

VODAFONE



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

4<sup>th</sup> July 2018

# Newsletter #224



## Vodafone Warriors v Sharks



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

# Get Set For A Whinge Fest

By David Kemeys

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



**WE WERE** minutes from snatching a truly hard-fought win when we lost to a forward pass. Bugger.

So what did the Aussies have to say in their papers? Much to my surprise, they were not impressed.

Pity, it made the memory of Paul Gallen mouthing off even more unpalatable.

We were home when Shaun Johnson potted the field goal.

But then Issac Luke's try was disallowed a minute later – and I have no issue with that – horrible as it is, he was ahead of the kicker and then encroached the 10 metres.

So the Sharks get a penalty and march into the attacking zone. You could not script it. Setting up for a field goal of their own it is charged down and we spill the ball forward, giving the Sharks a chance.

Edric Lee goes over in the corner but we all wait for the forward pass to be called.

The Bunker can't rule on forward passes, so the try stands, despite a chorus of booing .

That is all she wrote, and we just have to lump it.

Coach Stephen Kearney and the players resorted to the old line about win some, lose some.

That diplomacy has more to do with not criticising referees, and falling foul of the NRL.

I don't have to worry about copping a fine, so call it what it was – disgraceful.

There were rulings all night that confounded logic.

The worst was when Chad Townsend picked up a ball Blake Green must have got a fingernail to, headed for the line, only to be turned over so he could not ground the ball. The referee ruled no advantage, and came back for a scrum Cronulla scored from a few plays later.

Rubbish.

If Townsend had been able to ground the ball that would obviously have been an advantage.

Are you telling me players are now required to stand back and do nothing so players can score?

The try-scoring opportunity was the advantage. That Townsend did not score, is not our problem.

Worse still, motor-mouth Gallen was penalised, quite rightly, for an incorrect play the ball and spent the next few minutes giving it to the ref, so that you could be forgiven for thinking he fell for it and evened the score by incorrectly penalising Chris Satae for the same thing – when it wasn't.

If anything is going to make me give up on this game it is the inconsistency of the refereeing.

I know Pete gets cross and says we mustn't constantly bag refs, but I will stop when we get a fair go.

The 18-15 victory moved the Sharks' to seventh and dropped us out of the top four.

Which brings me back to the Aussie papers. I thought they would ignore the rough deal we copped. They didn't, being generally pretty sympathetic.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

But the comments were the most fun, with 'Bill' saying the forward pass has to come under video review, and 'Geoff' advancing the view there is a now a real risk given the frequency of refereeing decisions causing a stink, that the final eight will not represent the true eight.

There are now so many contentious decisions that relate to who wins, and ludicrously lop-sided penalty counts, that something has to be done.

### **On The Positive Side**

We might have lost, but we were outstanding in the second half.

My faith was waning when I said to the wife at half-time that I feared it was going to get ugly.

Instead we came out and tackled like demons and hung in on the arm wrestle and stayed live in a game we had no right to have any chance of winning.

Suppose that is what ultimately makes it so galling. We had no right to win it, having to make 54 million more tackles than the Sharks, and survive on a pittance of possession, and yet still found a way to win, Johnson doing the unthinkable and getting a wobbly old kick over that meant the points were Mt Smart bound.

Throw in serious injuries to Bunty Afoa and Tohu Harris, and the footy gods were not with us, because we all know what happened next.

As I say, Kearney wouldn't do what we all did, and blame the ref, though he did have a little snipe at the line-o. "The forward pass ... my opinion doesn't really count, it's the person on the sideline who's right next to it."

Instead he was straight back into analysing what else went wrong, identifying moments when we weren't good enough.

And that has to be the focus because we have more tough games ahead, and a job to get done.

Dwelling on the loss and feeling sorry for ourselves is going to change nothing.

That the Sharks dominated possession and territory but we still hung in there indicates, despite it being three losses on the bounce at Mt Smart, this one was nothing like the other two.

There was much more ticker and commitment, and as I have said many times, that is all I ask for.

That gives Kearney something to build on ahead of our trip to Penrith.

"It's a tough one when you get a result like that, but we've got to keep moving forward," the boss said.

Amen to that.

Penrith on Friday, then back on the road the next week in Brisbane, before returning home to face Melbourne.

They don't come more difficult than that.

*More on the next page...*

## Farewell Albert And Good Luck

Prop Albert Vete is in Melbourne getting measured for a Storm shirt, and I for one wish him the best of luck. I can understand why, given the limited game time he has been able to get, the move to the Storm was so attractive to the big fellah.

Vete was contracted until the end of next season, but the 25-year-old has been released to further his career in Australia.

“We are chock-a-block really as far as the salary cap is concerned and we're trying to get that into the right shape for us. So we made the decision and Albert goes with everyone's best wishes,” Warriors general manager football Brian Smith said.

"He's a great young man so we decided that was the best move for us and for Albert.”

I have enormous time for Vete. He has always put in a shift when required. The former schoolboy rugby player came through the 20s, to make 46 first grade appearances, debuting in 2015.

To be fair, he would be the first to admit he has struggled for consistency, and suffering a broken arm can't have helped either.

If you were looking for someone who is going to get the best out of the Tongan international, Bellamy would not be a bad bet.

One thing though Albert. If you come back to Mt Smart as a Storm player, please have a shocker!

## Woods Mid-season Shift

Call me a cynic but am I the only one who can't get his around the idea that in the middle of the NRL season Cronulla just happened to have a bag of cash lying about that allowed them to fit Aaron Woods into their side inside the salary cap restrictions?

That's a bit lucky isn't it?

Early in the week Woods was training at the Bulldogs, by the end of it he was a Shark.

The Bulldogs, who never saw a salary cap rule they could not get around, had to let him go and Woods signed a three-and-a-half-year deal with the Sharks, apparently taking a big pay cut.

Oh yes? Hands up anyone who believes that.

Woods only did about eight months of his four-year contract with the Bulldogs, and he was not exactly a resounding success, to the point he got dropped from State of Origin.

Part of the attraction, Woods claims, is coach Shane Flanagan's plans for the future.

Yeah, that and the money.

All of which pisses me off big time because he arrives with the Sharks having played like a marshmallow for the Dogs, yet suddenly clocks up 128 metres from 15 runs.

---

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter

# In the Stacey Jones Lounge



Adam Worth wins the voucher for a stay at the BLUEWATER HOTEL in Napier escape.



All Blacks Codie Taylor, Ryan Crotty and Jordan Taufua..



Brendan Popplewell from the TAB gives Jeannie the TAB voucher Shaun Johnson 1st try scorer.



Brent Webb former Warrior and Kiwi talks about the match.



Codie Taylor, Ryan Crotty, Courtney Tairi co-host of the kiwi rugby league show on sky and Jordan Taufua.



Codie Taylor, Ryan Crotty, Iqbal Singh and Jordan Taufua.



Codie Taylor, Ryan Crotty, Nathan Lowe who flew over from Sydney to support the Sharks and Jordan Taufua.



Dave winning a PANASONIC prize..



Dexter's tour of the stadium was a great hit again..



DJ Pete with shows of his new equipment.



EDC wins the Selley's pack.



Former Warrior Brent Webb's sons both won prizes.

# In the Stacey Jones Lounge



Janine and Steve Hopkin Sharks fans from Sydney.



Keegan Jeyes, Craig Chow, Alan Zahara from Freightways.



Ken Maumalo, Elvis (our DJ in the lounge) and Ryan Crotty, All Black and Crusaders Player



Ken Maumalo with Ryan Crotty.



Kishan Naran who flew up from Dunedin for the sharks game and was lucky enough to have his photo taken with these 3 All Black & Crusaders players.



Kishan Naran with Sir Peter.



Mark Robinson from Autex, one of the new owners of the Vodafone Warriors was kind enough it visit the lounge.



Mr Perfect John Woolley, The Hobbit Adam Worth, Sick Note Michael Anderson.



Patrick Rodhouse wins a Vodafone Warriors jersey.



Richard Matson wins the ASICS voucher.



Richie, Noel and Rob from Te Teko in the Bay of Plenty.



Rohan and Leslie Wallace, Piri and Maitaitawa Kake from Independent Traffic.

# In the Stacey Jones Lounge



Shane Hurdell journalist for the newsletter gets presented a Vodafone Warriors jersey for his support of our newsletter.



Stacey Jones with Sir Peter.



Steph and Graeme Hill from New Plymouth join me for the home game against the Sharks. Graeme, a firefighter from Taranaki was badly burnt in an incident nearly 8 years ago.



Zinny and Don Graham. Zinny won the Bendon voucher.



Jacob, Reuben, Rebecca and Walter Wilson from Christchurch. Walter was an x Kiwi Junior, Kiwi Colts, NZ Residents and Presidents X111, Reuben has a trial for West Tigers this week while him and Jacob are Canterbury age group reps.

**Be a Grandstand Millionaire!**

**Got what it takes to win up to a million dollars?**

Just head to a Vodafone Warriors home game, download the Vodafone Stadium Live App, register for Grandstand Millionaire and pick the try scorers in order.

If you nail it, you could be walking home with up to a million dollars!

GET IT ON Google Play

Available on the iPhone App Store

The future is exciting. Ready?

# Several changes made for Penrith encounter

by Richard Becht



**S**EVERAL LINE-UP changes have been made for the Vodafone Warriors' 17th-round NRL clash against Penrith at Panthers Stadium on Friday night (7.55pm kick-off local time; 9.55pm NZT).

Two have been forced with second rower Tohu Harris (knee) and interchange prop Bunty Afoa (elbow) side-lined for up to six weeks after picking up injuries in last Friday night's tough 15-18 loss to Cronulla at Mount Smart Stadium.

Simon Mannering moves from loose forward to the second row replacing Harris while Adam Blair makes a timely return from a one-match suspension to reclaim the No 13 jersey.

Afoa is out of the side for the first time this season, his spot on the bench going to Ligi Sao, who has been performing impressively for the club's Intrust Super Premiership side.

In last Saturday's 24-20 win over previous competition leaders the Mounties, Sao gained 158 metres from 15 runs in his 60 minutes on the field and complemented his work with the ball with 32 tackles.

He's poised to play just his fifth NRL game of the season and his first since appearing in each of the Vodafone Warriors' wins in the first four rounds of the year.

There are three changes in the starting backline with first-choice wingers David Fusitu'a and new Kiwi international Ken Maumalo both back while Peta Hiku moves from the right wing into the centres. Gerard Beale, who was on the left wing against Cronulla, is on the bench with centre Anthony Gelling returning to the ISP side.

Beale and Sao apart, the other players in line to make up the game day bench are Jazz Tevaga and Chris Satae.

The four additional players on the extended bench are Joseph Vuna, Karl Lawton, Sam Lisone and Mason Lino.

Issac Luke, Hiku and James Gavet are all nearing personal milestones. Luke will move within four games of his 250th career appearance, Hiku within four of his 100th and Gavet will be just two short of his 50th. Captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck is seven games away from his 50th outing for the Vodafone Warriors and Mannering nine from his 300th.

The Vodafone Warriors go into their third consecutive Friday night match lying fifth on the ladder on 22 points with a 10-5 record. The Panthers are on the same points but sit fourth on points for and against; a win would take the Vodafone Warriors back into the top four.

In 39 matches between the two clubs, the Vodafone Warriors have had 16 wins, Penrith 22 with one match drawn. In their last 10 meetings the Panthers have an 8-2 advantage and haven't lost to the Vodafone Warriors at Panthers Stadium since round 14 in 2012.

## VODAFONE WARRIORS v PENRITH PANTHERS

7.55pm, Friday, July 6, 2018

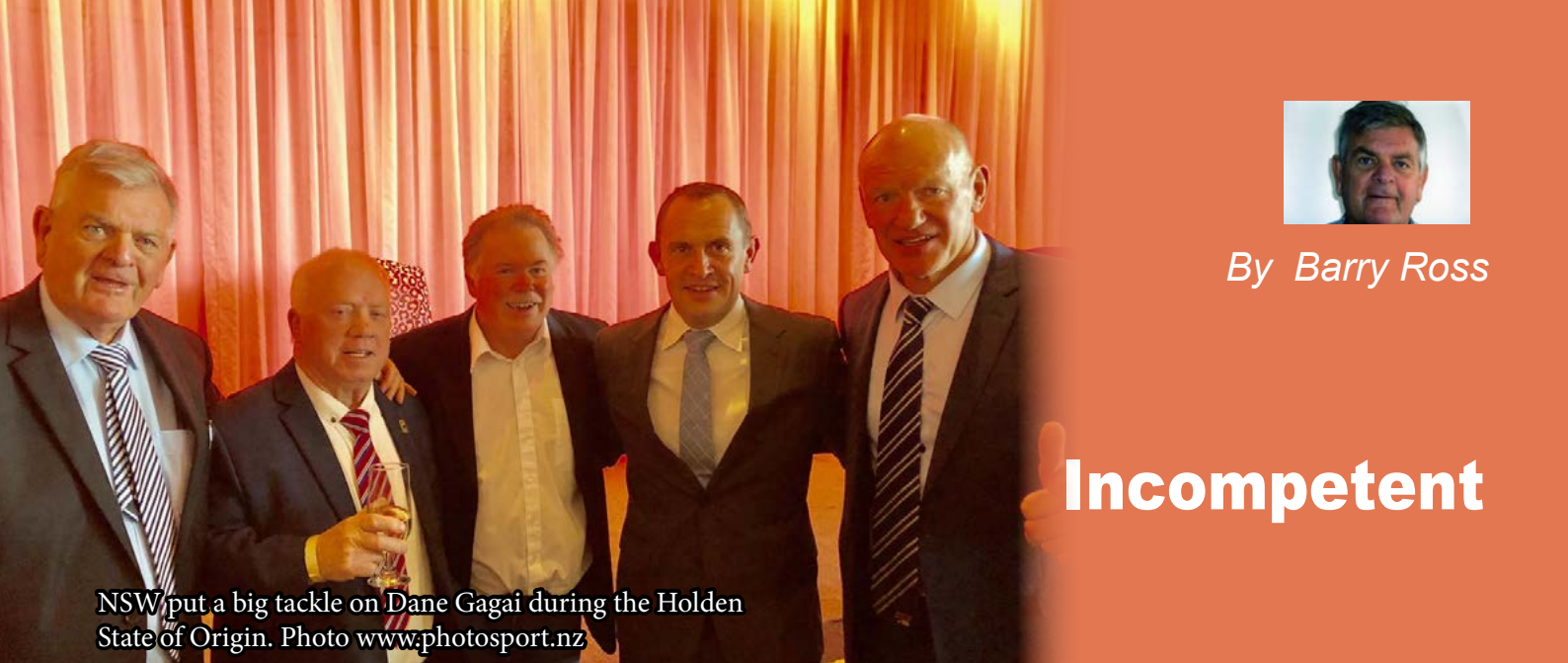
Panthers Stadium, Penrith

### Vodafone Warriors

- 1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (C)
- 2 David Fusitu'a
- 3 Peta Hiku
- 4 Solomon Kata
- 5 Ken Maumalo
- 6 Blake Green
- 7 Shaun Johnson
- 8 James Gavet
- 9 Issac Luke
- 10 Agnatius Paasi

- 11 Isaiah Papali'i
  - 12 Simon Mannering
  - 13 Adam Blair
- Interchange:
- 14 Jazz Tevaga
  - 15 Chris Satae
  - 16 Ligi Sao
  - 17 Gerard Beale
  - 18 Joseph Vuna
  - 20 Karl Lawton
  - 21 Sam Lisone
  - 22 Mason Lino





By Barry Ross

# Incompetent

NSW put a big tackle on Dane Gagai during the Holden State of Origin. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)

**WHEN WILL** the NRL do something about their many incompetent touch judges ? The Warriors were robbed of a win when play was allowed to continue after a Cronulla forward pass three minutes from full time. This resulted in Edrick Lee scoring the winning try. The TV commentators were quick to pick it up, but not the touchie, who was a few metres away and almost in line with it. Now it is not the Sharks fault as in their previous game on 16 June, they suffered the same fate when a blatant forward pass cost them dearly in the match at Shark Park with the Broncos. On both occasions the touch judge was right near the action but failed to inform the referee. Maybe the referee should have seen the pass but they have plenty of other things on their plate while the touch judge has far less responsibility. I still cant understand why the video referees are not used in these situations. The argument put up is that camera angles can cause problems but often the onfield line markings can offer a hint. My feeling is that either you use the video replay for anything that might result in correct decisions or you dont use it at all. Not too much will be heard about the touch judge's mistake at Mt Smart last Saturday. Often the men in white are defended by the hierarchy. It will be interesting to see if the man who missed the forward pass at Mt Smart, will receive a first grade appointment this coming weekend. I know the officials are human but too many forward passes are not being called nowadays and this is not good enough. The teams are too close in this competition and are really affected by bad decisions. I would like to see the referees boss, Bernard Sutton, come out with some ideas to minimise the forward pass problem. Too often blatant forward passes are brushed over and nothing is done to minimise this dilemma.

The NRL would save been happy with the 17,728 crowd figure at Adelaide Oval on Friday night for the Storm-Roosters match. Cameron Smith, yet again, showed just what a valuable player he is with his 38 metre winning field goal, two minutes from the final whistle. Smith also topped the tackle count with 53, landed two goals from his two attempts and played a role in the Storm's only try. It was a timely win for the Storm and it moved them up to third on the competition table. Looking at this table after last weekend's matches, it appears as if the top eight teams could already be decided. With six competition points between the eighth and ninth placed teams, it will be tough for the bottom group to catch up, but with nine rounds to go, this is not certain. Up at Cairns on Sunday, an Adam Reynolds field goal gave Souths a 21-20 win over the Cowboys and moved them up to second place on the ladder. John Sutton played his 298th first grade match for the Rabbitohs at Cairns and played strongly in the wet and slippery conditions. Now 33, Sutton has played the most first grade games for Souths and has crossed for 58 tries in these games.

I enjoyed a great Rugby League flavoured luncheon last Friday at Wollongong, 80 kms south of Sydney. The occasion was to celebrate the 40 year reunion of the 1978 Illawarra representative team. Known as Bishop's Babes, this team won nine of its 10 matches in 1978 and included two players - Peter Wynn and Steve Morris- who went on to play Test football for Australia, along with seven men who joined Sydney clubs the next year. The seven who went to Sydney in 1979 were Steve Morris and Brian Johnson both to St. George, Peter Wynn (Parramatta) and Alan Sheppard, Keith Rugg, Rod Henniker and Kon Demos all to the North Sydney Bears.

*Continued on next page...*

This 1978 Illawarra team won the NSW Country Championship, defeated Ken Stirling's touring New Zealand team at Wollongong Showground and reached the Quarter Finals of the Amco Cup. In the Quarter Final, they were beaten 12-2 by eventual winners, Eastern Suburbs, after holding the Roosters to 2-all at quarter time, half time and three quarter time. This Roosters lineup contained many stars of the 1970s, including Mark Harris, Russell Fairfax, Bill Mullins, Kevin Stevens, Kevin Hastings, Bob O'Reilly and Ron Coote. Illawarra's first game in the Amco Cup was against Wellington, New Zealand at Wollongong on 15 March 1978. The Wellington team contained Kiwi Test players of the time, John Whittaker, John O'Sullivan, Warren Collicot, Don Munro and Whare Henry, while the hooker, Kevin Tamati, went on to play 22 Tests. Whether the travel from New Zealand or something else caused some problems, the Wellington team were well off their game and were thrashed 63-5.

At Wollongong Showground on 11 June, Illawarra 15 (Alan Sheppard, Kon Demos, Barry Pearson tries; Rod Henniker 3 goals) beat New Zealand 10 (John Wright, Alan Rushton tries; Dennis Williams 2 goals).

Around 250 attended the lunch at Wollongong's City Beach Function Centre and the guest speaker was New Zealand trainer, Chris Waller. He was interviewed by new NRL Commissioner, Peter V'Landys and this was an enthralling and humorous discussion. Born at Foxton in Manawatu, about an hour north of Wellington, Chris is the trainer of champion horse, Winx and has won the past seven consecutive Australian Metropolitan Training Premierships. Two months ago in May, he was inducted into the Australian Racing Hall of Fame. Now 44, Chris told the luncheon guests how he gets out of bed at 3am on most mornings, but tries very hard to return to his western Sydney home to have dinner with his family. He and his wife, Stephanie, have two children, Tyler and Nikita. Stephanie, who is also from Foxton, travelled the world soon after leaving school, as a member of the band, Hokio.

The lunch was arranged by Bob Millward OAM, who was secretary of the Illawarra Rugby League from 1975 and when the Illawarra Steelers became the 13th team to join the Sydney competition in 1982, he was secretary and then chief executive. Bob has also been a director of the NSW Rugby League since December 1995. He enjoys a lot of respect throughout the Rugby League community and that was illustrated by the presence of Peter V'Landys, Chris Waller, former NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell, who is now the CEO of Racing Australia, David Trodden, the CEO of the NSW Rugby League and Professor of Law, Deborah Healey, who became the first ever female Board Member of the NSW Rugby League in 2013.

Another special guest was the legendary Great Britain halfback, Tommy Bishop, who coached the 1978 Illawarra team. Now 77, Tommy played 15 Tests for Great Britain - seven against Australia, five against France and three with New Zealand - from 1966 to 1969, captaining the team in two Tests. He was a key player of the 1965/66 St. Helens team, which won the English League Championship and the Challenge Cup Final. In 1969, he moved to Australia to join the Cronulla Sharks and took over as captain/coach in 1970. He was captain/coach for three seasons, 1970, 1971 and 1973, but missed the entire 1972 season because of a snapped Achilles tendon. In 1973 he led the Sharks to the Grand Final, where they were beaten 10-7 by Manly in what is generally regarded as the most violent of all Grand Finals. With Cronulla, Tommy played 60 games, scoring 21 tries, while in three and a half seasons for St. Helens, he played 135 matches, scoring 47 tries. He is a member of the St. Helens Hall of Fame, while in 1970, he was the Rugby League Week Player of the Year in Sydney Football. After his playing career, Tommy coached the Sharks, the North Sydney Bears and in the Brisbane competition, as well as Workington Town, Leigh and Barrow in the English competition. Tommy flew down from Redcliffe in Brisbane for the lunch, where he has been living for several years.

The luncheon was a very successful event and a credit to Bob Millward.



By John Coffey

## The Denver Test Hangover

**I**T WAS inevitable the long shadow of Mile High Stadium would loom over last weekend's NRL round as club coaches continued to complain about the Denver Test between New Zealand and England being part of the representative weekend. Notably, Brisbane Broncos and England coach Wayne Bennett – a man more experienced and craftier than any of his rivals – spoke only in praise of the venture.

When the NZRL reviews the Test it must ask whether it was out-smarted by Bennett. No-one can blame them for the electrical storm which knocked out an airport control tower and delayed the Kiwis departure from Denver. But maybe they were conned. While they stayed over to bow to NRL demands the Kiwis undergo extensive post-match recovery, Bennett and his Aussie-based Poms were on the first stage out of town.

Bennett actually got back to Brisbane on the Monday morning ahead of the Broncos who were involved in the previous night's Origin match in Sydney! Commentator Andrew Voss was interviewing George Burgess, who had not gone to Denver because of injury, at Souths training on the Monday when twin brother Tom Burgess walked in. Surely the Kiwis could have been on the same flights as their opponents.

England's James Graham and Gareth Widdop lined up for St George Illawarra against Parramatta at Wollongong on the Thursday night while Kiwi Leeson Ah Mau was rested. All five England players started for their Australian clubs. Of the 19-man Kiwis squad, forwards Ah Mau, Raymond Faitala-Mariner (Bulldogs) and Jared Waerea-Hargreaves (Roosters), and Warriors wing Ken Maumalo, did not play. Only RFM was injured.

Coaches Craig Bellamy (Melbourne) and Trent Barrett (Manly) were among the most strident critics. Barrett continued his tirade when Martin Taupau's rebooked flight from Denver was further delayed. But fellow prop Nelson Asofa-Solomona scored the Storm's only try in a 9-8 victory over the Roosters in Adelaide (after yet another flight) and Taupau was involved in Manly's match-clinching try over Penrith later on Saturday.

In just 36 minutes Taupau rampaged to a game-high 148 metres and made six tackle busts. Yet he had arrived home only on the Thursday morning. Barrett was silenced as he watched Taupau inspire his struggling team to beat one of the competition hotshots. For Penrith, Kiwis forward James Fisher-Harris played 63 minutes and made a game-high 42 tackles while fullback Dallin Watene-Zelezniak scored his team's sole try.

I fully understand that NRL coaches are expected to be among the most selfish men in sport. Their club administrators and fans demand success and their jobs depend on them achieving it. Personally, I don't believe the Kiwis should have been anywhere near Denver last month, not when there was an obvious hometown blockbuster against Tonga that should have been a priority in the aftermath of the 2017 World Cup.

But instead the NRL locked Tonga into a Pacific Test against Samoa at Campbelltown, leaving full-strength England as the only opponent for the severely weakened Kiwis. Despite Taupau's brilliant display, Widdop setting up the match-winning Dragons try and outstanding efforts by other Test players such as Eliot Whitehead and Jamayne Isaako, NRL clubs will be even more determined to scuttle a mid-season Denver Test in 2019.

*Continued on next page...*

Continued from previous page...

As someone said, no-one came home from Denver in a body bag and no jet-lagged zombies were noticed playing in the NRL last weekend. So let us take this opposition to representative football to ridiculous lengths:

Faitala-Mariner suffered season-ending hand and knee injuries on his Kiwis debut in Denver. Is that enough reason to ban players from travelling in 2019?

Both Ata Hingano (Tonga) and Akila Uate (Fiji) suffered season-ending ankle injuries in the Pacific Tests at Campbelltown. Should Pacific Tests be discontinued in 2019?

NSW captain Boyd Cordner was concussed in Origin and missed the Roosters' narrow loss. Does that mean playing Origin on a Sunday must not happen again?

Match-winner David Fusitu'a has been unavailable for the last two Warriors matches because of an injury suffered and aggravated at training. Should clubs stop training?

The unlucky Slade Griffin survived his Denver Test debut only to suffer yet another serious knee injury playing for Newcastle Knights. Maybe we should ban the entire NRL!

Meanwhile, the list of Kiwis unavailable to go to England later this year is growing. Kieran Foran could be back in six weeks from toe surgery but the Bulldogs have parked him away until next season. Faitala-Mariner and Griffin are gone for the rest of this year. And I hear the Watene-Zelezniaks are expecting their second child on October 23, just four days before the first Test at Hull. DWZ was close to our best in Denver but will he get to Hull?

## **This Week on the Kiwi League Show Thursday Nights at 8.30pm on Sky Sport 2**

The special guest is Brian Smith. Brian Smith is an Australian rugby league coach and former player. He is currently the Football Manager for the New Zealand Warriors. Smith played for St. George 1973-74 and South Sydney Rabbitohs, appearing in a total of 31 first grade games.

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter

**NO ADVERTS ARE PAID FOR IN THIS NEWSLETTER**



Motu Tony in his playing days. Warriors v Sharks.  
7 June 2003. Photo [www.photopsort.nz](http://www.photopsort.nz)



By Miles Davis

## Motu Tony - NZRL Board Member

**T**HE NZRL'S new board member certainly brings a wealth of rugby league experience and knowledge to the position. De La Salle old boy Motu Tony was recently appointed as the independent board director following recommendations made in the Castle report after last year's Rugby League World Cup debacle. He replaces John Bishop who has retired after 8 years on the board.

Tony made 55 appearances for the Vodafone Warriors, scoring 23 tries, in a three year spell that included the 2002 NRL Grand Final. He had a season with the Brisbane Broncos in which he only played 3 games (although he did score 2 tries) before moving to England and joining Castleford Tigers.

Following the Tigers relegation that season he joined Hull FC in 2005 and in his first year his side made it to the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley. Playing at full-back in front of a packed Millennium Stadium in Cardiff he scored the first try in a dramatic 25-24 win over the Leeds Rhinos. It was also the year that he was part of the Kiwis team (this time playing at hooker) who thrashed Australia 24-0 to win the Tri-Nations.

2006 saw Tony and Hull excel again, making it to the Super League Grand Final (this time he was playing on the wing. Whilst at Hull he also played centre and half-back) before going down 26-4 to St Helens at Old Trafford in front of another huge crowd of over 72,000.

In 2010 Tony switched codes to Rugby Union and joined Hull RFC before switching back again later that year joining the Wakefield Trinity Wildcats.

After retiring from the game he returned to Hull RLFC in 2013 this time as their manager of football. Always looking to improve himself he completed an MBA at Huddersfield University in 2014, passing with Merit and being awarded "Best Full-Time MBA Student" by the university. One of his responsibilities at Hull was the securing of new talent and that afforded him the opportunity to return to New Zealand once a year on the lookout for prospects. Although very much happy in Hull, 3 of his children being born there, he did intimate a while ago that a return to New Zealand was on the cards "I've got a job here to do. I want to win here and then who knows what the next step is...maybe after the [2017] World Cup."

He certainly kept his promise to Hull FC and their loyal fans winning back to back Challenge Cups in 2016 and 2017 before heading back to NZ.

As he departed Hull there were rumours that he was to return in some capacity to the Vodafone Warriors but Tony dismissed those as just newspaper talk, "At the time I came back there were a few opportunities inside and outside of sport. I was fortunate to have some time to adjust to being back in New Zealand and have a mental break."

*Continued on next page...*

Continued from previous page...

In March 2018 he took up a short-term position as CEO of New Zealand Baseball, while incumbent Ryan Flynn was working with Ateed CEO Brett Riley on a successful bid for a New Zealand based franchise to play in the Australian Baseball League. His attitude towards his tenure at New Zealand Baseball epitomises his approach to sports management and is one he will undoubtedly bring to his new role on the NZRL board "I've got experience of growing the grassroots of sport, especially rugby league because I was in it for almost 20 years," he said "So I want to continue to establish the game at grassroots level and the systems around that."

With his experience and attitude Motu Tony's appointment can only augur good for New Zealand Rugby League and that sentiment is echoed by NZRL Chairman Reon Edwards "Following the Castle review, it was imperative that we took on board the recommendation to make appointments that inject more high-performance knowledge into our organisation. As a proven sports leader, administrator and director (both executive and non-executive) with almost 20 years of experience in professional sport as both an athlete and administrator, Motu Tony more than fits the bill. We anticipate Motu will provide real value as we look to review the draft strategic plan with the help of the newly-appointed CEO, Greg Peters."

It's been a while but Motu Tony is finally back where he belongs and plying his trade in the sport he loves. Welcome home Motu.

## Win great prizes and help out a worthy cause! Be in quick it closes very soon!

Fancy winning a brand new ŠKODA New Zealand car or luxury Niue or VOMO Island Fiji holiday?!

ONE MORE WEEK to purchase a ticket to the Plunket Foundation and Lions Clubs New Zealand Lottery!

To purchase a ticket NOW please contact [carolyn.metrick@plunket.org.nz](mailto:carolyn.metrick@plunket.org.nz) - please provide us with your phone number and location.



The advertisement is for the "PLUNKET FOUNDATION LOTTERY 2018". It features a large yellow ticket graphic in the center with the text "TICKETS \$10" at the top. Below the ticket, two gold circular callouts list the prizes: "1st PRIZE ŠKODA Kodiak &amp; luxury Eagles Nest retreat, value \$58,000" and "2nd PRIZE ŠKODA Fabia &amp; Queenstown escape at Eichardt's, value \$38,000". At the bottom, two cars are shown: a silver ŠKODA Kodiak and a blue ŠKODA Fabia. The background shows a tropical beach scene with palm trees and a blue sky. At the bottom of the ad, it says "\$276,500 IN PRIZES MUST BE WON" and "Buy your ticket and support Plunket and Lions Clubs' vital work with New Zealand children and families."



By Shane Hurdell  
Hawke's Bay Today  
Sports Reporter



**JUBILANT RIANA:** Riana Foster centre with Caspian Buxton (left) and Warriors from left: Georgia Hale, Jazz Tevaga, Albert Vete and Keanu Laumafia-Paki.  
PHOTO/HAWKE'S BAY TODAY

# Ref's Daughter Earns Warriors Treat

**I**T'S NOT often parents hope their children collect injuries but Hawke's Bay rugby league referee Shane Foster will tell you there are exceptions.

"I hope Riana gets injured and then she might let me lead the Warriors out," Foster joked.

The former Hawke's Bay Unicorns speedster was reacting to news his daughter and Parkvale School student Riana Foster and another Hawke's Bay pupil, Eskdale School's Caspian Buxton, were crowned winners of the League in Libraries story writing competition. The competition is aimed at promoting reading and writing skills to children between Years 3 and 8.

Warriors reading captain Albert Vete and fellow NRL forward Jazz Tevaga led a team from the Warriors to officially congratulate Riana and Caspian last month.

It was the second consecutive year Eskdale School has provided a winning story after Tiaki McArdle's An Eggcellent Adventure in 2017.

"The quality of the entries from Hawke's Bay was tremendous with Riana and Caspian really standing out with their stories," Warriors community relations manager Petrece Kesha said.

Riana took out the primary category with her story Vodafone Warriors and the Magic Slime while Caspian won the intermediate section with The Warriors, the Wizard and the other Wizard. As part of their prize packages Riana and Caspian and their respective families will be flown to Auckland on August 24.

They will get to watch the Warriors-Panthers game from a corporate box and lead the Warriors team out. They will also visit the graphic designers who are working on the publication of their stories to watch

the initial stages of the process.

Hopefully they don't get to see the Warriors ripped off during the final minutes like me and my family witnessed during Friday night's 18-15 loss to the Sharks. It was also a pity to see Hawke's Bay's Tohu Harris collect an injury.

Warriors fans will be hoping Harris isn't sidelined for too long.

Getting back to that late try which should not have been allowed because of a forward pass. I must congratulate former Warriors fullback Brent Webb on his reaction when quizzed by Sir Peter following the game.

Webb and his two sons were among Sir Peter's guests in the Stacey Jones Lounge. Webb told the function it is the job of officials to make the calls and while you may not agree with them it pays to accept them and move on, something he hopes his sons will abide by during their sporting careers.

It was awesome to catch up with the All Blacks trio of Codie Taylor, Ryan Crotty and Jordan Taufua who were also guests of Sir Peter. I got a tough time from my family members as we left Mount Smart.

They reminded me that was my second consecutive loss as a spectator after last year's close loss to the Panthers. They told me one more and they won't be bringing me back again.

Hopefully that won't be the case because win or lose it is always a great night out when you get to see the Warriors play a home game.



# High-Tackle Holloway... I'll give ya the tip mate!

## The Mad Butchers Weekly NRL Tipping Comp.

By John Holloway

### NRL Round 17

NRL Round 17		Tarsh Ieremaia	Joe Vagana	John Coffey	Fast Eddie	Monty Betham	Neville Kesha	High-Tackle Holloway
<b>Date/ Venue</b>	<b>Game</b>	<i>Flava Star. Moving to the beat.</i>	<i>League Legend and Machine Lease King.</i>	<i>Newsletter Columnist and Veteran Leaguie</i>	<i>Devonport Dutchman - Takin it easy...</i>	<i>The Warrior Boxer - StepsForLife</i>	<i>Ex International Referee</i>	<i>Richmond Bulldog - Old School Rich- mond Leaguie</i>
Thur 5 July AAMI	Storm v Dragons	Storm	Dragons	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Dragons
Fri 6 July Panther's Std	Panthers v Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors
Sat 7 July Belmore	Bulldogs v Raiders	Raiders	Bulldogs	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders
Sun 8 July CBus	Titans v Broncos	Broncos	Titans	Broncos	Broncos	Titans	Broncos	Titans

<b>Picks last week</b>	4/8	2/8	3/8	3/8	3/8	6/8	2/8
<b>Total picks</b>	75	73	74	71	69	85	68

### If It Wasn't For Bad Luck We'd Have No Luck At All !!!

**O**K THE dust has settled but I'm still mad as hell with the forward pass, surely its common sense that on a "times up" deciding play, a TMO should be able to point to a possible forward pass when there is a line on the field that gives a clear indication. Then the ref could rule himself from the vision. Given the sideline supervisor is probably watching for the foot in touch I guess our only hope was a ref with some degree of eyesight. No go Joe on that one, Bugger. The totally wrong penalty call on Sataes play the ball (didn't get back on his feet) was also major refs error with the Homies in good position and the Sharks on the back foot. The replay shows that Satae did get back on his feet quickly, played the ball correctly but got impeded by the illegal cheating play of cunning veteran war-horse and senior citizen Paul Gallen..... It's the old story, when the hooter goes its 2 points you can't get back and that's why I am still mad. Some might say other parts of our own game let us down but I don't care our guys deserved better. The loss of our top wing pair and the hold-ups around the Kiwi players getting back from Denver was not helpful to us either with a Friday night game. Canny scheduling that. On the upside we showed the steely resolve that differs this team from other years, making our tackles and going toe-to-toe for most of the 80. RTS led by example. To be fair the Shireboys also missed a couple of key players but none the less were a powerful outfit that took a chance and got lucky on the night. We are out of the top 4 on percentage only but the task remains gettable and is in front of us to stay handy to the top spot. KiaKaha Warriioorrss.

Injuries are starting to bite most teams (except The Red V) with key players going down all over. Consider this team taken from the casualty ward...Ponga, Mansour, Rapana, Inglis, Dugan, Morgan, Pierce, Cordner, Gillett, Graham, Campbell-Gillard, Koroisau, J Bromwich. Reserves take your pick. Matt Scott, Finucane, McLean, Kasiano, Luke Lewis, Peter Wallace, Faitala-Mariner, Uate....not to mention the unluckiest of all the Knights Kiwi rake Slade Griffen with his 4th and I think worst Cruciate smash in only a few years. A massive challenge mentally and physically in front of him. Every best wish young fella.

Continued on next page...



Continued from previous page...

The big game of the round Roosters v Storm was as tight as a drum 9/8 with the Cam Smith droppie easing Bellyache Bellamys bleating. The Dragons just shading Eels 20/18, The Rabbitohs half Reynolds the 1pt hero in a 21/20 close call against Thurstons luckless Cowboys. The big upsets were Barretts Sea Eagles dumping the Panthers 18/10 and the unsung Titans spoiling Farrahs Tigers/Leichhardt return 30/12, Go figure. Milder upset with the Bulldogs biting the Knights 36/16 with the latter losing tyro talisman Kaylen Ponga to injury in the process. I've said it before poor Ricky the Raider boss can't take a trick. Run down yet again. In sight of a victory at Suncorp but not to be, Broncos at the bell 26/22. A very cruel season for the Green Machine. They sit beside the Knights on 12 points just under the Tigers (14) both just outside the 8. Further more you would have to think the bottom 4 sloters Sea Eagles (8), Cowboys (8), Bulldogs (8) and Eels (6) are gone-burger for 2018, plan for early holidays in September guys.

TIPPING OMG..when you are the organizer of the comp it is good etiquette to let your guest competitors win...well no one could say I haven't done that, crikey running last with a bullet. Conversely Nifty Nev the runaway train has two hands on the Premiership trophy already. The uncannily accurate Whistle Blower follows 4 out 4 last week with 6 out of 8 this week with the rest of us floundering under the upsets for a lot less than that. Unbelievable. (Editors Note. Don't invite this guy next year!!!).

## Jones And Iro Signed For Two More Seasons

By Richard Becht - Vodafone Warriors



**S**TACEY JONES and Tony Iro have both been re-signed as Vodafone Warriors NRL assistant coaches to the end of the 2020 season.

Jones was appointed an assistant coach when Stephen Kearney was signed as the club's new head coach following the 2016 season while Iro rejoined the NRL football staff this year after previously filling the assistant coach's role with Ivan Cleary, Brian McClennan and Andrew McFadden.

"Stacey and Tony have done a wonderful job in their roles and in challenging the group to constantly improve," said Kearney.

"They bring tremendous experience with their playing backgrounds and are constantly looking to develop as coaches.

"From a club viewpoint it's also really important that we have some continuity with our football staff so it's terrific that we've been able to keep Stacey and Tony onboard."

Jones ended his playing career in 2009 after 261 NRL games for the Vodafone Warriors, 45 Super League appearances for Les Catalans and 46 Tests for the Kiwis. Since then he has come through the system coaching his old club Point Chevalier and in a development role with the Auckland Rugby League before moving into the Vodafone Warriors' football department in 2012.

In his first year as NYC coach in 2014, Jones guided the Vodafone Junior Warriors to the premiership and then coached the Intrust Super Premiership side to finals football in 2015 and 2016.

Iro has filled a variety of football positions since ending a career boasting 25 Tests for the Kiwis, 184 NRL appearances and 61 games for English clubs Wigan and Leigh.

As well as being an assistant coach with the Vodafone Warriors from 2010-2012, 2015 and now 2018, Iro was the club's foundation NYC coach in 2008 and 2009.

# This Warriors Life Top 10: Warriors' Greatest Comebacks

By Will Evans

**A**FTER FRIDAY'S controversial, agonising loss to Cronulla, we could have come up with a related list of the most contentious calls in Warriors history, or the greatest injustices in the history of the world etc.

Be we've taken a different tact, instead recalling the greatest comebacks from the club's 23 and a half seasons in the premiership.

## THISWARRIORSLIFE.COM TOP 10: WARRIORS' GREATEST COMEBACKS

### 10. Warriors v Manly (2012)

The Warriors couldn't pull off the win in their Round 1 grand final rematch against Manly at Eden Park, but their fight-back after a horror start provided some solace for the club's supporters.

The Sea Eagles ran in three tries in the opening 22 minutes for a 16-0 advantage. Shaun Johnson exploded, however, to cut the lead to just six points by halftime. The visitors skipped out to 22-10 but the Warriors again rallied to set up a grandstand finish, eventually falling just short 26-20.

### 9. Warriors v Sydney Roosters (2010)

In rainy, freezing conditions at Christchurch's AMI Stadium, the Sydney Roosters led the Warriors 18-8 with five minutes to go, but a powerhouse try to Manu Vatuvei kept the Warriors hopes' alive.

Young winger Kevin Locke had already scored a memorable first-half double, and toed a Lance Hohaia grubber kick ahead from near halfway in the final minute of play. Displaying electrifying pace, Locke narrowly won the race to the ball ahead of Roosters speedster Phil Graham and planted the ball as his torso was simultaneously bent around the goalpost.

Replays showed Locke had successfully scored the gutsy leveller, while James Maloney added the simple conversion after the siren to win a thrilling encounter 20-18. Locke's bravery cost him two weeks in the injury ward but earned a place in club folklore.

### 8. Warriors v Illawarra (1996)

The fledgling Auckland Warriors already knew how hostile a venue the Wollongong Showgrounds could be, flogged 38-12 by Illawarra in their maiden premiership road trip in 1995. A similar result loomed when they trailed the Steelers 20-6 at halftime early in their '96 campaign.

But the Warriors scored the only four tries of the second stanza – including a 50-metre sealer to former All Black Marc Ellis in the dying seconds – to carve out a 30-20 win and shock the scarlet-and-whites.

### 7. Warriors v Sydney Roosters (2007)

The Roosters-Warriors showdown at Allianz Stadium in 2007 is rightly regarded as one of the greatest regular-season matches of all time. But the latter stages were so eventful it's often forgotten the Warriors clawed back from a 16-point deficit after 20 minutes to grab a two-point halftime advantage.

The Warriors made it five unanswered tries to lead 30-18 but the Roosters scored two late converted tries and a field goal to hit the front, before Michael Witt's one-pointer sent it into golden point. The classic encounter finished 31-all after the rivals were unable to find a match-winner in extra-time.

### 6. Warriors v Canberra (2016)

Another thriller that ended in defeat, but nevertheless worthy of inclusion in this list thanks to the Warriors' late heroics.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

The in-form Raiders led this Round 20 clash at Canberra Stadium 22-4 with just 10 minutes to go, but a quick-fire double to Thomas Leuluai gave the Warriors a sniff. A trademark finish in the corner from David Fusitu'a brought them back to within two points and Issac Luke buried the sideline conversion on the buzzer to level the scores.

But the Warriors couldn't complete the fairytale, with Raiders captain Jarrod Croker bagging his third try early in just the second minute of extra-time – consigning the Warriors to their third golden point loss in four outings.

### **5. Warriors v Canberra (1999)**

The Warriors snapped a six-match losing streak in '99 with a stunning 32-30 victory at Mount Smart over the Laurie Daley-led Raiders, recovering from a 16-point deficit during the first half.

The home side still trailed 30-18 with 12 minutes left but tries to tyros Ali Lauti'iti and Odell Manuel squared the ledger, before captain Matthew Ridge slotted a match-winning penalty goal in the dying stages.

Unfortunately, the match is predominantly remembered for the eight-match suspension meted out to Ridge for raking his hands across the face of young Raiders winger Lesley Vainikolo.

### **4. Warriors v Wests Tigers (2011)**

Thumped 40-10 by Brisbane in the qualifying final, the Warriors were headed for a straight-sets exit when they trailed the highly-rated Wests Tigers 18-6 at halftime of the sudden-death semi-final in Sydney a week later.

But tries to Feleti Mateo and Lance Hohaia during an absorbing second stanza reeled the deficit back in to two points, before a freakish Krisnan Inu touchdown from a Shaun Johnson cross-field kick two minutes from time snatched a euphoric 22-20 victory for the Warriors.

### **3. Warriors v Souths (2003)**

The mercurial Stacey Jones once again proved the New Zealand Warriors' saviour, sinking South Sydney 31-30 in an epic golden point triumph midway through the 2003 NRL season.

The lowly Rabbitohs had opened up an imposing 24-6 lead early in the second half over the previous year's grand finalists, but Jones' try just before the hour mark opened the floodgates as the visitors ran in three more four-pointers in the space of 12 minutes to take a 30-24 lead.

South regrouped and Justin Smith converted his own try two minutes from fulltime to send the match in extra-time but Jones broke the Bunnies' hearts with less than three minutes of golden point remaining, landing a running 35-metre field goal to clinch the win.

### **2. Warriors v Newcastle (2005)**

The Warriors' biggest-ever comeback came at Newcastle's EnergyAustralia Stadium in 2005, reeling in a 20-point deficit against the Knights. The hosts led 20-0 and were still in the box-seat at 26-16 in front when their talisman Andrew Johns departed with a broken jaw 15 minutes from fulltime.

Johns' great rival, Stacey Jones, went into overdrive to conjure three late tries for the Warriors. The final touchdown, to powerhouse winger Francis Meli, came in the final minute after a movement that originated deep inside Warriors territory, snatching an unlikely 30-26 result.

*Continued on next page...*

Continued from previous page...

## 1. Warriors v Bulldogs (2001)

In Round 8 of 2001, the Bulldogs were coasting to victory against the Warriors in the first-ever match staged in Wellington, ahead 24-8 with less than six minutes to go.

Back-to-back tries from wingers Henry Fa'afili and Francis Meli gave the inscrutable Warriors a sniff, before prop Justin Morgan busted the line and sent makeshift fullback Clinton Toopi away for a 75-metre, score-leveling touchdown.

Stacey Jones missed the relatively easy conversion, but the drawn result provided the impetus for the underachieving club to qualify for its maiden finals series.

Footage of these unforgettable encounters can be viewed here: <https://thiswarriorslife.com/2018/07/02/twl-top-10-warriors-greatest-comebacks/>

# THIS WARRIORS LIFE

**FRESH COVERAGE OF THE MIGHTY NEW  
ZEALAND WARRIORS**

**News - Previews - Reviews - Interviews  
Opinion - Analysis - Features - History - Stats**

**Website: [thiswarriorslife.com](http://thiswarriorslife.com)**

**Facebook: [facebook.com/ThisWarriorsLife/](https://www.facebook.com/ThisWarriorsLife/)**

**Twitter: [@thiswarriorslyf](https://twitter.com/thiswarriorslyf)**

**Instagram: [thiswarriorslife](https://www.instagram.com/thiswarriorslife)**

**Contact: [will@thiswarriorslife.com](mailto:will@thiswarriorslife.com)**

## Breaking News!

**Rugby League fans.. Buy it or lose it! Big League magazine is now on sale!**

- Progressive Supermarkets
- Paper Plus Group
- Relay Airport stores
- Whitcoulls
- BP Oil
- Z Oil
- Mobil
- Independent bookstores
- Selected Dairies and Superette

# BIG LEAGUE

**On sale EVERY  
Thursday!**



# Brothers in Arms

*By Gordon Findlater of  
The Star, Christchurch*

**DOUBLE TROUBLE:** Northern Bulldogs' props Chris and Jason Bamford have four Canterbury Rugby League premierships between them.

**BAMFORD BROTHERS** Chris and Jason have a lot in common – they're both massive props, are renowned for breaking tackles, start most sentences with “yeah mate” and always seem to be up for a laugh. They've also won four Canterbury club league premierships between them. However, it's taken until this year for them to play on the same team.

When Chris, 35, returned from a stint playing in Orange, New South Wales, late last year he was unsure of where he would play his club footy this season. However, his mind was quickly made up after a conversation with his older brother Jason.

“I just said to [Chris], why don't you come to Kaiapoi and play for the Northern Bulldogs? They'll love you,” said Jason.

“I said if you [James] come out of retirement, then I'll come and play for the 'Dogs,” said Chris.

Jason, 38, retired from the game in 2011 and up until January had no interest in returning to top flight club league.

“I lost the love for the game. But this was too good to turn down,” said Jason.

“I know that Kaiapoi is always looking for forwards so I started getting back into the gym.”

The decision is reaping rewards. On Saturday, Jason crashed his way over the line to score a match-winning try in the Bulldogs' 24-20 win over the Hornby Panthers. The win moves them into a tie for second in the premiership with the Panthers on 14 points.

The try was Jason's third of the season. Chris is currently one of the leading try scorers in the competition with nine. While the pair are both battering ram props with Chris 125kg and Jason 130kg, how they go about scoring differs, according to Jason anyway.

“He [Chris] is a bit more of a hot stepper and seems to jam his way through a gap, whereas I like to go straight through guys,” said Jason.

Although the pair haven't played on the same team until this year, it's not like they haven't tried. Jason has previously transferred to Linwood Keas and Celebration Lions in an attempt to link up with his brother. However, on both occasions Chris left for offers to play in Australia.

“We've always been really close so it's a privilege to finally be able to play next to one another,” said Jason.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

But he's not just playing alongside his brother, now he's also being coached by him. Chris has come on-board at the Bulldogs as a co-coach – alongside Brent Ringdahl – with the idea of taking over as head coach next year.

Chris isn't new to coaching. His first coaching experience came unexpectedly in 2010 in Australia when his agent Frank Endacott found him a job as a player-coach with Warialda in north-west New South Wales.

“Frank Endacott rang me and said get over there and play. He then told me I was the coach as well. I thought bloody hell he's thrown me in the deep end because I've never coached . . . he said don't worry, it will be easy mate,” said Chris.

“As it turns out, [Endacott] looked after me because you get paid more for being a player-coach.”

Chris is going for his own three-peat with the Bulldogs this year. He won the Pat Smith Trophy with the Linwood Keas in 2016. Last year he was instrumental in Orange CYMS winning the group 10 premiership. He was also awarded the competition's player of the year award. “Yeah mate, the goal this year is to get to the grand-final. Once you're there anything can happen on the day . . . we want to send a few old boys out with a bang,” said Chris.

One of those old boys is Jason, who, along with Kyle Reuben, are the only surviving members from the Bulldogs' one and only premiership win in 2007.

Even with coaching duties set to increase next season Chris doesn't see himself hanging up the boots anytime soon.

“The body's not too bad at the moment, definitely not as bad as Jason's anyway,” said Chris.

On Saturday the Bulldogs host bottom of the table Riccarton Knights at Murphy Park at 3pm.

## THE RLEF ROUND UP...

### NETHERLANDS SQUAD SELECTED AHEAD OF DOMESTIC FINALS

**A**HEAD OF the domestic Grand Final, which will be held in Rotterdam on 7th July, Netherlands Rugby League Bond head coach Kane Krlic has announced his 24-man squad for the nation's upcoming internationals. The Orange will take on Germany, also in Rotterdam, on the 1st September and head to Gothenberg on 22nd September to face Sweden.

### ENGLAND LIONHEARTS RETURN FROM SUCCESSFUL TWO-GAME TOUR TO SERBIA

**E**GLISH LIONHEARTS – Yorkshire have returned unbeaten from a two-game tour of Serbia. In the main fixture, they successfully defended their unbeaten record in the country defeating the national side 34-6 at the Makis Stadium in Belgrade; scoring six tries, three in each half.

### MALTA COACHING COURSE

**A**LEVEL 1 coaching course has been held in Valletta as part of the RLEF training and education portal project. Ten aspiring coaches attended, including two local teachers who hope to introduce the sport into their schools. They were put through their paces by local educator Sam Blyton-Keep, who is also the coach of the national team.

More details on [www.rlef.eu.com](http://www.rlef.eu.com)



# Baxey Fires Up

*By Jacob Page of The Star, Christchurch*

Second rower James Baxendale will captain the Canterbury Bulls in 2018. Photo: Getty Images.

**T**WELVE YEARS after his Canterbury Bulls debut, the fire to compete still burns strong for James Baxendale.

The 32-year-old second rower will lead the Bulls again this season. A 19-man squad was named at the weekend, with three more players to be added.

Baxendale says his advancing years has its football benefits.

“I play for different reasons now. I play for enjoyment and I think I’m going better than I ever have,” he said.

“When you get older, you get more crafty with how you play.”

Baxendale comes from West Coast rugby league stock. His father Ray was a product of the Runanga club and he played 39 matches, including 17 tests, for the Kiwis between 1975 and 1981.

“Dad guided me through the grades, but to be fair, he’s let me do my own thing and just play the way I want.”

Baxendale, an electrician, said he was motivated to stay in the game to win a Massetti Cup title with his club Hornby and a national title with the Bulls.

The Bulls’ last title was in 2014.

Bulls coach Andrew Auimatagi has named 10 in the squad from the Massetti Cup’s leading two sides, the Linwood Keas and Hornby Panthers.

It will be Auimatagi’s third season with the Bulls.

Riccarton Knights second rower Jope Tagicakibau forced his way into the squad after a standout start to the season, Auimatagi said.

“Jope is someone who trialled for the New Zealand 18s team and I thought he’s had a really strong season so far,” he said.

Former North Queensland Cowboys junior and Aranui High School product Cyrus Timo-Latu will add plenty of zip at hooker,

Veteran hard-man, back-rower Will Tafua, returns after a year off.

Matt Sauni, who has played reserve grade football with the New Zealand Warriors, will help strengthen the centre combinations.

Canterbury will play two of their three national premierships games at Christchurch Stadium.

*Continued on next page...*

Continued from previous page...

The Bulls will start with an away game against Counties on Sunday, September 16, and then have back-to-back home \ games against Waikato and Akarana.

- The final will be played on October 6 at Mt Smart Stadium.

Canterbury Bulls 2018 squad (three to be added)

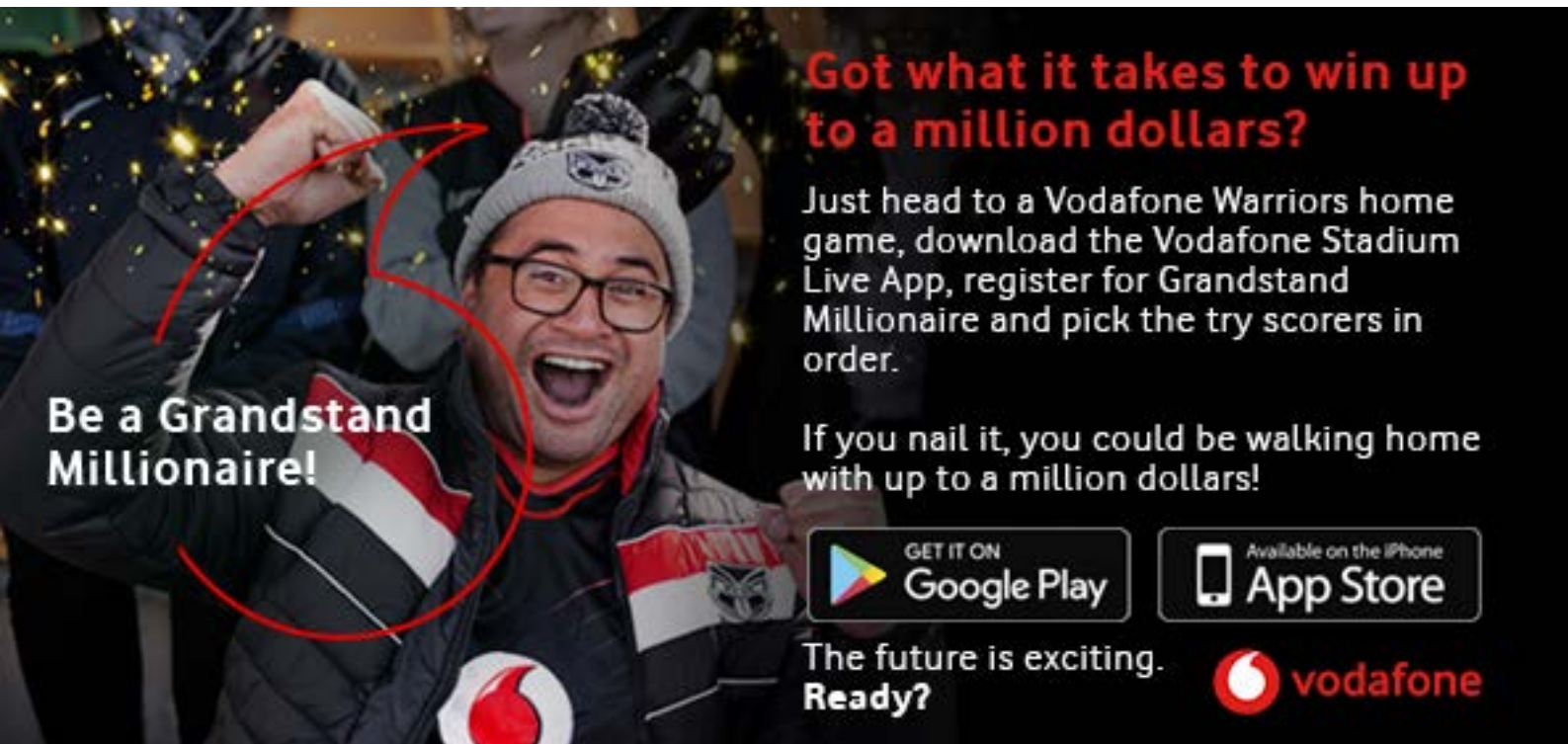
James Baxendale (captain, Hornby), Mark Burton (Linwood), Michael Butson (Northern), Jiordan Fidow-Kele (Linwood), Dene Grace (Hornby), Ben Ilalio (Halswell), Alani Kakoi (Linwood), Isaac Maliota (Papanui), Rulon Nutira (Hornby), Matthew

Sauni (Halswell), Paul

Sauni (Linwood), Toi Sepuloni (Linwood), Will Tafua (Hornby), Jope Tagicakibau (Riccarton), Elijah Tauamiti (Papanui), Reuben Te Amo (Riccarton), Cyrus Timo-Latu (Papanui), Alex Todd (Linwood), William Yeow (Linwood).

Bulls national premierships draw

- Sunday, September 16, v Counties, Mt Smart Stadium
- Saturday, September 22, v Waikato, Christchurch Stadium, 2pm
- Saturday, September 29, v Akarana, Christchurch Stadium, 2pm



**Be a Grandstand Millionaire!**

**Got what it takes to win up to a million dollars?**

Just head to a Vodafone Warriors home game, download the Vodafone Stadium Live App, register for Grandstand Millionaire and pick the try scorers in order.

If you nail it, you could be walking home with up to a million dollars!

GET IT ON **Google Play** Available on the iPhone **App Store**

The future is exciting. **Ready?** **vodafone**

**NO ADVERTS ARE PAID FOR IN THIS NEWSLETTER**





**Vodafone  
Warriors  
aim to raise  
\$50,000 for  
charity**  
*by Vodafone  
Warriors*

**T**HE VODAFONE Warriors have today announced plans to stage “the biggest charity game day in New Zealand sport” when they take on arch rivals the Melbourne Storm at Mount Smart Stadium on Sunday, July 22 (4.00pm kick-off).

In announcing the “The Great Vodafone Warriors Charity Day”, CEO Cameron George said KidsCan, Paralympics New Zealand, Ronald McDonald House Charities and Shine were the four charities the club had partnered with.

The Vodafone Warriors will announce a number of significant fundraising initiatives to support the game day in the coming weeks but, to kick things off, George revealed the club has already earmarked a donation of \$50,000 to the charities if the stadium is sold out. For a crowd of 20,000, the donation will be \$25,000, \$10,000 for a crowd of 15,000 and \$5000 for 10,000.

“We see this as a tremendous opportunity for our members, fans, corporate partners, players, staff and families to come together as we never have before to support some great causes,” he said.

“We’re calling on our fans to play their part and help us pack the stadium out. We want to sell it out and raise as much money as we can for our fantastic charity partners.”

George said the club’s commitment to donate much-needed funds based on the crowd size was just one component of “The Great Vodafone Warriors Charity Day”.

“We have some amazing plans in the pipeline,” he said.

“We’ve been working with our partners on this initiative for some time and will be in a position to announce what we are doing with them in the coming days.

“This is something that is incredibly important to everyone here at the club and our players are going to be coming to the party, too.”

George also announced principal sponsor Vodafone would be setting up a ‘text-to-donate’ number to support the fundraising drive.

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter



Mt Albert's Sala Falelua-Malio

# ARL Match Reports

By ARL

## Rd 12 SAS Fox Memorial Premiership Match Reports

Otahuhu 50 Richmond 12

Otahuhu clocked up seven tries on their way to a half century of points against Richmond, in what was the perfect celebration for prop Freddie Turuwhenua's 200th SAS Fox Memorial Premiership match. Up 24-6 at the break, the Leopards powered on in the second, with centre Rahiri Witehira scoring a double. Fullback Geronimo Doyle was a key contributor, while Setu Tu earned Man of the Match honours from the right wing.

Pt Chevalier 46 Papakura 22

After a tight opening 40 minutes, Pt Chevalier turned it on in the second half to register a comfortable victory over Papakura. Up just 18-12 at the break, the Pirates scored in quick succession to open the second period and never looked back. Lock Chris Sio was a standout in the middle of the park, along with veteran hooker Tevita Latu off the bench.

Mangere East 32 Howick 30

A Phillip Makatoa try with two minutes left on the clock saw Mangere East complete a spectacular comeback to down Howick. Trailing 30-16 with 10 minutes left on the clock, the Hawks stormed back into the contest to pick up their fifth win of the campaign, led by front-rower Kalani Ili.

Glenora 16 Northcote 12

An injury-ravaged Glenora Bears edged out a victory over Northcote, to keep hold of the Roope Rooster challenge trophy and extend their unbeaten run to 11 games. Without a number of frontline forwards, 18-year-old prop Caleb Uele played 80 minutes in the middle for the Bears, who had Simon Luafalealo, Phil Kingi and Chaz Brown score tries in the win.

Mt Albert 42 Marist 10

An Eiden Ackland double helped Mt Albert to a big win over Marist, putting an end to the Lions' previous four-game losing streak. While scores remained close through the first 20 minutes, the Lions assumed control midway through the opening stanza and ran away with the game off the back of an improved performance from their middle forwards. Teenage utility back Emanuel Tuimavave-Gerrard was brilliant with the boot, kicking a perfect seven from seven for the hosts.

*Continued on next page...*

## Rd 10 Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Match Reports

Northern 18 Otara 4

Northern Brothers earned their fourth win of the year, getting past Otara in a free-flowing game at Freyberg Park. Up 12-0 at half-time, Northern got out to an 18-0 lead at the back end of the match, before Otara scored a late consolation try.

Manukau 28 Ellerslie 28

A remarkable late comeback saw Manukau score 18 points in the final 15 minutes to secure a draw with Ellerslie. Facing a 28-10 deficit, Manukau struck in quick succession to steal a point from a game which had appeared a lost cause, with a late Magpies penalty sealing the result.

New Lynn 14 Bay Roskill 50

A strong showing from the Bay Roskill forward pack saw them roll through west Auckland neighbours New Lynn and make it a perfect 10 from 10 in 2018. Vikings Jerome Vogel, Cori Vogel and Mackenzie Kata all finished with doubles next to their names.

Papatoetoe 22 Pakuranga 28

An inexperienced Pakuranga rallied to beat Papatoetoe 28-22 on the road, in a result which lifts them back inside the competition's top eight. Locked up at 12-all at the break, Pakuranga, who had five players make their Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup debut in the game, got in front early in the second half and never looked back, holding on for their fifth win of the year.

Ponsonby 37 Waitemata 14

A four-try haul in the second half saw Ponsonby overcome Waitemata at Victoria Park, to consolidate their place in the competition's top four. The accurate boot of Carlos Mataora was a key difference for the Ponies, who were led around the park well by playmaker Aaron Nootai.

Franklin 30 Te Atatu 18

A double to utility Ben Kingi helped Franklin to another victory over a top-eight opponent, with the Storm overcoming the Te Atatu Roosters in Pukekohe. Kingi scored a try either side of half-time and also kicked three conversions, with the win keeping Franklin in second position on the ladder.

---

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter

**Check out this link from Physical Disability Rugby League NZ's inaugural curtain raiser on Friday night put together by Sky TV, it is amazing. Enjoy:**

<https://www.facebook.com/pdrlnz/videos/vb.263527967471463/416332635524328/?type=2&theater>



# A Grand Final to remember

By Wayne Capper –  
Taranaki Rugby League

**S**ATURDAY 30TH June 2018 will go down as a date to remember, and will be etched into the Taranaki Rugby League history books as one of the greatest comebacks in recent times.

Down 34-12, the Bell Block-Marist Dragons looked down and out but for those that know this side well know that they do not go down without a fight, and that is exactly what happened scoring 30 unanswered points in the second half to beat Whanganui Boxon 42-34, and win both the Paddock to Plate Butchery Taranaki Premiership and Lile Shield.

The game started off with a bang, both sides playing at a frantic pace with some bone crunching defence coming from both sides. It was the Dragons who took the first scalp through livewire hooker Jesse Pirini who burrowed over close to the posts, this was converted and the Dragons were out to a 6-0 lead.

Although the opening stanza had the Boxon boys stunned and on the back foot, they came firing back through some well executed attacking play and finished off by a superb grubber and regather by classy half-back Bernard Matthews who scored close to the posts. The try was then converted which brought the game even at 6-6 all.

For the next 20 minutes it was all one way traffic as Boxon took command of the game through basic completions and well executed plays, up 20-6 with 5 minutes to go the Boxon defence could not contain big Dragons forward Jonathan Fidow who had a barnstorming run to score close to the posts which lifted the spirits of the Dragons side heading into halftime, Boxon with the lead 22-12 going into the break.

Boxon started off the second half in commanding fashion with tries to stalwart Richie Graham and Matt Everleigh-Brown which took the game out to 34-12 early in the second half, it was at this time that the game looked over. The Dragons were tired and Boxon had good momentum, not to mention a commanding lead.

It all changed when barnstorming Dragons second rower Tieimi Ransfield came off the bench to power onto the ball beating defenders at will with his quick footwork to score a much need try, that was all that was needed for the Dragons to get the lift they needed. From then on the momentum of the game shifted with Boxon conceding penalty after penalty as the Dragons marched forward bringing the game to a 34-34 all draw with 8 minutes to go.

With 6 minutes to go a ruck infringement penalty was given and the veteran Dylan Hall stepped up to slot the kick and give the Dragons a 36-34 lead with 5 minutes to go. A few minutes later after another strong surge by the Dragons was finished off by elusive winger Chance Te Uira who dotted down in the corner, the try was converted by Dylan Hall which closed the game off at 42-34.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

It was commiserations for the Whanganui Boxon side who had been the benchmark all season with some fine displays of Rugby League and barnstorming wins throughout the year, Shade Heta was absolutely outstanding for them and by far the stand out prop of the competition, Bernard Matthews was also outstanding as he directed his well structured team around the park whilst Jordan Davis and Tautahi Rawiri were always a threat. Woody Martin and Te Tuhinga Reweti were workhorses throughout the game as was hooker Steven Aue.

It was all celebrations for the Bell Block-Marist Dragons team as they showed true grit and determination to come back from what most teams would not be able to, and to once again show they know how to win the ones that count. Tieimi Ransfield was outstanding with his hard runs and quick footwork, he changed the whole momentum of the game. Isaac Hekenui was hard to contain up front as was the likes of Jonathan Fidow and Andrew Castles with ball in hand, Jesse Pirini and Enele Fidow were always a threat around the ruck and questioning the defence. Dylan Hall produced some outstanding kicks and was instrumental in directing his team around whilst young Ricco Falaniko and Tjontae Morunga impressed.

All in all it was a great Grand Final to remember, a big thank you must go to all the players, management, supporters, volunteers, sponsors and associates that made the day the success it was. Rugby League, what a game.....

---

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



Facebook



Instagram



Twitter

---

**Memorial Match Between the Coastal Cobras Masters  
Vs  
Patea Masters in Opunake Taranaki on the 28th July 2018**

The purpose of this inaugural event is to bring members from each league community (Patea & Opunake) as well as our own whanau, together, and have a past and present seniors/elders from both organisations participate in a fun, friendly and enjoyably-competitive league fixture.

**SANFORD EVENT CENTRE  
SAT 28TH  
2.30 KICK OFF**



**Lorna  
Hinga-Tapiki  
Memorial  
Taonga**

**28th July 2018 @ Opunake**

**Coastal Cobras vs Patea  
Warriors masters**

**Playing for the Lorna Hinga  
memorial trophy.**

**MASTERS RUGBY LEAGUE**



# NZUTSRL Women's Wrap Up

*By Carey Clements*

**A**FTER HAVING their men's team return from the United Kingdom several weeks ago with a one-all shared Test series against England Universities, the very first New Zealand Universities and Tertiary Students women's league side have been carving up in Canada in the past week with two wins from two games.

The idea behind the tour came after four women's sides competed at the NZUTSRL national tournament in Wellington last September and after some extensive fundraising had been held from two big raffles to a quiz night which was supported by sports people across the sporting codes, the women students left for Canada and the United States on June 24.

After travelling on a long and exhausting flight from Auckland to Vancouver, the side only had a few days to get over both the jetlag and acclimatise to a warm Canadian summer before their first match was held against the British Columbia Storm team.

The next few days saw the team coach Kenny O'Brien (who had also coached the men's side in England) mould the team together through some intensive training and for everyone a chance to fully verse themselves as team mates for the first time.

The pride in also representing their country was also further brought home when former New Zealand Universities representatives and now Vancouver residents Neil Speedy and James Roughan visited the team on separate occasions to pass on their best wishes as well as telling them of what it means to wear the jersey.

Within minutes of the start of their 7.30pm fixture, the NZUTSRL Women were on the board when a beautiful pass by the inside centre Sherri Taurima resulted in the outside centre Deven Robinson going over for a well worked try.

In the end the new girls on the block overwhelmed the Storm side 54-nil with a total of ten tries, including three tries to Krystal Rota, while both Marama Davies and Jane Bryce also had memorable debuts with two tries each. 2017 New Zealand Womens World Cup representative Kimiora Nati also gave a class display with the boot with seven successful conversions from ten attempts.

Team captain Brenda Collins (who is the younger sister of the late All Black Jerry Collins) was very happy after the game and said her side set up the win by playing up the middle before then attacking on both the left and right hand sides.

The following morning the team flew 971km to Calgary and into a new time zone. After more training sessions under both O'Brien and the team trainer Ben Montague, the NZUTSRL women played their 'Test' match against a Canada Select XIII.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

The Kiwi students began the game as if they had not left Vancouver by racing out to a 14-0 lead, before some fine rugged play by the home side saw them hit back with two tries to trail 14-10.

The NZUTSRL side however soon found their lost ways and with a try near halftime, they led 20-10 at the break before increasing the lead further with two quick tries to lead 32-10.

Canada scored its third and final try of the game with 15 minutes to go before the final quarter was again claimed by the visitors to see them finish with an emphatic 42-16 win, over a team that had players in its side that had played and subsequently finished fourth in the 2017 Women's Rugby League World Cup.

After taking a rodeo on Canada's national day, the team flew out to Los Angeles, for a few days R & R, before they undertake an official function with the New Zealand Consular General Maurice Williamson in Santa Monica on Tuesday morning, following the initiative made by the NZUTSRL Board member Stephen Grice, whose brother Leon Grice, had previously been the New Zealand Consular General in the United States.

The third and final match of the short tour will be in Santa Barbara on Wednesday, California time before the side returns back to New Zealand later this week.

The NZUTSRL Chairman John Fiso said the tour was another initiative made by its new Board, coupled with the experience and expertise made by Fiso Group's Shelley Addison and Rebecca Ama to ensure the team was assembled and the tour was made successful.



# Vantage Black Sticks Women Named for World Cup Campaign

By Hockey NZ

**V**ANTAGE BLACK Sticks Women's head coach Mark Hager has named his side to compete at the Vitality Hockey Women's World Cup in London next month.

The New Zealand team includes just one change from the group who won a gold medal at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in April.

Auckland midfielder Lulu Tuilotolava will suit up for her first major tournament after making her debut during the Pioneer Energy Women's Tri Nations in Cromwell.

It's an experienced side led by captain Stacey Michelsen (254 tests), while Anita McLaren (264) and Sam Charlton (219) have also played more than 200 matches.

Hager said it's a strong team with plenty of players who have proven they can match up against the best in the world.

"It's a very versatile team and we believe there's a good mix of youth and experience within the group with talent across various positions," he said.

"We think we've got the right balance - all 18 players in the side deserve their spot and I know they are very excited.

"After winning a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games we probably go in with a bigger target on our backs but hopefully that fuels us to lift even further as a group."

The Women's Hockey World Cup is the biggest prize and most cherished victory in hockey alongside the Olympics.

Every four years, the Hockey World Cup sees the world's greatest teams play some of the toughest, most skillful and entertaining international hockey imaginable.

In 2018, the tournament has been extended to 16 teams with teams playing three group stage matches before the elimination phase.

All games will be played at England's 10,000-seater Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London.

The Vantage Black Sticks Women open their campaign against Belgium (world ranking 13th) on Monday 23 July at 6:00am (NZ time).

The Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup takes place later this year in Bhubaneswar, India from 28 November - 16 December, featuring the Vantage Black Sticks Men.

## VANTAGE BLACK STICKS WOMEN'S WORLD CUP TEAM

21 July - August 5, 2018 - London

TEAM	
Sam CHARLTON	Stacey MICHELSEN
Tarryn DAVEY	(c)
Frances DAVIES	Brooke NEAL
Madison DOAR	Grace O'HANLON
Shiloh GLOYN	Amy ROBINSON
Ella GUNSON	Sally RUTHERFORD
Sam HARRISON	Kelsey SMITH
Rose KEDDELL	Liz THOMPSON
Anita McLAREN	Lulu TUILOTOLAVA
Olivia MERRY	

## VANTAGE BLACK STICKS WOMEN'S WORLD CUP SCHEDULE (in NZ time)

Monday 23rd July - 6:00am	Vantage Black Sticks Women vs Belgium
Tuesday 24th July - 11:00pm	Vantage Black Sticks Women vs Japan
Sunday 29th July - 7:00am	Vantage Black Sticks Women vs Australia
Monday 30th & Tuesday 31st July	Post Pool Play Cross-Overs
Wednesday 1st & Thursday 2nd August	Quarter Finals
Saturday 4th August	Semi Finals
Sunday 5th August	Medal Matches





Runanga Rugby League (west coast-nz) centenary 1919-2019

Queens birthday weekend 2019,

Runanga Rugby League will be celebrating 100 years of the home of champions, we have had 17 kiwis over the years.

Any further information required we have a Facebook page Runanga Rugby league centenary 1919-2019

Or [runangarugbyleague@gmail.com](mailto:runangarugbyleague@gmail.com)



# Back in the GAME



It's no secret the Warriors' return to winning ways coincides with the return of one of rugby league's master coaches to the game he loves. By **MICHAEL BURGESS**

**H**E'S gone under the radar in the wake of many other changes – but Brian Smith might just be the Warriors' secret weapon.

As a football renaissance begins across the Tasman, it's no coincidence Smith has taken on a critical role at the Auckland club.

He's the Warriors' first full-time football manager, a role that dovetails between a mentor for the coaches, a father figure for the players and a sounding board for the staff. He's also charged with turning the tide in the battle for junior talent, and is leading a working party that could transform New Zealand league.

It's not bad for a 64-year-old, who this time last year was retired to a small farm in the Blue Mountains.

"This is the perfect job, at the perfect time," says Smith. "I'm loving it."

## CLEARING THE AIR

Smith has dove back into the hurly burly of the NRL – he watches five or six junior games a weekend – as well as time on the road with the Warriors.

It's a long way from Bilpin – a small country town 90 kilometres west of Sydney – where Smith had lived for the past two years, sharing a five-acre lifestyle block with "chooks and ducks, cats, rats and dogs."

It was a simple life.

"I was looking after vineyards, mowing lawns, fixing fences, cleaning dams, growing veggies – all that healthy stuff" he says.

It was also a time of reflection for Smith, who began his first-grade coaching career in 1984.

"I had some personal things to sort out," he says.

"I had a marriage break-up to sort out and some business issues. I'd been carrying a lot of stuff with me. Working on that property cleared my head. I felt like I unloaded everything out there, left it, and it all stayed there. I was refreshed."

That looked unlikely after finishing up with English side Wakefield Trinity in March 2016. Smith hadn't considered getting back into the game – "I was burnt out, mentally, emotionally" – but the wheels started turning early last year.

"I had some talks with a couple of clubs, a few coaches," he recalls.

"Then I started having chats with Steve [Kearney], talking about how it was going for him. It grew out of that. It was the right time and the right job for me. I was ready to go back."

## THE STORY SO FAR

Smith enjoyed a remarkable, though at times tumultuous, career. He worked at five different NRL clubs (Steelers, Dragons, Eels, Knights and Roosters) and also had stints at Hull, Bradford and Wakefield.

One of only three coaches to top 600 career NRL games (Wayne Bennett and Tim Sheens are the others), he enjoyed success with Parramatta and St George. Smith also reached four grand finals and a Challenge Cup final, though never lifted the trophy.



**BACK IN THE DAY:** Smith in charge of Parramatta.

"I loved almost all my days as a coach," Smith recalls.

"It's an honour to be involved at that level and there are a lot of great memories."

But does it still hurt, after so much hard work, to have missed the champagne in the big moments?

"Of course I've got regrets," says Smith, who had a remarkable 56.8 win percentage across almost 250 matches at Parramatta.

"You can't live a life like mine without making a few mistakes. But overall, I did my best – it was pretty damn good most of the time."

"There aren't many people who have taken that many clubs to grand finals or Challenge Cup finals. Of course I wish I'd won the whole lot of them, let alone one, but that doesn't bug me. It's disappointing, but if you go into coaching and you are expecting not to be disappointed, you've got rocks in your head."

## THE NEXT CHAPTER

We meet Smith in his office at Mt Smart.

A bookshelf is heaving with sports books, with an autographed Bill Walsh come taking pride of place. The adjacent whiteboard details plans for the year, while the desk, complete with family photos, is uncluttered.

It's a tiny room, and Smith jokes about having the smallest office in the building, to which CEO Cameron George replies "you should be out and about anyway."

Such banter reflects the current environment at Warriors HQ, as good vibes abound after years of despair. It's a happy place, and Smith has also found his. An unashamed football tragic, he is back among it, although without the same pressure.

"Because of my experience – I've been in the moccasins of the head coach – I'm trying really hard to make sure that everything Steve doesn't need to worry about gets done," says Smith.

"I'm contributing what I can."



**RIGHT HAND MAN:**  
Warriors coaching staff.

So far, he's added a lot.

"His knowledge, his football brain, his experience, his contacts... he knows everybody," says George.

"In March we received a tip that a high-profile Roosters player might be available. Brian made one phone call to Trent [Robinson] and we got the answer."

The veteran's office has also become a drop-in centre for players and coaches seeking advice.

"There have been queues outside his door," laughs George.

"I'm not sure what he's saying in there, but it's working. Brian has been great for us, and really valuable for Steve."

"He helps you think about the game differently," says young Warriors prop Bunty Afoa.

"He's got a way of getting right to the point, of making you realise what really matters."

### NATIONAL PRIDE

Smith's key task is to slow the huge player drain to Australia, with hundreds of young players heading across the Tasman each year. It's a daunting assignment.

"One guy said to me 'Smithy, you'll never stop those Aussie clubs coming and taking our players. 'Oh really', I replied. 'Never?' - I thought that was a defeatist attitude."

Instead, Smith has taken an aggressive approach.

"It's on," says Smith.

"The battle has begun, and we are determined to win this. We've got no choice."

There's a multi-faceted strategy, from running parallel camps in Auckland to stymie similar attempts by Australian clubs, to investing more in the scouting and development network, to making a conscious effort to change the perception of the Warriors among potential young players.

Most importantly, Smith is also heading up a working party with representatives from the Warriors, Auckland Rugby League and New Zealand Rugby League, to improve symmetry and alignment between the three organisations.

"If we can do that it will be massive for the game," said Smith. "The Aussies better watch out, because things are going to change." 🐣



### Brian Smith's coaching career

NRL team	Years	Games	W	L	D	Win %
Illawarra	1984-87	96	32	64	0	33.3%
St George	1991-95	118	69	46	3	58.5%
Parramatta	1997-06	243	138	98	7	56.8%
Newcastle	2007-09	68	31	37	0	45.6%
Roosters	2010-12	76	35	40	1	46.1%
Total	1984-2012	601	305	285	11	50.7%

Smith reached four grand finals (1992, 1993, 2001, 2010)

#### England

Hull FC	1988-90	50	32	18	0	64.0%
Bradford	1996	28	21	7	0	75.0%
Wakefield Trinity	2015-16	20	6	14	0	30.0%
Total	1988-2016	98	59	39	0	60.2%





## THIS WEEK IN OUR ROUND 17 ISSUE

NRL, INTRUST SUPER PREMIERSHIP, INTRUST SUPER CUP +  
UNDER-20s TEAM LISTS, PREVIEWS AND STATS + SCORES AND  
RESULTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY!



ROUND 17, 2018

On sale at newsagents, supermarkets and at the  
ground from Thursday, July 5

### DIGITAL VERSION

Available via [magsonline.com.au](http://magsonline.com.au), the Apple News-stand and Google Play

### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

@bigleaguemag  
[bigleague@newslifemedia.com.au](mailto:bigleague@newslifemedia.com.au)

It's another short round, but the footy never stops in Big League.

As teams struggle for a competitive edge and players face uncertain futures, in this week's edition we've compiled our comprehensive list of the league's most valuable off-contract players and ask whether or not they'll stay – and where they'll go if they choose to depart.

If you thought the players and coaches had it tough, spare a thought for NRL CEO's like South Sydney's Blake Solly and the Bulldogs' Andrew Hill. They tell us how they manage the expectations of players, fans and shareholders while helping to grow the game and leave their historic clubs in the best position for the future.

He might share a surname with one of the game's greats, but Melbourne young gun Brandon Smith is making a name for himself. The young pugilist has taken boats and trains on hours-long round trips since he was 10 just to chase his dream, and now that he's become a regular at the Storm he'll be fighting hard to stay there.

Premiership winner Michael Ennis believes the top eight is already sorted. He reviews the title aspirations of every contender for the run home and tells us why he thinks the South Sydney Rabbitohs look like the real deal.

PLUS... All the news for Origin III, This Week in History, a classic Origin flashback to 2008, 10 minutes with young Warrior Karl Lawton, NRL Fantasy

Editorial:

[pamela.whaley@news.com.au](mailto:pamela.whaley@news.com.au)

Advertising:

[bowie.phillips@news.com.au](mailto:bowie.phillips@news.com.au)



**H**ERE IS my good mate Dexter Traill receiving his inspectors epaulettes from the Commissioner of Police Mike Bush. Special occasion for a very special friend of the Sir Peter Leitch Mad Butcher club and co host in the Stacey Jones Lounge at Mt Smart stadium the home of the mighty Vodafone Warriors.



If you wish to **subscribe** to the newsletter go to:  
[www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz](http://www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz)

## Our Sponsors

**A VERY BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTING BRANDS!**

Without the help of these brands the Sir Peter Leitch Club and Newsletter wouldn't be as fantastic as it is. If you do get the opportunity please support them whenever you can.



## The Newsletter Team

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

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

**John Coffey** - Southern Correspondent  
**Barry Ross** - Australian Correspondent  
**John Holloway** - Correspondent  
**Miles Davis** - Correspondent  
**Shane Hurndell** - Correspondent