

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

13 April 2016

Newsletter #117b

Frustration Levels Rising

By David Kemeys



IT IS tough work being a Vodafone Warriors fan. In truth, and the Butcher will have the hump with me because he likes to see the positives, Saturday night at Mt Smart was abysmal.

We are now 2-4 and far from out of it, but those around me trudging out of the ground, were almost to a man, disappointed that we had been served up the same old thing by our side.

In the pessimism corner one supporter advanced the argument that he had seen enough. No side that had more holes in its defence than a Swiss cheese, could possibly expect to make the eight, and even if it did, it could only be by the skin of its teeth, in which case they would come up against clinical sides that would absolutely bury them.

Result, six games in and he'd seen enough to make the call, we will not make the eight.

In the optimism corner, and it took a fair while to find someone with something good to say, our fan was prepared to write off the performance as a one-off bad night made worse by troublesome decisions.

She argued the RTS/Johnson/Robson combination was improving, and we were not far off, and that the return of Thomas Leuluai would add some steel to the defensive line.

On a night when belief had lifted after back to back wins, it was absolutely crushed by a performance that just was not acceptable.

It is a horrible feeling to yet again leave the ground

absolutely flogged, though we were in it for a while, even if we did not deserve to be.

Sure supporting any side can be a roller-coaster, up one minute and down the next, but supporting the Mt Smart mob provides more lows than highs, and the mass exodus from the ground on Saturday night was proof that people have had enough of it.

Plenty has been said about the standard of refereeing and the bunker, but if you defend like a revolving door and complete 75 percent of your sets, you are going to be beaten even if the men in green give you a dream run.

I'm just a fan, and I try desperately not to bag my own team, but it was hard not to feel let down by that showing.

If there was a positive it was in seeing Thomas Leuluai back on the park, even if Jazz Tevaga, who has been one of our best, was the player to make way.

It is hard to see things getting any brighter for us any time soon.

The Bulldogs love coming to Wellington, so don't expect any favours.

But the tightness of the NRL competition may well do us a favour.

We might be down, but we are not out. The trouble is I have a horrible feeling that the ref is starting the count!

ENJOY THE newsletter. It is a busy old time for me, and by the time you read this I will be in Wellington to support the boys as they take on the Bulldogs – so Brad Fittler, I am a fan and I am still going (see the newsletter for what the Aussie legend had to say about us).

I will be catching up with family too, because Wellington is my home town, and I love the place.

I fly home next Monday because I have to fly out again on the Thursday to Melbourne for our game against the Storm. Then I get home and actually get to draw breath, 13 days at home (although that comes with a 21st birthday, two luncheons and a speaking engagement included), before I fly to Aussie for the Kiwis and Kiwi Ferns test in Newcastle, and the following day's match when the Junior Kiwis, coached by the Vodafone Warriors NYC coach Kelvin Wright, play Australia in Sydney.

Then it will be three days at home before heading to Christchurch for the Vodafone Warriors v Panthers on May 14, back home for a day or two, then another flight – this time to New Plymouth.

They tell me I am just a cheerleader for the Vodafone Warriors and go over the top, but I tell you what, even I will admit we got hammered at the weekend.

The Manly Sea Eagles came to town and battered us all over the park.

We were second-best, and badly, but no one died and it's only a footy game.

No sooner had the final whistle gone than my good friend Darren Brady, who is in thick with the Papakura Sea Eagles, and is a Manly Sea Eagle fan too, was on the phone glowing about the result.

He is a top bloke who does all my auctions at my charity events, but I had to cut him off!

I am nothing if not a sucker for punishment, and for that reason I will be there as always when we play the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs, who will arrive fresh off the back of tipping over the Melbourne Storm 18-12.

The under-fire Warriors can't expect any favours from a very sound Sydney outfit.

But as the old saying goes, when the going gets tough, the tough get going, so bring it on and go the mighty Vodafone Warriors.

Hopefully I'll see you in Wellington - Your Old Mate the Butcher

Sea Eagles v Vodafone Warriors

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz



Roger Tuivasa-Sheck sizes up the opposition.



Blake Ayshford scores a try.



Shaun Johnson passes.



Solomone Kata in action.



Steve Matai scores a try for Manly.



Thomas Leuluai in action.

A Step Back

The disappointing Warriors performance against the Manly Sea Eagles, losing 34-18 and looking horrible doing it, had coach Andrew McFadden admitting we took a backwards step.

Any momentum we had after back-to-back wins over Newcastle and the Roosters vanished in a display that was beyond bad.

It's back to the drawing board for McFadden. "It was disappointing, we gave up 30-plus points in our home and it wasn't good enough."

Penalty Count Horror

There has been plenty of grizzling about the performance of the referees. They were horrible on Saturday night. The game never flowed, the penalty count was incredibly lop-sided, until a late flurry suddenly went our way, so much so the count ended up only 11-10 Manly

But 21 penalties is absurd. Jacob Lillyman ended up on report, and that was farcical.

The swag of penalties Manly got was hard to live with, and Mt Smart let the officials know they weren't happy.

Of course the biggest blunder was Solomone Kata being ruled not to have got the ball back into play.

It was no wonder Ryan Hoffman spent plenty of time in the ear of the officials.

They are so protected that even after the game during the press conference, comment was muted.

I do not believe for one minute, what Hoffman and McFadden had to say, was really what they thought.

It is little wonder many fans believe to this day that we do not get a fair go.

"We felt like every time we got them down in our corner we just piggy-backed them out so I'm going to have to have a look at that and the reasons why," McFadden said. "

And on the Kata moment: "It was a big call. I thought they got it wrong, but we have to live with it."

Barrett Credits Manly Muscle

Sea Eagles coach Trent Barrett said the start was crucial. "Our defence was really good, particularly in that first half. Our aim was to start well and we built

our way into the game. We had a pretty simple plan and I thought every one of them played well."

Welcome Back Thomas

Comeback kid Thomas Leuluai blamed silly offloads and knock-ons for the poor showing. "We were looking for the quick tries to catch up. We played to the scoreboard instead of building pressure."

Leuluai said when the side tried to force things too much, it didn't really work."We just have to trust that, when those opportunities come, we take them, but our mindset should be just to complete."

The match was Leuluai's first in almost a year after a knee injury against Parramatta last May.

He played 31 minutes off the bench, as dummy half and lock.

The 34-Test Kiwi said he came through in good shape. "It seemed like forever out there at the end."



Photo: www.photosport.nz

Rnd 6: Sat 9 Apr 2016, 7:30Pm, Mt Smart Stadium

#NRLWarriorsManly

New Zealand Warriors

18

Full Time

Manly Warringah Sea Eagles

34

[Highlights/Match Stats](#)

[Match Review Tipping](#)

Lillyman At A loss

Warriors prop Jacob Lillyman said it wasn't his side's night. "It just seemed to go against us from the start. In that first half it just felt like we did far too much defence, piggybacks, penalties on late tackles... it just felt like we turned the ball over too easy. We were still well in the game and were very confident at half-time... but we didn't start with the intensity we needed to in the second-half."

Johnson On Defence

Warriors playmaker Shaun Johnson says his defence is improving his confidence.

He has copped plenty, and will get it again this week, but says he's been defending well. "A lot of people focus on my attack but I feel like my defence has been pretty solid and I was always confident the running part of the game was going to come back. Hopefully it can keep building."

Johnson may be happy, but our defence is awful – and you only have to look at how many points we are giving up each week to show it.

Johnson admits it is frustrating but he's adamant there can be no faulting their effort. "I feel like we're defending well and that's probably the hard thing. The scoreboard, especially in the weekend, probably didn't justify how hard we were scrambling."

Fittler Fires Up

Oz league legend Brad Fittler has labelled the Warriors "unprofessional" and "sad to watch". The 34-18 hammering we took at the hands of Manly has us 13th on the table.

Fittler didn't hold back on The Footy Show. "If I was a Warriors fan, I wouldn't be going next week," he said.

There was no confidence. "They were terrible. They were just ... I don't know what the problem is."

He said the major difference between the Warriors and Manly was the way the Sea Eagles played for each other. "There was absolutely none of that from the Warriors and there were some unprofessional actions by a lot of the team ... penalties, dropped balls, just carelessness coming out of trouble. It was quite amazing actually. It was quite sad to watch."

Doyle On The Defensive

Club boss Jim Doyle is unhappy with our poor start but has defended under-pressure coach Andrew McFadden.

He says the players need to be more accountable.

"Obviously we're disappointed when we make errors and put ourselves under pressure and that's something the coaching staff are working on."

Doyle also expressed frustration McFadden's future continues to be questioned.

"McFadden didn't drop balls and miss tackles and therefore our players need to be more accountable. Every time the team goes well the team gets the credit but every time the team doesn't, the coach gets the blame.

"I didn't think we'd be two and four but I know how tough the competition is. I knew that with some of the new players it would take time. When you look at the roster there's high expectations. We'd like to be winning every game but we're still working on as many things as we can."

Ali Opens Up

Great story in the Herald on Sunday about Ali Lauitiiti's departure from the Warriors in 2004. He has never spoken about it, but it seems then chief executive Mick Watson had him escorted off the premises.

Ali made his debut in 1998 and by 2002 was regarded as the most exciting forward in the game.

But in 2004 things changed and Watson called Ali to his office and told him to list his priorities. Lauitiiti wrote family and religion, with the Warriors underneath.

"He wasn't happy with that. League was always going to be important for me, because it was my job. But it was never going to take away my family and church. He just told me to leave and I had to be escorted off the premises."

Warriors Eye SG Ball

Apparently we want to enter a team in the Australian SG Ball competition, a NSW Rugby League-run competition for players aged under 18. It is something the Warriors haven't been a part of, with the best young players either having to play club footy or the Holden Cup.

The Warriors are looking at making a significant financial investment and fund a fourth team flying over to Australia for games, along with the NRL, NSW Cup and Holden Cup teams.

"Ideally that's where we'd like to go," Warriors recruitment and development manager Tony Iro said.

"But obviously it's going to be an expense and it's money we'd have to find."

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There are 17 teams in the SG Ball. It's mainly made up of teams who are in the NRL, but there's also the Central Coast Centurions, Western Sydney Academy and West Coast Pirates from Perth.

Escape Clause For New Boy

New Warriors signing Shaun Lane could walk away at the end of the year to join a rival club.

Lane joined last week from the Bulldogs, with Raymond Faitala-Mariner going the other way.

But Lane's contract is only for the season, so we could let him go, or if he was big hit, he could elect to go – and remember, there were a number of Sydney clubs interested in Lane before he signed.

NYC Juniors Get Home

Centre Junior Pauga's 73rd-minute try and a superb

Zion Ioka conversion from wide out sealed the Vodafone Junior Warriors a 28-20 win over Manly.

The contest was right in the balance into the final few minutes until Pauga stripped the ball, juggled it and then raced away 30 metres to slam the ball down.

Equally critical was Ioka's conversion, which took his side eight points clear with little time left.

Vodafone Junior Warriors 28 (Kane Telea 2, Lewis Soosemea, Isaiah Papalii, Junior Pauga tries; Zion Ioka 4 conversions). Manly Sea Eagles 20 (Brad Parker 2 tries, Bill Bainbridge, Harlan Collins tries; Nicholas Hynes 2 conversions).

Intrust Super Premiership (NSW)

The Vodafone Warriors had a 30-12 sixth-round Intrust Super Premiership victory over the North Sydney Bears on Sunday.

Newtown 28 v Canterbury 22
Mounties 24 v Wentworthville 16
Manly 40 v Wyong 30
Illawarra 31 v Wests Tigers 18
Penrith 28 v Newcastle 16
NZ Warriors 30 v def North Sydney 12

NSW Intrust Super Premiership Round 6 Results



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it was Alfritz Tatui's first time in the lounge. He was the guest of Don Graham and he had a great time.



Anne Vitaliano was also a guest of Don Graham. It was also her first time in the lounge and she proudly wore her Vodafone Warriors jersey.



Mike, Kristan and Anna all from Cardinal Logistics. All the first time in the lounge as guest of Don Graham.



Chris Martin with Sir Peter.



Don Graham with Sir Peter.



Dwayne, Jo, Lainey and Andy all new members this year.



Jacob Lillyman reflects on his career before receiving two certificates. One for his 150th Warriors appearance and the other for his 200th NRL appearance.



Jacob Lillyman with Liam from Christchurch. Liam was a special guest of Sir Peter's.



Joyce a member of the Sir Peter Leitch Club.



Lorna and Trevor celebrate their wedding anniversary.



Trevor and M8 with Shontayne Hape.



Our good mates Lorna and Trevor celebrate their 31st wedding.



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Mark Sorenson interviews Golden Home Black Sox player Joel Evan.



Mark Sorenson Golden Homes Black Sox Softball coach talking to Sir Peter.



NZ Golden Homes Blax Sox Softballers Eru, Conner, Hohepa, Penese and Joel with Georgia Robinson.



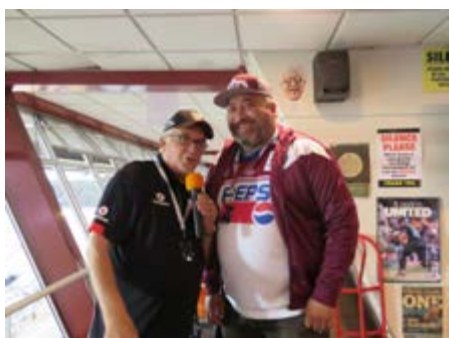
It was great to host the Golden Homes Black Sox softball team in the lounge.



Jayden Moore Manager of the Golden Home Black Sox Softball team gets a Warriors scarf.



Nathaniel Roache speaks about his partner's father, the legend Steve Price.



Rau Tangiiti a Manly supporter had the cheek to wear Manly gear into the lounge. Sir Peter certainly gave him a talking to



Shontayne Hape with Sir Peter.



Sir Peter presents Bodene Thompson with a certificate for his 100th NRL Appearance.



Max King age seven from the Northcote Tigers gets a Warriors jersey from Sir Peter.



Bodene Thompson and Nathaniel Roache.



Michael Tipene with Sir Peter.

SATURDAY APRIL 16



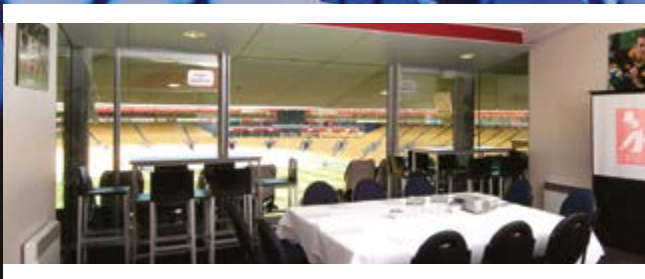
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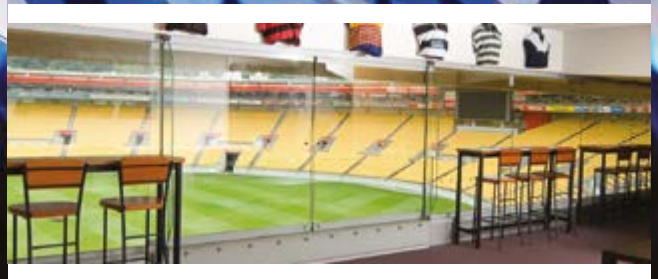
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The "Alternative Kiwis"

By John Coffey QSM



STEPHEN KEARNEY and his fellow selectors are deep into their deliberations about who will line up for the Kiwis against the Kangaroos in the Anzac Test at Newcastle on May 6. One thing is for sure – they will not have the problems of their predecessors who often had to delve into second tier competitions to find players.

New Zealanders abound in the NRL, and there are plenty of emerging youngsters. Even the specialist positions which lacked depth are filling up. In the halves, Kodi Nikorima and Tui Lolohea were blooded late last year and Te Maire Martin has made a sensational club debut. Manaia Cherrington, Danny Levi and Jazz Tavega have boosted the hooking ranks.

With the Kiwis enjoying so much recent success, the Anzac Test squad will inevitably be comprised of players who won the 2014 Four Nations title and shared in three consecutive victories over Australia. So I found it an interesting exercise to look beyond them and select an "Alternative Kiwis" team which would not be out of its depth at international level.

Not all of these guys are creaking through the declining years of their professional careers. In fact, my starting props, Sam McKendry and Russell Packer, and their main back-up man, Sam Kasiano, are all 26, the age when they should be reaching their peak. And, on recent performances, they are doing just that, yet seem to have been overtaken by newer arrivals.

My team of far-from-over-the-hill Kiwis with Test experience comprises:

Fullback: Josh Hoffman (Kiwis number 773), aged 28. Currently doing a good job in the Titans centres, the former Bronco was New Zealand fullback in four Tests in 2012-13.

Wing: Sam Perrett (744), aged 30. Still one of the most reliable outside backs in the NRL, as he always was when making 21 Test appearances from 2007 to 2013. World Cup winner.

Centre: Bryson Goodwin (752), aged 30. Was picked for the Kiwis in 2009 and 2013. Does that mean this consistent midfield man and occasional goalkicker will be back in 2017?

Centre: Steve Matai (730), aged 31. Played 12 Tests between 2006 and 2010 but did not make the same impact (except on Mark Gasnier's head) as he has in the Manly backline.

Wing: Chase Stanley (745), aged 26. Since his two Test matches in 2007 his career has been ruined by injuries. A great start to this season has been sadly halted by a hamstring problem.

Stand-off half: Benji Marshall (717), aged 31. Debuted in 2005 and played the last of his 27 Tests (19 as captain) in 2012. Deserves an honoured place among our very best inside backs.

Scrum-half: Thomas Leuluai (704), aged 30. Will surely add to his 34 Tests (2003-15) and should not be included here. But we needed a No.7, just as the Warriors have needed him.

Prop: Sam McKendry (763), aged 26. Eight Tests between his debut in 2010 and breaking his neck in 2013. Penrith powerhouse playing as well as when he was first selected for the Kiwis.

Hooker: Dene Halatau (713), aged 33. Enjoying a second coming in Tigers backrow, where he won a grand final in 2005. But used mostly at hooker in his 15 Tests from 2004 to 2009.

Prop: Russell Packer (768), aged 26. The man who Wayne Bennett regrets he never coached has made a convincing NRL rehabilitation. His two-Test international career was in 2011.

Second-row: Iosia Soliola (729), aged 29. Former (2006-09) Kiwis centre in 12 Tests who became a forward at St Helens and returned to be Canberra's Player of the Year in 2015.

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Second-row: Frank-Paul Nuuausala (754), aged 29. “Frank-Paul the Wrecking Ball” is still as destructive as when he played nine Tests in 2009-10 and six more at the 2013 World Cup.

Loose forward: Jeremy Smith (742), aged 36. The oldest NRL player but with the same glint in his eye as when he collected a World Cup win among his 23 Tests from 2007 to 2012.

Interchange: Sam Kasiano (777), aged 26. During his Kiwi days (2012-13) big Sam operated only in short spells, but under reduced interchanges he is going longer and stronger than ever.

Interchange: Jeff Lima (743), aged 34. Seven Tests as an interchange prop in 2007 and 2009, then won a Lance Todd Trophy as the British Challenge Cup final man of the match in 2011.

Interchange: Zeb Taia (761), aged 31. His only Test as at Melbourne in 2010 and later played in France. He recently scored two tries in five minutes for the Titans against the Broncos.

Interchange: Elijah Taylor (770), aged 26. Injuries interrupted his Kiwis career at 10 Tests from 2011 to 2013. Intelligent, versatile, whole-hearted performer who is still a contender.

Eighteenth man: Ali Lauitiiti (677), aged 36. Turns 37 in May and might yet make Jeremy Smith the second oldest man in the NRL. His 19 Tests were way back, from 2000 to 2006.

Footnote: When we researched the Kiwis centenary book a decade ago, the late Bernie Wood discovered “Jeff” Lima’s full Christian names are Operani Alotutusaolemataafa Jeffrey. How would the Aussie commentators handle that?

A Special Invitation from the Butcher

IF YOU'RE thinking of going to Christchurch for the Panthers game then I would like to invite you to join me at Gary CLARK's Rugby League Museum in Christchurch on the Saturday at 11/30am for a BBQ, sausage and beer. Email garyclarke@paradise.net.nz to register your attendance. We will be joined by a few ex players like Shontayne Hape, Vodafone Warriors boss Jim Doyle and several other staff members like fan engagement manager Aaron Lawton. I'm looking forward to having some fun!



A couple of photos from inside the museum.



YOU MUST EMAIL TO REGISTER YOUR ATTENDANCE

Mark Sorenson - NZ Softball Coach

By Ben Francis



MARK SORENSON might not be a household name, but he is one of the most respected men in New Zealand Sport and in the world of Softball. Mark is currently the coach of the National Men's Softball team. (known as the Black Sox) Mark has been in this role since June 2013.

The Black Sox had their first training camp of the year in Auckland last weekend in preparation of for the 2017 World Championship's which will be held in Whitehorse, Canada.

"It was very good," said Mark. "We achieved the things we wanted to achieve and laid out our expectations for our next training camp."

"We will bring the boys back in September to check their progress and see how much they have improved in the offseason."

"We will then take a squad of 17 for a two week tournament in Venezuela which will feature seven of the top eight teams in the world followed by a home series against Argentina in March before we name our squad for the World Championships."

It was a fantastic start in preparation for the World Championships with Golden Homes and BLK coming on board as major sponsors of the Black Sox.

"It's providing the sport sustainability heading into the future," said Mark. "It is a great step in the right direction as our sponsors have similarities to us," he added.

Softball was an Olympic sport between 1996-2008 for woman. It has not featured in the last two Olympics and will also not feature at Rio later on this year. However talks are underway to get the sport back at the Olympics. "It would be great for the sport to be back at the Olympics," Mark said. "It would bring great credibility to the program and will get more people participating in the sport also."

The Black Sox are currently ranked #1 in the world whilst the White Sox (Woman's national team) are ranked #8 in the world.

Mark got his love of Softball through his father, Dave Sorenson. Dave was a first baseman for the Black Sox, played in four World Championship's for New Zealand and also captained the team in a 10year career.

Mark followed in his father's footsteps and became a player himself, spending 20years in the national team. Mark played in six World Championship's winning four of them in 1984 (aged 16), 1996, 2000 & 2004. In 2010 Mark Sorenson was inducted into the international Softball Federation Hall Of Fame, joining his father who was inducted in 1995) to become the only father/son duo in the hall of fame.

Sorenson was also inducted into the New Zealand Sporting Hall Of Fame this year at this year's Halberg Awards and also has been awarded the New Zealand Order Or Merit for his services to Softball and the community.

If you would like to take part in Softball head along to <http://www.softball.org.nz/> it is currently the offseason for Softball in New Zealand. The new season will start in October



*Head Coach Mark Sorenson of NZ looks on. 2014 ISF Men's Softball Championship Qualifiers.
Photo courtesy of www.photosport.nz*

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Jerome Ropati - Former Warrior Now a Community Man

By Ben Francis



IF YOU don't know who Jerome Ropati is, you are not a true Warriors fan. Jerome Ropati played 145 games for the Warriors and 11 tests for the Kiwis in a 10 year career covering multiple positions including Centre, Five Eight and Fullback. Sadly for Ropati his career was hampered with a number of serious injuries which led to an early retirement at the age of 29. Ropati endured two knee reconstructions, a couple of fractured kneecaps, shoulder, ankle and hamstring injuries. The last straw was in Ropati's final game for the Warriors against the West Tigers in 2014 where he broke his jaw.

"It wasn't the way I wanted to go out," said Ropati. "My body was telling me it was time to move on."

"The two knee reconstructions were the toughest injuries to go through. The length of time I was out for, training on my own was difficult to deal with."

Since retiring Ropati found a new home at the Warriors off the footy field as the Warriors NRL Community Ambassador.

"What this role involves is going around schools with Warriors players and talking about our Well Being program," Said Ropati we talk about things like how important it is to keep hydrated, the importance of sleep, group work and mental health issues."

Jerome Ropati loves taking the program to schools along with some of the players and showing how much they mean to the communities.

"Delivering the program to the communities and seeing the effect it has on the community is great"

"Seeing the players give back to the community and seeing how much they mean to certain communities is unbelievable."

"I am very fortunate the Warriors got me this job and supported me during my retirement. I worked hard, and they know how hard I've worked to get to this stage."

Other former NRL players who are NRL Community Ambassador's include Nathan Hindmarsh, Andrew Ryan and Allan Tongue.

Jerome Ropati has a number of great career achievements but believes his best career moment was when the Kiwis won the Rugby League World Cup in 2008 when they beat Australia 34-20 in the final.

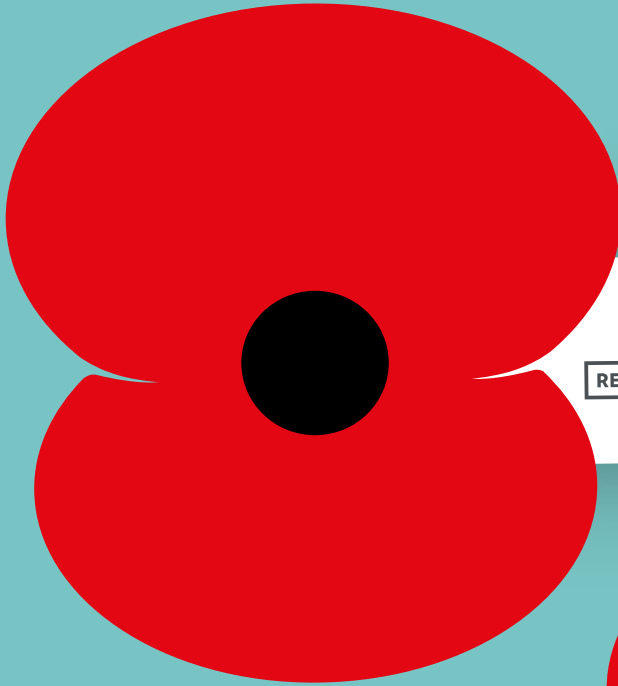
"The circumstances of that game made it more special," said Ropati. " We were not supposed to win, that Australia team was one of the best teams ever and we won." Other Warriors in that World Cup winning team included Simon Mannering, Thomas Leuluai, Manu Vatuvei, former Warriors Lance Hohaia, Nathan Fien, Sam Rapira and new recruit Issac Luke.



*NRL community ambassador Jerome Ropati visits St Peter Chanel Motueka, Nelson, New Zealand. Thursday 18 February 2016.
Photo courtesy of www.photosport.nz*



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Expect a Battle of the Big Men in Wellington

By Barry Ross



AND SO to Wellington this Saturday. No doubt coach McFadden will have his charges very aware of the thrashing St. George/Illawarra inflicted on the team last year. That's in the past now and it is probably a good thing, as every player will have their minds focussed on the tough job in front of them. There was a crowd of 18,317 in 2015 to see the Dragons demolition, but in 2014, a crowd of 22,512 turned up to Westpac to see the Warriors belt the West Tigers by 42-18. Shaun Johnson scored 14 points in this win from a try and five goals.

Des Hasler is a smart coach and he will have his Bulldogs team ready for anything. But you don't have to be a genius to know that a no-holds barred, forward battle is on the cards. Des loves to see his big men going forward and things will be no different in Wellington. They come into the game with a solid win behind them. While Melbourne probably had the better of play on Monday night, the Bulldogs goal-line defence gave them the two competition points.

I hate to harp on the referees but gee they left a lot to be desired on Saturday in the Manly game. The reversal of the 25-tap to a line drop out from Solomone Kata's great effort in the second half was a huge decision. At that stage of the game, it was a major benefit to Manly. As Warriors captain, Ryan Hoffman said, "I don't know how five people could get it wrong." Was it from the Bunker? Tony Archer hasn't told us at the time of writing this piece. It has escaped a lot of deserved criticism in the Sydney media on Sunday and Monday, although I did hear criticism about it on talkback radio. I, along with the fans, would like to know exactly what powers the bunker has in regards to changing decisions the referees have already made.

Around the middle of the second half, the Warriors were penalised for not being square at marker. I am all for this penalty as it does give the defenders an unfair advantage. But in the Manly game I believe it was the only penalty given for this indiscretion. All teams do this but I don't believe Manly were found guilty of this last Saturday.

And while I am no expert on all the rules, I didn't think you could change your mind after you had indicated to the referee whether you were kicking for the line or having a shot a goal. Manly's Apisai Koroisau appeared to do this in 65th minute. He indicated a kick for the line, but then Jamie Lyon over-ruled him and took shot at goal.

In the Penrith-Cowboys game at Penrith, I was amazed when referee, Ashley Klein, said to Jonathan Thurston, "That's Rugby League mate." Thurston had enquired why there was no penalty after he perceived one of his players received a facial from an opponent in a tackle.

Klein of course was correct, as there is usually nothing in most of the facials, except to annoy the player worked on. But this is not a consistent line from the refs. Often players are penalised for what the whistle blower believes is foul play. That's fine as long as the referees are consistent about it. Tony Archer has to tell his men to penalise the offenders all the time, not just on some occasions. Or else they could forget about this altogether, if Archer, like Klein, believes, "That's Rugby League, mate." I am becoming a bigger and bigger fan of Tigers fullback, James Tedesco. Even though his team were beaten by the Knights, Tedesco's ball running was one of the features of the game. He is the NRL's leading try scorer with 8 and also has 5 try assists.

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The Warriors Want More Tongan Success-Stories Like Solomone Kata

By John Deaker



SOLOMONE KATA has been one of the Warriors' standout players in 2016 and is a recruitment success-story for the club. He initially came down from Tonga to New Zealand in 2012 on a rugby scholarship where he attended Sacred Heart College. The centres have traditionally been a weak area for the club so the 22 year-old's rapid rise through their ranks is appreciated even more than it might be in many other positions. It's little wonder then that the Warriors' Recruitment and Development Manager Tony Iro arrived back on Monday from a tour to Tonga where he visited the village where Kata lived growing up.

Finding a few more Solomone Kata's and securing them without paying a 'Tuivasa-Sheck price-tag' is a search worth pursuing and even investing heavily in. It's not just the natural athletic skills that a man like Kata possesses. He also has a natural toughness ingrained in him that is hard to coach into a player. It's a trait that people are more conscious of in talent identification circles these days – and also a characteristic that many critics of the Warriors refer to when the teams performances on the field become very inconsistent.

Kata's large family (his parents, five brothers, two sisters and three adopted brothers) remained in Tonga when he came to New Zealand and it's clear that helping to financially support them was the motivation behind him switching to rugby league.

"I took the opportunity (with the Warriors) because of my family. That's the only reason I came to league," says Kata.

"When I was at Sacred Heart I got picked for the Blues Under 18 academy and one of the guys from the Blues told me to stay with rugby."

That period when young men leave school has become a crucial window for recruitment by the New Zealand Warriors. With rugby being the National sport and rugby league's limited presence in many schools, a lot of boys get to the end of high school without ever having the opportunity to play the 13 man game. Tony Iro doesn't view it as poaching – he's very open about the Warriors providing an alternative opportunity to young men

"Super rugby level is probably not targeted by us but at schoolboy level we are very active," says Iro.

"I make no apologies about the fact that we are actively recruiting out of rugby union. They've got a massive talent base of players. My opinion is that not everyone is designed to play rugby – there's some designed to play rugby league and it's our job to try and find those boys... we're happy to provide that opportunity."

The Warriors have often had to pay over the market value of Australian players to attract them across the Tasman so setting up stronger links with countries like Tonga makes sense when there is a proven formula for successful results.

The Inventus group who manage both Kata and Konrad Hurrell went up to Tonga with Iro on his "fact-finding" visit this week. The local community had organized 60 boys to play a couple of games and Iro also organized some coach development and athlete development sessions. He's hopeful the relationship will continue to develop.

"Up there we visited Solomone's school. We took some footballs to help with their training as a bit of an appreciation to the Tongan community. There's a very good rugby academy at Solomone's [former] school," he says.

"We're looking at ways to set up a longer-term commitment and how we'd do it considering there's such a strong Tongan presence in our team at the moment. We'd be foolish not to go and explore that a bit more. We're not the only club of rugby or league that are having a look – but we want to be as proactive as we can."

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

The numerous challenges that Kata has overcome in New Zealand make his story such a special one. He says the language barrier was the toughest hurdle initially for him but having a few other Tongan boys boarding at Sacred Heart helped him to feel at home a bit more.

In 2013 Kata made an immediate impact on the Warriors NYC team scoring two tries on debut against South Sydney. By the end of 2014 he'd received plenty of experience in the NSW Cup team and was also a key member in the Warriors' NYC championship winning team; he scored a hat-trick of tries in the final against the Broncos and won the Jack Gibson Medal as the man of the match.

By the time he played first grade Kata made the step up look easy, but he admits he found the jump just as big as so many young men have before him.

"It is a very big step. I got a lot of confidence out of my first match though... and I think the most important thing is to be tough... also to learn quickly in training every time to practice what I've done wrong in games."

Playing on the Warriors' left edge alongside two men as accomplished and experienced as Manu Vatuvei and Ryan Hoffman has been a huge help for Kata.

"It's very different when Manu's on the field. Every time he starts our sets I try and back him up. He takes the hard one and then I come up behind him and try and better that. That's how I work in with him," he says.

And regarding his captain, Hoffman: "He always comes and talks to me on the field and says to play the way I am and if I stuff it up to put it behind me."

These days Kata lives with his Uncle Malakai in Glen Innes. He's a much bigger fan of doing weights than running for trainings. Watching the NRL on television is something he enjoys during his down-time – a notable change from the Super rugby that he predominantly watched through his teenage years in Tonga.

He's already played for Tonga but not the Kiwis yet. It's just a matter of time before the Kiwis come calling and when they do, family will again be critical in helping him make a big decision for his career.

"My only plan is I want to play a World Cup for Tonga... The first thing I want to do if I get picked for the Kiwis is I'll ask them to give me a chance to call my parents and ask them what they think. Whatever they want me to be is their call."

*Solomone Kata. Vodafone Warriors v Sea Eagles.
Photo courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz*



Tony Iro's Role Is Crucial to the Future of the Warriors Club

By John Deaker



IT WAS late September last year that Tony Iro was announced as the new Recruitment and Development Manager to take-over in the position that Dean Bell had previously filled at the club. Bell was moved on from his job in April last year with 18 months left on his contract so it was obvious the club would have more demanding expectations of whoever took over the role. It's a crucial position at a club that remains proud of developing and retaining more home-grown talent than most clubs in the NRL. Iro has now been in the role just over six months and is transparent about where he's been aiming to provide a point-of-difference from Bell's era in the similar role.

"I wanted to get a lot deeper involved at the junior level," he explains.

"So that meant basically attending all our trainings at academy, development, Under 20 level and even reserve grade to get as much time on the field with the boys as possible. I thought that was an important part of not just recruitment but finding out about boys training ethic. The other thing was because I've had a reasonable amount of experience I could get down and mentor some of those coaches coming through."

Iro has built up plenty of experience in coaching via under-age roles and coaching positions with the Warriors and Kiwis during the last decade. This complements the vast experience he acquired playing for the Kiwis, Wigan and many clubs in Australia.

An interesting part of Iro's job at the Warriors that many fans may not appreciate is the importance of him obtaining and maintaining good working relationships with players' managers. In the modern game these connections can be crucial.

"We have very robust discussions continually every week," says Iro.

"Obviously there's always some players that aren't happy. Generally there is only 17 that are very happy each week. We see the managers regularly, have our disagreements just like any normal business situation but generally we seem to get on ok most of the time."

Critics of the Warriors are sometimes heard lambasting the mental hardness of their home-grown talent when the players break in to first grade. Selecting a lot more Australians is the quick-fix solution many of these critics suggest. This attitude fails to recognize how tough it is for the Warriors to attract players

across the Tasman without paying a lot more than their market value.

Iro also says the Warriors' system hasn't performed as badly as some people might believe and he's determined to keep focusing on developing young Kiwis rather than looking offshore.

"We're a New Zealand club so it's our responsibility to develop New Zealand talent – and we've done that really well. A lot of our critics will say we've missed some coming through and we'll continue to do that because it's not an exact science. I back the club and believe we do find most of them," says Iro.

A key change that Iro is hopeful of making a reality in the coming years is getting a Warriors team into Australia's SG Ball (Under 18) competition. Doing this would come at a considerable cost but it's money that appears to be worth investing. Importantly, Iro is genuinely "reasonably confident" that it will happen in the next few years.

"The most positive thing is that the Australian clubs want us in it. Having talked to some of their clubs they're prepared to travel here if we enter the SG Ball Cup," he says.

"I think for us if we want to become genuine about developing our kids then we need to be providing that football. It's too hard for our boys to come straight out of local league and into the Under 20's. Even though physically we're well prepared a lot of the time it's the mental pressures of being in those types of competitions where you're being tested week-in-week-out that's really the big ingredient missing out of the development of our best kids."

Iro is still only 48 and despite the knock-backs he's had you wouldn't discount him one day reaching his goal of coaching an NRL team. For now though, Iro has his hands full and is definitely in a role where he can significantly assist the Warriors first grade team to be more successful in the future.



Assistant Coach Tony Iro during a Warriors training session.
www.photosport.co.nz



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

The Mad Butchers Weekly NRL Tipping Comp.

By John Holloway

NRL Round X

NRL Round X		Sue Phelan	Joe Vagana	John Coffey	Fast Eddie	Monty Betham	Bill Hayward	High-Tackle Holloway
		<i>Maloney's Barber Shop</i>	<i>League Legend</i>	<i>Newsletter Columnist</i>	<i>Devonport Dutchman</i>	<i>The Warrior Boxer</i>	<i>Link Business</i>	<i>Richmond Bulldog</i>
Date/ Venue	Game							
14/04 - Brookvale	Sea Eagles v Eels	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels
15/04 - 1300Smiles	Cowboys v Rabbitohs	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys
16/04 - CBUS	Titans v Dragons	Titans	Titans	Titans	Titans	Titans	Titans	Dragons
16/04 - Westpac Stdm.	Bulldogs v Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors
16/04 - Suncorp	Broncos v Knights	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos
17/04 - GIO	Raiders v Sharks	Sharks	Raiders	Sharks	Raiders	Raiders	Sharks	Sharks
17/04 - Leichardt	Tiger v Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Tigers
18/04 - ALLIANZ	Roosters v Panthers	Roosters	Roosters	Panthers	Panthers	Panthers	Panthers	Panthers

How they're traveling....

Picks last week	4/8	4/8	4/8	4/8	5/8	4/8	5/8
Total picks	24/48	22/48	26/24	30/48	29/48	27/48	26/48

VERY EVEN Tipping this week with Monty and High-Tackle out front on 5 apiece backing the Bulldogs and everyone else on 4s. Big Joe was solo nicking the Knights. The table tightening up just a little on the Dutchman. It's often said that nothing is as it seems and round 7 matchups might just fall in to this view....more head-scratching headaches with another batch of banana-skins on offer. Good luck all.

High-Tackle spent the weekend in Dunedin and what a good (old school) place it is...I expected that the Octagon bars and eating places (there are heaps of them) would be all about stingy Scotsmen, sofa burning scarves and the Highlanders but much to my liking the welcome was warm, the seating comfy and the Warriors and other NRL games also featured on most TV screens. I can tell you that I made a sizeable dent in the Southland Bluff Oyster stocks that they were helped on their journey by some very salubrious and slippery local brews. Cool.

They reckon if you can't say anything constructive don't say anything at all so I won't be dwelling on the

Mt Smart match or the rocky reffing. I believe by the time you read this Cappy will have made a statement via his team selection for the Caketin. I went to Wellington last season for the Dragons encounter which was a long way from memorable...may the Footy Gods shine brighter on our homeboys trip to the Capital this weekend. Around the traps it was business as usual for the pace setting Broncos, 26 zip over the dreadful Dragons and JTs Rustlers rounding up the improving Panthers 23/18. The Eels made mincemeat of the rickety Raiders 36/6 and the sharp-shooter Sharks blanked the tin-soldier Titans 25 zippo. Not a lot of outfits get out of Melbourne with the winnings but the Bulldogs battled to a 18/12 result in a torrid tussle. The bottom feeding strugglers finally hit pay-dirt with the Roosters and the Knights notching their first win bonuses. The Bondi boys with red-hot Napa running riot bashed Souths into submission 17/10 and the unheralded Knights unseated the hot'n'cold Tigers 18/16. The Westies woes compounded by the injury loss of inspirational prop leader Woods for 4 to 6 weeks.

Thank You

By Shontayne Hape



I WANT TO use my column this week to thank our loyal Vodafone Warriors members for their support. Like everyone else, I was disappointed with last weekend's loss to the Sea Eagles at Mt Smart Stadium.

But when I walked into our members' clubrooms after the game and saw how positive the club's loyal supporters are, it really made me smile.

We were lucky enough to have Issac Luke and Jeff Robson join us in the clubrooms for a post-match debrief and when they arrived, they received a standing ovation from our members.

As a club, we really couldn't ask for better fans.

Speaking of fans and I'm hearing we will have quite a contingent of Vodafone Warriors supporters at Westpac Stadium in Wellington this weekend for our clash with the Bulldogs.

While it's a Bulldogs home game, we'd love to see a full house with Vodafone Warriors fans getting behind the boys.

There's no doubt it will be a tough clash. The Bulldogs are a top side and head into this game on the back of a good win over the Melbourne Storm.

That said, I'm certainly keeping the faith. We've got so much talent at the club and I know we aren't far away from really hitting our stride.

From a membership point of view, our new memberships manager Dan Boyd and our memberships team leader Georgina Temm will be in the capital to rub shoulders with our members on Friday and Saturday.

The boys are doing a signing session at the Rydges Hotel on Friday night from 5-5:30pm. If you're a member, get down there and show your support for the Vodafone Warriors the signing session **IS FOR MEMBERS ONLY**

See you at our next home game.

What I've Been Up To - *Sir Peter Leitch*



All the 2011 Grand Final Hats and magazines all loaded in my car. They have all been posted and if your a winner yours should be in your mailbox soon.



Out on the water with the four happy chaps I took Kayaking on Sunday morning.

Jersey Winners



Sorry for the delay, received last Friday. Thank you so much for the jersey, it's AWESOME! I will treasure for life
Kristin.



Kia ora Peter
Cheers for the jersey. I can't believe I won it. Go the Vodafone Warriors.
- Matt White



Kia Ora Sir Peter,

Many thanks to you and the team who organised the signed jersey that I won recently. I was so shocked to see my name in your newsletter that I didn't actually believe that I had won. I had to email you to double check that there wasn't another Mark Campbell living in Te Atatu.

Here is a photo of my daughter Jaime & I in her room & as you can see by her posters, she is a huge fan too. I think she

has already taken claim of the jersey to add to her excessive Warriors wardrobe.

We are proud to be season membership holders along with another 23 family members who turn up with us to Mt Smart every home game to cheer on our Warriors.

Thanks for being an inspiration & a fantastic role model and above all else, thank you for keeping the faith.

We love your work. - Mark Campbell

Catching Up With My Mates in the Sea Eagles



Great to catch up with Nat Myles before and to ask how his wife is doing after her battle with cancer.



Nice seeing Brett Stewart. Did you know Brett is diabetic. He has to inject insulin daily.



Was awesome to see Martin Taupau.



THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 7 ISSUE...

Jam-packed with FEATURES and NEWS, plus columnist **DANNY BUDERUS** and game analysis by **BEN IKIN**; plus **NRL, HOLDEN CUP, NSW CUP, QLD CUP** and **RON MASSEY CUP** team lists and a **FULL NRL DRAW**.

FEATURES

- Canberra five-eighth **Blake Austin** has always had to fight for everything – his career, his position and trying to mend his body when it has failed him – and he's prepared to go the extra mile to prove to NSW coach **Laurie Daley** he should be in the mix for Origin this season.

- **Lachlan Coote** says beyond winning a premiership, playing for the Cowboys alongside Johnathan Thurston has taught him more about his game than ever. The salary cap may force him to move on from the club, but eight years into his career, he's only just getting started.

- The surprise packet of the competition so far has been crafty Titans halfback **Ash Taylor** and the 21-year-old is not afraid to call the shots despite his inexperience and age. He needed the move from the Broncos to "move on with his life" and is prepared to do anything to keep the No.7 jersey.

Also, **Danny Buderus** says **Nathan Peats** is the only other NSW hooker that can perform at rep level behind Michael Ennis and Robbie Farah; **Manly** players say they have rediscovered their grit; **Jordan Rankin** is restarting his career on his own terms; they've shared 42 players and the **Roosters v Panthers** rivalry is still strong; **Trent Hodkinson** talks charity work and **Aidan Guerra** doesn't think **Dylan Napa** would be picked for Origin even if he was eligible.

PLUS... **Rory Kostjasyn** could be the first Cowboy out the door; **Chad Townsend** says the field goal in the new mental edge in a game and we revisit the **Top 8 longest losing streaks in the NRL era**.

AND: Little League, lower grade previews, news, The Analyst compares the Broncos' defence across the board and all the stats you can poke a stick at.



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Tuimoala Lolohea | Shifted to Standoff

By Richard Becht



TUIMOALA LOLOHEA will start at standoff while Bodene Thompson, David Fusitu'a and Ligi Sao have been brought into the squad for the Vodafone Warriors' seventh-round NRL match against the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs at Westpac Stadium in Wellington on Saturday (7.30pm kick-off).

Lolohea moves from the wing to join halfback Shaun Johnson with Thompson back from a three-match injury absence to restore the club's established back row combination.

With Thompson in the second row, Simon Mannering reverts to loose forward where he started in the first three rounds while Fusitu'a comes in on the wing with Lolohea's shift to the halves.

"We've always seen Tui as moving into the halves at some stage," said Vodafone Warriors head coach Andrew McFadden.

"We had him there late last season when Shaun was injured and he also played in the halves for the Kiwis. He provides great value wherever he plays on the field but, while he has done a terrific job on the wing, we see Tui's future being in the halves. It's a good time to bring him in."

Named on an extended bench is back rower/prop Sao. Sidelined with a shoulder injury since the February 20 trial against St George Illawarra in Nelson, he made his return for the club's Intrust Super Premiership side in its 30-12 win over North Sydney on Sunday.

An NYC premiership winner with the Vodafone Junior Warriors in 2011, Sao made 21 NRL appearances for Manly from 2013-2015 – 20 of them last season – before coming home to Auckland. If he plays on Saturday night, he'll become Vodafone Warrior #210.

McFadden has also made a switch in the front row, naming Sam Lisone to start with the vastly-experienced Jacob Lillyman set to be used from the interchange.

Veteran wing Manu Vatuvei hasn't fully recovered from the hamstring injury which kept him out of last week's clash against Manly. That has allowed Fusitu'a to return for his 16th NRL match after last appearing against the Roosters in July last season.

The Vodafone Warriors face a Canterbury-Banks-

town side lying fifth on the ladder after an 18-12 win over the Storm in Melbourne last night. The Bulldogs are spending the rest of the week in the Capital for what is their home game.

The match will be the Vodafone Warriors' ninth in Wellington and their fourth in the last four years.


Their squad includes four players with Wellington connections.

Ben Matulino has played in each of the last three matches there since 2013 while Gubb was in the NRL side last year. Mannering and hooker Issac Luke both spent time in the Capital in their junior playing days; Mannering appeared in the last three visits but this will be Luke's first NRL game in Wellington.

This will be the 34th encounter between the two sides and the sixth time they've met in Wellington. The Bulldogs hold a 19-12 winning advantage overall with two draws. In 15 away games the record favours Canterbury-Bankstown 9-4 with two draws.

VODAFONE WARRIORS v CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN BULLDOGS

Westpac Stadium, Wellington
7.30pm, Saturday, April 16

- 
- 1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck
 - 2 Jonathan Wright
 - 3 Blake Ayshford
 - 4 Solomone Kata
 - 5 David Fusitu'a
 - 6 Tuimoala Lolohea
 - 7 Shaun Johnson
 - 8 Sam Lisone
 - 9 Issac Luke
 - 10 Ben Matulino
 - 11 Bodene Thompson
 - 12 Ryan Hoffman (C)
 - 13 Simon Mannering
- Interchange:
- 14 Thomas Leuluai
 - 15 Jacob Lillyman
 - 16 Charlie Gubb
 - 17 Konrad Hurrell
 - 18 Ligi Sao

Referee: Henry Perenara. **Assit Referee:** David Munro
Touch Judges: Shane Rehm & Jeff Younis
Review Officials: Steve Chiddy & Luke Patten



Hiya,

Just thought I would share this photo of my wee grandson Eli with you. He knows what game is best, he is pretty happy with a league ball.

Dot Eaton - Christchurch



Ziah Cowan at the game showing his support.



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