

VODAFONE



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

28<sup>th</sup> February 2018

# Newsletter #206



**Vodafone Warriors 2018 Season Launch**



Photos courtesy of [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

# At the Vodafone Warriors 2018 Fan Launch Event



Bodie Friend (Brand and Communications manager) and Richard Becht (Media and Communications manager).



Catherine, Thomas and their dad David. Big Vodafone Warriors fans.



Jon Spittle (GM Marketing SkyCity) & Cameron George (Vodafone Warriors CEO).



Joyce Putohe loves the Vodafone Warriors.



Ken Maumalo & To Tumai-Harris member for 8 years.



Kevin Ratahi arrived with his father at 3.30 to meet the boys.



Lucas Taylor traveled from Christchurch. It's his first time being a member as he lived in Canada for the last 10 years.



Ranjit Lala & George Stanisich Members for over 10 years.



Ray & Olive Ferguson who have been members since 1995.



Sir Peter Leitch Club members Richard Matson and Charlie Raass.



Stephanie and baby Tayte the youngest fan at the launch.



My grandson Reuben with Shaun.



Issac Luke, Solomon Short Williams & Ken Maumalo.



Sam Lisone and Blake Green and Joyce Putohe.

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## At the Vodafone Warriors 2018 Launch Party



Greg Bramwell - Brand Manager ASICS and Jason Niles - Sports Marketing Manager at Asics.



Jamie (MD Canterbury of NZ) & Jo Meikleham.



Michelle and Russell Stanners, Don Stanaway (Warriors director) and Niki Schuck (Warriors director).



Michelle Stanners wife of Vodafone Warriors CEO & Lizzie Leuchars - Corporate Events Manager - SKYCITY & Gabrielle Pritchard Head of Sponsorship Vodafone..



Reon Edwards - Chairman NZRL, Nicky Styris - Newshub sports presenter and Cameron George - CEO Vodafone Warriors.



My old mate Gordon Gibbons interviewing me.



The 2018 Vodafone Warriors Squad on display at Skycity tonight last night



# Tuivasa-Sheck secured in signing coup

*by Richard Becht*

**G**REAT NEWS! Captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck has reinforced his commitment to the Vodafone Warriors by signing one of the longest deals in the club's history, ensuring he'll remain at Mount Smart Stadium until the end of the 2022 season.

The four-year signing coup was announced by Vodafone Warriors CEO Cameron George at the club's official season launch at SKYCITY tonight.

"As one of the game's most exceptional athletes, Roger understandably attracted lots of interest, so we couldn't be more delighted to have him onboard for another four years," he said.

"Still only 24, he embodies all the qualities we want to see in our players.

"This is hugely significant for both Roger and the Vodafone Warriors, not only critical for our future but also for Roger in paving the way for him to truly establish himself as a leader for the club on and off the field. He's the type of person we can build our club around."

Tuivasa-Sheck is entering his third season since joining the Vodafone Warriors. His first campaign in 2016 was limited to seven appearances after a season-ending knee injury before he returned to feature in all but one game in 2017.

"I'm excited knowing my future will be with the Vodafone Warriors for another four years after this season," said Tuivasa-Sheck.

"I'm also glad to be able to sort it out now before the season starts.

"We've had some challenging times but all of us are working really hard to turn things around this season and in the years ahead.

"Wanting to be part of that with everyone at the club was a huge factor in my decision to stay with the

Vodafone Warriors."

Tuivasa-Sheck was named the club's 2017 Vodafone NRL Player of the Year and also the New Zealand Rugby League's Player of the Year following the Rugby League World Cup.

"Roger's a wonderful player and also a wonderful person," said Vodafone Warriors head coach Stephen Kearney.

"He sets an example in all he does as a player on the field and in all aspects of training as well as looking after himself off the field.

"He's a tremendous asset for the Vodafone Warriors and has a huge appetite to improve each and every day."

Tuivasa-Sheck warmed up for his seventh NRL campaign with a quality performance in the Vodafone Warriors' 20-14 trial win over the Gold Coast Titans on Saturday.

With 11 tries and 30 appearances for the Vodafone Warriors, he has a career tally of 39 tries in 114 first-grade games.

## **ROGER TUIVASA-SHECK**

Date of Birth: June 05, 1993

Birthplace: Apia, Samoa

Junior Club: Otahuhu Leopards (Auckland)

Position: Fullback

Height: 182cm

Weight: 93kg

Rep Honours: 16 Tests for Kiwis (2013-2017), World Cup (2013, 2017)

NRL Debut: Sydney Roosters v Gold Coast, Allianz Stadium, July 27, 2012 (Round 21)

NRL Career: 114 appearances, 2012-2017

NRL Points: 156 (39 tries)

Secondary School: Otahuhu College (Auckland)

# It Would Be Nice To Think So, But I Can't See It Happening

By David Kemeys

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



**T**HAT DAVID Long over at Sunday News is wasted on newspapers when he could be writing scripts for Seven Days or some other TV comedy.

His piece at the weekend was headed Here's why the Warriors will win the NRL – or words to that affect.

Then it was followed by two words – don't laugh.

To be fair to Dave, who has a top bloke by the way, he did admit he was writing through the rosier of spectacles, when he tipped the number one reason – that no one expects us too.

He is certainly right there. I don't expect us to and I am died in the wool Warriors, and would love to be wrong.

But the simple truth of the matter is that there is very good reason why no one expects us to, the fact that we have been beyond awful for years.

Certainly I am among those who think we perhaps have a better and more rounded squad than in previous years, but going all the way. I don't think so.

We won't face the pressure of expectation, but that's because no one has any.

I will say this, I have not missed all the hype that has surrounded previous seasons.

It's been nice to muddle along without inflated hopes and buying into some "Keep the Faith" or similar nonsense.

Nor have we had to endure the super-star signing.

It doesn't seem to work.

Anyone remember Sam Tomkins. He was supposed to be the best thing since sliced bread, but he while he showed glimpses of wonderful form, more often than not he was just plain disappointing.

We suffered it again with Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, and it always looked like the weight of expectation that fell on his shoulders was just too great.

Hopefully he can be the player we know he is capable of being.

So while we might not have had that wonder signing, Adam Blair and Tohu Harris are no mugs.

Better depth might be the big card we have to play this season, because most fans will realise we had guys out there last year who were not cutting it, but who held their places because the alternatives were even worse.

Anyway, Long reckons Stephen Kearney is now into his work too, labelling his first full year as a settling in process, and I think we all know he could not have been happy with the calibre of players at his disposal, most of whom were brought in by someone else.

I don't disagree with that, but I will say this. The Rabbitohs, Titans, Raiders, Roosters, Cowboys and Broncos are our first six, and if we get off to the start we always seem to, and are 1-5, Kearney might find his second year increasingly uncomfortable.

Please at least play a brand of football we can celebrate.

Last year's muddling performances hardly inspired enthusiasm.

If we are going to go down, let's at least go down swinging.

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There are mutterings out of the club that a less structured style might be on offer this year, and please let that be true. We might well never have won anything with your off the cuff footy, but at least it was enjoyable to watch.

Endless plodding up the middle to get into position, then having no idea what to do when we did, did not make for great viewing.

Still, it's only footy.

### **Trial Tells Us Little**

This weekend's pre-season game against the Titans wasn't on TV so I tried to watch the live-stream on the internet, but the broadband was not up to it at my house.

But the papers had reports the next day and one of them said coach Stephen Kearney was pretty chuffed with his new halves combination, and that they will continue to get better.

Blake Green and Shaun Johnson did well as we ran out 20-14 winners, but as I said last week, trial form means zero – though obviously you want to look good, rather than like 13 headless chickens.

Souths in Perth –where we never win –is now only a fortnight off, so we can assume the team is hard at in triaining and working out some tactics, and most of all 0 hopefully – some scoring plays for when we actually find ourselves on attack.

But Kearney was pleasantly surprised at how well the pair went.

“They haven't spent a great deal of time together on the training field. Shaun's been hampered by a injuries, so they are only going to get better. Their time together was positive so that's a good sign.”

Tohu Harris and Adam Blair made their debuts, with Harris adding plenty on the right edge and Blair solid defensively.

As I say, I didn't see it, so it was good to read Issac Luke had a decent hit-out. I like the bloke, always have, and would love to see him contribute more than has admitted he has been able to so far.

“We've got to make sure we keep looking at areas where we can make ourselves better,” Kearney said.

At the end of the day we will head into round the season unbeaten in pre-season, so credit where it is

due.

On the negative side, any injury to Simon Mannering is concerning. He left the field with a shoulder injury that is being monitored.

### **Tonga V Oz At Mt Smart Anyone?**

Reports that Tonga could play Australia at Mt Smart later this year.

If they do I will be there.

I have not forgotten how wonderful the Tonga v England 2017 Rugby League World Cup game was. The most I have ever had a league game for sure – except for England winning of course.

Hawaii is a more likely venue apparently, but Auckland remains a strong possibility.

A test between Tonga and Australia in New Zealand would surely be a sell-out.

### **RTS Is One Of Us For Another Four Years**

Vodafone Warriors captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck has re-signed until the end of the 2022 – and hand on heart, I did not see that coming.

I thought he would be off.

How wrong was I? About as wrong as all those “in the know” journalists who said he was going to rugby and the Chiefs apparently.

The 24-year-old is sticking with us long-suffering Mt Smart faithful, and I for one am pretty chuffed about it.

He said he was happy to sign a new deal before the start of the season. “I'm excited knowing my future will be with the Warriors for another four years after this season. We've had some challenging times but all of us are working hard to turn things around.”

Warriors supremo Cameron George looked like the cat that got the cream when he announced it at the season launch.

“Roger attracted lots of interest, so we couldn't be more delighted to have him onboard for another four years.”

Coach Stephen Kearney didn't look grumpy about it either.

“Roger sets a wonderful example in all he does as a player on the field and in all aspects of training as well.”

# COMMISSIONER

By Barry Ross



I WAS FORTUNATE enough to be invited to the farewell dinner for NRL Commission Chairman, John Grant in Sydney last week on Tuesday night 20 February. The event was held on the top floor of the Museum of Contemporary Arts at 140 George Street in the Rocks area of Sydney, adjacent to the Circular Quay International shipping terminal. Before we sat down to dinner, we had an hour or so outside on the balcony, sharing memories over a few drinks. After this enjoyable night I began thinking about the Commissioners and I wondered if a New Zealander might be considered in the future. Now I am Australian and I realise the NRL is an Australian Rugby League competition but there has been an Auckland-based team playing in this league since 1995. The Auckland Warriors met the Brisbane Broncos at Mt Smart on 10 March 1995 before around 30,000 fans and from this time, a Kiwi team has competed each year and 2018 is the 23rd season. So it is reasonable to discuss a New Zealand Commissioner. I am not sure of the rules and regulations involving the Commissioners and maybe there is a by-law which stipulates that members must be Australian citizens. But if there is not, I believe Sir Peter Leitch would be an ideal candidate. Until he reads this column he had no idea that I would suggest he be considered. But he is passionate about our game and is highly respected throughout the entire Rugby League world. More than this, he is highly respected in all walks of life throughout New Zealand and the same thing occurs in many other countries. At the John Grant dinner last week, it was obvious how well liked and admired he was by Australians. Perhaps he is not interested in a role on the Commission, if it was available to him, but it is definitely a good topic for future discussion. I might also that there is no editorial influence or directives for any of us who contribute to this newsletter.

It was great to see the 25,000 or so turnout for the Cameron Smith-Johnathan Thurston Testimonial match at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium last Friday. It was a very wet night and to see such a crowd figure in those conditions proves once again just how healthy Rugby League is in Queensland. Although it was still a trial game, the players generally took it seriously and considering the conditions, it was an entertaining affair. Although most of them would have gone home quite wet, the Queensland fans would have also gone home happy, following Thurston's well directed banana kick on the game's last play, which allowed his right winger, Kyle Feldt, to score his third try and give the Cowboys a 16-14 win. Now 26, Feldt has very safe hands and is a quality all round player. He has 48 tries and 18 goals (228 points) from his 74 first grade games. What a record both Thurston and Smith have. Thurston is the older and he turns 35 on Anzac Day this year, He has played 38 Tests, 37 Origins and 299 first grade matches in which he has scored 2,050 points (86 tries, 845 goals, 16 field goals). Smith is 54 days younger and celebrates his 35th birthday on 18 June. The Melbourne captain has played 56 Tests, 42 Origins and 358 first grade games, scoring 2,185 points (42 tries, 1,007 goals, 3 field goals). Thurston played the whole 80 minutes in Brisbane in his first game for eight months after his shoulder problem. Smith was on the field for this first 27 minutes of the first half and several minutes in the second half. Test prop Matt Scott also had some game time and appears set to play in the Cowboys opening match at home with the Sharks on Friday 9 March. Scott, 32, damaged his cruciate ligament in round two last year and had to have knee surgery. On the negative side for North Queensland, Lachlan Coote suffered a hamstring injury and centre Kane Linnett, left the field with a suspected pectoral problem. Melbourne fullback, Jahrome Hughes injured his shoulder and as the club's backup fullback, this could be a problem if Billy Slater can't play in the first game, away against the Bulldogs in Sydney on Saturday 10 March. Slater also has shoulder worries from the World Club challenge win in Melbourne against Leeds on 16 February.

Out at Mudgee, 280 kms north west of Sydney on Saturday night, Souths star, Greg Inglis, became the third Test player, to begin playing after a long injury stint on the sidelines. It is almost a year since Inglis last played and he only had 20 minutes on the field, but it was a positive thing for the Souths club, their fans and the 31 year old, 34 Test veteran. Inglis has scored 138 tries in his 242 first grade games and when fully fit, he will be a major asset for new Souths coach, Anthony Seibold. The Warriors meet Souths at Perth on Saturday 10 March in round one of this year's competition. Souths beat St. George/Illawarra 22-18 at Mudgee to win this year's Charity Shield, while up on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, the Warriors were impressive in their 20-14 defeat of the Titans.

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So Perth fans will be in for a very tough and competitive match in the first of the double header at the new 60,000 plus seats, Perth stadium. After the Warriors-Souths game, the Bulldogs clash with the Melbourne Storm.

The NRL website came up with an interesting statistic recently. It said that the Sharks' Paul Gallen is on the verge of cracking the 50,000 running metres mark. In his 304 first grade games, the Cronulla forward has run for 49,668 metres at an average of just over 163 metres per game. Storm fullback, Billy Slater, is in second place with 39,187 metres. Slater's average is 131 metres a game from his 299 matches.

## Auckland to Face Tonga in June

By Corey Rosser - ARL

**T**ONGAN RUGBY league is returning to Auckland in 2018, with the Auckland Rugby League today announcing two Queen's Birthday Weekend representative clashes.

Auckland will host the Tonga New Zealand Residents in the feature match on Saturday, June 2, with a sea of red set to converge on Mount Smart Stadium #2 following on from Mate Ma'a Tonga's success at the recent Rugby League World Cup.

In the curtain-raiser the Auckland Maori U20 will face Samoa U20, with both games to be streamed live and free on [aucklandleague.co.nz](http://aucklandleague.co.nz).

ARL general manager Greg Whaiapu said aside from putting the Auckland jersey back at the forefront of the New Zealand league scene, it was a chance to provide players with a meaningful representative game.

"It's exciting to be able to give players from across the region the opportunity to represent Auckland once again, and to celebrate the proud history associated with the blue jersey," Whaiapu said.

"It's important we continue to give local players the chance to achieve higher honours here at home.

"The Auckland Rugby League also has a responsibility, as a leader of the grassroots game, to help foster growth in that area, so we are delighted to be able to involve Tonga, Samoa and the Auckland Maori in this event as well."

The Auckland premier representative team last took the field in 2016 against the New Zealand Maori Residents, and last year the ARL celebrated the 30-year anniversary of the 1977 Auckland side which famously beat Australia, Great Britain and France in the space of three weeks.

For more visit [aucklandleague.co.nz](http://aucklandleague.co.nz).

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## Manly To Play In Ngai Tahu Designed Jersey

**I**T WAS announced on Wednesday, 21 February that Manly will be wearing a custom-designed strip for the game in Christchurch, commissioned by Ngai Tahu to be designed by leading Maori artist and carver Fayne Robinson. The design will incorporate a mix of Ngai Tahu and Manly heritage and will only be worn when Manly plays in Christchurch.

Watch this space for details about where and when to buy!

# ALL ABOARD FOR THE KIWIS TIKI TOUR

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)



**O**NE OF the tips for finding cheaper air fares is to book early. So how many New Zealand fans have already confirmed airline seats for the Kiwis' much anticipated Test match against England at Denver's Mile High Stadium in June? Or the trans-Tasman Test that has been mooted for Doha in the United Arab Emirates in October? They are just a couple of the radical suggestions in the wake of the successful 2017 World Cup as administrators, coaches and promoters seek to capitalise on the increased interest in international rugby league.

The June date coincides with the stand-alone second State of Origin in Sydney on Sunday, June 24 (the others, in Melbourne and Brisbane, are still scheduled for Wednesdays), and, of course, the traditional Anzac Test no longer features on the NRL calendar. Instead, the NRL has for some weeks been offering tickets for a "Pacific" double header at Campbelltown featuring Samoa and Tonga and Lebanon and Papua New Guinea. Now the Tongans, at least, are looking for something more meaningful to capitalise on their sensational World Cup.

Of course, the Kangaroos are out of the equation in June because their top players will be involved in the Origin clash. One exception might be Andrew Fifita, who is apparently expecting NSW coach Brad Fittler to arrive at his door, cap in hand, begging him to come back to the Blues after his Tongan heritage trip last year. Meanwhile, Australian coach Mal Meninga has been looking for something to do in October, between the NRL Grand Final and the start of the Kiwis' three-Test series in England. He has apparently struck oil in Doha.

So far the following fixtures have been proposed for June: England v New Zealand in Denver (supposedly to promote the 2025 World Cup in North America); New Zealand v Fiji at Auckland (having been left out of the "Pacific" series the Fijians are available on condition they are paid an increased match fee); Samoa v Tonga at Campbelltown (from which the Tongans believe they can be released provided they find something more lucrative to occupy their weekend); Lebanon v Papua New Guinea (planned as the Campbelltown curtain-raiser).

With Australia available, October could feature any of these: Australia v New Zealand at Auckland (because it is our turn to have a home game, just as it has long been our turn to host a home series against the Poms); Australia v New Zealand at Doha (the brainwave of Mal Meninga's mate from Qatar) with Fiji and Samoa in the curtain-raiser; Australia v Tonga at Auckland (another of Mal's considerations after seeing Mt Smart packed to capacity during the World Cup); Australia v Tonga at Honolulu (the original idea proposed by Big Mal).

So what is missing? Ah, yes, there is no mention of the Kiwis lining up against Tonga at Auckland in either time slot as a re-match of their World Cup thriller. Various theories have been offered. Obviously the NZRL would have a much stronger chance of enticing Jason Taumalolo and his fellow mutineers back to play against anyone other than their Tongan brothers. But what a clash it would be, with Taumalolo's Tongans up against a Kiwis team reinforced by Jesse Bromwich, Kevin Proctor, Tohu Harris, Kieran Foran and Jordan Kahu.

Kiwis World Cup captain Adam Blair talked real sense when he clearly preferred a June Test match in Auckland ahead of a mad dash to and from Denver. Does anyone other than the promoter really believe the ripples of a 2018 game in Colorado would have a positive impact if the 2025 World Cup actually takes place in North America? And even the promoter must know he is pushing water uphill with a rake if he expects NRL clubs, especially the Warriors, to release their players in mid-season for such a long-haul trip to a high altitude stadium.

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With all due respect to Fiji, the Kiwis' try-less 4-2 loss in the World Cup quarter-final at Wellington made not even a fraction of the impact on the psyche of the New Zealand sporting public as the magic day when Tonga came from behind to run down the Kiwis and expose their vulnerability in Hamilton. That is undoubtedly the rematch the game needs, the one everyone – even the most disillusioned New Zealand supporter – wants to see. Surely this is a chance for the Kiwis players and the NZRL to restore some of the faith lost from last season.

If you are determined to travel far to watch the Kiwis this year it would be smarter to head for Britain and the Tests against England at Hull on October 27, at Liverpool's famous Anfield ground on November 3, and at Elland Road in Leeds on November 11. The only problem is that series should be played in New Zealand; we have not hosted England (or Great Britain) in a series since 1996. Instead, another weakened Kiwis team will be despatched on a tour which will be totally overshadowed by the All Blacks also being in England at the same time.

## Grab a Vodafone Warriors Basic Membership for only \$30 at the Link Below

<http://warriors.memberlink.net.nz/shows/show.aspx?sh=EWRR0000018WA>



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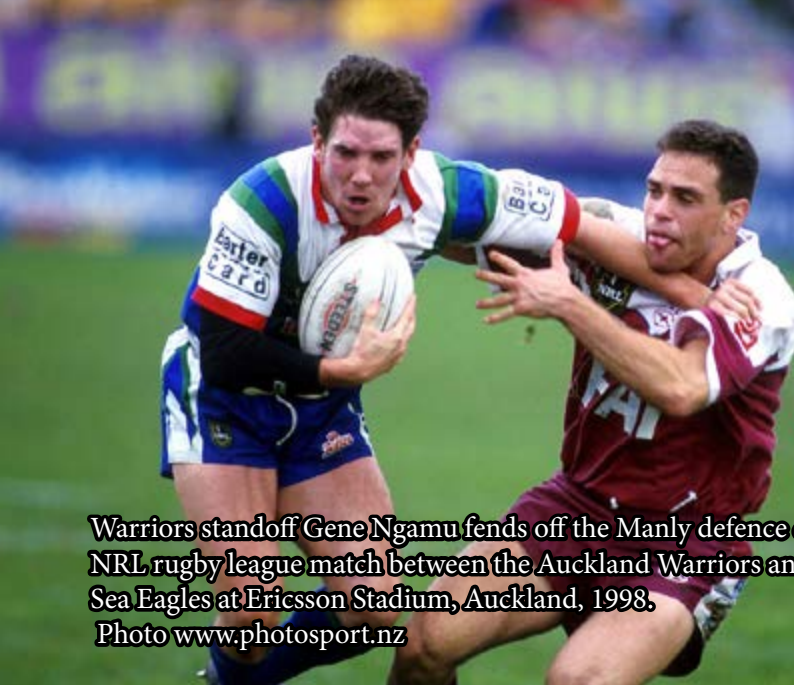
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By Miles Davis

Warriors standoff Gene Ngamu fends off the Manly defence during the NRL rugby league match between the Auckland Warriors and Manly Sea Eagles at Ericsson Stadium, Auckland, 1998.  
Photo www.photosport.nz

## The Originals - Warrior No. 6: Gene Ngamu

**V**ODAFONE WARRIOR No. 6, Gene Ngamu, started his rugby league journey with Auckland club Marist Saints (a prominent club in the 20's, 30's and 40's who then suffered a decline after their last Premiership in 1966 but who are now back in the big time of the Fox Memorial).

In 1992 he made the Junior Kiwis and was signed as a junior for the Manly Sea Eagles by then coach Graham Lowe but was allowed to play for Northcote Tigers in the interim. He suited up for them in the pre-season but was recalled to Manly before the season proper began. Signed as the heir apparent to Manly legend Cliff Lyons things didn't quite pan out. After just 9 games in 1992 and 1993 (scoring 1 try) Ngamu was released.

1993 had however given him some on field success as he was selected for the Kiwis tour to Great Britain. He played in the tour opening test against Wales with the Kiwis prevailing 24-19 in a close encounter. He then fronted up against Wigan scoring a try and also being given kicking duties by coach Howie Tamati although regular kicker (and super boot) Darryl Halligan was also in the side. It was a decision that nearly backfired as Ngamu had an off night kicking just 1 from 5 in a 25-18 win.

He was selected for the First Test vs Great Britain as the Kiwis went down 17-0 but was replaced by Tony Kemp for the 2nd and 3rd tests.

Having been released by the Sea Eagles he signed for the South Sydney Rabbitohs in 1994 but his time there was to prove fruitless as he struggled to break into the first grade side and was restricted to just one first team appearance.

1995 was to bring an upturn in fortunes when he was signed by the Vodafone Warriors as part of their foundation squad. As Ngamu later recounted -

“Playing for the Warriors was a dream come true. There were rumours going around that they were going to be included in the competition – even when I got over to Manly and played there for a while. I was hoping they would come in and when they did I pretty much signed straight away.

“I desperately wanted to go home and be part of it. I wanted to be part of that first team that was part of the [premiership]... the bonus was playing top-line footy and being at home at the same time.”

He was named in the starting line-up for the first game against the Brisbane Broncos and took on the goal-kicking duties, converting 3 from 4 in the 22-25 loss.

He went on to record 21 appearances that season (only Sean Hoppe played more with 22) and was top-scorer with 84 points (3 tries and 36 goals). 1996 saw him make another 20 appearances and once again come out as top dog in the point-scoring department. His 120 points made up over half of the Warriors total points for that season.

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His time at the Vodafone Warriors came to an end in 1999 and the remaining 2 years of his contract was picked up by the struggling Huddersfield-Sheffield Giants club in the UK (a merger between the two Yorkshire clubs that was short-lived). He was to leave the Auckland club after 81 games and 283 points but fans will also fondly remember his partnership in the halves with the legendary Stacey Jones.

His time in the UK was not a success as Huddersfield Sheffield picked up the wooden spoon but Ngamu was still having an impact for the Kiwis. He was called up by coach Frank Endacott to bolster his squad for the Tri-Nations final against Australia. The Kiwis had shocked the Kangaroos 24-22 in the round robin clash but the result went the other way in the final with the Aussies victorious 22-20. It was to be Ngamu's last of his 25 tests for the Kiwis in which he scored 11 tries and kicked 8 goals and 1 field goal.

In 2000 Ngamu represented Aotearoa Maori at the World Cup, kicking a late field goal to beat Scotland in the group stages.

Ngamu then moved his family to Australia and had a short stint with Manly Rugby Union before hanging up his boots.

After a career in league he turned his focus on to maintaining playing surfaces rather than gracing them with his skills. He became a greenkeeper based in Manly and admits it has given him a different perspective of sporting arenas -

“When I used to play I never really thought about the grounds we played on. We used to get out there and train and kick balls 1000 times on the same spot. The groundskeeper used to come out all the time and repair divots straight away and I used to look at him funny, but now I understand exactly what he was doing.”

As well as being a Vodafone Warriors original Ngamu is still a huge fan and always keeps his eye out for his old club. Nothing more than we would expect from Vodafone Warrior No. 6.

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# Foster's On Target For Another World Cup

By Shane Hurdell - *Hawke's Bay Today Sports Reporter*



**F**ORMER HAWKE'S Bay Unicorns rugby league winger Shane Foster has been the province's No 1 referee for well over a decade and that status is unlikely to change in the near future.

Foster, 48, boasts fitness levels which are the envy of most of the Bay's premier players he referees. He again proved how fit he was with some outstanding displays for the Hutt Valley over 45 tag football team which won their division at the Wellington-hosted nationals during the weekend with a 20-1 drubbing of their Wellington counterparts.

"There were three over 45s teams and three over 40s. So they combined the grades which meant we played six games over the weekend. We had two losses to two of the over 40s teams and both were by one point," Foster recalled.

"Hutt Valley are new to tag and most of the guys in our team used to play for Wellington. A lot of the players were league mates of mine when I played in Wellington when I was at university. Blokes like Yogi Rogers and Warren Doughty," Foster explained.

"That final was just one of those games where everything clicked. We still don't know why we were so good in that game," the Hastings Intermediate School assistant principal said with a laugh.

Six of the Hutt Valley team including Foster are regarded as certainties for the New Zealand over 50s team for the November World Cup in Australia.

"I'm turning 49 in April and if you are 49 within six months of the tournament you are eligible for the 50s," Foster explained.

The father of two has been a New Zealand tag football rep since 2012 and has been to two World Cups where his team was beaten by Australia in the final on both occasions.

"Hopefully this year it will be a case of third time lucky and we return home with gold. I know I will be in peak condition then as the tournament start a week after our Hawke's Bay rugby league spring competition ends and I referee three games a day each week during that comp," Foster said.

Foster was a member of the New Zealand Universities rugby league team which played at two World Cups. They won bronze in 1996 and gold in 1999.

A former Flaxmere Falcons speedster, Foster, played for the Unicorns from 1992-'94 before heading to the capital. While in Wellington Foster played for Wainuiomata, the Wellington Dukes and Wellington Pumas.

Meanwhile Rugby League Hawke's Bay secretary Mike Tamati confirmed this week there will be no winter senior club comps in the Bay this year.

"The spring comps will again be our main ones. Most of our players play rugby and they told us it would be too much to play rugby on Saturdays and league on Sundays. It's not like it was in the old days when a lot of them could take Monday off work to recover," Tamati said.

Foster was Hawke's Bay sole national title winner during another busy weekend of sport for Bay people. Other highlights included the Hawke's Bay polo team beating South Africa 4-3 in Hastings and Magpies rugby player Jason Long winning the Hawke's Bay superstock championship for the first time at Meeanee.

There was disappointment for the Central Districts Stags cricket team which lost their Ford Trophy final by six wickets to the Auckland Aces in New Plymouth and the Hawke's Bay United soccer team which lost 2-1 to Canterbury in Napier.



*HOT FORM* Hawke's Bay's No 1 rugby league referee Shane Foster in action for the Hutt Valley over 45 tag football team at the weekend.

# Kiwis To Play Test In United States



NEW ZEALAND  
RUGBY LEAGUE™

**T**HE KIWIS will play a ground-breaking Test match on 23 June against England in Denver, Colorado, the first time the countries currently ranked two and three in world Rugby League have met in the United States.

Chair of the New Zealand Rugby League (NZRL) Reon Edwards said the Test is an important step for the code's international development.

“Rugby League is making impressive strides in the United States and Canada. This Test match is an opportunity to showcase the highest level of our sport in the North American market, which has significant participation and commercial potential. NZRL has worked with the Rugby Football League and the Rugby League International Federation on this, agreeing to play a New Zealand-England Test in the United States each year for the next three years,” he said.

Denver's storied Mile High Stadium, which has a capacity of 76,000 and is home of 2016 NFL Super Bowl Champions the Denver Broncos, will host the historic June Test match.

Kiwis stalwart Simon Mannering said: “I think it's a great concept and one I wish was around five years ago when I was a bit younger. Growing our game internationally has to be a priority – think of the opportunities we could create for our game if it was a genuine international sport played all over the world.

“I know it'll be tough for some NRL clubs to see the importance at first, but if we really care about the game, then I think it's something we have to support. I definitely will.”

Another notable Test for the Kiwis will be Australia coming to New Zealand for the first time since 2014.

From this year the ANZAC fixture will move to the end of the season, and alternate annually between Australia and New Zealand. A rematch of the Rugby League Women's World Cup final between the Kiwi Ferns and the Jillaroos will feature on the ANZAC Test programme, together with the Junior Kiwis taking on the Junior Kangaroos. This is part of NZRL's commitment to staging more games in New Zealand.

The three-Test series in England announced late 2017 will be followed by a one-off Test in France.

Recent Rugby League developments in North America include the Toronto Wolfpack, Canada's first professional Rugby League team, winning the Rugby Football League's third tier Kingstone Press League 1 title, gaining promotion in their inaugural season in 2017, and making a successful start to the 2018 in the Rugby League Championship. Success at that level will secure promotion to Europe's top tier Super League. Several other North American clubs are contemplating similar moves.

In 2016 the 2025 Rugby League World Cup was provisionally awarded to North America, with the United States and Canada to co-host.

## Kiwis' 2018 Test Programme

Saturday 23 June 2018; Kiwis v England; Denver, Colorado, USA

Saturday 13 October 2018; Kiwis v Australia; Auckland, NZ

Saturday 27 October 2018; England v Kiwis; Hull, England

Saturday 3 November 2018; England v Kiwis; Liverpool, England

Sunday 11 November 2018; England v Kiwis; Leeds, England

Saturday 17 November 2018; France v Kiwis; venue TBC

# NZ PDRL Team Second Place At Inaugural Commonwealth Championships



NEW ZEALAND  
RUGBY LEAGUE™

**T**HE NEW Zealand Physical Disability Rugby League team have come away with a silver medal after a hard fought 0-0 golden point match against Australia at the inaugural Commonwealth Championships in Queensland.

The first game against Australia on Friday night was a true Anzac battle, as two old foes of rugby league came together to represent their countries out on that field. The challenge laid down by the kiwi team with a very passionate haka led by Garry Kingi, set the tone for the next 18 minutes of footy.

The level of rugby league was phenomenal, their skill level lifting immediately under the pressure to do the best for their fellow teammates. There was no doubt the players left nothing in the tank

Although the final ended in a draw, Australia came away with the gold medal based on points differential. New Zealand went through the tournament conceding only one try.

PDRLNZ Captain Brad Vear said “This is a really big milestone in their lives because of the adversities they’ve faced in their lives whether it be through accident or born with a disability, it’s such a big deal to be here.”

The championships was one of the exhibition sports for the 2018 Commonwealth games with the physical disability tri-series making up one feature of the event.

PDRLNZ hope it will encourage more physically disabled athletes throughout NZ into the sport.

Greaves says “We want it to grow nationwide. We want our kaupapa to get out there so that people can see that what’s holding them back in themselves.”

“Our next goal is to recruit players for a local competition over winter in preparation for our inclusion at the Rugby League Emerging Nations Championships in October 2018 in Sydney,” he said.

NZPDRL would like to thank their sponsors especially NZRL, ARL, Sir Peter Leitch, Digital Island, First Sovereign, Lenco, Hilton Haulage, Parcel line express, DNI Electrical, Debtworks NZ, Straker Translations, YMCA, Graeme Williams, friends and family.

You can see the results from the tournament below.

#### Day one results:

NEW ZEALAND 4 (Usa Adams try) def COMMONWEALTH ALL STARS 0.

AUSTRALIA 8 (Mitchell Gleeson, Geoff Clarke tries) def COMMONWEALTH ALL STARS 0.

AUSTRALIA 4 (Mitchell Gleeson try) def COMMONWEALTH ALL STARS 0.

AUSTRALIA 6 (Kyle Lloyd tries; George Tonna goals) def

NEW ZEALAND 0.

#### Day two results:

AUSTRALIA 0 drew with NEW ZEALAND 0.

COMMONWEALTH ALL STARS 0 drew with NEW ZEALAND 0.

**Gold Medal match:** AUSTRALIA 0 drew with NEW ZEALAND 0 (Australia declared winners of championship).



# SKYCITY Mystics Go North

**N**ORTHLAND NETBALL fans get the chance to get up close to the SKYCITY Mystics with the team heading North next week for a training camp, Community Day and ANZ Premiership pre-season match against the Northern Stars.

Young players are invited to the FREE Northern Zone Community Day hosted by Whangarei Netball Centre on Friday 2 March from 4:30-6:30pm, where they can meet the SKYCITY Mystics and take part in skills and drills with the team.

Fans can watch the SKYCITY Mystics take on the Northern Stars in a pre-season game at ASB Stadium, Whangarei at 4pm on Saturday 3 March. There will be a curtain raiser featuring the two Northern Zone BEKO teams - Marvels and Comets, with the centre pass at 2pm. Tickets are available on the door and fans are encouraged to arrive early as seating is limited and last year's game sold out!

SKYCITY Mystics Coach, Helene Wilson says she's excited to be taking the team to Northland during this important stage of the pre-season build up.

"Our team represents the whole Northern Zone, from the tip of Northland all the way to Pukekohe. It's really important for us to connect with young players and fans throughout the region. We'll be spending a few days training in the Far North before heading to Whangarei for these two public events and we can't wait."

Northern Zone Community Day  
Friday 2 March, 4:30-6:30pm  
Whangarei Netball Centre  
FREE  
Suitable for primary and intermediate students

ANZ Premiership Pre-Season Game  
SKYCITY Mystics v Northern Stars  
Saturday 3 March, from 1:30pm  
ASB Stadium, Whangarei  
Curtain raiser: Marvels v Comets, 2pm  
Main Game: SKYCITY Mystics vs Northern Stars, 4pm  
Door sales only - \$10 adults, \$2 children (2-12 years),  
under 2 years free, family pass \$20 (2 adults and 2 children)



VS



## SKYCITY MYSTICS VS NORTHERN STARS PRE SEASON MATCH

**DATE:**  
SATURDAY 3rd MARCH 2018

**TIME:**  
4pm

**WHERE:**  
ASB STADIUM, WHANGAREI

**CURTAIN RAISER**

See the two Northern Zone BEKO teams compete: MARVELS vs COMETS

**Doors Open:** 1:30pm > **Tickets \$10 Adults** - Children 12 years and under \$2 (under 2yrs free)  
**Centre Pass:** 2pm > **Family Pass \$20** - (2 adults + 2 Kids)  
> **Door Sales Only** - Seating is Limited

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# It's Marist For Little Leivaha

By Savannah Tafau-Levy - ARL

**YEARS AFTER** starring for the Marist Saints himself, New Zealand Warriors recruit Leivaha Pulu is now preparing to unleash the next generation at the club.

While Leivaha is yet to visit the club since returning to New Zealand this off-season, the powerful back-rower said all signs point towards his son, Amon James, wearing the green and gold of Marist this year.

“Registrations are around the corner and I am thinking of putting my son, Amon James, into Marist, so it will be good to see the little fella running around,” Pulu said.

“Hopefully he gets to wear headgear as well and follow in dad’s footsteps. He’s five, a little tank, and my pride and joy. He even wears my headgear around the house.

“It has to be Marist man, I can’t put him anywhere else!”

Pulu started his football journey with Marist aged 15, before moving to Australia to attend Queensland’s Keebra Park State High School.

Unable to make an NRL appearance for the Wests Tigers, Pulu had stints with NSW Cup sides Western Suburbs, Windsor Wolves and Wyong Roos and an off-season in France.

Now with two full seasons of first grade under his belt, as well as a Test appearance for Mate Ma’a Tonga, Pulu returns to form part of a new-look Warriors pack in Auckland.

“Nothing beats being around your parents, around your family, being somewhere you are wanted,” he said.

“At the end of the day I wanted to come home and give it my best effort here.”

Pulu has been named in the starting line-up for the Warriors this Saturday against his former club, the Gold Coast Titans.



Hi there

**T**HOUGHT YOU might enjoy this - Brodie Fan Club in Melbourne!

Our eldest son Kiel with new babe 6 week old Beau!!

Gorgeous!

Kindest

Pam





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- Five night's accommodation including breakfast
- Transfers throughout

#### VIP JOSHUA VS PARKER PACKAGE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

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- Cocktail function and Interactive Q&A with world renowned boxing promoters Eddie Hearn, Bob Arum and Duco Event's David Higgins
- Breakfast with Joseph Parker and trainer Kevin Barry
- Attendance to the Official Joshua vs Parker weigh-in
- Signed Joseph Parker poster
- Official Team Parker t-shirt

PACKAGE PRICE: Twin \$8,999 pp or Single \$9,899 pp

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#### For full travel package bookings, contact:

Chris Hammonds  
 E: [chris@mondotravel.co.nz](mailto:chris@mondotravel.co.nz)  
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#### For ground packages only, contact:

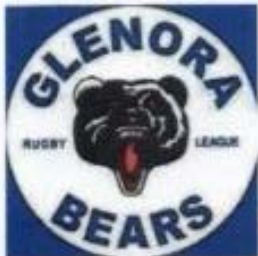
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 E: [donna@duco.co.nz](mailto:donna@duco.co.nz)  
 P: 027 545-5353



\*Schedule subject to change.

# Results of the Preseason Trials Held Over the Weekend

	14	16	
	10	24	
	12	26	
	24	12	
	26	28	
	14	20	
	06	26	
	22	22	
	22	18	



Glenora Rugby League Club's

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2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - \$1,000

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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.

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