/1039552812795728/>

First try for Vodafone Warriors <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRsakqdoJ8I>

Photos from our trip to Queenstown, Invercargill and Wanaka



ME & Janice and our mates Barbara & Ken from Waiheke have just spent a few days down south and I wanted to share our trip with you. I hope you enjoy.

-Sir Peter Leitch



Great to be hosted by my good friends in Southland. Paula, Renee & Rewi, and baby Hohepa they organised a fantastic evening full of laughs and fantastic food



Great to catch up with my good mate ex-All Blacks Jimmy Cowan in Invercargill today. What a fantastic guy



My travel mate ken the book man from Waiheke holding one of the crayfish we had at Rewi & Paula's place on Sunday night



Great to catch up with ex-Vodafone Warrior Druce Nilsen in Bluff



A massive thank you to Rewi & Paula for an outstanding night last night. Great company, great food and real Southern hospitality



Fans in Southland are great Maiti & step mother Jillian both great warriors fans Maiti loves Roger Tuavasa shek



Just stopped off at Lumsden on the way to Wanaka. It's a beautiful drive



Just had a hearty kiwi breakfast in Winton at Adagio Cafe



Welcome to Bluff! I'll be back

Continued on next page...



It's like coming home to Bluff, so many good memories of when I used to MC the Stabicraft fishing competition. Great memories



Lake Wakatipu heading to Queenstown



Sunrise over Wanaka is just getting better. Gonna be a fantastic day!

A VERY SPECIAL thank you to Sue and Bryan who hosted us on Tuesday night in Wanaka. I got to make my first Pizza under Sues watchful eye.



Our hostess Sue and I tangoning to celebrate the masterpiece



Sue getting the pizza oven ready for me



Pizza in the oven cooking just Before I close the door



Finished product



Great to catch up with Former Vodafone warrior And X mad butcher employee Whetu Tawera in Comwell yesterday

A S I write this I'm chilling out in Wanaka, it's been a great break but like all good things we are heading back to Auckland. The hospitality and friendship has been fantastic and I've met some fantastic Vodafone Warriors supporters in our travels: we have fantastic friends all over the country and I love catching up with them. The highlight for me this weekend is going to the Waiheke Club (Surfdale Bowling Club) to see a Johnny Cash impersonator, it's going to be a great night. You all have a great weekend and let's share the LOVE out there!

- Sir Peter Leitch



Continued on next page...



I popped into Goldfields Primary School, Cromwell to catch up with some very keen NZ Vodafone Warrior fans. I met the new principal Anna who ensures me that her husband Craig is a massive Vodafone Warriors fan, I am pretty convinced she was the fan of the butcher with the cuddle I got. Nona Kelly photo bombed our shot - one of our many southern loyal supporter.

Layton Davis in the Vodafone Warriors jersey and his classmates from room 11 at Goldfields Primary School in Cromwell taking the time out of the new school year to chat with me and have laugh and talk about Vodafone warriors. I think we might have a few new warrior fans in that class.



Was great to pop into Cromwell to catch up with 3 staunch Nz Vodafone warrior fans, Nona Kelly, Layton and Bianca Davis. Especially the Principal Anna Harrison on the left who coached for the St Kilda Sharks Club in Dunedin in the 80's and is a real league fan.



A big thank you to our hosts in Wanaka Alison and her brother Bruce. It was like staying in a VIP hotel.



Great to catch up with the Wanaka fives Bowling team on their return from Alexandra.



ON TUESDAY I great supporter of this newsletter & friend of mine Chris Smith sadly passed away. Chris had also been a great supporter of the Mad Butcher Suburban Newspapers Community Trust over many years. He will be sadly missed by many people in the community.

Rest in peace my friend.

This Year We're Having A New Piece: Where These Former Warriors And Kiwis Are Today

Lance Hohaia

Kiwis Number: 695

28 Games Played

Vodafone Warriors Number: 99

185 Games Played

GIDDAY BUTCH, thanks for the opportunity of sharing what I'm up to with the readers.

We are all doing well, the kids are growing fast and are almost eating as much food as me. Tyler is 5 and Riley is 3, they have both settled in here really well. Marisa is doing really well, also. She is one of the top recruiters in West Michigan so work is great. A lot of her close family live locally so we've been able to meet a lot of good people through them. In saying that, we can't wait to get back in NZ in a few weeks. I'm doing personal training now which has been great, I'm back in my element. Real estate was going good but it wasn't my passion so I moved away from that back in October although I still have my license.

I have made some really good connections in the Rugby community locally and nationally so I'm becoming more and more involved in sport again. League isn't very big here unfortunately, there are no league teams in Michigan at all. I'm coaching rugby for two university teams at the moment, I run my own rugby skills clinics for high school aged rugby players www.infiniterugby.com and I coach at the USA Rugby academy camps held all throughout the country so that is all keeping me pretty busy. I can talk to you more when I'm back in Feb.

Here are a few photos from December 2017



Coaching at one of rugby skills clinics in December



Coaching at Grand Valley State University where I'm assistant coach



Fresh dumping of snow, looking out the back yard



This is looking out our front door, some days we get up to half a metre of snow in one day. Last week it was the coldest day in 30 years it was -28C!



Our view from the chair lift, it was -19C that morning



Sledding in Petoskey

Continued on next page...



Marisa and I



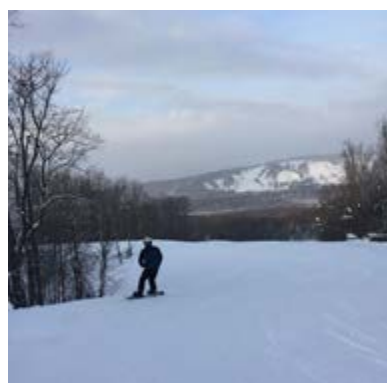
Marisa and I on the chair lift and Nubs Nob ski field in Boyne City, Michigan



Marisa, Marisa's mum (Julie) and the boys sledding on Petoskey golf course (Northern Michigan) which is where Marisa's mum lives



Tyler about to slide have a very cold bum



That's me trying not to fall off my snowboard



LOOK WHO my mate Dexter ran into at Auckland airport police station, NZ rugby league legend Mark Graham. He lost his passport and the some good person found it and handed it in to police. He's off back home tomorrow.

For those who don't know him, Mark Graham is a former New Zealand National Rugby League player and coach who represented New Zealand from 1977-1988.



Photos courtesy of www.photosport.nz

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



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READER MAIL



HI PETER! I wanted to sincerely thank you for the Warriors gear you gave to Carter, who is 7, and Abbie, who is 6. They are both big Vodafone Warriors fans. Carter's favourite player is Shaun Johnson and Abbie's is Simon Mannering.

Your generosity is amazing and it was great to catch up with you again! They are wearing their caps and playing with their Vodafone Warriors balls as I am writing this to you!

I just wanted to say thank you very much once again for my Rugby League World Cup programs that I was lucky enough to win from the competition in your newsletter! To have them delivered personally to Invercargill was a great surprise and very much appreciated. My kids were stoked to meet you!!

Thanks again,

Brendon Dawson.



Bloody stocked to get my Selley's BBQ tough complete care kit thank for Personally delivering it to me in Invercargill and eating me out of house & home



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