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# Newsletter #203

## WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED AND IT'S A CRISIS

By David Kemeys

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



**T**HOSE ROGER Tuivasa-Sheck rumours will not go away, and it is not difficult to understand why.

His contract is up at the end of 2018, and we already know that Souths have been sniffing around, and that the Titans have also expressed an interest, though it is hard to imagine the Gold Coast outfit would be high on his list of priorities.

More importantly, his manager has dismissed all the talk of a code swap to rugby, with all sorts of stories doing the rounds, including one with lots of legs that he is going to sign on with the Blues.

After getting battered at Mt Smart in Warriors colours it is hard to imagine why he would want to move across town and get battered in Blues colours either, but it is the story most often repeated.

Roger's background in rugby means the story is not going to fade any time soon, so expect to hear a lot more made of it.

We have kept RTS on as captain, something of a risk in my humble view, since he could well go at the end of the year, but on the other hand, why would you not?

All this of course comes on the back of the Etene Nanai-Seturo debacle I wrote about last week.

It all feels depressingly familiar.

Kieran Foran, James Maloney, anyone?

It is difficult not to believe all this talk about RTS, and the fight over the hotshot Etene Nanai-Seturo, are not related.

I just repeat what I said last week - a contract is a contract. For rugby to claim, as it does, that yes, it's a contract, but it's not a binding one, is absurd.

It's all about him being too young when he signed.

Wonder what he did with the five months he had between being offered the contract, and signing it? Wonder if he said to himself: "Better not avail myself of all the development opportunities", or "better not take those free fights in my not binding contract because I'm too young", either?

Of more immediate concern to me is Issac Luke, who has not had a great time since coming to us, and who is also at the end of his contract this year.

He's admitted himself he owes us long-suffering fans one, and at 30, he is running out of chances.

So I was delighted at how seriously he is taking it all, having lost some weight, the "who ate all the pies" tag obviously not sitting well with him.

"I know I haven't played up to my standard. My name has been questioned. I've got to have a good season. I'm going to try to impress."

You can't say any fairer, and much as we might not like it, you have to remember that when he played for the Bunnies, he had a decent forward pack in front of him, not the less than impressive lot we have suffered over the last two seasons.

This year might turn out to be something of a watershed, because despite all the talk of good recruiting, and only time will tell if that is right, we will have about a dozen or so players off-contract.

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One of them is Simon Mannering.

Can you imagine the Vodafone Warriors without Mannering?

I know, and god knows why, he has his detractors, but he is amazing, and any club would snap your hand off to take him.

There is zero doubt he will rack up 300 games for us this year, or that has been an incredible servant.

I'm torn. I won't be surprised at the end of the day if RTS goes, and I doubt we will take Luke back on – especially on the kind of contract he is said to have arrived on.

But watching Captain Mannering in another club's colours just does bear thinking about, although he deserves better and you totally understand if he pulled the pin and did the “looking for a new challenge” thing.

He is 31 and whatever contract he signs is likely to be his last – barring a soft Super League deal. But he must have taken a hell of a hammering, especially when you consider he carried his own tackling load, and that of the props who didn't think it was part of their game, in recent seasons.

He has racked up 13 seasons, but two words for anyone pondering what it all means - Manu Vatuvei.

Having said that, I would not be broken-hearted to have him suiting up again. Paul Gallen is about 100, and he ran around with the Sharks like a new recruit.



## **Eye Swear We Do Not Need This**

We have had our fair share of guys with zero luck when it came to injuries. Jerome Roptai was a fabulous player who was never out of the treatment room, Elijah Taylor was not a lot better, Ben Henry had to pull the plug on his career, and I always reckon Tommy Leuluai should have been by the metre of bandage he was willing to cop.

But I am beginning to worry our halfback is heading the same way.

Shaun Johnson has suffered some cruel injuries, and I believe does not get the credit he deserves for battling back from then.

But I did not want to read he was in hospital having eye surgery, all the same.

The good news it is a fairly routine sort of a problem, one Black Caps cricketer Ross Taylor has coped with too.

Johnson has had an operation to remove a growth called a pterygium on the surface of his right eye, and won't miss any game time.

And this got me to wondering how he might be settling in with his new halves partner Blake Green, who came in from Manly on a three-year deal late last year.

At 31, he is expected to add a bit of structure and experience to the line.

So if he is that good why would Manly get rid of him? Don't forget they were bringing Mitchell Pearce in.

Green has played alongside Cooper Cronk and Daly Cherry-Evans, so must have learned something.

He is certainly making all the right noises, talking about getting the best out of each other and the team.

“We bounce ideas off each other and we are both pretty easy going. We have only done bits and pieces but the bits we have done have been good, really fluent and they flowed quite easily.”

Of all the signings, Green's is the one I regard a most key. If he does not click with Johnson, it will be another year of misery, so that is a lot of pressure on his shoulders.

# MEMORIES

By Barry Ross



**I**T WAS interesting to read in last week's newsletter the note that Lance Hohaia had sent to Sir Peter. Like a lot of others, I did not know he was living and working in Michigan and the photos he sent show what a different life he and his family are now leading. His name brought quickly brought back memories to me of the Warriors 2002 season when they won the Minor Premiership and made the Grand Final. Lance was on the Warriors bench that day, 6 October 2002, at Sydney's Telstra Stadium, which is now called ANZ Stadium. The Roosters won the game 30-8 before a crowd of 80,130. But the match was far from one sided and the Warriors led 8-6 in the 46th minute and held this lead until the final 20 minutes. The Warriors 17 man team that day was Ivan Cleary, Justin Murphy, John Carlaw, Clinton Toopi, Francis Meli, Motu Tony, Stacey Jones (captain), Jerry Seu Seu, PJ Marsh, Mark Tookey, Ali Lauiti'iti, Awen Guttenbeil, Kevin Champion, Lance Hohaia, Richard Villasanti, Wairangi Koopu, Logan Swan. The coach was Daniel Anderson.

Behind the scenes, the assistant coach was Tony Kemp, while Rohan Smith, son of Brian Smith, was the video analyst. Mick Watson was the CEO under owner, Eric Watson. Clinton Toopi was the top try scorer with 18 and Ivan Cleary was the top point scorer with 242. Ali Lauiti'iti won the club's player of the year award. The average home game attendance at Mt. Smart Stadium, then known as Ericsson Stadium, was 16,529. The Warriors won 10 of the 12 home games and seven of their 12 away matches.

Born in Hamilton on 1 April 1983, Lance, at 19 years of age, was the youngest player from both sides in the Grand Final. He went on to play 185 first grade matches for the Warriors from 2002 to 2011, scoring 57 tries and 64 goals for a total of 357 points. A versatile player, he could handle most backline positions and played 28 Tests for New Zealand, scoring 12 tries and eight goals for 64 points. After leaving the Warriors, he played 81 games (22 tries) with St. Helens from 2012 to 2015. In the 2014 English Super League Grand Final, in a nasty incident in just the second minute, he was knocked unconscious and took no further part in the 14-6 win over Wigan. A few days after the match, Wigan prop, Ben Flower, was suspended for six months because of the incident. A year later, Lance retired due to recurring concussion problems.

The oldest player in the Grand Final was also a Warrior and he was fullback Ivan Cleary, who was 31 at the time. Born in Sydney, Ivan retired after the Grand Final, finishing with 186 first grade games and 1,363 points with Manly, North Sydney, the Roosters and the Warriors. He began his coaching career with the Warriors in 2006 and after six seasons moved to Penrith in 2012. He joined the Wests Tigers last season and at the moment, he has coached 268 first grade games for 127 wins, three draws and 138 losses, giving him a winning percentage of 47. He was the Dally M coach of the year in 2014.

Daniel Anderson was also a Dally M Coach of the year, in 2002 and after leaving the Warriors he had a lot of success coaching St. Helens in England. While with St. Helens, he won the Challenge Cup in 2006, 2007 and 2008, as well as the Super League Grand Final in 2006 and the World Club Challenge in 2007, when St. Helens beat the Brisbane Broncos 18-14 at Bolton on 23 February 2007.

There was an embarrassing incident before the Warriors ran out for the 2002 Grand Final. Billy Idol was scheduled to entertain the crowd, but a power outage caused his appearance to be cancelled.

There was also another blast from the past in last week's newsletter. Former New Zealand Test captain Mark Graham had lost his passport and Dashing Dexter stepped in to save the day at the Auckland Airport Police Station. What a player Mark was as his record indicates. He was named New Zealand Rugby League's Player of the Century in late 2007 and captained the Kiwis in 18 of his 29 Tests. A product of the Otahuhu club, he came to Australia in 1980 where he won a Premiership with Brisbane Norths. He joined North Sydney in 1981 and in eight seasons with the Bears, he played 146 first grade games and scored 29 tries. In 1981 and 1982, he was the Dally M second rower of the year. He also captained the Rest of the World twice, against Australia at the Sydney Football Stadium on 27 July 1988 (Australia won 22-10) and against Great Britain at Leeds on 29 October 1988 (Great Britain 30-28). Now 62, Mark represented Oceania against Europe on 14 April 1984 in Paris as vice captain, with Wally Lewis as captain. The game was staged to celebrate 50 years of Rugby

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League in France and Oceania won, 54-4, with Mark scoring one of his team's 11 tries. He was the first player to captain two New Zealand touring sides to Britain and France (1980 and 1985). He had a season with Wakefield Trinity in 1988/89 before finishing his playing career.

Penrith had no hesitation in releasing Bryce Cartwright so he could join the Titans. He was tipped as

a State of Origin player in 2016, but he had several off field problems last year and did not play as well as expected. He still had four years remaining on his Penrith contract and was one of the Panthers' highest paid players. A close friend of Titans' coach, Garth Brennan, who has coached him since he was 17, the 23 year old Cartwright might thrive in change of club, coach and living environment.

## Youth focus in new ARL partnership

By Corey Rosser

Digital Communications Officer, Auckland Rugby League

**OFFERING FURTHER** education opportunities for local youth is at the forefront of the Auckland Rugby League's new partnership with the New Zealand Institute of Sport.

A memorandum of understanding between the two organisations will see the New Zealand Management Academies provide 10 full scholarships to Auckland Rugby League players aged 17 and over, while two scholarships will also be available through the New Zealand Institute of Sport.

ARL chairman Cameron McGregor said the partnership provides the opportunity for local league players to get a start on the path to a rewarding career off the field.

"This is very much a big-picture partnership for us," McGregor said.

"Only four per cent of players go on to achieve a professional career in our sport, and we have to look after the rest of them by offering them options off the field while also helping them to become better rugby league players.

"This is a natural fit for the Auckland Rugby League and something we are very excited to be able to offer our players going forward."

Each year over 15,000 players take the field in various Auckland Rugby League competitions.

Group director of the New Zealand Institute of Sport and the New Zealand College of Massage, Taulalo Fiso, is a strong believer in the importance of providing valuable education and career learning opportunities for aspiring sports people.

"By using sport as a hook, this partnership will provide opportunities to grow sporting endeavour, whether it be on the playing field, sports administration, event management or life-changing experiences to pursue a career in the field of their choosing," Fiso said.

"We are excited about this relationship with the Auckland Rugby League and its wider community.

"I am also confident that my Northern Regional manager Willie Maea will work closely with the ARL in meeting all the outcomes we have agreed to."

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*By Miles Davis*

## The Originals - Sean Hoppe

**Auckland Warriors winger Sean Hoppe, 1999.**

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

**S**ECOND UP in a look back at the original Vodafone Warriors squad is flying winger Sean Hoppe. He took his first steps in league at the Glen Innes Falcons as a junior before making his presence felt in Senior league with Northcote Tigers.

He enjoyed a successful stint with the North Shore side. The Tigers were the dominant force in Auckland Rugby League whilst Hoppe was with them between 1989-1992 (they also won the Fox Memorial Shield in 93 and 94).

In 1989 they managed a meritorious double – winning the Fox Memorial Shield by overcoming Mangere East 30-14 and the Lion Red National Knockout Cup, beating a powerful Wainuiomata side 10-4 in the final.

1991 was to see Hoppe and Northcote claim the double once more this time beating Otahuhu Leopards 23-20 in the Fox Memorial and Wellington club Randwick 30-12 in the Lion Red National Knockout Cup.

In 1992 he was to play a game that was to take his career in an upward direction. He was selected for Auckland who played the Canberra Raiders in a pre-season game. Although Auckland suffered one of their rare losses to a touring team, Hoppe suitably impressed the visitors and he was signed at the end of the 1992 season.

His first season in Canberra saw him voted Raiders' Rookie of the year. In 1993 he stepped up another notch as his Raiders side made the Semi-Finals of the NSWRL play-offs and he was voted New Zealand Rugby League's Player of the Year.

The 1994 season was to be a bittersweet one for Hoppe. The formation of the Vodafone Warriors (due to debut the following season) gave Hoppe the opportunity to return to his home city to ply his trade. His decision to sign saw him fall out of favour with the Raiders and be consigned to a reserve grade side. He was saved from this fate by North Sydney Bears who signed him for the 1994 season. The Bears finished 2nd in the Minor Premiership, one place above the Raiders, but in the play-offs were to twice lose to the Canberra side who went on to win the Grand Final against the Bulldogs. Hoppe reflected on that roller-coaster ride a few years ago –

"It was exciting to finally have a New Zealand side in the competition because it meant I could head home," Hoppe recalls.

"Obviously I felt lucky to be able to play alongside some of the best players in the world at Canberra and I wanted to stay for the 1994 season before joining the Warriors in '95 but when [former Raiders CEO] Kevin Neil found out I'd signed with the Warriors he told me I wouldn't be playing first grade in '94 and would have to play for West Belconnen instead.

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“That’s when North Sydney showed some interest – because Daryl Halligan had just retired – so I spent a year with Norths before heading back to New Zealand.

“My only regret is missing that premiership win in ’94 because we knew we had the team to win it. We only bowed out of the semis in ’93 when Ricky Stuart went down injured and they went on to win it the following year. It was unfortunate to miss out.”

Although he missed out on the Raiders big day there have never been any regrets about becoming an original Warrior. His four year stint saw him play 88 games, scoring 44 tries. Hoppe rates it as some of the best years of his life and it made him a Vodafone Warriors fan for life. Says Hoppe “I like to just sit down and watch the games by myself so I can watch them properly. I’m a bit of a tragic like that when it comes to following the Warriors! I’ve still got a soft spot for the Raiders and of course I follow St Helens in England – but the Warriors are my team.”

In 1999 Hoppe was released a year early from his Vodafone Warriors contract so he could join St Helens in the Super League. His first season saw him play in the Grand Final at Wembley, coming off the interchange bench in an 8-6 win over Bradford Bulls (Kevin Iro scored the only try for St Helens with fellow Kiwi Henry Paul replying for Bradford).

2000 saw him back at Wembley once more, this time scoring a try in their 29-16 demolition of bitter rivals Wigan. This was followed by a dramatic 20-18 win over the Brisbane Broncos in the 2001 World Club Challenge, St Helens getting home courtesy of 2 late field goals from Sean Long and Paul Sculthorpe.

He extended his Saints contract for a further season at the end of 2001. He couldn’t have imagined that he would end his time in the North of England with yet another Grand Final and another dramatic win. This time a 19-18 victory over Bradford Bulls due to another Sean Long drop goal. He ended his career with a game for St Helens against the touring Kiwis in 2002 before being called up to bolster an injury hit Kiwi squad to play his final 2 international games.

His international career for the Kiwis spanned a decade between 1992 and 2002. He managed 35 tests scoring 17 tries. My personal favourite was his two-try effort against the Kangaroos at Mt Smart in 1993, where he scored twice in a thrilling 14-14 draw.

In retirement Hoppe became involved in property development and spent his time between England and Bundaberg in Queensland. The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 saw house prices tumble in the UK and Hoppe returned full-time to Bundaberg.

He became involved for a while in refereeing and turned his hand to the construction business. In 2015 he was working long shifts building huge storage tanks on a gas plant in Gladstone.

Although firmly ensconced in Australia Hoppe is still very much a Kiwi and a Warrior and travels whenever he can to watch them. No doubt one of New Zealand’s finest league talents.

1995 Warriors season <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSIJ-bjXqNQ>

Kiwis v Kangaroos 1993 Series <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H3DNN1pYGY&t=12s>

2000 Super League Final St Helens v Wigan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP9Q-JVfrY&t=12s>

2001 World Club Challenge St Helens v Brisbane Broncos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FODmso-8q84E&t=8s>

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# NOTHING LIKE AN OLD RUGGER STOUGH

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)



**T**HERE WAS nothing I enjoyed covering at The Press newspaper more than a decent wrangle between the rugby codes, even if it often felt like banging my head against a brick wall. Now, from a distance, I am a more than moderately interested spectator to the current dispute over young Etene Nanai-Seturo's footy future and the speculation about Warriors captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's next contract.

The Canterbury Rugby Union never officially informed me I was banned for life (to avoid the publicity?) but I was told by a third party. Years ago Lion Breweries took pity on those who shivered on the sidelines during cold, wet winters reporting club sport. They wanted to give us hooded coats with warm, woolly lining. The CRU agreed to host the presentation function on one condition – that I was not invited. An apologetic chap from Lion called and asked whether I would mind picking up my coat from the brewery.

Tales filtered back to me of CRU officials angrily throwing copies of The Press across the morning tea room at their old bunker near Lancaster Park. They did not like me disclosing their inhumanity to other sports or breaching their own ridiculous laws of amateurism (or, as I called them, shamateurism) before they finally came clean and turned pro in 1995. The CRU hierarchy would have been surprised to learn who leaked me information, but my sources will always be confidential.

I did unofficially visit their headquarters, thanks to a CRU employee who found an old scrapbook in a cupboard. It contained an original photograph of the All Golds and their Ceylon opponents before a match at the Colombo Racecourse en route to Britain in 1907. He snuck me in one Sunday morning to borrow the photo and have it copied. When The Press later used it with an All Golds story I resisted the temptation to tag the photo as “supplied by the Canterbury Rugby Union”. It would have cost my mate his job.

As one gets older one becomes more interested in history, and I found you cannot research either code without learning of its relationship to the other. Union tried to strangle league at birth in England in 1895, in New Zealand when Albert Baskerville was assembling his All Golds, and in Australia from 1908. Union actually succeeded in having league banned during the Nazi occupation of France in the early 1940s.

I discovered primary school children were threatened with life disqualifications if they played league during an era when the union convinced the public that professionalism was akin to the black plague. League was barred from our major sports venues, Eden Park (from 1919 to 1988), Lancaster Park (1920 to 1996), Athletic Park (1908 to 1990) and Carisbrook (forever). Union officials used their influence with the government, local bodies and schools, something that continues to this day.

It is annoying when stories refer to players “returning to rugby” after playing league, and quoting the first XV that had represented. Many of them were actually league player before being forced to change their allegiance at secondary school. A recent example has been Matt Duffie, a one-Test Kiwi and current All Black whose Melbourne Storm career was wrecked by injuries. He played his junior footy for the Kaiapoi Bulldogs in Canterbury.

I once compiled a long list of All Blacks who had been junior league players and The Press published it. Next day 1952 All Black Kevin Meates phoned me to say he and his brother Bill, a 1949-50 All Black, had been overlooked. Kevin told me he and Bill had never even seen a game of union before they left the West Coast to board at St Bede's College in Christchurch.

League has not been the only other sport to suffer from union. Lancaster Park lost its Test cricket licence and Eden Park is a joke as a cricket venue, both because of union influence. After the Canterbury under-17 cricket team won the 2004-05 national title in Napier three talented all-rounders, Colin Slade, Ash Dixon and Andrew Horrell, were steered exclusively into union for their last two years at Christchurch Boys' High School and never played serious cricket again. That goes on all the time.

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I was fortunate my first sports editor, Dick Brittenden, gave me free rein to develop my more “investigative” instincts. With one exception. When Hornby High School did not enter a league competition the local league club blamed the headmaster. After my story appeared the headmaster denied his involvement and used his old school and cricket ties with my boss to shut me down. As it happened, Hornby High fielded a team the next year, only weeks after that headmaster retired!

Another union official leaked me news the Cantabrians club (similar to the Barbarians) was planning a children’s charity day at Lancaster Park featuring “all-star” games in both codes. He felt the CRU would not dare veto the plans if they were made public. But veto them it did and a much smaller union-only day was held at Rugby Park. The kids’ charity lost a potential bonanza. In the “amateur” era one club president admitted they were offering a Canterbury player thousands of dollars to transfer “because everyone else is”. I bet that went down well at the Kremlin!

Only last year the Canterbury inter-club rugby league grand final was played at a suburban rugby union club ground after the CRU vetoed the use of AMI Stadium (the former Rugby League Park which had been league’s spiritual home since 1912 and where the CRL still holds a legal lease). The Press lamely accepted the CRU excuse, that three weeks preparation was needed before the next scheduled match. All fight has seemingly gone out of the old rag.



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By Shane Hurndell  
Hawke's Bay Today  
Sports Reporter

## INSPIRATIONAL FIGURE

Kiwi Ferns WRLWC Headshots  
Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

**H**AWKE'S BAY'S most successful Kiwi Fern, Chanel Huddleston, will have her last outing on the international scene when she plays for the New Zealand Maori women's rugby league team across the Tasman on Saturday.

"This week's game will be my swansong in the international arena. My career will be my main focus from now on," the Henry Hill School Year 5 and 6 teacher said before the Maori team flew to Sydney on Sunday.

"I wanted the World Cup to be my farewell from international league. I just missed out on that so this week will be a pretty good way to bow out," Huddleston, 34, said referring to the New Zealand Maori women's team's match against the Australian Indigenous team which will be played as a curtainraiser to the male encounter between the same two international selections in Sydney on Saturday.

"While I won't be battling for an NRL team contract I will be doing my best to encourage some of my teammates this week as well as some of the younger girls in Hawke's Bay to aim for one. It's definitely exciting times for female rugby league players," Huddleston said.

A 2014 Kiwi Fern in a 12-8 test win against the Australian Jillaroos and 2015 Kiwi Fern at the Auckland Nines, Huddleston, will play as a secondrower for the Maori side. Under-16 and under-18 male matches will also be played as part of the fixture.

"Current Kiwi Ferns or Australian Jillaroos aren't eligible for the match. Five of our girls almost made the Kiwi Ferns and five of us are former Kiwi Ferns. We know nothing about the composition of our opposing team so it will be a different challenge," Huddleston explained.

"We've had some good training camps. It's a typical Maori campaign ... all about whanaungatanga, enhancing a positive culture and the willingness to play for each other," Huddleston, the second oldest in the team and sole Bay player, said.

The New Zealand Maori tour party will spend a week at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Sydney.

Although she is retiring from international play Huddleston will continue to play for the Central Vipers - the Hawke's Bay team she is the player-coach of - at the national tournament, as well as club league for Bridge Pa, the Hawke's Bay women's champions, and club rugby for MAC.

"I'm confident it will only be a matter of time before a Hawke's Bay women's team will be good enough to play at the nationals. We would have a team good enough to go this year but New Zealand Rugby League criteria states we must go as part of the Vipers like we did last year when we finished third with six Bay players in the team," Huddleston said.

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She believed three Bay players, 2014 Kiwi Ferns centre Tori Lauvao-Araia, secondrower Denise Airolupotea and backrower Te Aroha Hunt, were good enough to earn NRL contracts in the near future.

"If we get a fulltime women's development officer here in the Bay I have no doubt Hawke's Bay will supply players to the new NRL comp on a regular basis," Huddleston said.

A former Hawke's Bay Tuis rugby coach and player, Huddleston still holds the record for the most first-class appearances for the team with 64 from 2001-14.

Although she has ruled out a return to playing for the Tuis, Huddleston said she would consider coaching the Tuis if the opportunity arose.

An Aotearoa Maori Sevens rep from 2005-11, Huddleston played in three Hong Kong Sevens tournaments as well as tournaments in England, Italy, Australia and the United States. She ranked those tournaments, along with her Kiwi Ferns stints, as the highlights of her playing career.

No prizes for guessing the lowest point ... the 14-month suspension she received after successfully appealing an 18-month one for physical and verbal abuse of a referee during a Hawke's Bay women's club rugby game in 2015.

"It too

k me a while to recover from that. Because league recognises union's suspensions and vice versa that cost me a spot in the 2016 Nines ... I had to start from the bottom again."

Huddleston pointed out a mural of multiple world and Olympic shot put champion Valerie Adams at her school proved inspirational to her in recent times.

"The mural is accompanied by the word perseverance, one of the six qualities our Henry Hill School principal Jason Williams encourages. Valerie visited our school soon after the mural was completed and was so inspiring to all of us."

Hawke's Bay rugby league fans wish the Dannevirke Tigers club all the best in the battle for the Club of the Year award at the Rugby League Hawke's Bay Awards function in Auckland on Saturday night.

The club is a worthy finalist following a memorable 2017 year. After fielding one team in Manawatu club competitions in 2016 the club fielded nine in 2017 including an under-11 side which won their mini mod competition with an unbeaten run.

In addition to the nine teams who played in Manawatu the Tigers fielded a premier men's team and premier women's side in Hawke's Bay's club competition and both were beaten semi-finalists.



**Chanel Huddleston with the mural featuring Valerie Adams at Henry Hill School in Napier, where Huddleston teaches.**

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## Northern Stars aim to shine in their community

**S**UCCESS FOR the Northern Stars this year will mean more than just results on the ANZ Premiership netball court.

New coach Kiri Wills has rolled up her sleeves ready to help her side make an impact in New Zealand's elite league but believes it will be just as important for the fledgling club to establish their roots within their culturally diverse community.

Representing one of the country's largest communities is a privilege Wills says and hopes to see those in the south and east of Auckland find some special links with the club.

"I think people want to belong to something bigger than themselves and sometimes it's hard to know what that is in a city so big – we can get a little bit lost at times," the Whangarei-born coach said.

"We want to be that something that people want to be a part of."

The Northern Stars found themselves in a unique position as netball's newest elite team when the ANZ Premiership was launched last year.

The game is thriving in south Auckland and Wills, who has been coaching teams in the city since 1998, says it was an obvious choice on where to base netball's newest club.

"As an Auckland coach I've seen so many athletes having to move out of Auckland to get their opportunity having just had the one flagship team within this massive city," she said.

"This is an amazing chance to show that the Northern Zone can support two teams and we are producing great people who don't have to go anywhere to continue their careers."



Wills believes the Northern Stars could become the "fairy-tale" of netball in New Zealand.

"We are going to be the team that stands for south Auckland," she said. "We want to give people out in south Auckland something to aspire to. We too know that nothing comes easy."

The players are testimony to that – whether it is those who have fought their way back from injury, those who strive to better themselves out of their comfort zones, or those who have something to prove.

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“It’s up to us to get out there and do it and we want to take the community along for the ride,” Wills said.

“It’s one of those things that could be a really great story – a fairy-tale story – and it’s up to us to write it the right way.”

The Stars introduction was penned last season with mixed results but Wills says she hopes the next few chapters will be ones the fans can sink their teeth into.

“There is no doubting we have the crew on board to do this,” she said. “I like being in a battle and I like fighting for something that means a lot to people.”

Being role models for their community has been to the forefront for the new club since day one and Wills says the new-look squad has been quick to continue that theme.

“There are some messages we can get across to our community in terms of staying fit, keeping healthy and having fun in sport,” she said.

“These athletes are fantastic role models for that because not all of them have found it easy to stay fit or to focus on nutrition – they’ve had to make changes in their lives to be who they are.”

The Hire Wire Charitable Trust, a private organisation set up to provide opportunities for young people, already employ a quartet of Stars – including Holly Fowler, Christina Oscar, Paula Griffin and Fa’amu Ioane – to get those messages into the south Auckland community.

“It’s about going out to schools and the community and doing the ‘netball stuff’ but underlying that is the focus that we need to get more people active,” Wills said.

“It also has to be about enjoyment because the more fun they have in sport the more likely they are to carry on....and as an athlete, that’s something we definitely want to see.”

Ends

Annual memberships for the Stars are just \$60 per adult (\$30 for a child) with six games to be played at home at the teams new playing venue Pulman Arena, Takanini. Corporate hospitality is available from \$4000.

The 2018 ANZ Premiership starts on May 6 with the grand final to be played on August 12.



**4 DAYS, 8 GAMES**  
**NON-STOP NETBALL ACTION**

**Taini Jamison Series**  
North Shore Events Centre  
21 - 24 March 2018



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# MEET THE 2018 SQUAD

## A BIG SHOUT OUT TO ALL OUR MEMBERS YOUR CHANCE TO MEET THE NRL SQUAD TO KICK OFF THE 2018 SEASON

Hi VODAFONE WARRIORS MEMBERS

The 2018 NRL season is fast approaching and we'd like to invite you to meet your Vodafone Warriors before they pack their passports and venture to Perth to kick off our NRL campaign.

To meet the boys and wish them well for the upcoming season, head to SKYCITY Auckland at 5pm on Tuesday, February 27. We'll be setting up outside the main SKYCITY hotel doors and under the Sky Tower.

The 2018 NRL squad will be on deck to sign autographs and there'll also be spot prizes up for grabs.

DATE: Tuesday, February 27

TIME: 5 – 6pm

LOCATION: SKYCITY, corner Victoria and Federal Streets, Auckland

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: For up to date information on bus, train and ferry services visit [www.at.govt.nz](http://www.at.govt.nz)

PARKING: Paid parking is available at SKYCITY and other parking sites around the city

We look forward to seeing you there!

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**T**HE RUGBY league world is about to get a whole lot bigger (we hope) with the proposed introduction of a newly formed team based in New York which that will play in the English Rugby League Championship Division in 2019.

Following on from the successes of the Toronto Wolfpack who in 2017 entered into the English RFL League 1- the New York City Rugby League Club hopes to emulate the same model that has seen the team from Toronto, Canada win their way through from League 1 and take promotion in to the Championship League with the hope of making it to the Super League.

This model has a hefty price tag to begin with - the newly formed franchises are required to fund the return air travel and associated accommodation costs for the visiting English sides when they travel to North America. Despite this cost, both clubs have backers with deep pockets who see beyond the short-term pain and look forward to the long-term gain of making the game of rugby league a truly global sport.

With the 2025 Rugby League World Cup to be hosted in the USA and Canada, now is the time to push forward in to the North American market and introduce the sports mad fans to the game so they can gain an understanding of the rules, and truly appreciate the athleticism and skill shown by the players without helmets and pads. It is probably the only sport that resembles the NFL in terms of its structure and how it's played, meaning it should be relatively easier for the locals to understand the rules and follow the game.

Given that the rugby league season begins when the NFL season ends – those 'contact sport' hungry fans should be well satisfied.

It will take a huge amount of advertising, promotional and community-based initiatives just to get the locals interested in watching, all of which the club has a plan in place and ready to go. This must be followed up with games of quality that are held in quality facilities – again, which the club has in place – they will be playing all their home games at the 25,000 seat Red Bull Stadium.

Fans pay an enormous amount of money these days to support their teams and going to a home game should be an experience they enjoy and savour alongside a win. New York City Rugby League CEO Ricky Wilby states – It's about gaining the hearts and minds of the fans both here in the USA and in the UK and pushing beyond the boundaries to Australia, New Zealand etc. Wouldn't it be great to be the Real Madrid or Manchester United of the rugby league world and have fans wearing our club jerseys everywhere you go? But firstly, we need to be successful here and show that we are in it for the long haul, showcasing and growing our game, the flow on effect would see more locals play the game here in America.

Time is of the essence as they say, and this is no different so they can begin the all-important task of signing players. The longer this drags out the harder it will become as it is envisaged that players will come from all corners of the globe including the US. Ricky Wilby states players looking for an easy path to retirement need not apply – we are looking for quality individuals who will bring something both on and off the field and have the same vision as we do – to help the game grow.

As the old saying goes – if you always do what you've always done – you'll always get what you've always gotten... Therefore, the RFL should be commended for having the vision and willingness to see their game expand via the New York bid in the North American market which is full of untapped potential. Administrators and fans alike should be embracing the winds of change and also commending the Toronto Wolfpack and New York Rugby League clubs for their willingness and desire to invest in the greatest game of all – Rugby League.

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# MANLY IS COMING

KICK OFF 5PM  
SAT. 9 JUNE 2018  
AMI STADIUM



## HOSPITALITY

### WELCOME

On behalf of the Manly Warringah Sea Eagles, we look forward to making Christchurch a home away from home for the next three seasons.

As one of the most successful and recognisable brands in Australian sport, we look forward to coming to Christchurch and bringing the NRL to your community.

We know there are a lot of Warriors fans in Christchurch, however, we aim to develop our Christchurch fan base to support the team. We are your home team!

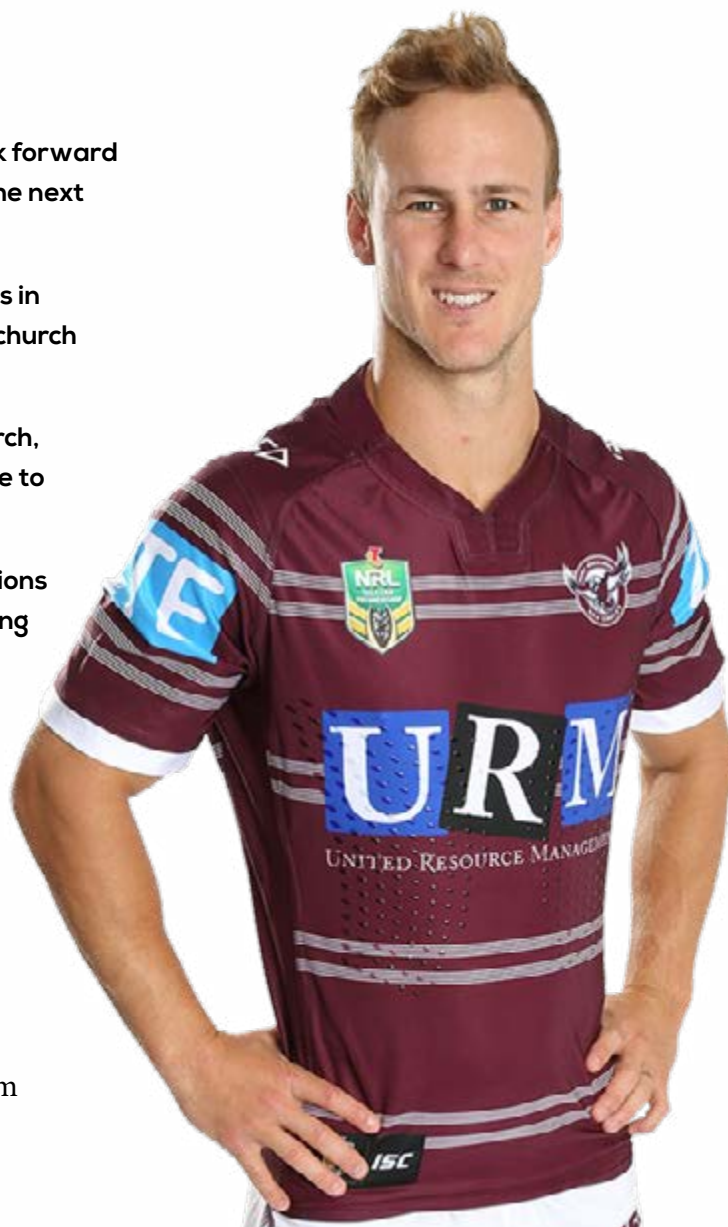
Walco Events have a great selection of hospitality options for you to enjoy the game! But be quick if you are looking at the Eagles Nest Corporate Suites as they sold out well before the last game in 2016 and are in demand once again!

See you soon and go Manly!

**DALY CHERRY-EVANS**  
CAPTAIN

Thanks Daly I'll be coming down to support my team the Vodafone Warriors

- Sir Peter Leitch



# CORPORATE SUITES

Eagles Nest Corporate Suites are our AMI Stadium premium match day hospitality experience for the Sea Eagles home game.

## EAGLES NEST PLATINUM

Eagles Nest Platinum Suites are our middle suites for great views of the entire field.

Included is a high-quality food and beverage service, followed by the opportunity to watch the game from the glass-front room or in premium reserved seating in the stand.

Dress is smart casual. Children permitted, but must be supervised by an adult at all times and are charged at full rate.

Suites offer the perfect private setting for hosting available in the following capacities: 60, 40, 30 and 20.

**Price: \$349 + GST per person**

## EAGLES NEST

Eagles Nest Suites are our end suites at AMI Stadium and offer great views of the field.

Included is a high-quality food and beverage service, followed by the opportunity to watch the game from the glass-front room or in premium reserved seating in the stand.

Dress is smart casual. Children permitted, but must be supervised by an adult at all times and are charged at full rate.

Suites offer the perfect private setting for hosting available in the following capacities: 60, 45 and 30.

**Price: \$299 + GST per person**

## ITINERARY

The approximate timings:

- 3.00pm Gates open
- 3.30pm Hospitality commences
- 5.00pm Kick off – Manly v Warriors
- 7.10pm Farewell



# ADDINGTON RACEWAY PRE-GAME HOSPITALITY

Enjoy some great pre and post game entertainment at Addington Raceway with a special guest speaker with lunch. Then get to watch the game from the best seats in the South stand.

## EAGLES CLUB GOLD

Secure your pre-game table in the Eagles Club Gold Lounge for the NRL clash between the Manly and the Warriors. This offers excellent food and beverages, great entertainment in a relaxed environment. The Eagles Club Gold is perfectly suited to networking with clients, staff and guests.

### INCLUDES:

- Hospitality period for 2-hours pre-match and 1-hour post-match
- Category A reserved match seating located between 10m lines (halfway)
- Guest speaker - rugby league personality
- Master of ceremonies and host service
- Famous Addington hot buffet selection
- Selection of wine, beer and non-alcoholic beverages throughout the hospitality period.
- Complimentary car parking

**Price: \$2590 + GST per table (10)  
\$269 + GST per person**

## EAGLES CLUB

The Eagles Club offers excellent pre-game hospitality at Addington Raceway in a more casual environment. You can entertain any number of guests or a bunch of mates with a food and beverage package included. And you are just a short walk from the big game!

### INCLUDES:

- Hospitality period for 2-hours pre-match and 1-hour post-match
- Category A reserved match seating located between 20m lines
- Guest speaker - rugby league personality
- Master of ceremonies and host service
- Quality hot roast carvery, salads and rolls
- Selection of wine, beer and non-alcoholic beverages throughout the hospitality period
- Complimentary car parking

**Price: \$229 + GST per person**

## ITINERARY

The approximate timings for hospitality will be:

- 2:30pm Hospitality commences
- 3.15pm Buffet and carvery served
- 4.30pm Bar closes – depart for stadium seats
- 5.00pm Kick off – Manly v Warriors
- 6.50pm Full time (approx.)
- 7.00pm Hospitality resumes and beverage service continues
- 7.35pm All Blacks v France live on big screens
- 8.00pm Hospitality concludes – cash bar
- 9.00pm Bar closes
- 10.00pm Lounge closes

For enquiries and bookings, please contact: Justin Wallace

Mob: 0272 515 210 Email: [justin@walcoevents.nz](mailto:justin@walcoevents.nz)



# READER MAIL

Hi Sir Peter

No matter where you go, always take the Warriors with you!

What more could anyone want from Santa but a Vodafone Warriors supporters membership. Once again we look forward to another NRL and once again we will be supporting our team the Warriors. Lets not dwell on the previous year and the negativity others blurted out without the engagement of the brain. I can't even image how tough the NRL comp is and that's why I have nothing but respect for the club. So lets get behind our mighty team - it's time to go BANANAS!!!!!!

Regards,

Hilly

Ps. Graham is a fireman and is lucky to be alive as he got badly burnt in a fire and was lucky to make it out.



Caleb had the experience of a lifetime today when we bumped into Sir Peter Leitch at the marina. Not only did he remember me from a few brief meetings but he remembered Caleb played rugby league!

Sir Peter was generous and humble and a fantastic motivator for Caleb. He is currently in the thick of pre-season fitness preparing for playing with the Howick Hornets Rugby League Club.

We were honoured to have met him and so very thankful for his encouraging words for Caleb not to mention the great gear he gave him too. He has an amazing community spirit and we appreciate all he has done to motivate Caleb to work harder in his league



Hi Sir Peter

This Jackson from Christchurch he's a mad keen Warriors supporter and loves Shaun Johnson.

Thanks Sir Peter for the backpack and ball I love them. The bags all packed and ready to go for daycare tomorrow. I'll see down here in Christchurch for the Warriors Manly game.

Thanks, Jackson.



Was great to catch up with Vodafone Warriors head coach Stephen Kearney on Tuesday morning as they headed out to training I love the guy







I hear a lot of Warrior fans complain about how long it's going to be before we win the Grand Final. Well then how about the 99 year old Philadelphia Eagles fan who just saw his team win the Super Bowl for the FIRST time! Been a fan since the 1930's and never lost the faith. He turns 100 in a couple of months and reckons he could now die a happy man.

Bruce Judson

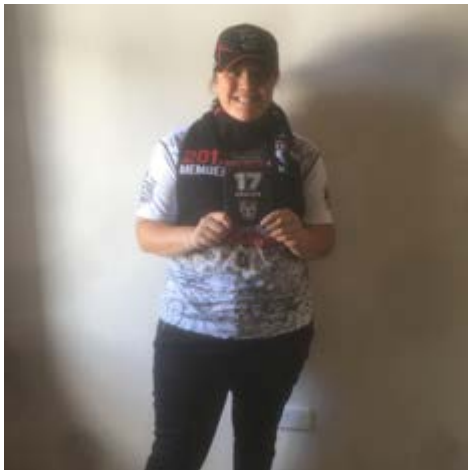
A loyal fan.

Giddy Uncle,

This is Harlow Aruroa your Great Grandniece, next generation Warriors fan.

Go The Mighty Vodafone Warriors.

- Jeff



Thanks for coming to Invercargill to meet us fans and a massive Thank you so so much for the Vodafone warriors gear. It honestly means so much! Absolutely love the gear!



Maiti in Invercargill loves his new gear from you he's absolutely stocked thank you so much



Dave from Christchurch I wanted to share this photo I had taken with Jacob Lillyman before he flew out to join the Newcastle Knights I've booked our flights to Auckland to watch all the home games this year can't wait



Thanks for the parcel - very exciting to receive such a generous gift for our School. I'll have to get out on the field and run some league sessions at lunchtime to choose the recipients of the supporter packs. Should be fun

-Anna Harrison principle of Goldfields Primary School Cromwell



Dear Sir Peter Leitch

Wow you and the Vodafone Warriors are so incredibly generous! These packs have been earmarked for our up-coming West Coast Nines tournament as spot prizes.

Pictured is Seth Wilson from the Hokitika Taipos who is super excited about such a huge box of goodies from the Mad Butcher!!

Thanks again....GO THE MIGHTY WARRIORS.

Yours gratefully,

Kirsty Wilson

Hokitika Taipos

Hi Sir Peter!

Thank you very much for your Warriors gift that you sent to Carter and Abbie!! It was an awesome surprise for them to get after school today!! Carter says "Thank you for giving me the poster of Shaun Johnson with his signature on it and also for the Shaun Johnson card too!" Abbie says "Thank you for the rugby league pack and the Simon Mannering card! I hope you are having a good day in Auckland! I hope you have a good day tomorrowtoo!"

Thank you very much once again for your generosity to Carter and Abbie!!

Brendon Dawson.

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[www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz](http://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  
**Emma Woodhead** - Graphic Designer

**John Deaker** - Correspondent  
**John Coffey** - Southern Correspondent  
**Barry Ross** - Australian Correspondent  
**Ben Francis** - Northern Correspondent  
**John Holloway** - Correspondent  
**Miles Davis** - Correspondent  
**Shane Hurndell** - Correspondent