



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

28th November 2018

Newsletter #246



Johnson granted immediate release

by Vodafone Warriors

VODAFONE WARRIORS CEO Cameron George today announced halfback Shaun Johnson has requested and been granted a release from the last year of his contract in 2019.

George said the release was effective immediately.

“Yesterday (head coach) Stephen Kearney, (recruitment manager) Peter O’Sullivan and I met with Shaun and his manager Peter Brown,” he said.

“During the meeting Shaun clearly demonstrated to us that he didn’t want to be at the club in 2019.

“On the basis of what Shaun told us, we are not going to compromise our culture on and off the field with people who do not wish to represent our club, members and fans in the way we expect.

“Everything we do is about the club being first and what’s best for our future, our development and ultimately our results.

“While it’s disappointing it has come to this, we must acknowledge the contribution Shaun has made to the Vodafone Warriors. We’re proud of what he has achieved at the club and wish him all the best for the future.”

Johnson finishes his Vodafone Warriors career with 917 points from 162 appearances.

Should he stay or should he go?

By David Kemeys

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



WE LOVE a drama at the Vodafone Warriors.

The saga of the club sale dragged on longer than a politician's speech, and the Shaun Johnson "we only want him on less money" crisis is showing no sign of coming to an end either.

For those who don't know – and it's hard to imagine any fan doesn't, the club told Shaun to test the market because we wouldn't be signing him again at the type of money he is on now.

Johnson came out and said the club had told him they wouldn't be offering anything at all beyond his current contract.

That is the same as telling him to go.

A day later he asked for a release from his final year.

When you tell someone what we told Johnson - which is essentially a two word sentence with the second word being off - you would have to be a special kind of moron not to have anticipated this.

But apparently we didn't, and are demanding he play his last year out. Like that's going to work.

Johnson is our highest paid player ever, and the brown stuff really hit the fan when he took to Facebook to clarify his position on Monday.

"Firstly there is no contract for me to sign past 2019. Secondly, if you saw the article that came out a few weeks back...in a roundabout way they said they are in no rush to re-sign me. Since then they have told me again they won't be offering me anything."

That's unequivocal.

He went on: "That means I get to spread my wings and see what's out there, so right now that's what I'm doing!"

That is a long way different from what the club told us, and that's a concern.

When this broke we heard Canberra was interested, though why anyone would want to live there is beyond me. The Green Machine later poured cold-water on that, but now we are told at least four clubs might be willing to nibble.

Continued on next page...

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Losing Johnson would be a massive loss – and that's not me saying it, it's Johnathan Thurston, who says Johnson could fulfil his potential at a club with a strong culture – which is to say we don't have one.

He did admit Johnson's game management hasn't developed, which is the criticism the poor bugger has to cop from everyone on the negative side of the debate.

Thurston also said he had sympathy for Shaun, who has endured a string of partners in the halves.

"He's had a lot of pressure. He hasn't really had a settled halves partner throughout his career and he's had to shoulder a lot of the blame."

Johnson has also had support from his Kiwis partner, Broncos half Kodi Nikorima, who called his mate's treatment "harsh", and to be fair, it's hard to argue with that.

The timing of it, and playing it out in public, was a bit rough to say the least.

"I thought it was pretty harsh the way it all came out, him being on the other side of the world," Nikorima said.

Johnson has divided opinion for a long time, and it's no secret I'm a supporter, believing our winning stats when he plays prove he is vital to us.

But I'm also a big supporter of the direction the club is taking, and the people like Brian Smith, who have been brought in to put an end to the constant diet of crap we have been served up in the past.

When he does well elsewhere, I suspect a lot of people are going to be pretty unforgiving.

On The Other Hand

With all the fuss over Johnson, a new contract for Warriors coach Stephen Kearney has reportedly been tabled – and what does that tell you?

Apparently it is an offer to the end of 2022, that's a three-year extension to his current contract to the end of next year.

So Johnson is not the future, and Kearney clearly is then.

Kearney has been on record before saying he wants to stay.

Let's take a cold hard look. His first season was awful, though he got a "not your fault – not your team" get out of jail card for that.

His second was much better. There was heaps to be pleased with, but we still went out in the first round of the play-offs, even if finals footy was nose-bleed country for us given how terrible we had been for years.

I have my suspicions on this one too. If there is not clear improvement evident pretty quickly this coming season, expect the calls for his head to come quickly, whether that's fair or not.

Let's hope that improvement is there, because if it isn't, it could be a tough sell for management to convince long-suffering fans that they have it right.

Three Big League Stories Around

First the charges being faced by Jarryd Hayne. At the moment that's all they are – charges, so let's not convict him here.

But that said, if proved, what an inglorious end it will be for a man with enormous talent.

Second, and you may not have heard this, Cameron Smith wants a two year deal at the Storm.

He's only 35. If he told me he wanted to sign until he was 50 I'd look at it.

And third, Valentine Holmes leaves the NRL to pursue a career in the United States.

Good riddance.

Anything that weakens the Sharks is fine by me.



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Ngai Tuhoe
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Maori TV 6pm Sunday November 25th

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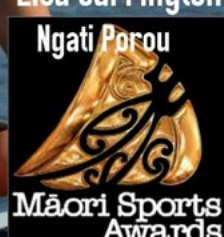
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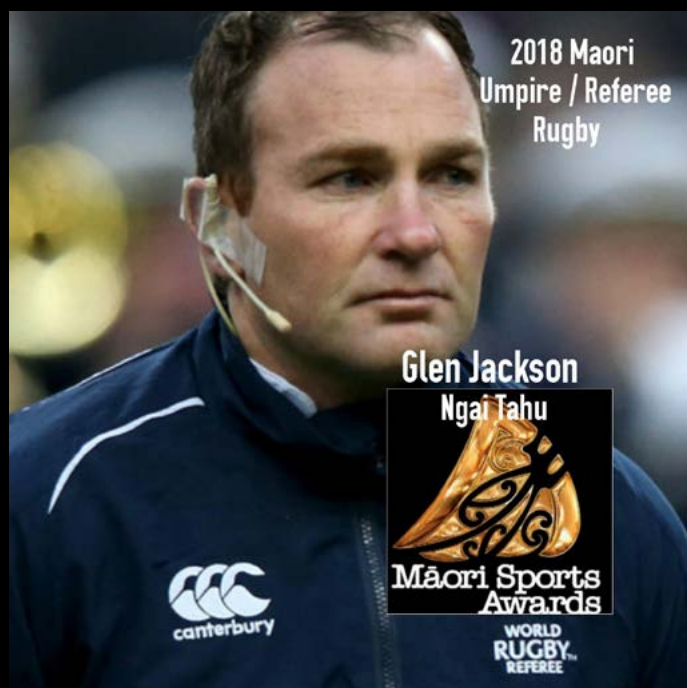
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Reggae Warriors Qualify For World Cup

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)



IT IS 25 years since the highly popular movie Cool Runnings told the unlikely and very inaccurate story of a Jamaican bobsleigh team qualifying for the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada. Now someone in Hollywood might be considering a follow-up, this time telling the tale of how Jamaica found a place at the 2021 Rugby League World Cup to be played in the chilly north of England.

Earlier this month the Jamaica Reggae Warriors beat both Canada and the United States to earn the right to represent the Americas at the tournament. It was an amazing achievement for a small country which has played only 20 Test matches since its international debut in 2009. Jamaica beat the Canadians 38-8 to set up a showdown with the United States, knowing it had lost all six previous meetings between them.

Jamaica raced away to a 16-0 lead at Jacksonville's Hodges Stadium in Florida, but the old order seemed to be returning when the Americans reduced that to 16-10 by halftime. The Reggae Warriors were made of sterner stuff, however, and defended grimly throughout a scoreless second half. It was only their sixth Test win and clinched outright victory in the Americas Championship, which started in 2016.

Jamaica Rugby League Association (JRLA) director of rugby Romeo Monteith was ecstatic when he spoke to the local Daily Gleaner newspaper. "We've done it, man! I mean, this is just incredible," said Monteith. "To think that Jamaica is going to be out there in front of millions of people in 2021, that's incredible. All of this has been done in the last 16 years. It's incredible to see what we have achieved."

You get the impression that Monteith really believed this result was "incredible". But the JRLA was only formed in 2004 and started a four-team competition the following year. In 2006 its first representative side played a friendly match against the touring West Yorkshire Police squad from England. Six teams now play in the College and Universities league and there is reportedly a thriving schools competition.

But Jamaican attempts to qualify for the World Cup in 2013 and 2017 failed. United States represented the Americas both times. Benefiting from several NRL players who had birth or heritage qualifications, the Hawks beat Cook Islands and Wales in 2013 to

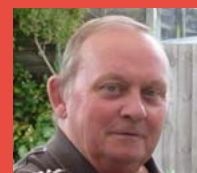
reach the quarter-finals, where further advancement was snuffed out by Australia 62-0. The Americans were well beaten in all three of their 2017 cup fixtures.

The JRLA has gone to great lengths to qualify. Until 2016 the only nations it had played were Canada (three wins and one draw from nine games) and United States (one win from seven games), with one exception. In 2011 Jamaica played and beat South Africa in New Jersey. But in 2016 the Reggae Warriors went on tour, beating Ireland 68-16 and drawing with Wales 16-16. Last year they lost in France 34-12.

Only one of Jamaica's 20 Tests has been on home soil, a 2017 victory over Canada at the University of West Indies in Kingston. JRLA officials hope the World Cup will lead to improved facilities. As one twitter writer said, "Will we finally get a dedicated rugby league field in Jamaica? Tired of playing on stone filled fields. Will our players stop having to fund their own way to represent our country?"

Flying the Jamaican flag in Ireland, Wales and France was also designed to bring together players from the domestic competition with those of Jamaican heritage who are at British clubs. There were 10 in the latter category, most of them attached to lower-division teams. But wing Ben Jones-Bishop has fashioned a proud career with three Super League clubs and utility back Ashley Golding is at Leeds Rhinos.

The best known Jamaican rugby league representative was Richie Barnett (no, not the former Kiwis captain). This Barnett, born in Britain, totalled more than 200 appearances for Hull, Widnes, Warrington, Salford, Sheffield, Hunslet, Keighley and Doncaster between 2004 and 2017, scoring 95 tries on the wing. He played in the 2013 and 2017 qualifiers but is now 37 so there is no chance of a comeback in 2021.



By John Coffey



Tonga's Andrew Fifita and Tevita Pangai Junior celebrate the win. Kiwis v Tonga

Fittler Chasing Tevita Pangai Junior

WHAT HAPPENED to the NRL off-season? No sooner has the three-Test series between the Kiwis and England ended – frequently interrupted as it was by the distractions imposed on players and coaches by club officials back in Australasia – than the NRL clubs have started their 2019 summer training programmes. And already NSW and Australia are trying to lure one of Tonga's best players to the dark side.

Just about everyone in the game agreed there had been nothing to match the euphoric scenes at Mt Smart Stadium when Tonga challenged the mighty Kangaroos in an encounter which proved the Mate Ma'a had the talent to take on tier-one nations. It was driven home to even the most insular Australians, just as we in New Zealand had discovered during the 2017 World Cup matches against the Kiwis and England.

But last week NSW coach Brad Fittler got out his shovel and started undermining all that good will -- and good football – by including Tevita Pangai Junior in his 32-man squad to attend a Blues camp at the NSWRL Centre of Excellence in Sydney next month. TPJ was outstanding in the clash with the Kangaroos, just as he had been during a breakout season with the Brisbane Broncos. He is hot property.

Pangai Junior, 22 and 113kg, is committed to the Broncos for 2019 but there is speculation he will follow his mentor, Wayne Bennett, to South Sydney in 2020. He has thrived under Bennett in Brisbane, emerging as the best of a bevy of big, strong, fast young forwards in the Broncos' stable. But TPJ was born in Sydney and served his NYC and Junior Kangaroos apprenticeships at the Canberra Raiders.

Fittler reckons he is not applying any pressure to Pangai Junior by naming him. TPJ is currently eligible to represent NSW and Tonga because the latter is a tier-two nation. But by listing him Fittler is indeed putting Pangai Junior under the same pressure felt by Andrew Fifita this year because in 2019 the second Origin game at Perth clashes with Tonga's June 22 Test against the Kiwis in New Zealand.

Only the most outstanding youngsters spend three seasons in the Junior Kangaroos, and TPJ did that between 2014 and 2016, captaining them in the third year. Canberra coach Ricky Stuart must be having nightmares about letting him leave for Brisbane, where he has since played 54 NRL games for the Broncos. He made his Tongan debut in the massive World Cup victory over the Kiwis at Hamilton.

That was the day when Mate Ma'a mania began in earnest. It continued with the narrow loss to England in the World Cup semi-final and was reignited when the Kangaroos played Tonga earlier this year. For 2019 Tonga has been elevated to an Oceania Cup section which also includes tier-one nations Australia and New Zealand, but tier-one status was not accorded to Tonga and its players are still open to poaching.

Of course, Fittler, Queensland coach Kevin Walters and Kangaroos coach Mal Meninga have powerful financial arguments as they compete for players. Fifita received a pittance for lining up with Tonga when he could have pocketed 90,000 Aussie dollars for three Origin games and more riches for donning the Kangaroos jersey. Young Pangai Junior might be persuaded he cannot deprive his family of such riches.

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Origin's financial benefits have been used to recruit the likes of former New Zealand Maori prop James Tamou for the Blues and current sensation Kalyn Ponga for the Maroons. Sure, many dual-eligible players feel they were born and raised as loyal Australians – I understood this when talking to part-Maori Kangaroos centre Timana Tahu years ago – but others have clearly been swayed by the money.

Pangai Junior already faces a massive 2019 club campaign, with far more responsibility in the Broncos pack now Sam Thaiday has retired and Josh McGuire (who did his own flip from Samoa to Australia) is off to the North Queensland Cowboys. Fittler clearly wants TPJ to play for NSW in a rare defence of the Origin Shield, ironically convinced by the form he showed for Tonga against the Kangaroos.

If Fittler has his way, and Pangai Junior bows to the pressure, he will be seen to have used Tonga as a stepping stone to the Blues and Kangaroos and international rugby league will suffer another blow in comparison to Origin. While Fifita was an older, battle hardened, cantankerous campaigner when making his stance, Pangai Junior is likely to be more easily led astray and dazzled by the dough.

Nicoll-Klokstad New Physical Disability Rugby League Ambassador

By Vodafone Warriors

THE VODAFONE Warriors' commitment to encouraging people with physical disabilities to get involved in rugby league has been underlined with Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad's appointment as an ambassador for Physical Disability Rugby League New Zealand.

The role will see Nicoll-Klokstad attend PDRLNZ team trainings to help players prepare for upcoming tournaments as well as promoting more interest in rugby league among people with physical disabilities.

He said he was proud to be asked to be an ambassador and says encouraging people with physical disabilities to give rugby league a go is a cause that has special meaning for him. His older brother Tyson had muscular dystrophy and died from the condition in 2010 when he was only 19.

"Because of my personal experience with supporting my brother and seeing the challenges he went through, this is something that's really close to my heart and I guess this is my way of giving back," said Nicoll-Klokstad.

"I'm looking forward to encouraging people with physical disabilities that they can give anything a go, and that rugby league is such an awesome sport to be involved in. I also think I will learn so much from them, too. I just want to be able to help in whatever way I can. Physical disability doesn't need to be something that holds you back from taking part, and I want to help spread that message across our com-

munities."

PDRLNZ organiser Sandra Michelle Hickey welcomed Nicoll-Klokstad's appointment.

"We are thrilled to bits to have Charnze join our whanau as ambassador," she said.

"As a young man with a close relationship to disability through his brother there couldn't be a better choice than Charnze.

"His amazing talent and passion for the game and for the development of Physical Disability Rugby League will help us reach even more people with a physical disability and encourage them to get involved."

The Vodafone Warriors and Physical Disability Rugby League's partnership began in 2017. As well as providing the organisation with the ongoing support of a player ambassador, the club has supplied kit for the national team and staged a physical disabilities match as a curtain-raiser before the Vodafone Warriors' NRL home game against Cronulla this year.

Nicoll-Klokstad made headlines last year when, in a random act of kindness, he purchased a pair of sneakers for a young boy - Takiri Wikitera - who has cerebral palsy.

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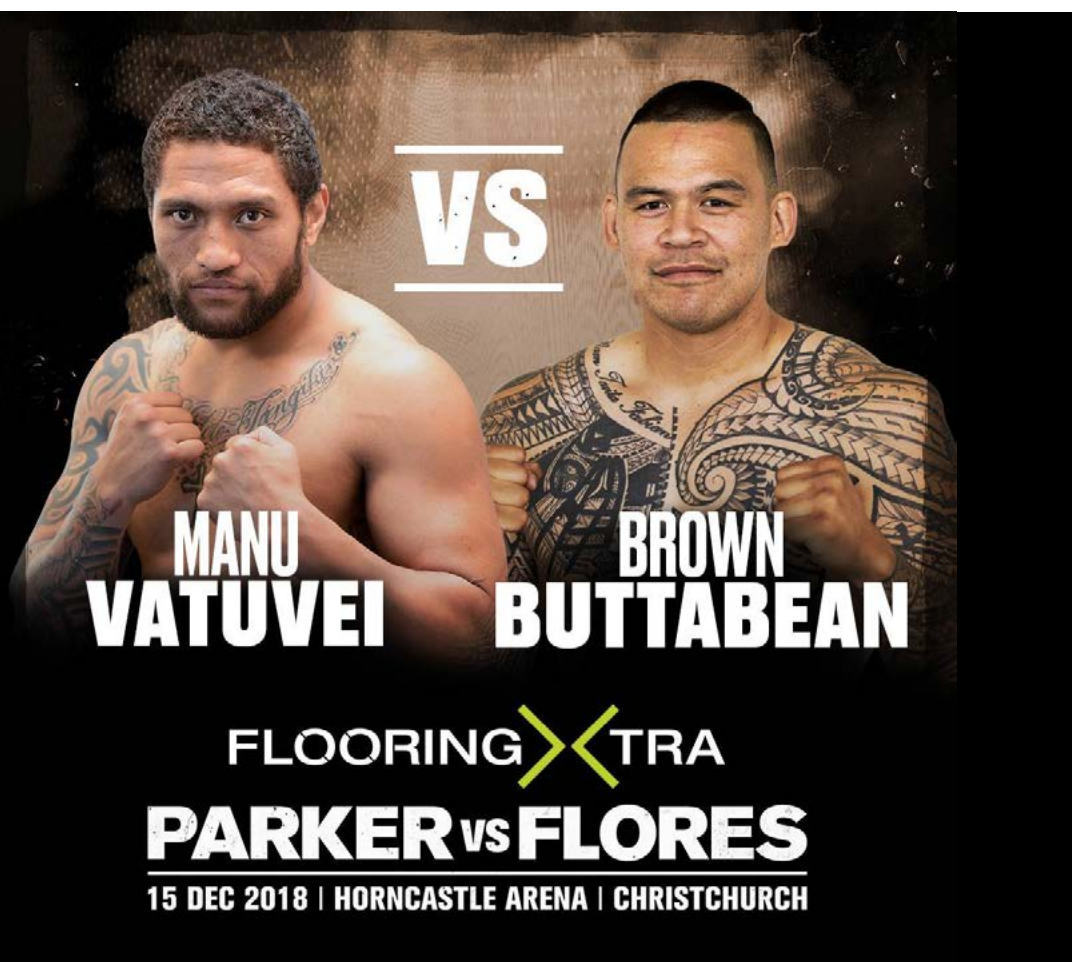
WITNESS FORMER WBO World Heavyweight Champion Joseph Parker live at Horncastle Arena, Christchurch.

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Flores holds an exceptional record of 17-1-1, his only loss to Former IBF heavyweight champion Charles Martin, a fight he took on only two weeks' notice – and with an impressive 80% knockout ratio, the American is seizing the opportunity to end Parkers career and make his way to the big time!

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Tickets start from just \$39 - available from <http://www.ticketek.co.nz/parkervflores>



Reader Mail

Tena Koe Sir Peter,

Barry Broughton, a husband, a father, a koro, brother, Uncle, cousin, friend and a WARRIORS fan to the very end, taken 09 Oct 2018 by Prostate Cancer.

93 represents - our address 93 Kura Road Patea. A absolutely avid fan of Rugby League since he was a toddler, and a staunch supporter of Patea Rugby League.

We sent him off to his last GRAND FINAL, dressed in his beloved WARRIORS gear.

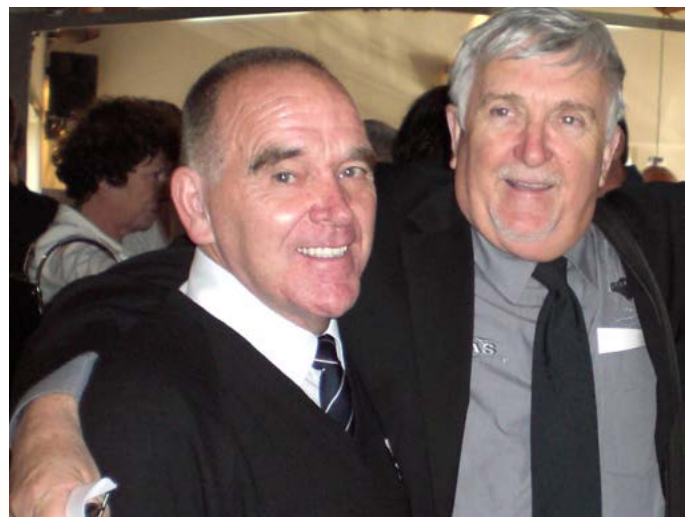
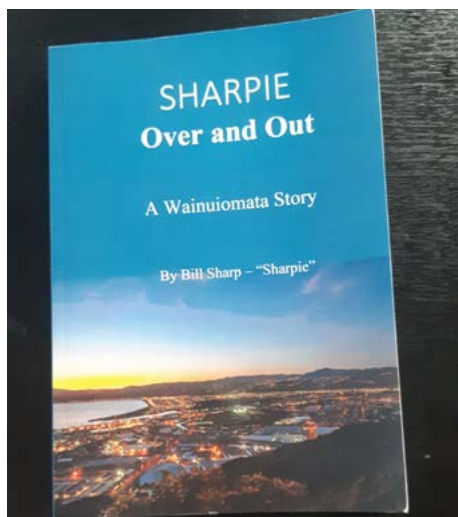
Our other whanau - 3B FITNESS - Directors being our 2 sons and a daughter, hence the name 3B recently took Barry to the floor @ NZ Crossfit Teams Nationals In honour of his memory and being the Dad of 3B, they celebrated in style winning first place in the Intermediate division and Third in Scaled Division. He would be so proud of all the 3B whanau members.

Regards

Marcia Broughton.



MY OLD mate from Wainuiomata, Bill Sharp, has written a book featuring 20 people who have made it out! Great leagues like Tana, Paul Whataura, David Faiumu, Johnny Lomax and Piri Weepu all have their stories in there plus a few others like my good mates Wayne Bennet and Trevor Mallard. It's 400 pages and only \$25 . Its a bloody good read hit up Craig Sharp at dad2mal@gmail.com if you'd like a copy.





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WELL YOU all know how I love my kayaking and my kayaks. It is such a brilliant way to relax and enjoy some of the best things New Zealand has to offer. Particularly Waiheke.

Last week one of my mates was looking for a kayak. He wanted one that was of good quality and one that was fun and easy to paddle. I remembered that another mate of mine Rod Slater also a butcher had a son Dan Slater who owns a shop in Takapuna called The Water Shed. Now Dan is actually a sailor and he has a lot of sailing boats and sailing gear in the shop. But also he specialises in leading edge kayaks and in the sole New Zealand agent for Hobie and Viking Kayaks.

So I bowled up week with my mate, Willy from Waiheke, at The Water Shed in Barrys Point Road to see Dan and what he had to offer. What a shop. There were so many models of kayaks to choose from. From the basic to ones that you can pedal as well. These are very fast and of course hands free for fishing. I imagine kayak fisherman really love them.

My mate bought two kayaks and Dan is going to deliver them down to Waiheke for him. So if you are looking for a kayak go take a look at The Water Shed in Takapuna. Tell Dan you are a mate of mine and I am sure he will look after you.

Thinking about it I might just have to add another kayak to my collection.



- Sir Peter Leitch

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



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THE MANLY-WARRINGAH Sea Eagles return to Christchurch to take on the Vodafone Warriors at Christchurch Stadium on Saturday March 3rd 2019 with a 5pm kick-off.

This is Manly's second "home" game in Christchurch, a city that always gets behind international rugby league.

This will be a blockbuster match as new Manly coach Des Hasler looks to make Christchurch his own!

Our first release of tickets go on sale to the general public this Friday 30th November.

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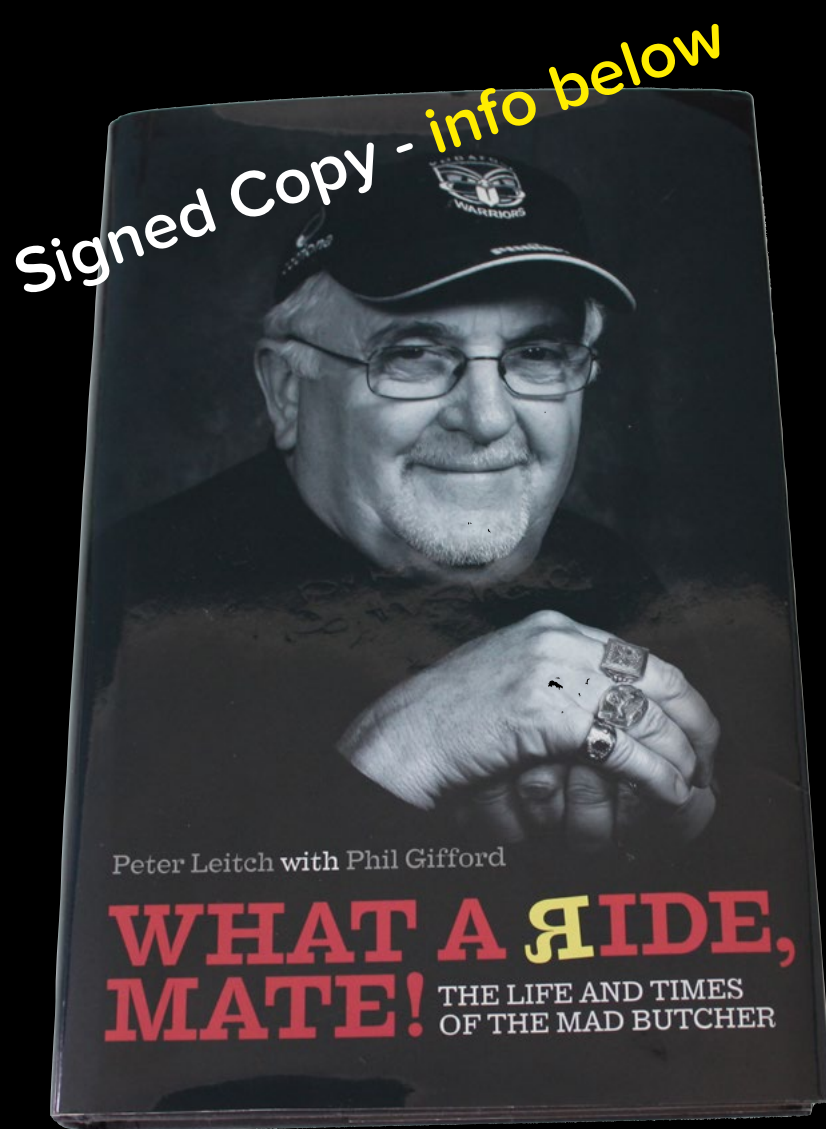
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“What a Ride Mate!”



First published in 2007, this book details my life. From the blurb:

Here is what readers had to say:

To be fair, I couldn't put the book down one Sunday, so my wife had to wash the car and mow the lawns, bloody good of her.

This is an amazing yarn about a great New Zealander who has proven that with a positive attitude, self-belief along with treating people respectfully anything is possible.

The message in this book can be life changing in such a positive way, so get your copy and "enjoy the ride mate".

- Tony Stack

I confess I thoroughly enjoyed it and particularly the little stories from your childhood and the backgrounds of your Mum and Dad. I always think understanding who our parents are, what they cared about and their approach to life, gives us great insight into who we are. I also had no idea of the sheer number of people you know and who think so highly of you. I feel privileged to tell people I know you as a mate.

- Dave

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