

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

Newsletter

28 January 2016

#106

No advertisements are paid for in this newsletter.

TALK ABOUT straight back into it! There are some massive events in my diary.

On Wednesday night next week I am at the New Zealand Rugby League awards night, and on the Thursday I'm going to racing at Eilerslie.

Part of the Barfoot and Thompson Twilight Summer Series, the February 4 meeting is hosting a League 4 Life fundraiser, and you are welcome to come and raise funds that are used to support members of the wider league family who find themselves in tough circumstances.

League 4 Life is not just for top players, it supports to the grassroots level, and it is a cause dear to my heart, so get a group together and support the cause and have some fun too.

The first race is at 4.30pm and the last at 7.30pm, so you can be home for dinner, although there are all sorts of things to do afterwards, and we will be going on in the League 4 Life area.

There will be plenty of former Kiwis in attendance, including Logan Swann, Roger Bailey, Fred Ah Kuoi, Ritchie Blackmore, Ken Stirling, and Graeme West, while Stephen McIvor will be our MC for the evening, with me – since I am the League 4 Life patron.

By coming, your ticket means you are making a donation to the League 4 Life Foundation while getting access to the League 4 Life marquee on the Champagne Lawn. That is a great spot to watch from, with sweeping views of the home straight and winning post.

You'll get a gourmet BBQ buffet dinner, and I have seen the menu and can tell you it incorporates the best New Zealand ingredients, featuring hot items from the grill, accompanied by a selection of salads,

all finished with tea and coffee.

Your ticket is also entry to the course, a complimentary drink on arrival, racebooks and pens. No point going to the races and not having a wee flutter, so there is access to betting facilities, and a cash bar.

If you have a group of eight I can reserve a table for you. Just contact me on 021 936 105 or email pcleitch@xtra.co.nz. You can get single tickets at www.ellerslie.co.nz

Bring On The Nines

That weekend there are no prizes for guessing I'm at the Downer NRL Auckland Nines at Eden Park. The big question is will we see Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Isaac Luke and Shaun Johnson in Vodafone Warriors colours together for the very first time?

I am looking forward to the Nines. It is an amazing weekend with an atmosphere that is something special. So if you have never been, get to www.ticktek.co.nz. There are still tickets from \$69, so it is not one of those events that costs an arm and a leg.

I'm keen to see a big crowd to witness our marvellous game, and support the event, which I believe has done a lot for our city. Really the only way we can truly support the Nines, is by turning up!

Ambassadors Named

Former Kiwi Jerome Ropati and multiple international Georgia Hale have been named to represent the Vodafone Warriors as NRL community ambassadors in 2016.

Ropati filled the position last year and has now been joined by Hale, who has represented New Zealand in league, touch and tag.

Continued on next page...

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The Vodafone Warriors' duo were among a record 40 current and former league stars gathered in Sydney after accepting roles as NRL community ambassadors.

After ending his career early in the 2014 season, Ropati moved into his community job with the us.

Hale has recently been working with special needs children in the Long Bay area.

A Kiwi Fern at test level and at the 2015 NRL Auckland Nines, she has also played at international level for the New Zealand women's touch and tag teams.

Other ambassadors include Darren Lockyer, Alex McKinnon, Stephanie Hancock, Petero Civoniceva, Tallisha Harden and Justin Hodges.

Membership Council To Be Formed

The Vodafone Warriors will form a membership council for the 2016 season, including representatives from New Zealand and Australia.

Expressions of interest are now being sought from signed up 2016 members.

"The creation of a membership council is a new development following the introduction of membership ambassadors last season," said Vodafone Warriors membership manager William Felgate.

"Members served on a voluntary basis in 2015 helping out in a variety of ways especially on our home game days at Mt Smart. Now we're looking to broaden the concept."

Felgate said the Warriors were seeking a small group of members who are keen to be involved.

"We're after members who are keen to be game day

volunteers and to represent our tribe," he said.

"These people will help out not only on game day but they will also be the link between the members and the club, helping to make our membership programme the best it can be. If you think you have what it takes we'd like to hear from you."

Felgate said Warriors members in Australia would be communicated with monthly this year to test membership concepts, as well as being updated about 2016 events and planning for 2017.

If you're interested email memberships@warriors.kiwi with your name, member number and a brief explanation about why you should be on the council. Specify whether you can help at all 11 home games at Mt Smart.

Nines Club Programme

All sixteen NRL teams will be returning to the community with the Downer NRL Auckland Nines club programme. Sixteen grassroots clubs will play host to 16 NRL teams providing a chance for local clubs to welcome their heroes in the lead up to the Nines. In addition to the NRL teams, we now have a '17th' team confirmed with the coach and players from the NSW Blues and Queensland Maroons heading out to Manukau.

Times and dates are on page 7.

Nines Fan Day – Friday, Feb 5

The Downer NRL Auckland Nines Fan Day will again be taking place on the eve of the event. All 16 teams will visit Aotea Square providing a chance for the public to meet all 288 NRL players competing in the Nines.

You can see the timetable on page 6.

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Nines On The Way... I'm getting excited!

TELL YOU what I'm really excited about - happening live at the Downer NRL Auckland Nines just before the final on Sunday is the Beko Legends Kick-Off – which sees legends Daryl Halligan (4th highest NRL point scorer of all time) and Andrew Johns (2nd highest point scorer of all time and a rugby league Immortal), taking on rugby and Eden Park legend Carlos Spencer and superhero and 2015 Dally M winner, Johnathan Thurston in a kicking competition for charity.

Every goal kicked will see the sponsor Home Appliance company Beko donate \$700 to the official Downer NRL Auckland Nines charity, The Rising Foundation. Which legend will dominate the kicking stakes? Read more on the next page.

Organisers are also looking for a good club kicker to apply to compete in front of 35,000 fans at Eden Park with these legends. For more information, go to the NRLAKL9s facebook page, nominate yourself or a star kicker you know, for the opportunity to showcase your skills in front of the world. Genuine kickers only please apply.

There are less than 2 weeks until the Downer NRL Auckland Nines, so if you haven't got your tickets yet, get your mates together for an electrifying weekend of rugby league!

With new Warriors lads, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Issac Luke expected to be playing alongside Shaun Johnson and Manu Vatuvei for the first time in a mighty Vodafone Warriors jersey, the Butcher will eat his hat rather than his sausages if they don't make the final!

With plenty of stars from all 16 x NRL clubs, the teams back warming up in front of you on the field, the BEKO Legends Kick-off, the opportunity for one lucky attendee to win \$20,000 shopping voucher from Kia, the big hitting women's games, the colourful carnival atmosphere .. you'd be madder than the Mad Butcher at a tea party to miss Waitangi Weekend at the Nines!

All 16 x teams will be announced next week, so keep locked here for the full team lists!

Tickets start at \$69 *plus fees at www.ticketek.co.nz/nines



THE GREATEST WEEKEND!

SAT 6 & SUN 7 FEB, 2016
EDEN PARK, AUCKLAND

» I DON'T WANT TO JINX IT, BUT I THINK WE'LL GO CLOSE TO WINNING THE NRL AUCKLAND NINES. «
ERIC WATSON, WARRIORS OWNER

Book now at Ticketek

2 X DAY TICKETS FROM \$69*
*Fees apply



Superstars to Kick for Charity at Downer NRL Auckland Nines

RUGBY LEAGUE Immortal Andrew Johns, three-time Golden Boot winner Johnathan Thurston, Superboot Daryl Halligan and former All Black and Blues rugby star Carlos Spencer will go head-to-head in the Beko Legends Kick-Off charity goal kicking challenge at the Downer NRL Auckland Nines in February.

The quartet of goal kicking champions will put their reputations on the line in a bid to earn cash for the tournament's official charity The Rising Foundation – an organisation that teaches leadership and life skills to over 500 at risk young Aucklanders – with up to \$20,000 on the line thanks to global appliance manufacturer Beko.

The unique event pits three of rugby league's greatest points scorers against a man who ruled Eden Park for a decade.

Andrew 'Joey' Johns' 2176 points for the Newcastle Knights ranks him second on the NRL's all-time scorers list, two places ahead of former Bulldogs sharpshooter Halligan (2034). Thurston (1794 points) sits ninth on the all-time list and second amongst active players – just four points behind Cameron Smith. Completing the line-up of sharpshooters and carrying the flag for rugby union is Spencer – a man who notched over 500 points for Auckland in the NPC, over 600 points for the Blues in Super Rugby and 291 points for the All Blacks in 35 tests.

Johns said he was relishing the chance to have some fun while supporting a great cause.

"I am really looking forward to it," he said. "With goal kicking you can have a laugh about it, but I don't think it has ever been done before where you have some of the greatest points scorers and goal kickers in history shooting it out. It's really exciting. I think the crowd will get right into it and it will be pretty special.

"I'm honoured to be a part of it really. And I think it's sensational that the money goes to charity. It's a great cause. Let's hope we can kick some goals and raise some money for them." There is a sweetener for the contestants, with the winner picking up a \$2,000 home appliance package from sponsors Beko. The company will also donate \$700 for each successful kick to The Rising Foundation.

Rugby league's premier kicking coach Halligan will be under extra pressure as he juggles his duties as a television commentator at the tournament.

"I can just sense Vossy [fellow commentator Andrew Voss] or Greg Alexander or the guys just carving me up," he said. "If I don't do any good I'll pretend to head upstairs to the commentary box but I might just leave the stadium."

Thurston, who holds the all-time record for most State of Origin points and is the reigning Golden Boot (awarded to the game's best player) and Clive Churchill medal holder (awarded to the man of the match in the NRL grand final), will be showcasing his skills at the Auckland NRL Nines for the first time.

The event will also include one lucky competition winner, who will also walk away with a \$3,000 appliance package thanks to Beko a long with the once in a life-time opportunity to pit their skills against four kicking legends. It is scheduled to take place before the final on day two.

FEATURING:

- **Andrew Johns:** Rugby league Immortal and second highest points scorer in NRL history.
- **Johnathan Thurston:** Second among active players with 1794 points. Holds record for most State of Origin Points in history.
- **Daryl Halligan:** Ace goal kicker and goal kicking coach. Fourth highest points scorer in NRL history.
- **Carlos Spencer:** Over 500 points for Auckland in the NPC and over 600 for the Blues in Super Rugby, to go with 291 points for the All Blacks in 35 tests. Made Eden Park his back yard for over a decade.
- Plus one lucky domestic kicker will get the opportunity to participate in this kick-off. The search for the next big kicking star will take place via Downer NRL Auckland Nines social media channels.





HOST CITY

AKL

The Show Never Stops

**DOWNER
NRL AUCKLAND NINES**

FAN @ DAY

AOTEA SQUARE • FRI 5 FEB

Meet all 288+ NRL players, plus free family fun and giveaways.



aucklandnz.com/nines



HOST CITY

2016 DOWNER
NRL AUCKLAND NINES

FAN DAY

AOTEA SQUARE • FRI 5 FEB



Kick off your ultimate weekend of league at the FREE Downer NRL Auckland Nines Fan Day. Meet the players for signings and selfies and enjoy live entertainment and activities.

MEET ALL 288+ NRL NINES PLAYERS

10AM – 11AM

North Queensland Cowboys
Manly Warringah Sea Eagles

11AM – 12PM

Sydney Roosters
Wests Tigers
St George Illawarra Dragons

12PM – 1PM

Newcastle Knights
South Sydney Rabbitohs
Penrith Panthers

1PM – 2PM

Melbourne Storm
Canberra Raiders

2PM – 3PM

Gold Coast Titans
Brisbane Broncos
Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks

3PM – 4PM

Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs
Parramatta Eels
Vodafone Warriors
Kiwi Ferns

aucklandnz.com/nines



What's on in AKL

COMMUNITY CLUB PROGRAMME VISITS 2016



MEET YOUR FAVOURITE NRL STARS AT YOUR LOCAL
AUCKLAND RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB. FREE ATTENDANCE.

Club	Team	Programme
Glenora Bears	Cronulla Sharks	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Hibiscus Coast Raiders	North Queensland Cowboys	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Manurewa Marlins	Melbourne Storm	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
New Lynn Stags	Sydney Roosters	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Northcote Tigers	Wests Tigers	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Otara Scorpions	Vodafone Warriors	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Pt Chevalier Pirates	Penrith Panthers	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Waitemata Seagulls (Ranui)	Newcastle Knights	5.00pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Bay Roskill Vikings	Canberra Raiders	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Mangere East Hawks	South Sydney Rabbitohs	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Marist Saints	Brisbane Broncos	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Mt Wellington	Gold Coast Titans	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Otahuhu Leopards	Manly Sea Eagles	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Pakuranga Jaguars	Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Papatoetoe Panthers	Paramatta Eels	6.45pm Thursday 4 February 2016
Papakura Sea Eagles	St George-Illawara Dragons	4.30pm Friday 5 February 2016

GET YOUR TICKETS TO THE DOWNER NRL AUCKLAND NINES TODAY
SATURDAY 6 & SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY, 2016



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» TWO DAY TICKETS FROM \$69* » KIDS HALF PRICE**

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*Booking and venue fees apply **In most Categories

Otago Taieri A&P Show

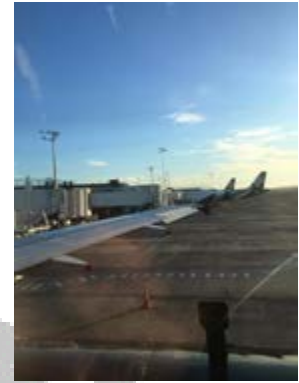
Check out this YouTube video: <http://youtu.be/iMZ-138fBYg>



On my way to the airport.



Caught up with Peter Williams in the Koru Lounge in Auckland Airport.



Lucky enough to have scored a window seat.



Welcome to Mosgiel the friendly town down south.



At the Adopt A Greyhound tent.



The team at the Adopt A Greyhound tent check them out on www.greyhoundsaspets.org.nz



Brian Thomson from Loch Lomond Syd with his baby South Devon yearling bull (would get a few steaks off this bugger).



Damian from The Breeze radio. Top bloke.



Getting up close the horses.



The Hungry Tui mobile kitchen was pumping out some great kiwi tucker.



I'm getting a few tips off one of the judges on the day. You're always learning even at 71 years young.



Kate from the A&P show and Damian from The Breeze radio in Dunedin was nice to meet you both.



Lane Harris 3 years old with his calf Brinny I thought he was a WINNER. But I was not a judge, bugger!



The Dexter Class winners where all smiles with their win.



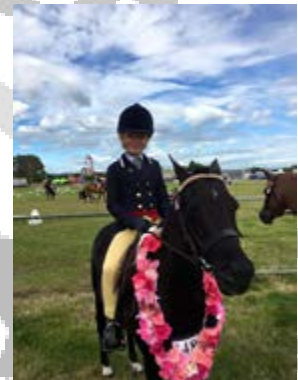
The winners of the paddock to plate competition Jane and Warwick Howie well deserved.



The stars of the A&P show Mae Valley they were fantastic (X FACTOR FINALISTS) lovely voices.



Winners are grinners as you can see on this young lady's face.



Winners are grinners and this young girl was all smiles well done.



This little guy, Ashley Wendelgest, was the supreme pet winner..



Was great to catch up was the Three Musketeers from The Highlanders rugby team top blokes we had a few laughs we even rang Sir Graham Henry and he had a chat.



Had the pleasure of meeting the worlds fastest woman Rally driver Emma Gilmore. Legend in her sport and a local too!

Happy Birthday to my big brother **Jack** who turns **81 on Saturday!** And Happy Birthday to anyone else celebrating theirs this week.



Taking One For The (Boxing) Team

By John Coffey QSM



THERE WERE more sporting names than usual, including a bevy of All Blacks and their support staff, when the New Year Honours list was released. So many in fact that my old newspaper claimed in an editorial that there were too many sports people recognised at the expense of more arty types. There was a time when sport was more highly regarded at The Press.

One particular name caught my eye, even drew a fist pump. Awarded the Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit alongside such notables as millionaire rugby player Dan Carter, former Test spin bowler and current New Zealand Cricket president Stephen Boock and renowned sports doctor John Mayhew was Phillip Graeme Shatford, “for services to boxing.”

That seldom happens. If you think champion rugby league and softball teams have been given a rough deal at Halberg Awards, then how about someone receiving not just a gong, but an ONZM no less, in an even more maligned working-class sport like boxing. Sylvester Stallone’s movie character, Rocky, famously punched beef carcasses for fitness; many of our real-life boxing characters toil fulltime in the freezing works just to feed their families.

I always enjoyed contacting Phil Shatford for a story. There was no boasting or bullshit, just a little exaggerated praise to give yet another young amateur some public recognition to boost his confidence for an upcoming bout. Mostly, Phil would then coach the youngster to a stage where the stories became repetitive. No-one would want to box the rising star, and it would take money to fly in an opponent from overseas. That money would have to be raised from pub raffles; sometimes I suspect it came from Phil’s own pocket.

There was a nice article on Phil in The Press, some days after the stories about Carter, Boock and company. It told of Phil’s embarrassment at being elevated to such company, how he even considered turning the award down because he believed himself to be no more worthy than other battling Canterbury coaches such as Bernie Pope, Mike Pimley and Peter Bell. Ultimately, he accepted it on their behalf. I have no doubt he was sincere.

It was Pope who introduced Phil to boxing as a 13-year-old, taking him off the mean streets of Aranui. Boxing was the only sport his family could

afford because Pope charged nothing. More than 50 years later, on Christmas Day, Pope was a guest at Phil’s house. Boxing is like that. There might be plenty of rivalry in and around the ring but mates are made for life. Phil went on to become a national amateur champion but could not quite crack a black singlet for the 1974 Commonwealth Games even though he beat the bloke chosen ahead of him.

In 1979 Pimley, another of those truly genuine blokes, asked Phil to help him coach young boxers in an old wooden pavilion at Papanui Domain. For the next 20 years the name Papanui earned respect throughout New Zealand boxing. That dilapidated building became a refuge as they transformed aggressive and potentially troubled kids into proficient sportsmen whose lives took on a new direction and purpose.

In 1998 Phil set up the Riverside Boxing Club which has since won 54 national titles and is believed to be the only gym to have won every senior weight division. Don’t be fooled by the name. There is no river alongside. The ring, training bags and other gear were set up in Phil’s garage. He literally takes every one of his boxers into his home, and the rewards have been enormous. Little Noah Lopez and current professionals Bowyn Morgan and Reece Papuni have all held the prized Jameson Belt for scientific excellence at national championships.

Phil Shatford has twice been national coach. After assisting Dr John McKay for three years from 1998, he mentored Daniel Codling and Shane Cameron to bronze medals at the 2002 Commonwealth Games. Phil stepped down after the 2004 Olympics but was recalled six years later. At Glasgow in 2014 he took David Nyika to New Zealand’s first Commonwealth Games gold medal in 24 years and David Light to a silver. But it still rankles that Bowyn Morgan controversially lost his quarter-final to the Englishman who went on to claim gold.

By then Phil was missing some of Reece Papuni’s promising professional career, for national amateur coaches are not allowed to corner professionals. So Phil hung up his amateur gloves after Glasgow, and is now concentrating on Papuni (12 wins, one loss) and Morgan (six wins) and his Riverside gym. He will probably never retire. His love of boxing, instilled by Bernie Pope half a century ago, will never wane -- it will just be passed on to another generation.

Join Former Kiwis: Logan Swann, Roger Bailey, Fred Ah Kuoi, Ritchie Blackmore, Ken Stirling, Graeme West, Shontayne Hape and Tawera Nikau **at the....**

League **4** Life



Summer Fundraiser

Next Thursday February 4, 2016 at the **Ellerslie Racecourse**
(The day before the Downer NRL Auckland Nines kick off)

First race approximately **4.30pm** Last race approximately **7.30pm**

Come Racing! Join **Former Kiwis** at the League 4 Life Summer Fundraiser to be held at Ellerslie Racecourse as part of the Barfoot and Thompson Twilight Summer Series. **So why not get a group together and support a great cause and have some fun at the same time.**

By purchasing a ticket to the Summer Fundraiser you are making a generous donation to the League 4 Life Foundation. Your ticket price includes:

- **A donation to the League 4 Life Foundation**
- Entry into the exclusive **League 4 Life marquee**, located on the **Champagne Lawn** with sweeping views of the home straight and Winning Post
- **Gourmet BBQ buffet dinner** designed by our award winning chefs incorporating the best New Zealand ingredients, featuring hot items from the grill, a selection of salads, finished with tea and coffee
- **Complimentary drink** on arrival for each guest
- Racecourse admission, racebooks and pens
- Convenient access to betting facilities and a cash bar



Stephen McIvor
MC for the Event

Go to www.ellerslie.co.nz and click on **League 4 Life** to learn more and purchase tickets. To book a table of eight contact Sir Peter Leitch on 021936105 or pcleitch@xtra.co.nz

Win 1 of 10 Vodafone Warriors Nines Jerseys

Nines Jersey
Giveaway
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Name:
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Jersey Size:

To enter: **YOU MUST** subscribe to Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club Newsletter, only one entry per person. Competition closes on **10 February 2016**.

Then post a stamped addressed envelope with your name, address, phone number, email and jersey size to the address.



International Giveaway!

To be eligible you must be subscribed. To subscribe email: stephan.maier@medstar.co.nz

Rugby League Northland Has a New Face

By Ben Francis



RUGBY LEAGUE Northland has announced that Duane Fyfe will step into the role of Rugby League Northland General Manager replacing Alex Smits.

Fyfe brings plenty of experience to the role having previously being the General Manager of Canterbury Rugby League, Manager for New Zealand Army Rugby League, Junior Kiwi, New Zealand Residents and Liaison for the Kiwis. A total of 10 years experience. Outside of Rugby League Fyfe has served 20 years in the New Zealand Army which he achieved the Warrant Officer Class One rank.

Fyfe started his role on January 18th and identified some of the issues facing Northland Rugby League. The biggest issue is to try establish unity in Northland League with the recent events late last year which saw a number of Far North clubs start their own competition away for the Scott Electrical Premiership and Championship divisions. Fyfe wants all Northland based clubs to continue developing and growing which will create more opportunities in the communities. Along with that, Fyfe wants to continue the great job Alex Smits did in growing the number of participants in Northland League and continue the upward trend.

Cara Hutchinson has also come on board at Rugby League Northland replacing Toni Haldane as the club development officer.

If you would like to get in contact with Rugby League Northland or find out how to register to take part or be involved in Northland Rugby League head along to www.northernswords.co.nz

You can also head along to www.northernswords.co.nz to find out all the information on the Vodafone Warriors preseason game against the Gold Coast Titans at Toll Stadium in Whangarei which will be taking place on February 13th



Duane Fyfe

Competition Winners

**We have another winner of Downer
NRL Auckland Nines Tickets:
Dean Ramihana from Napier**



Winners of the Vodafone Warriors prizes from the Otago Taieri A&P Society show last Saturday are:

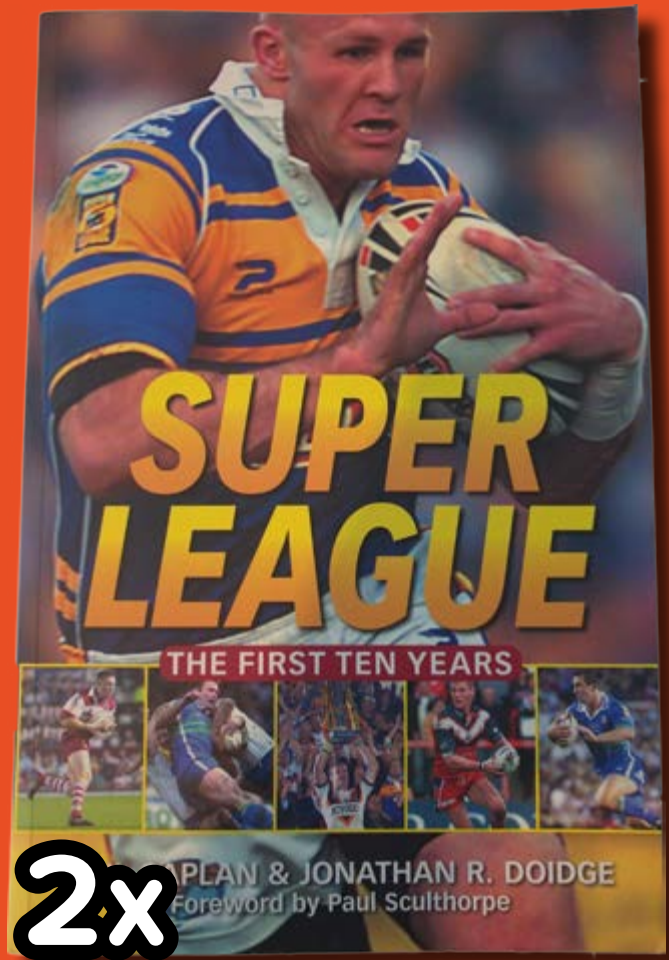
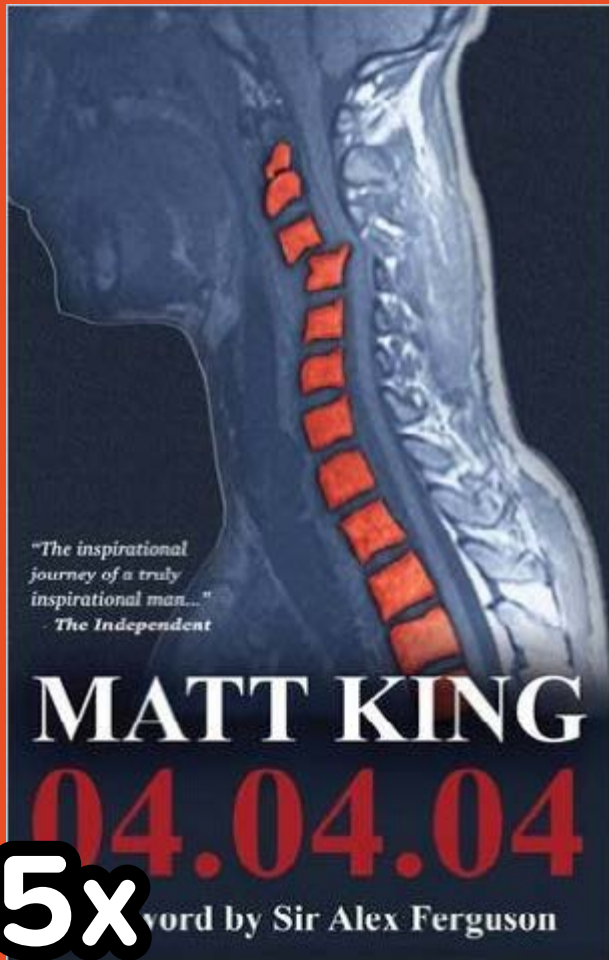
Caleb Lily - Vodafone Warriors Jersey

Joe Taylor - Vodafone Warriors Membership

Richard Diak - Vodafone Warriors membership



Rugby League Book Giveaway



On the 4th April 2004, Matt King's life changed forever. Making his first tackle as a 17-year-old professional rugby player for London Broncos Academy, his neck snapped. A happy-go-lucky teenager with the world seemingly at his feet; his life, as well as his spinal cord, appeared broken. But, showing the same spirit, resilience, wit and courage that characterised him before the accident, Matt overcame the severe trauma and rebuilt his life.

5 copies to give away.

In March 1996, 100 years after its formation, Rugby League - traditionally a northern English, industrial, working-class game - undertook the biggest rebranding exercise seen in modern sport with a switch to summer and the formation of a twelve-team Super League including the introduction of a European element. Ten seasons later, a third consecutive sell-out crowd at Old Trafford brought a decade of unprecedented change and wholesale transformation to a close. **2 copies to give away.**

Book

Giveaway

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The Marina 2144,
Manukau, Auckland
New Zealand



Name:
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To be eligible you must be subscribed. To subscribe email: stephan.maier@medstar.co.nz

To enter: YOU MUST subscribe to Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club Newsletter, only one entry per person. Competition closes on **10 February 2016.**

Then post a stamped addressed envelope with your name, address, phone number, email and jersey size to the address.

Success On and Off the Field is Important for NZ at this Weekends Wellington Sevens

By John Deaker



THE WELLINGTON 7's is on this weekend and there's more to love about the action ON the field than there's been in a long time. Many fresh players come in to the All Black Sevens team as their campaign towards August's Olympics steps up a gear. Many oppositions will also look to strengthen their playing rosters.

Off the field, Wellington's unique user-friendly layout means that despite the atmosphere not being as wild as it was during its 'vintage' years, the Sevens still remains a unique party that's unlikely to ever be matched within New Zealand. It's not unusual to spend both days at the Wellington Sevens without seeing one person who hasn't made an attempt to dress-up. It's when you start confusing the real police and even security guards as having "really genuine costumes" that it's usually time to take on board a few alcohol-free beverages.

The attraction on the field of people like Sonny Bill Williams and Ardie Savea this weekend will hopefully be able to rejuvenate interest in the 7's following a few years where the crowd numbers have dropped away significantly. Sadly, the only bad thing about the NRL 9's coming to New Zealand has been that with the tournaments usually spaced only a week apart some people have adopted the philosophy that they have to be either a 7's or 9's fan. Of course that doesn't have to be the case ; people should be able to enjoy BOTH for what they are and relish the different strengths that both events possess.

This year the Wellington tournament will be a very important one for New Zealand to re-establish some of the physical and mental dominance that Gordon Tietjens teams have traditionally had over most of their opponents. After 2 poor tournaments late last year, they've found themselves in the unfamiliar position of 7th place on the World Series standings. Injuries were a factor at Dubai and Cape Town but just as important as that has been that Tietjens team's playing without any Super rugby players have struggled to make the same progress that other team's have made as they've constantly committed more resources to their Olympic campaigns.

High Performance Sport New Zealand committed over \$4 million dollars to New Zealand's Men's Olympic campaign from 2012-2016. It's highly debateable whether they got this model correct. In reality, the New Zealand Mens Sevens campaign has barely changed the last three years from what it would have been without that HPSNZ funding. The key time that money could have been better utilised would have been to have invested it all in to this year's campaign. This may have enabled some strong financial incentives to be provided (or even insurance-type systems to players if they lost their All Black 15's jersey while playing Sevens) to ensure the real cream-of-our-crop like Ben Smith, Julian Savea and Beauden Barrett had made themselves available to Tietjens throughout 2016. That hasn't happened, and in some ways it makes this weekend even more fascinating.

What we do know is that with Tietjens at the helm the players that are available to go to Rio are in safe hands. What we don't know is whether he's had men like Sonny Bill Williams on board long enough for us to get any indication in Wellington of what they might be capable of 7 months down the track. New Zealand take on Series co-leader South Africa in their pool on Saturday so it shouldn't take long for us to get some sort of feel for how much progress our new-look All Blacks Sevens team has already made. The other teams in New Zealand's pool are Russia and Scotland.

New Zealand Sevens team for Wellington: Kurt Baker, Sam Dickson, Akira Ioane, Rieko Ioane, Gillies Kaka, Ben Lam, Tim Mikkelson, Augustine Pulu, Ardie Savea, Regan Ware, Sonny Bill Williams, Joe Webber.

FIRST LET me take this opportunity to thank my old mate The Mad Butcher- Sir Peter for allowing me to write a few words for this great newsletter.

I don't want to embarrass The Butch but I have to say I love his energy, just a solid Kiwi bloke that gives what he can, we should all aspire to being as generous with our time as he is.

I'm really looking forward to 2016. The New Zealand Warriors have brought really well this year, I'm super enthusiastic, in fact for the first time in 15 plus years I've purchased a season pass, actually a family pass. I cannot wait to introduce my Wife and Kids to our great game and more so staunch fans.

Not only am I a Warriors fan, I love their hard core supporters. Win, Lose or Draw the loyalty of a true Warrior supporter is never in question.

I've been lucky enough to go to plenty of sporting events in my life but there is something special about Warrior supporters that you don't see at any at any other major sporting event in New Zealand.

League is a workers game founded in New Zealand by coal miners and factory workers and many of its modern day supporters are from the same stock, going to a Warriors Game for them doesn't come cheap and for many it's their biggest non-essential spend of the fortnight. You got to love and respect that.

Over the summer our family were lucky enough to go to Texas. In fact we flew on the first direct flight Auckland -Houston by Air New Zealand. It was a terrific flight just like the Warriors our National carrier is hard to beat.

You know they say that everything is bigger than Texas and when it comes to food and portion size my ever expanding unfortunately is living proof.

Steaks don't come in less than 750 grams and are almost always accompanied with a huge bowl of soup and a massive salad that frankly could feed a family of four.

In Texas they are very picky about BBQ, I'm talking smoked BBQ where the Brisket, Pork and Beef is cooked as an art form for anywhere between 8 to 12 hours. Neighbours have competitions and secret recipes are guarded with one's life. Because in Texas be prepared to see people carry around large pistols in holsters just like in the movies.

Sport is huge in the States with multiple channels dedicated to Baseball, Basketball and of course Grid Iron. Every team has a growing number of players from Tonga and Samoa. Here's an interesting fact the most watched sport is College- Grid Iron with squads of 90, bands with 300 members and 110,000 people watching live its truly a spectacle to watch.

Anyway Team, see you on the sideline, Here's to a safe 2016 for the fans and a Championship on the field.

Shane Te Pou



Mike Pero

BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR



VERSUS

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Kiwis to Face Australia Twice this Year

By Grant Chapman - NZRL Communications Manager



THE NZ Kiwis will face Australia twice this year in the build-up towards their Four Nations title defence.

Newcastle's Hunter Stadium will host the two archrivals in the traditional mid-year test on May 6, with a curtainraiser between the Kiwi Ferns and Jillaroos women's teams.

The Junior Kiwis face the Junior Kangaroos at Parramatta's Pirtek Stadium the following day to support a Pacific doubleheader that features Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

"Last year's tests in Brisbane and the Gold Coast really connected the threads of our high performance programme," says NZ Rugby League acting chief executive Alex Hayton. "Having our three premier national sides together as part of the same jersey presentation ceremony was certainly a very special occasion.

"The logistics of that may prove challenging for us this year, but the schedule still provides a unique opportunity to showcase our talent over a single weekend."

The Kiwis have played twice in Newcastle in recent

years, beating England there during the 2008 World Cup and losing to Australia in an end-of-year outing in 2011.

"Hunter Stadium is a great boutique stadium, where the crowd is close to the pitch, so there's a great atmosphere," says Hayton. "And Novacastrians love their league.

Then, before flying to England for the Four Nations tournament, the world top-ranked Kiwis are scheduled to face the world champion Australians again on October 15 at Perth's nib Stadium, the first international staged at the West Australian venue.

"We have seen some wonderful crowds in Perth in recent seasons and the city will again host two of our premierships matches in 2016," says NRL head of football Todd Greenberg.

"It is clear that Perth has embraced our club games in recent years. The support the game has received is a key reason we have decided to stage a test match in Perth."

One of those club fixtures will feature Vodafone Warriors v Manly Sea Eagles on July 16.



Kiwi Ferns to Play at the NRL Nines

By Grant Chapman - NZRL Communications Manager



VETERAN SARINA Fiso will lead a new-look Kiwi Ferns side into next week's Downer NRL Auckland Nines series against Australia at Eden Park.

National women's coach Alan Jackson has named five newcomers in his 16 players to defend the trophy won by New Zealand in last year's inaugural women's event.

Mary-Jane Ale, Alex Cook, Amber Kani, Annetta Nuuausala and Langi Veainu will wear the Kiwi Ferns jersey for the first time, while Charmaine McMenemy will return to the programme, having previously appeared in 2010.

"To be fair, it was one of the hardest teams I've had to name and I've been coaching for a long time," he told the squad. "It's changed from when we got into camp for the Anzac Test last year, when I had 19 players to pick 18 and we were really looking around for players.

"This year, it's been really, really hard and I'd like to thank everybody for the effort they've put in. The ones that make this squad owe it to the others to work hard and to do the job in two weeks' time.

"To those other six, the effort has been great and I just know that if they keep doing what they're doing, they will play for the Kiwi Ferns at some stage."

The team is: *Mary-Jane Ale (Wellington), Alexandra Cook (Akarana), Tasha Davie (Akarana), Maitua Feterika (Counties Manukau), Sarina Fiso (Counties Manukau), Teuila Fotu-Moala (Counties Manukau), Georgia Hale (Akarana), Amber Kani (Counties Manukau), Nora Maaka (Counties Manukau), Kelly Maipi (Counties Manukau), Charmaine McMenemy (Akarana), Annetta Nuuausala (Counties Manukau), Kahurangi Peters (Counties Manukau), Kristina Sue (Mid Central), Atawhai Tupaea (Counties Manukau) and Langi Veainu (Counties Manukau).*



NZRL Awards Next Week

By Grant Chapman - NZRL Communications Manager



PROP JESSE Bromwich, second row Tohu Harris and fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck are competing for the major prize, when the NZRL Awards are announced at Auckland's Maritime Room next Wednesday. The international trio are finalists in the Kiwis Player of the Year category, while Jordan Kahu, Kodi Nikorima and Siosua Taukeiaho are in line for the Kiwis Rookie award. The best of New Zealand rugby league will be celebrated over 12 categories that cover players, coaches, match officials, clubs and volunteers.

Finalists for those categories are:

Kiwis Player of the Year:

Jesse Bromwich (Melbourne Storm), Tohu Harris (Melbourne Storm), Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (Sydney Roosters)

Kiwis Rookie of the Year:

Jordan Kahu (Brisbane Broncos), Kodi Nikorima (Brisbane Broncos), SioSua Taukeiaho (Sydney Roosters)

Women's Player of the Year:

Sarina Fiso (Manurewa/Counties Manukau), Teuila Fotu-Moala (Otahuhu/Counties Manukau), Georgia Hale (Richmond/Akarana)

Junior Player of the Year:

Nelson Asofa-Solomona (Melbourne Storm), Daniel Levi (Newcastle Knights), Tuimoala Lolohea (NZ Warriors)

Premier Player of the Year:

Nick Read (Hamilton/WaiCoaBays/Upper Central), Matthew Sauni (Linwood/Canterbury/Southern), Raymond Talimalie (Mangere East/Counties Manukau)

18s Player of the Year:

Tarquinn Alatipi (Porirua/Wellington), Rory Ferguson (Dunedin/Southern), Ata Hingano (NZ Warriors)

16s Player of the Year:

Soane Hufanga (Richmond), Hayze Perham (Pikiao/WaiCoaBay/Upper Central), Josh Uta (Manurewa/Counties Manukau)

Match Official of the Year:

Adam Burns (Christchurch/Southern), Anthony Elliott (Auckland/Akarana), Harry Lysaght (Manawatu/Mid Central)

Domestic Coach of the Year:

Darrell Coad (Canterbury/Southern), Grant Pocklington (Auckland/Akarana), Rod Ratu (Counties Manukau)

Grassroots Club of the Year:

Glenfield RL (Auckland/Akarana), New Lynn Stags (Auckland/Akarana), Pacific Sharks (Tokoroa/Upper Central)

Male Volunteer of the Year:

Marty Brown (Dargaville/Northland), Peter Butler (Manawatu/Mid Central), Simon Itula (Wainuiomata/Wellington)

Female Volunteer of the Year:

Leanne Anderson (Nelson/Southern), Mere Davis (Waikato/Upper Central), Mel Mather (Canterbury/Southern), Jeanne O'Brien (Dannevirke/Mid Central)

Vodafone Warriors Membership Council Being Formed



THE VODAFONE Warriors will form a membership council for the 2016 season including representatives from not only New Zealand but also Australia.

Expressions of interest are now being sought from signed up 2016 members.

“The creation of a membership council is a new development following the introduction of membership ambassadors last season,” said Vodafone Warriors membership manager William Felgate.

“Members served on a voluntary basis in 2015 helping out in a variety of ways especially on our home game days at Mount Smart Stadium. Now we’re looking to broaden the concept.”

Felgate said the Vodafone Warriors were seeking a small group of members who are keen to be involved this year.

“We’re after members who are keen to be game day volunteers and to represent our tribe,” he said.

“These people will help out not only on game day but they will also be the link between the members and the club, helping to make our membership programme the best it can be.

“If you think you have what it takes then we’d like to hear from you.”

Felgate said Vodafone Warriors members based in Australia will be communicated with monthly this year to test membership concepts as well as being updated about 2016 events and planning for 2017.

If you’re interested in being considered for the 2016 membership council email us at memberships@warriors.kiwi with your name, member number and a brief explanation about why you should be on the membership council. Also specify whether you will be able to assist at all 11 home games at Mount Smart Stadium this season.



Go to www.warriors.kiwi and click on the membership tab to find out about membership packages



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Welcome to 2016 Memberships Team

Andrew Purdie (left), Georgina Temm and Shontayne Hape

REPLACING DEPARTING memberships manager William Felgate is Andrew Purdie, who has returned home from New York to fill the position of CRM and memberships manager.

Also back in New Zealand and back at Mount Smart Stadium is 2000-2002 Vodafone Warrior Shontayne Hape. He has joined the club as one of memberships coordinators alongside Georgina Temm, who started with the club last season.

Purdie is a dual United States-New Zealand citizen with more than 10 years' experience in sales roles, most recently working for Visual Natives in New York, an organisation providing turn-key social media marketing solutions designed to brand products and services for generating new leads and sales.

Former Kiwi Hape became Vodafone Warrior #80 in 2000, going on score seven tries in 28 NRL appearances before spending six seasons with the Bradford Bulls in the English Super League. He switched to rugby union in 2008 having stints with Bath, London Irish and Montpellier as well as representing England in 2010-2011 including the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand.

Leading the memberships, game day, events and communications operations at the Vodafone Warriors is newly-appointed fan engagement manager Aaron Lawton. He replaces Rodney Wallace who finished up at the end of last season.

Lawton has a strong connection with rugby league after covering the game for Sunday News and he was most recently Fairfax's head of sports. In 2012 he spent a year at USC (University of Southern California).

For all membership inquiries email memberships@warriors.kiwi or call one of the team on 0800 839 839.

Go to www.warriors.kiwi and click on the membership tab to find out about our packages.

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