

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

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7th November 2018

Newsletter #243



Newsflash! League Legend Simon Mannerling's Book Is On Sale Tomorrow

SIMON MANNERLING is one of elite sport's great enigmas. From 2005 to 2018 he was a regular fixture in the Warriors and Kiwis rugby league teams and has captained both. He is one of only a handful of players to have played 300 NRL games for one club and, remarkably, he's the only one who has ever done it flying back and forth across the Tasman every second weekend. Yet little is known about him as he shuns the spotlight and seldom does interviews.

Warriors and former All Blacks doctor John Mayhew rates Simon alongside Richie McCaw and Buck Sheldford for sheer toughness and his ability to play through pain and illness is legendary.

Yet he was not a sporting prodigy. In *Warrior*, Simon explains how he transformed himself from a sports-mad kid with mediocre talents into one of the greats of New Zealand sport.

Simon Mannerling – Warrior goes on sale Thursday 8 November

Simon will be signing his new book at a number of sessions around Auckland.

FRIDAY 9 NOVEMBER

Whitcoulls Little High St
12.30pm – 12.50pm

SATURDAY 10 NOVEMBER

Whitcoulls St Lukes
10.30am – 10.50am

The Warehouse Westgate
11.20am – 11.40am

Whitcoulls Albany
12.20pm – 12.40pm

Glenfield Paper Plus
1.10pm – 1.30pm

Whitcoulls Northwest
2pm – 2.20pm

SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER

The Warehouse Pukekohe
10.30am – 10.50am

The Warehouse Takanini
11.30am – 11.50am

Whitcoulls Manukau
12.30pm – 12.50pm

Whitcoulls Botany
1.20pm – 1.40pm

The Warehouse Sylvia Park
2.20pm – 2.40pm

Two tests, two losses

By David Kemeys

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



WE LOST the first one and went down moaning about a penalty try, now we have lost the second one and we only have ourselves to blame.

Yes you could well mount an argument that the winning try showed separation and was dodgy, but it is in the record books, and playing like drunken cats in patches does not win you a lot of tests.

Now we have only pride to play for, and the Kiwis had better show plenty of it or all the gains made by beating Australia will count for nothing, it will be just another false dawn.

So peeved was coach Michael Maguire that he kept the players in the dressing room for a good long while after the test and one can only assume he was not handing out player of the day lollipops.

Maguire's young squad has been unlucky but we have made far too many mistakes and our completion rate would embarrass the Otahuhu Leopards.

Results matter.

When we arrived in England after beating the Roos, we all hoped, even knowing as we did that England are not the bunnies of yesteryear, we could continue our resurgence.

This side has let itself down with poor discipline - though admittedly they have been on the wrong end of some curious refereeing, failure to complete, dreadful last play options and wretched ball control.

Worse, they have let the fans down because they are better than they have showed.

Apparently Maguire held Shaun Johnson, Adam Blair, Jared Waerea-Hargreaves, Jesse Bromwich and Dallin Watene-Zelezniak in the Anfield dressing-room after the game and laid down the law about how the final test this weekend will define this group.

DWZ has had a tough baptism as captain and has been pretty good. It's not his fault the referee decided to treat him like a naughty schoolboy in the first test, but obviously it is his fault he foolishly stuck his eyes on George Burgess's fingers in a tackle during the second.

"Just the way we've lost the last two weeks has been frustrating because we know we can play better," he said.

Fair play, England are a better side than people gave them credit for and having super coach Wayne Bennett at the helm helps, but they do what we do not - complete, defend, and hang tough.

Our inability to closeout this match from a handy position is just not good enough.

But I come back to what I and DZW clearly believe, that we are capable of much better.

It's time to show it at Leeds and leave with our heads held high.

Gouge Burgess Should Have Been Sent Off

That's as clear a case of eye-gouging as you ever likely to see, and that George Burgess got away with it is a disgrace.

I thought the Aussies were bad on their own patch but the match officials turned a blind eye to it that Stevie Wonder would have been proud of.

Tempting as it is, you can't use it as an excuse for the loss, but there is no way Burgess should have stayed on the field and though Kiwis captain Dallin Watene-Zelezniak played it all down, it should be before a review.

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It's as low as it gets, and I confess it surprised me because the Burgess brothers have had a few difficulties with the judiciary before, but are well-regarded by their fellow professionals and not given to the really scummy stuff this was.

We all accept that accidents happen in our game, sometimes with terrible results, but that didn't look like any kind of accident to me.

Refs can't see everything, but the man in the video box could and should have let his whistler know.

It certainly left me with a pretty bad taste in the mouth and I was only watching.

Mind you, over in ruggers, England talisman Owen Farrell got away with a blatant shot on his Springbok opponent that did at least get looked at by the match committee.

That committee, which I think was Ray Charles, Jose Feliciano, and three blind mice, saw nothing untoward.

Like I say, we thought the Aussies were bad.

Johnson Finds A Fan

I've made it clear where I stand on Shaun Johnson, that he's got my support as long as he is one of ours, but I see former NRL star Greg Alexander reckons testing his value on the open market will come back to haunt us.

Now a league commentator, our former player says it's a hell of a gamble, and that we will struggle to replace him.

"It's pretty clear what the Warriors are saying. They signed him for too much."

Alexander has no doubt there will be clubs looking at our halfback, though he thinks several of them might be tempted to move him to stand-off.

No matter what you think, it's hard to argue with Alexander on this one: "I'd like to see who they've got in mind to fill the role that Shaun does, because there's not many who have his talent."

Two Coming In

So we are bringing in utility Adam Keighran from the Panthers, supposedly to boost our halves stocks, though he is said to be a promising player who can

earn his money in a number of positions.

He's just 21, so obviously has a lot to learn but he fits the Warriors mould of bringing in young players who will have time to learn their trade.

He is one of two players coming in on two-year deals and looks a decent punt to fill the gap left by the departure of Mason Lino, who went from zero to hero for his excellent performances this season, and who is now a Knight.

Keighran has not made his NRL debut yet but was a bit of a star at Intrust Super Premiership level, making the NSW Team of the Year after some pretty decent form at centre.

If I was Solomone Kata I'd be learning to pass to my winger really fast.

If nothing else he will be decent competition for the highly-rated Chanel Harris-Tevita for the halves back-up role next season.

The other player coming in is former Roosters, Dragons and Tigers centre Taane Milne, which adds weight to the theory we are not all that delighted with our stocks in the middle of the park.

Milne is another young fella, just 23, and I have to confess to having some doubts on this one, given he comes with a bit of history.

The Tigers showed him the door after he was sacked for a second positive drug test.

It's the old everyone deserves a second-chance story, although two tests is surely two chances.

But Milne is said to have written to coach Stephen Kearney, reassuring him he would not be a problem.

Fair play, he's owned up to his mistakes and is on the books, so let's give him a go. The coaching team obviously see something worth persevering with.

The Aussie papers reckon Roger Tuivasa-Sheck stuck up for Milne, who he knew from his days at the Roosters, as did our recruitment manager Peter O'Sullivan, who knows a hell of a lot more about the game than us mere fans.

If Milne's name sounds vaguely familiar it might be that you recall him playing for Fiji in the Rugby League World Cup. He was the one who lined up the penalty that sent the Kiwis crashing to a 4-2 defeat in the quarter-finals.



By John Coffey

Kiwis In A Losing Pattern

Photo www.photosport.nz

AS THEY say, it was Groundhog Day all over again at Anfield. The Kiwis again suffered what is becoming a traditional post-haka slump in the early stages, conceded a try against the run of play when clock watching just before halftime, and faded badly over the final stages. They had a big enough lead to hold on against the Kangaroos 26-24 at Auckland but have lost the first two Tests, and the series, in England.

They should have enjoyed a handy lead at the interval instead of being level at 6-6, and there was every expectation the Kiwis would win after being up 14-6 and having looked the better side over most of the first 55 minutes. Instead, an England team which never lost its bulldog spirit capitalised on a string of New Zealand errors to run in three more tries and win 20-14. It had been 18-16 in the first Test at Hull.

Some will call this loss controversial because of the influence of England video referee Ben Thaler, the man who had given his countrymen that ridiculous penalty try in the first Test. This time Thaler found a solitary finger in the vicinity of the ball and awarded St Helens wing Tommy Makinson his third try in the 74th minute with the scores locked at 14-14. Makinson did not have any control, but England did.

All four England tries were scored by Makinson and centre Jake Connor down the Kiwis' right side. Coach Michael Maguire later confirmed wing Joseph Rapana dislocated his shoulder when stretching for a try after 11 minutes and aggravated it when tackling Makinson 12 minutes from fulltime. A suspect defensive formation was further weakened by the need to move forward Kevin Proctor to right centre.

But the winning and losing of this Test occurred between minutes 55 and 63. Joseph Manu spilled an interception which would have given the Kiwis a 20-6 lead, Makinson ran in for his second try, Rapana dropped an easy in-goal catch, Kodi Nikorima bravely stopped George Burgess from scoring, Burgess appeared to eye-gouge Dallin Watene-Zelezniak, Rapana lost the ball in a tackle, and Connor grabbed his try.

The normally chirpy Thaler was silent during replays of Burgess raking DWZ's face, and the Kiwis captain donned his diplomatic hat after the match by telling interviewers Test footy was a tough game and Burgess was a good bloke. Even had Thaler ruled out the last try, all momentum was with the locals. As they got stronger the Kiwis' error-rate increased and if not a try then surely a field goal would have sealed the result.

Makinson would not have played in this series had human bulldozer Ryan Hall not been injured but he was a deserved Man of the Match. While his first two tries were from overlaps created by George Williams and Jonny Lomax, he scored the third from a standing start and a weaving infield run past the remnants of the Kiwis defence. Makinson also single-handedly prevented Proctor from scoring in the first half.

Hooker Josh Hodgson was the busiest man on the field, brilliant on both sides of the ball.

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While Hodgson played the entire 80 minutes, England coach Wayne Bennett had him sharing the dummy half duties with another specialist, Daryl Clark. By comparison, the Kiwis lose some impact when starting hooker Brandon Smith is rested. Replacement Kenny Bromwich is not exactly a plodder but nor is he well suited to the role.

There was a notable Test milestone when Shaun Johnson converted Ken Maumalo's try. He became the first Kiwi to reach 200 points (he now has 203 from 11 tries, 79 goals and one field goal). But at the risk of restarting an old debate, Johnson was anonymous on attack. Criticised in some quarters for running too often at Hull, Johnson's only hit-up was from dummy half (67th minute) and his kicking was of a mixed quality.

But Shaun Johnson did not lose this Test. He did not do enough to win it but nor did most of his team-mates. During the 30 first-half minutes when the Kiwis had more possession and position, and through a dazzling series of off-loads starting the second spell, they did not score enough points to seriously bruise England's confidence. When the errors infiltrated their play England did not need a second invitation.

Rugby league in England is desperate to sell itself to its public as it looks towards hosting the 2021 World Cup. The crowd at Hull was down 6000 from the corresponding Test in 2015 and the 26,234 at Anfield did not compare favourably with the 40,042 who attended the 2016 Four Nations final there. But now we hear talk of a full house at Elland Road this week when England has the Baskerville Shield to parade for its fans.

Clark (ribs) and Rapana (shoulder) might be missing from their respective teams. Maguire must now decide whether to promote any of Gerard Beale, Jahrome Hughes, Jamayne Isaako, Isaiah Papali'i, Agnatius Paasi or Peta Hiku for the third Test. None have played since their NRL clubs ended their seasons, and Hughes, Papali'i and Paasi are uncapped. Joseph Tapine played seven minutes of the first Test.

Scorers: England 20 (Tommy Makinson three, Jake Connor tries; Connor, Sam Tomkins goals) beat New Zealand 14 (Dallin Watene-Zelezniak, Ken Maumalo tries; Shaun Johnson three goals) at Anfield Stadium, Liverpool. Halftime: 6-6. Referee: Gerard Sutton (Australia). Video referee: Ben Thaler (England).

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By Barry Ross
Australian Correspondent

Inovative



Photo www.photosport.nz

I WAS INTERESTED to see the New Zealand team visit the famed Liverpool Soccer club last week. Liverpool invited coach Michael Maguire and his team to use the club's facilities at Melwood, which is about 8 kms from the Liverpool city centre. The Liverpool players responded positively to the Adam Blair-led Haka and team manager, 51 year old Jurgen Klopp, revealed how he used the Maori War Dance in his team's preparations during his first manager's job, 15 years ago with the German club, Mainz 05. Kiwi coach Michael Maguire is keen to learn from the top coaches in all sports. Madge, as he is known, finished his last club coaching position at the end of the 2017 season, when he left South Sydney. For the next few months and before signing to coach New Zealand, he travelled extensively in his aim to broaden his life experiences and improve as a Rugby League coach. Just a few weeks after leaving Souths, he flew to Africa with the aid agency, Caritas Australia. He travelled thousands of kilometres across Zimbabwe, visiting a dozen or so poverty-stricken communities and interacting with the people. This was a very moving experience for the 44 year old coach. After returning to Australia, he visited the Melbourne Storm at least twice, where several years ago, he had been an assistant coach under Craig Bellamy. He also worked for the NRL, mainly spending time with the referees. When the opportunity came to again coach in the NRL, he was patient and careful, looking at Manly and Brisbane before accepting the Head Coaching role with the Wests Tigers for 2019. Maguire's integrity was obvious when after receiving a letter from a nine year old fan thanking him for his efforts with South Sydney. He then sent the young boy a package of South Sydney mementos and memorabilia.

Maguire would be terribly disappointed after the series loss to England. When the team flew out of New Zealand, there was plenty of belief that they could defeat England after the great win over Australia. But losses in the first two Tests means Wayne Bennett's Englishmen take the series. Like the first Test, the Kiwis began the second Test brilliantly but lack of discipline and errors when in good scoring positions, cost them a good lead at halftime. To their credit England came back in the second 40 minutes and were worthy winners. I hope George Burgess receives a long suspension for his foul play involving Dallin Watene-Zelezniak in the 60th minute. English video referee, Ben Thaler, who was very quick to see things that benefited the home team in the first Test the previous week, was silent after viewing the replay. The foul play was obvious in the replay and Thaler should have immediately alerted Australia referee Gerald Sutton. Burgess should not have been on the field for the final 20 minutes and if this had have occurred, the result could have been different. Thaler and Sutton have a lot to answer for doing nothing after Burgess' action. The crowd for the second Test was 26,234.

Still in England, at a prestigious dinner at Elland Road, Leeds tonight, (7 November), three great English players from the past will be inducted into the Rugby League Hall of Fame. They are Andy Gregory, Derek Turner and Johnny Whiteley MBE. Many other great names from the past, who are already members of the Hall of Fame, will attend the dinner. These include Malcolm Reilly OBE, Lewis Jones, Garry Schofield OBE, Neil Fox MBE and Billy Boston MBE. The male and female Golden Boot winners for the best players in 2018, will also be named at the dinner.

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Rugby League is still doing well in Papua/New Guinea. The Kumuls tied up their two game series with the visiting English Knights team on Saturday at Port Moresby. They defeated the Englishmen 32-22, with former St. George/Illawarra winger, Nene Macdonald, scoring one of the tries. Macdonald will play with the Cowboys next year. The English Knights had won the first international 16-12 at Lae the previous week. Over in Dublin last Saturday, France clinched a place in the 2021 World Cup when they beat Ireland 24-10. This was a 2018 European Championship game and the week before, the Frenchmen defeated Wales 54-18. If they are successful this Saturday at Carcassonne against Scotland, France will take out this year's European Championship. Also this Saturday, Wales and Ireland clash in a vital match, which will decide second place in the Championship and also give the winner a place in the 2021 World Cup.

The date and venue for the next World Club Championship game has been released. The Sydney Roosters will play the Wigan Warriors at DW Stadium at Wigan on 17 February 2019. Wigan have won four World Club Championship games which is the most by any club in either hemisphere. February's game will be the 27th World Club Championship game, since the first one in 1976 when the Roosters beat St. Helens 25-2 at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 29 June. It will be the fourth World Club Challenge game at DW Stadium and the sixth in Wigan, with the other two being played at the old Central Park.

The problems in Australian cricket continued on Sunday with yet another loss. This time they were beaten by the South Africans at Perth in the first of a best of three ODI series. This loss follows a 3-0 defeat in Dubai in a Twenty/20 series against Pakistan. Before this series began, the Australians lost a Test series to Pakistan also in Dubai. The first Test, which finished on 11 October was drawn, but the Pakistanis easily won the second Test by 373 runs. The fallout from the ball tampering affair in South Africa on 24 March this year, continued last week, when David Peever, the Chairman of Cricket Australia, resigned. James Sutherland, the CEO of Cricket Australia, resigned on 6 June this year, while Pat Howard, the General Manager of High Performance, with step down when his contract ends next year. The players involved were punished just a few days after the incident. Captain Steve Smith received a 12 month ban from International and interstate cricket, as did vice captain, David Warner. Cameron Bancroft received a nine month suspension. Australian coach, Darren Lehmann, resigned soon after the players suspensions were announced. On a positive note for Cricket Australia, the National Women's team is expected to do well in the Women's Twenty/20 World Cup which begins in the West Indies this Friday, 9 November. New Zealand open the tournament on Friday with a game against India in Guyana, while straight after this game, Australia play Pakistan at the same venue.

NRL Interfering In Test Footy

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)



ISN'T THE NRL supposed to be in recess for the off-season? Apparently not. Instead of having a summer snooze its tentacles have again been entwining themselves around international rugby league. In company with that, the NRL-infatuated Aussie media has played its part in distracting some players and both head coaches from concentrating on the current Test series between England and New Zealand.

The NRL comprises sixteen clubs who have a totally insular attitude to the game. That's nothing new. In the old Sydney premiership St George won eleven consecutive grand finals from 1956 because it had more of those then new-fangled poker machines than anyone else. Decades later Manly-Warringah ruthlessly raided the best players from cash-strapped rivals North Sydney and Western Suburbs.

Therefore NRL clubs are expected to be selfish, not giving a damn about what damage they are doing to other areas of the sport. They have had a detrimental effect on Test football for many years, usually by finding reasons not to release players. The Kiwis, especially, have suffered because the clubs know the influential Sydney media will not kick up a stink if our national team is weakened by their actions.

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I don't blame the NRL for releasing its 2019 draw just as the brief international window was creaking open. But since the Kiwis assembled for their one-off Test against the Kangaroos and tour of England the distractions have continued almost daily. In almost every interview the Kiwis have been denying they are being distracted by happenings at home – that must be a major distraction in itself!

The coaching merry-go-round that has spun madly since Penrith sacked Anthony Griffin in August is typical of how the NRL can flail around damaging the game in general, with the frantic Sydney media in hot pursuit. Surely it smacks of incompetence among club officials that so many – Penrith, Manly, Wests Tigers, South Sydney and Brisbane – had no idea who would coach them in 2019 or 2020. Some still don't.

On this side of the Tasman the biggest bombshell was Warriors CEO Cameron George's totally unnecessary hint that Shaun Johnson might not be long at the club. George must have known his teaser would trigger a multi-media maelstrom, would unsettle Johnson in England, and possibly torpedo the entire Kiwis' Test series preparations. The timing, just before the first Test, was deplorable.

Test coaches Wayne Bennett (England) and Michael Maguire (New Zealand) were embroiled in the NRL coaching saga. Bennett threatened to walk away when media questions were asked about his future at the Broncos (2019) and Rabbitohs (from 2020) instead of the Test prospects, while a somewhat more diplomatic Maguire was also frustrated in trying to talk about the Kiwis and not the Tigers.

It's not over. Late last week Souths official Shane Richardson flew from Sydney to Liverpool in a bid to re-start the coaching merry-go-round in a bid to get Bennett in Sydney for the 2019 season. Richardson was Kiwis campaign manager at the 2017 World Cup, though it was noticed he did not put club duties aside then either. He should have shown more respect for international footy on both occasions.

George's landmine was triggered by the Daily Telegraph quoting a Canberra spokesman expressing interest in Johnson. Where the Telegraph goes, Radio Sport follows. By Thursday many fans were convinced Johnson had already been fitted for a lime green jersey. His Kiwis halfback partner Kodi Nikorima assured us his room-mate was holding up under the strain. So did assistant coach Stacey Jones. More distractions.

But by Friday night an anonymous report on the Stuff website contradicted all that by saying the Raiders were not negotiating with Johnson at all. It's just that if a loose media cannon asks enough club officials if they would be keen on signing a quality player (in this case Johnson) they will eventually find someone who will say "yes". Minor matters such as salary caps do not get in the way of a beat-up story.

On Saturday the Telegraph ignored the Kiwis but baited Bennett into an angry denial that he was recruiting Penrith forward Trent Merrin for Souths while still a well-paid employee of the Broncos. Another Telegraph story claimed Tevita Pangai Junior was rethinking his choice of Tonga ahead of Origin in 2019 after a telephone call from NSW coach Brad Fittler. More NRL interference at international level.

Footnote (1): Here is a question which might have been asked of the Warriors. If the club is indeed seeking to bolster its halfback depth how was it that highly regarded Roosters rookie Sean O'Sullivan signed for the Broncos in August – only a few weeks after his father, Peter, joined the Warriors as recruitment manager? Does father not rate son, or did son turn dad down? It could have made a great beat-up story!

Footnote (2): Anyone wondering why Jamayne Isaako was not in the Test teams after his brilliant Broncos season and impressive debut in Denver? On Saturday an Australian website revealed he was not even in England for the first Test, having stayed home for the birth of his first child, and arrived too late to be considered for the second. Just one of the prices we fans pay for no New Zealand journalists being with the Kiwis.

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