

VODAFONE



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

30th June 2016

## Newsletter #128

### Vodafone Warriors v Sharks Game



Andrew Fafita is tackled by Jacob Lillyman and Simon and Simon Mannering



Ben Matulino on the run



Blake Ayshford sprints away from an attempted tackle



Blake Ayshford tackles Gerrard Beale



Izaac Luke on the attack



Ryan Hoffman on the attack



Sharks celebrate



Shaun Johnson defeats the tackle of James Maloney



Solomone Kata gets tackled

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

# Paying the Penalty

## By David Kemeys



**T**HERE WAS only one topic of conversation after the heartbreaking loss to Cronulla –that penalty try. What I have a difficulty with, is that it has taken this long to come, when you see the same thing week after week, and I am also a big enough conspiracy theorist to say, there is no way in hell the Warriors would be given a decision like that. Not even at Mt Smart, let alone in Australia.

There just isn't.

So it is hard to criticise Vodafone Warriors coach Andrew McFadden for going so far as to accused the NRL of caving to pressure – especially from the media - and changing the interpretation of the penalty try in the middle of the season.

What was really galling was that it was awarded to Jason Bukuya, the former Warrior. Talk about former players coming back to haunt you. And the reason I found it so galling was that he was nothing but a passenger, a dismal failure for us. If there was ever a player you could point at and say that guy is not giving everything, he looks like he doesn't want to be here, it was Bukuya.

In fairness to the club, they refused to blame the loss on the decision, and I also happen to be in the camp that is unconvinced Thomas Leuluai made the line either, so some decisions go for you, and some against you.

But do you know how many incidents like the one when Simon Mannering held Bukuya back there have been this year. No, I don't either, but it is plenty.

And how many have resulted in penalty tries?

One.

So hands up anyone who is surprised it was awarded against us.

That's no one.

Captain Ryan Hoffman argued on the field, and we could all see him do it, that there was no way anyone could be certain the try was going to be scored.

Crikey Mannering had to take a couple of swipes at it.

The inconsistency is a shocker. Only last week we saw the Roosters' denied a penalty try against us in an incident that appeared remarkably similar to me.

No wonder the club, and us fans, are scratching our heads.

McFadden agreed with Hoffman there was no certainty Bukuya would have got there, and said the rules had changed without the clubs being told about it. "That looks like a bit of media pressure."

Hoffman, who has grown as a captain – which is hardly surprising when you consider what he has had to deal with – did not hold back. "There's been quite a few this year that they couldn't definitively know he was going to score. I don't know what's changed to reckon there was no doubt he was going to score with a ball bouncing everywhere."

Even Sharks captain Paul Gallen said he was surprised, and their coach Shane Flanagan called for consistency.

"I thought it was a brave decision to award it," Flanagan said. Brave, that's one word for it.

Here's some others – stupid, inconsistent, confusing, inexplicable...

## What Was That Selection About?

**O**UR MUCH criticised coach Andrew McFadden dropped Tuimoala Lolohea to the bench for the game against the Sharks, and I can't have been the only one wondering what the hell that was about.

McFadden has taken a lot of stick for a lot of things this season, but one of the things I do admire about him is his loyalty to players.

The problem with loyalty is that it can be seen as a refusal to accept what is – according to the rest of us – the obvious.

His persistence at the start of the year with Shaun Johnson at stand-off and Jeff Robson at halfback is a case in point.

Even then his argument was that it was just a number on your back and it didn't really matter. That's a club of one among NRL coaches I suspect, and if it doesn't matter, why not reverse them?

Instead he stuck with it, and we endured a less than stellar run.

And the decision to drop Lolohea – which was apparently down to the outstanding form of David Fusitu'a – is another one where the rest of us, I suspect, were left muttering why make a change that brings Jonathan Wright back into the side, and leaves one of our genuine strike threats riding the pine.

McFadden dropped his little bombshell before kick-off, shifting Fusitu'a to fullback, the reshuffle bringing Wright in and putting Lolohea on the outer.

McFadden thought Fusitu'a could have a bigger influence from fullback. "It was more to do with David and how well he's been going. He's had two games at fullback and did a good job. We probably felt like we got a bit more out of our kick returns, and with Tui, we felt like he was lacking a bit of energy in a few areas of his game."

According to one press report it was "debatable" whether the move paid off.

I thought Fusitu'a was excellent.

And here I will surprise you, I thought Wright delivered to his absolute best too.

It is just that his absolute best is nowhere near good enough.

He scored a try, sure, but all he had to do was catch it

and put it down, something he was utterly incapable of doing later in the match with the line beckoning, and his attempt to scoop up a ball right on halftime was lamentable.

Just fall on the bloody thing, there's seconds to go.

Instead he missed it in an all or nothing play, leaving a yawning gap for Cronulla to score in.

Not much of a debate if you ask me.

It is awful to rag on one of your own, but is it any wonder the fans call him Seldom.

Sorry Andrew, but loyalty only goes so far. Enough is enough.

### Apparently This Is The Answer

With apologies to David Skipwith at the Herald, where I stole this article and shamelessly cut and pasted it into the newsletter, McFadden defended his decision, saying there are areas Lolohea needs improvement in.

Yeah and there are a few Wright could do with improving in to.

McFadden is at least "aware his decision left people scratching their heads" but says there remain facets of Lolohea's defensive game that require attention.

"There's been things in Tui's game we haven't liked. We know how good Tui is and it won't be long before he's back in the side."

Yep, only until this weekend I'd have thought.

Apparently McFadden is aware many of us think Wright is not up to it, but does feel some of the criticism he gets is off the mark, and he blamed Blake Ayshford for the dropped ball-blunder.

"The ball was behind and high on him. And when you're running flat-stick, that's the last place you want it. But he does a lot of good stuff for the team and the team does recognise that."

Anyone else remember Wright's last appearance. That's right, against Canberra in New Plymouth, where he ran for about 35 centimetres.





## **Damn You Maloney**

Talking of players who come back to haunt you, stand up Chad Townsend, and in particular James Maloney, whose golden point field goal was one of the wobbliest I've ever seen. But they all count.

He was good around the park, and Townsend, who is another who failed to cover himself with glory while with us, made a number of telling breaks.

But perhaps perversely, given that we lost, I thought there was much to admire about our game.

Sure we made mistakes.

But few rated us any chance going in, and we put on a performance that, if we could repeat it consistently, would in my view see us a lot higher up the table than we are.

Cronulla are genuine contenders. They are top for good reason, but we stayed with them and were genuinely competitive, which as much as you can ask of your side.

The boys can hold their heads high.

Newcastle and the Roosters are one thing, Cronulla quite another.

"We'll take some positives out of this," McFadden said. "Not many people gave us a chance at all to come here and win and it just came down to a few moments where we lost."

### **Another Mannering Milestone**

As you may or may not be aware Simon Mannering will be playing his 250th NRL game on Saturday – every one of them in our colours.

It is also the Vodafone Warriors 250th NRL game at Mt Smart.

This week and game day the club has arranged various activities to celebrate both Simon and Mt Smart on this special occasion.

Hopefully we can make it an extremely special night for Simon, if the poor bugger is not too knackered to play –having played 87 minutes on Saturday and made 67 tackles.

If there is a player who better epitomises the Warriors spirit, I would be pleased to meet him!

## **Kata Signing Great News**

I'm very far from upset we have signed centre Solomon Kata until the end of the 2019 season.

The 21-year-old, has been one of our best, scored 22 tries in his 38 games for the club since making his debut last season.

He was our top try-scorer with 12 last year and leads the way this year with 10.

Keeping winger Ken Maumalo is good business too. Only weeks ago there was talk he would leave for the Dragons. But he has grasped his opportunities in recent weeks and I believe has plenty more to offer.

Also re-signed was hooker Jazz Tevaga.

You can get a gauge of the club's thinking, with Bunty Afoa signed until the end of the 2019 season, with Erin Clark, Patrick Siple and Ofahiki Ogden given one-year deals.

Siple's younger brother Toafofoa has played two NRL games this season, and was also signed through to the end of next year.

### **Run-in Confirmed**

Details for our final rounds of the NRL season are out. We finish with back-to-back Sunday games at Mt Smart, against the Tigers and Eels.

The remaining two home games have been scheduled for Saturdays, against Penrith on July 30 and Souths on August 13.

This Saturday at 5pm we have the Titans, followed by the bye, which leaves eight games to go:

19 Sat, July 16, 3.30pm, Sea Eagles, Perth

20 Sat, July 23, 3pm, Raiders, Canberra

21 Sat, July 30, 5pm, Panthers, Mt Smart

22 Sun, August 7, 2pm, Titans, Robina

23 Sat, August 13, 7.30pm, Rabbitohs, Mt Smart

24 Sat, August 20, 7.30pm, Cowboys, Townsville

25 Sun, August 28, 4pm, Wests Tigers, Mt Smart

26 Sun, Sept 4, 6pm, Eels, Mt Smart

### **Finals**

1 September 9-11, Qualifying semis

2 September 16-17, Semis

3 September 23-24, Preliminary finals

4 October 2, Grand final

## Doyle's Report Card

Really interesting to see Vodafone Warriors boss Jim Doyle issue a mid-season report card to club partners.

It is all in a bit of business-speak if you like, but it's pretty straightforward stuff. It sets out the club's vision for the future, then measures things against that aim.

The vision, apparently, is to be the most entertaining, respected and engaging team in the comp. The club uses the phrase "making our team your team".

Under those headings it has a number of aims.

As the most entertaining club it wants to be consistently top four, create memorable experiences for partners, members and fans, and to deliver a high level of game-day entertainment.

In terms of being engaging the club tries to deliver against its partners expectations, excel in communications, be family orientated, and to be innovative in the ways it engages with us all.

And in terms of becoming the respected club, it aims to consistently reach the finals, do it on a financially stable basis, to be engaged with the community, and to have a good reputation and brand.

So we are 10th with a seven-seven win-loss record, but average attendance across the NRL is up, and viewership numbers are too. We have a new deal that will keep us at Mt Smart, and the place is having a bit of a facelift.

The Warriors are the number one club in terms of merchandise, the facebook and internet pages are going gangbusters, as is Warriors TV, and the club now has more than 18,000 members – up a massive 39%.

It's been six cities this year alone, in nearly 60 schools, engaged with about 14,000 kids and clocked up an impressive 1800 hours in the community.

Don't know about you, but all in all I'd say that's a pass.

## Pete Gets Life!

Now the boss will be a bit embarrassed but I for one am delighted to see Sir Peter has been made a New Zealand Rugby League life member for his passionate support of the game across 50 years.

The Butch began his association with league through the Mangere East Hawks – who he will not shut up about to this day - during the 1970s, but has supported the NZRL, the Kiwis and Warriors.

The Warriors even retired the No 19 jersey in his honour, he has been NZRL patron since 2011 and was manager of the Kiwis' successful 2005 Tri-Nations campaign.

Pete is also a driving force behind the NZRL League 4 Life Foundation, as well as representing a variety of health-related causes in the community.

He was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for community service in the 1991, and was knighted in 2010 for his services to business and philanthropy.

"Sir Peter has helped various league communities around the country raise funds for local needs," NZRL chief executive Alex Hayton says.

"No-one knows how much money he has raised."

And I can attest to that, having served with him on the Mad Butcher and Suburban Newspapers Community Trust for years.

It's a special honour and one I'm sure you will all agree is fully deserved.

The NZRL now has 16 life members and Sir Peter will officially receive the honour at a special presentation ceremony later this year.

# In Aussie for the State of Origin

## Some of the people I caught up with while in Aussie for the State of Origin Game 2



Great to bump into the male model from Mudjee, Ken Sutcliffe. A legend in Australian broadcasting.



Just caught up with my mate Jason King, former Manly Sea Eagles player who played 239 games for the club.



Just meet these Australia Jilaroos. Casey Karklis, Stephanie Hancock and Annette Brander.



Me and Darren Lockyer former QLD (36 games), Australia (59 games) and Broncos (355 games) player.



The man that started the call "Queenslander, Queenslander, Queenslander!", Billy Moore. Played 17 games for the QLD Maroons.



Wayne Pearce OAM Junior. Former Tigers (193 games), Australia (19 games) and NSW (16 games) player.



Brent Tate former Warrior (48 games), Cowboy (67 games), Broncos (114 games), QLD (23 games) and Australian (26 games) player. A bloody good bloke.



Great catching up with the voice of Australian Rugby League Rabs Warren.



Just caught up with John Grant, chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission and former QLD and Australia Player.

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number and email to the  
address on the left.

**Winner will be drawn on 19/07/16**





By John Deaker

## Mannering says “Luck” has enabled him to reach 250 games while still in his 20’s

*Simon Mannering during the game against the Brisbane Broncos. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)*

**W**HEN SIMON Mannering runs out to play his 250th first grade game this Saturday night New Zealand Warriors’ fans will be witnessing something very special. What’s remarkable is that he’ll not only become just the second player behind Stacey Jones to play 250 games for the club but he’ll also notch up this achievement before his 30th birthday.

At his current rate it appears likely Mannering will threaten Darren Lockyer’s record of 355 NRL matches, a feat that would be phenomenal considering the man who stood down as captain of the Warriors this season has had such a high work-rate throughout his career.

Mannering has always let his actions on the field speak louder than his words off it and though he sees this week as a significant milestone the priority will be getting the right result for the team.

“It’ll be more when I’ve finished playing that I’ll be able to tick off achievements but for this weekend it could be a good chance to reflect on what I’ve done and who’s helped me get there. But at the end of the day you just want to play a good game as a team and get the result. That’s what the focus is on,” he says.

The Warriors better form the last month has made playing the game more enjoyable for Mannering, though he says the team hasn’t made any dramatic changes to their approach.

“Any time you win football games it makes it more enjoyable. It makes a difference,” he says.

“We haven’t really done anything too different from earlier in the season though. We just probably had

put too much pressure on ourselves to get the results earlier in the season rather than focus on playing good games of football.”

During the Warriors’ extra-time loss against Cronulla at the weekend Mannering was at his invaluable best for the team, pulling off 67 tackles as well as carving off 84 running metres.

He finds himself on 250 caps this week because he literally turns up every week for the Warriors: Until the freak gash to his mouth against the Melbourne Storm he’d played 73 consecutive games for them since round eight in 2013. Typically, he downplays his resilience.

“It’s just good luck. I can’t put my finger on any one explanation for it to be honest. I’ve seen blokes that have been the ultimate professionals over the years and they just get injury after injury – sometimes that’s just the way it is. So I’ve been very lucky along the way.”

Though he is ‘technically’ 29, he believes he’s actually pretty old in football terms. He feels the effects from big trainings or games much more the next day than when he was “a young fella” and has had to adjust his training as his body has changed over time. One positive of getting older though is it takes him less time to get his fitness up pre-season that it did through the early years of his career.

One thing that doesn’t change with time is he still wants to improve his game as much as ever. Even now there are many things he wants to get better at.

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“What keeps you hungry for the game is the desire to keep improving,” he says.

“In particular I’ve probably tried to be more of a link man in the middle and play a bit more football and a bit smarter rather than tucking the ball under the wing and crashing it up. That’s as much about what Cappy and the coaching staff are wanting from me too and encouraging us to take opportunities when you see them. Physically I’m not going to get better so you just try and improve in other areas like skill-wise and the way you approach the game.”

Another feature of Saturday night’s match against the Gold Coast Titans is that it’s the 250th match the Warriors have played at Mount Smart Stadium. Considering Simon Mannering’s been such a team man and has played such a key role in the survival of the Warriors club the coincidence seems highly appropriate.



*Former Warrior Francis Meli presents Simon with his special jersey for Saturdays game.*



*The Special Jersey.*



*Simon with his boys at the lunch to celebrate his 250th game.*







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# Hape's Whole Family Are Now Happy Back In Auckland

By John Deaker



**S**HONTAYNE HAPE played 29 games for the Warriors in the early 2000's and his appointment as a membership coordinator with the club this season was a popular one, not just because he's a charismatic person but also because it gave a career opportunity to a former player who was in need of a hand. It's been well-documented how severe complications from numerous concussions forced an abrupt end to Hape's playing career, so the role with the Warriors has been a blessing for the former Kiwi and enabled him to base his family back in Auckland.

This week, Hape actually picked up his dog from the airport. It had been in France the last six months, so being reunited with his wife and four kids means "the whole family are back together again."

Being a former player has been useful for Hape in his role at the club which focuses more on looking after the Vodafone Warriors existing members than recruiting more of them.

"It can be a good ice-breaker in conversation when people say 'I remember you from back in the day playing for the team,'" he says.

From the perspective of a former player, one of the fascinations for Hape has been seeing the work the club's staff get through during the week and on game day.

"It's been a big eye-opener for me. As players you definitely have no idea how much work is getting done behind the scenes," he says.

Hape's role with the club includes travelling to many away games in Australia with fellow co-ordinator Georgina Temm to service the club's New South Wales, Queensland and Victorian members. At the weekend this involved having a post-match function following the Cronulla game.

Hape is generally in good health these days and still looks like he could run out on the field. However, he's relishing not getting his body ( especially the head! ) "smashed up" each week and watching people get knocked out makes him cringe knowing the difficulties that concussions caused him. He recently gave Thomas Leuluai a call after he'd been knocked out, mainly just to check he was ok and provide any words of wisdom he could contribute.

As well as playing for the Kiwis, Hape also represented England 13 times in rugby union and he played with many of the current team including captain Dylan Hartley. He's been really impressed by the progress their team has made under their Australian coach.

"Eddie Jones seems to have installed more confidence into the players. They don't look like they're afraid of trying things any more. They're on a roll now. The other pleasing thing for them is they've just finished a long season and they could have switched off but it seems like they've found their mojo and winning has become a habit," he says.

Hape believes a matchup with the All Blacks at the moment would be very close and as a 'fan' he'd be happy enough with the result going either way.

"I sit on the fence really. That's the best way to put it. I think if they played now it'd be a pretty even contest."





*By John Coffey QSM*

## **BIG MAL'S WAY OF WINNING AT ALL COSTS**

*Mal Meninga during the 2016 NRL Nines Draw announcement.*

*Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)*

**N**O-ONE WORE the Australian rugby league colours with more pride than Mal Meninga during his long international playing career. But any doubts that Big Mal devalued the Kangaroos jersey by selecting Fijian born and bred wing Semi Radradra for last month's Anzac Test against the Kiwis have been extinguished by the extraordinary events of the last couple of weeks.

As the new Kangaroos coach, Meninga no doubt felt he was doing the best for his team – and his own future – by including Radradra ahead of a bevy of true-blue Australians. He tried to justify it by describing Radradra as “the best left wing in the (NRL) competition”. Maybe he was. But why did Meninga not choose “the best right wing in the competition” on the other flank instead of Roosters centre Blake Ferguson?

Earlier in the season Radradra and his management had hinted of a shock switch to French rugby union, using that threat to try and have him accepted for State of Origin selection and the \$30,000 per match payments that go with it. Although Radradra was declared ineligible because he did not qualify under Origin regulations he was told he qualified for Australia under the three-year international residency rule.

On his early-season form Radradra was playing well enough to be picked in any team. But Australia was not so desperate for wings – as Dane Gagai, Josh Mansour and Corey Oates have proved in the Origin series – that Meninga needed to deprive Fiji of a star player for the 2017 World Cup. Or was he and the Australian Rugby League worried that Radradra would not be playing the game in 2017? That he might have absconded to France?

The \$20,000 match fee Radradra earned for his 70 minutes against the Kiwis (he spent the other 10 minutes in the sin-bin) was nowhere near enough to make him content with his lot at the dysfunctional Parramatta Eels. When the Origin split-round came up, the Semi-Trailer took off to Fiji amid rumours he was “doing an SBW” and deserting the Eels for a far more lucrative contract in Bordeaux. Then the media games started.

Parramatta claimed it had granted Radradra leave in bye week and promised he would be back. The club also floated the idea he play an off-season in France on condition he sign a new three-year contract. His manager went into hiding. Semi's sister told a Fijian newspaper he was off to France and then told an Australian newspaper he was not going to France. His former partner said he had planned to defect since February. It was also reported that French club registrations had closed.

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Meninga should now be more than a little troubled by all this coming and going with a player whose Test selection further damaged international rugby league credibility. At the time he probably thought it was a great idea. After all, his Kangaroos already included former New Zealand Maori prop “Aussie Jim” Tamou and Auckland-born Josh Papalii, who Meninga himself had persuaded to pledge his allegiance to Queensland ahead of the Kiwis.

New Zealand has also made use of the residency rule, through Brent Webb and Nathan Fien. But they filled specialist positions in the Kiwis line-up at a time when there was a distinct lack of depth. Neither Webb nor Fien, by turning their backs on possible Origin careers, viewed playing for the Kiwis as a means of supplementing their income in the blatant manner that Radradra has been shopped around.

Because he had previously represented Fiji at Sevens, Radradra was not eligible for the Wallabies had he switched codes in Australia. Therefore there was no prospect of the Australian Rugby Union buying him for any of its five struggling professional franchises. Radradra could not do a Wendall Sailor, a Lote Tuqiri, or a Mat Rogers and bank the ARU gold before going back to where he came from.

It has been reported Radradra was being paid only about \$250,000 a season plus another \$75,000 in third-party deals by Parramatta, but considering the manner in which the Eels have done their sums in recent years who would know? Since signing that supposedly binding contract, player and manager have become aware he could earn a lot more in French rugby union.

Radradra clearly could not care less about wearing the Kangaroos jersey at the Four Nations in England later this year. But if he has missed the French rugby union registration deadline that might be his sole source of income during the NRL off-season. Meninga, on the evidence of his winning decade as Queensland’s coach, will feel obliged to stay loyal to the players who beat the Kiwis last month -- and to protect himself.

Meninga has seen what happens to those who fail to bring home the silverware. Wayne Bennett exited Brisbane airport through a back door and then resigned after the 2005 Tri Nations; Ricky Stuart abused the English referee who officiated in the 2008 World Cup final and was replaced; Tim Sheens survived defeats in the 2010 and 2014 Four Nations but after three consecutive losses to the Kiwis he relocated to the struggling Salford club in England.

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

## *The Mad Butchers Weekly NRL Tipping Comp.*

By John Holloway

### NRL Round 17

		Sue Phelan	Joe Vagana	John Coffey	Fast Eddie	Monty Betham	Bill Hayward	High-Tackle Holloway
		<i>Maloney's Barber Shop - The best haircut in town.</i>	<i>League Legend and Machine Lease King.</i>	<i>Newsletter Columnist and Veteran Leagueie</i>	<i>Devonport Dutchman - Takin it easy...</i>	<i>The Warrior Boxer - StepsForLife</i>	<i>Link Business - Buying or Selling a Business</i>	<i>Richmond Bulldog - Old School Richmond Leagueie</i>
Date/ Venue	Game							
30/60 - ALLIANZ	Roosters v Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs
01/07 - Suncorp	Broncos v Storm	Storm	Broncos	Storm	Broncos	Broncos	Storm	Storm
02/07 - Mt Smart	Warriors v Titans	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors
02/07 - ANZ	Tigers v Panthers	Panthers	Tigers	Panthers	Tigers	Panthers	Panthers	Panthers
02/07 - Shark Pk	Sharks v Eels	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks
03/07 - GIO	Raiders v Knights	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders
03/07 - Barlow Pk	Rabbitohs v Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys
04/07 - Brookvale	Sea Eagles v Dragons	Dragons	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Dragons	Sea Eagles

#### How they're traveling....

Picks last week	4/8	5/8	6/8	4/8	6/8	6/8	6/8
Total picks	67/122	69/122	78/122	71/122	77/122	83/122	84/122

**W**ELL THE magnificent Maroons have well and truly rocked Lozzas Blues boat again. Once more the tightknit "champion team" has dashed the hopes of the "team of Champions". The Old Firm, Smith, Cronk, Thurston and notably Boyd running the Cutter, holding everything together. The Maroons just keep comin at ya mate. The Sydney-siders sliding into a tailspin of selection based turmoils and troubles, do they stay stoic and staunch or throw the dice. For mine the choice is clear...clean out the deadwood now for game 3 and get a reading prior to next years series. Give the new blood a run, Cartwright, Peachey, Barba, Graham et al. What have they got to lose.

The major target for change is the old battler Paul Gallen who has hinted at dark doings if he can catch up with Phil Gould who made plain his lack of faith in the Cronulla Ikon. Even Michael Jennings is slated for selfish running and not distributing to others. Greg Bird, Farrah also in the "old folks" firing line. Watch this space.

Celebrating their 50th season Goulds Penrith Panthers climbed into the 8 with a gutsy 28/26 result against Russells bombing Bunnies. The ball is bouncing kinder for the Blue mountain boys after several close losses early in the year. The Dragons stayed steady with another win 30/18 at the expense of the hapless wooden spoon bound Knights. Rickys rampaging Raiders cleared away from the injury affected Titans 30/22 at CBus. Greg Bird up to his old tricks in a running battle with up'n'coming young gun Joseph Tapine. Bird in the bin for his sins and a points decision for the toughie Tapine. Bellamys Stormtroopers ripped into the Westies, 24 zip at oranges but Taylors Tigers fought right back into it as they often do but still downed 29/20 at the bell.

*Continued on next page...*

*Continued from previous page...*

The Bulldogs put a big bite on the TAB favoured Broncos taking them apart in a 40/14 bashing at ANZ. The craggy faced Bronco Boss Bennett is often likened to Clint Eastwood and would indeed be Dirty Harry following another lacklustre display by the Brisbane bumblers. The abject loss of form by halves Milford and Hunt is telling and the star quality pace of Roberts shown just once in this game has not been the factor anticipated by many this season. Will they come again.... is Bennett feeling lucky? The Monday niter...saw the Cowboys rope in another one but not without a big fight from the Manly mob 30/26. With DCE, Lyons and Buhner back on deck the Eagles had a lot more structure and go forward and went toe to toe with Thurs-ton men the whole way. Getting back to Gallen, his shireboys got the lollies but only just against the mighty Vodafone Warriors at Shark park. Probably not a lot I can say that you haven't already heard or seen by the time you read this but know this, we gave it plenty and if we can lift away from the disappointment of a close run thing we deserve to have every confidence going forward. Mannering was magnificent in all things bar none....the pullback interference needed to happen ...its called "taking one for the team" albeit the resulting penalty try a somewhat surprising outcome. Wrighty dropped a sitter try but so did Barba so no gripe there. All in all I thought it was an exciting and even tussle with the top of the Table Sharkies, arguably the Title favourites.

TippinTalk...The Titans tripped a few but otherwise a steady set. JC, Monty, Wily Bill and High Tackle on 6's and the rest snappin at the heels.

Ps Congrats to the Butcher on yet another recognition of his non-stop great works.

## NRL Photos Rd 16 - *Ra Pomare*



**#Mannering250**

**#MtSmart250**



*By Ben Francis*

## Fans Need to Stop Harassing Jono Wright

*Jonathan Wright. Vodafone Warriors v St George Dragons.  
Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)*

**JONATHAN WRIGHT** has worn the Warriors jersey 29 times since arriving last season. Wright arrived from the Sharks and had previously played games for the Bulldogs and Eels. In his time in the NRL, Wright has played in 120 first grade games since 2009, which is a remarkable achievement considering the average NRL player only plays 43 games over three years.

From the moment the Warriors announced his signing, Wright has been criticised by fans, which is hard for a player arriving at a new club. It's understandable, when a player makes a mistake fans will be frustrated, but the reaction towards Wright during the game against the Sharks over the weekend was bullying. The one play in particular was when Wright dropped the ball cold off an awful pass from Blake Ayshford which bombed a certain try. After that play, fans went online and roasted the Warriors winger. Some of the comments included "should be called Jono Wrong." "I blame Wright for the loss, the loss is on you." "Would have won if Wright wasn't playing." They are the less harsh ones I saw on social media during the game.

Wright got criticised before kickoff cause Cappy named him in the starting side over Lolohea. When Wright made a mistake fans, vented saying "why is Lolohea on the bench over this guy?"

The one question I want to ask people is, why is it when Lolohea was inserted in the 65th minute, he had no impact?

Remember when Shaun Johnson went on the radio earlier on in the season and commented about all the abuse and negative comments towards him on social media? The exact same thing is happening here with Wright and it's completely wrong.

"Social media is a way to connect with fans and there's a lot out there saying you need to start posting more. On the flipside of that is it's a good way for people to vent their frustrations. I look at it as bullying, essentially," he said.

"It's just not worth it. I'm like any other person, I don't like seeing things like that."

Players make mistakes during the game, and as we already know players are under enormous pressure, it's a tough business being a professional athlete.

If we look at the stats from 2016, in nine games Wright has scored four tries, made 30 tackles out of a possible 35, and had 783 running meters.

All I ask from fans is to ease up on the negative comments towards players on social media, the comments I saw fans posting about Wright were over the top! You cannot criticise nor blame the loss on one player in a team sport. I hope for Wright's sake he gets his chance and shows his true worth to Warriors.



# Scott Electrical Premiership Round 12

By Ben Francis



**T**HE TAKAHIWAI Warriors had a close scare on the weekend but managed to hold on and claim a tight 16-14 win over the Otangarei Knights.

The Knights went into the break leading 14-10 and full of confidence, but a determined Warriors outfit kept the Knights scoreless in the second half in wet conditions.

The Warriors claimed their ninth win of the season and are in the box seat to claim the minor premiership. Earlier on in the season, the Warriors beat the Knights 26-0.

In the weekends other fixture, the Portland Panthers claimed win number five for the season after a claiming a 28-10 win over the Horahora Broncos. Portland went coast to coast leading the game from start to finish, as they scored the games opening try inside five minutes, the Panthers scored two more tries to lead 16-0 after twenty minutes, but Horahora lifted the intensity to only trail 16-4 at the break. Two more tries in the second half by Portland set up the comfortable win and keep Horahora winless in 2016.

This weekend will see the Otangarei Knights host the Northern Wairoa Bulls and the Moerewa Tigers play the Portland Panthers.

## NSW Cup Game Recap

By Joe Williams - NSW Cup Team Manager

**A** MASON LINO field goal in the last minute gave the Vodafone Warriors Intrust Super Premiership NSW team a 15-14 win in their Round 16 encounter against North Sydney Bears at Mt Smart #2 on Saturday.

Coach Stacey Jones was able to welcome back Ata Hingano into the team while also losing both Jonathan Wright and Bunty Afoa. This meant another reshuffled team with Marata Niukore coming back into the centres, Upu Poching starting at prop and experienced campaigner Jeff Robson was moved to the bench.

After a frustrating loss the previous week against Newtown Jets, the Vodafone Warriors had to find a way to win in challenging conditions with steady rain falling throughout the contest at home.

Tries to both Matthew Allwood and Lino, Lino converting both tries as well as a penalty goal kept them in the contest with scores being locked up multiple times. This was until Lino took it into his own hands to secure the win with a field goal.

This gives the Vodafone Warriors ISP NSW team their 10th win of the season and leaves them still sitting at second place on the ISP NSW table. The team have another home game this weekend as a part of the triple header at Mt Smart this weekend kicking off at 2:40pm before NRL kick off at 5:00pm.





**I**WOULD LIKE to pay my respects to former Australian and Cronulla captain, Greg Pierce, who passed away last Friday aged 66. Greg captained Australia in one Test and it was against New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 24 June 1978. It was a very good Australian team and they won 24-2. Immortal and Australian Team of the Century player Bob Fulton was five eighth, while the current Chairman of the NSWRL, George Peponis OAM, was the hooker. As well as this, there were five players who were named in 2008 among Australia's greatest one hundred players since the game began in Australia during 1908. These five players were Graham Eadie (fullback), Mick Cronin (centre), Steve Rogers (centre), Kerry Boustead (winger) and Ray Price (lock).

Halfback, Ken Stirling ( 22 Tests), captained the Kiwi side, while future stars, Mark Graham (29 Tests), then 22 years of age, was lock and Olsen Filipaina ( 29 Test), then 21, was in the centres.

Although a lock for his club Cronulla, Greg played in the second row in this Test. Despite him playing well and the team having a good win, the Australian selectors dropped Greg for the second Test, three weeks later at Brisbane, so they could name Fulton as captain. Greg was recalled for the third Test, again at the Sydney Cricket Ground, on 22 July. Altogether, Greg played 24 matches for Australia, including eight Tests. He toured England and France with the 1973 and 1978 Kangaroos, as well as the 1975 and 1977 World Series. He also played eight games for NSW, two for City Firsts and four with City Seconds. From 1969 to 1980, he played 210 first grade games for the Sharks, including the brutal 1973 Grand Final against Manly when the Sharks were beaten, 10-7. After that Grand Final, he and Steve Rogers became the first Cronulla players to represent Australia when they were named in the 1973 Kangaroos and when he captained Australia, he became the first Sharks player to be given this honour. The grandson of 1933 Kangaroo, Arthur Folwell (2 Tests), Greg coached the Sharks in 1981-82 and 2005 and has been named as a Sharks Immortal.

The Bunker saga continues. On the face of it, you probably can't argue about the penalty try awarded against the Warriors on Saturday. But what you can complain about is the lack of consistency. Earlier in the season in very similar instances, such as the situation involving the Tigers, Chris Lawrence and also one where Ryan Hoffman was interfered with, deserved penalty tries were not being given. Referees man Tony Archer was quick to come out in the Sydney papers on Monday, to say that Saturdays decision was correct, but he was not so noticeable earlier in the season. To change policy in mid season is frustrating to the players and fans but this has happened in several other NRL seasons. Everyone wants consistency.

While the penalty try played a big part in Saturday's result, the Warriors had a chance to shoot for a field goal just before halftime of the Golden Point period. They were in a good position, just 20 metres or so out from the try line. Someone must take charge in these situations and guide the players towards taking the field goal shot, rather than spinning the ball wide.

Another Saturday game for the Warriors this week and if they beat the Titans, they still are on the way to a top eight position. Wayne Bennett will have his Broncos primed for the Friday night game with the Storm, which should be a beauty. The third and last Saturday match between the Sharks and the Eels should also be entertaining. Will Semi Radradra play? Not only Parramatta fans will want to know the answer to this question.

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



Facebook



Instagram



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*By Grant Chapman  
NZRL Communications  
Manger*

## **Sir Peter Leitch Made NZRL Life Member**

*Sir Peter and Daughter Julie at the function.*

**N**EW ZEALAND Rugby League has made Sir Peter Leitch a life member at its annual meeting in Auckland, recognising his passionate support of the game across the past five decades.

Sir Peter (aka “The Mad Butcher”) began his association with rugby league through sponsorship of the Mangere East Hawks during the 1970s, but has more recently contributed magnificently to NZRL, the NZ Kiwis and NZ Warriors.

The Warriors have retired the #19 jersey in his honour, he has been NZRL patron since 2011 and was proud manager of the Kiwis’ successful 2005 Tri-Nations campaign.

Sir Peter is a driving force behind the NZRL League 4 Life Foundation, as well as representing a variety of health-related causes in the wider community.

“Sir Peter has assisted various league communities around the country raise funds for local needs,” says new NZRL chief executive Alex Hayton, who nominated him. “No-one knows how much money he has raised or assisted the game with.

“He has been a confidante to various NZRL CEO’s and boards, providing a respected independent voice. He has singlehandedly raised the sport’s profile in New Zealand, and is internationally respected by the Australian Rugby League and the Rugby Football League.

“Sir Peter’s contributions are outside the normal life membership criteria, but his exceptional service to the game deserves the ultimate recognition by the game.”

For once, Sir Peter was near speechless in accepting the honour.

“I’m very humbled to be here today,” he said. “I don’t do what I do to get awards - it’s all about the fellowship and you can’t buy that.

“To join the elite of the life members is a great honour and I thank you.”

NZRL now has 16 life members and Sir Peter will officially receive the honour at a special presentation ceremony later this year.



# Alex Hayton Appointed NZRL Chief Executive

**H**AYTON STEPPED into the role on an interim basis after predecessor Phil Holden departed in January and has been awarded the role after a robust recruitment process.

Previously chief financial officer, Hayton joined NZRL in 2007, so is well versed in the issues facing the game, both nationally and internationally.

Before joining rugby league's governing body, he was NZ Soccer operations manager.

During its search for a new CEO, a key consideration for the NZRL board – and a major factor counting in Hayton's favour – was maintaining consistency of leadership.

“One of the messages we received from all our stakeholders was their confidence in NZRL leadership,” says board chair Garry Fissenden. “Alex already commands the respect of NZRL staff and board, and keeping that continuity was important to us.

“During the past few months, we've had a chance to see how he handles the extra responsibility and we've seen him really grow into the role. He has guided us through some delicate conversations with stakeholders, both in New Zealand and Australia, and impressed everyone with his knowledge, his ability to communicate and his vision for the game's future.”

For his part, Hayton is obviously delighted to retain the job, which sees him presiding over the world #1 NZ Kiwis, an exciting Kiwi Ferns women's programme, a thriving junior development strategy and a range of projects designed to improve lives within the rugby league community.

“I'm passionate about rugby league,” he says. “This was the first sport I ever played as a kid.

“I really believe in NZRL's ‘more than just a game’ approach. We're one of the few, if not the only sport in New Zealand that can have this kind of impact on society.

“This is definitely a role that I've aspired to and I'm grateful to now have that opportunity.”

Looming large on the horizon is Rugby League World Cup 2017, and Hayton faces the challenge of not just winning on the field, but also leveraging the event's profile to grow the game beyond next year.



**COMMITTED TO THE  
VODAFONE WARRIORS**

COMMITTED TO THE GAME



#CommittedToTheGame



*By Grant Chapman  
NZRL Communications  
Manager*

# Taurahere Camp

**WHEN THE NZRL TAURAHERE CAMP ASSEMBLES ON QUEENSLAND'S GOLD COAST THIS WEEK, THE TWO 18S SQUADS WILL DELIBERATELY NOT BEAR THE NAMES OF THEIR AUSTRALIAN HOME STATES.**

Instead, New South Wales-based players will form the “Tu” squad, drawn from the Maori word meaning “stand up”, and Queensland-based players make up the “Toa” group, referring to “strength”.

“One of the real drivers for this programme is to reconnect our Australian-based players with their NZ heritage,” explains NZRL high performance general manager Brent Gemmell.

“Although they are largely drawn from these two Australian states, for the obvious reasons, we don’t want them thinking of this as some inter-state rivalry.

“They are not here to represent their states. Ultimately, they are there to represent one country – New Zealand.”

The camp will culminate in a trial game on the final day, with a merit team named the following week.

Many of the invited players, particularly in the Tu squad, have come through the NZ domestic pathway and are now contracted with NRL clubs or attend schools across the Tasman. For them, this will be a way to stay engaged with the national team programme, until they are selected for Junior Kiwis and Kiwis.

Others, though, have been born in Australia or have moved there while still young. These players are also eligible for State of Origin and Australian national teams, and must eventually choose which nation

Recent Kiwis Kieran Foran, Gerard Beale and Jason Taumalolo, along with former captains Benji Marshall and Nathan Cayless, have all represented Australian Schoolboys, before opting to wear the black jersey.

But NSW Origin prop James Tamou (born Palmerston North) and Queensland forward Josh Papalii (born Auckland), both Australian internationals, represent the alternative.

“These are the kinds of players that we need to engage before they make those career decisions,” says Gemmell. “The more we can strengthen their NZ roots, the better chance we have of retaining them in the Kiwis programme.”

**#Mannering250**

**#MtSmart250**

# ARL Rd 11 Wrap Up and Rd 12 Fixtures

**T**HE SEA Eagles remain at the top of the table beating the Pirates 15-6 in the ARL Game of the Round on Saturday.

Injuries coupled with wet and windy conditions seemed to take it's toll on Pt Chevalier and Papakura now hold a seven point gap at the top.

Mt Albert remain neck-and-neck with Pt Chevalier trailing closely behind on differential following their loss against the Hornets.

The Lions will look to bounce back when they travel to Prince Edward Park to take on the Sea Eagles this weekend.

The Konica Minolta Roope Rooster trophy which has been home to Papakura since their first meeting in the first round of competition play will also be on the line.

The battle at the bottom continues to prove to be just as exciting as that at the top.

Otahuhu who have been on the brink of shifting down to the Sharman Cup competition manage to keep their survival dreams alive winning 34-28 over the Richmond Bulldogs.

Northcote now sit at the bottom of the table sitting on the tails of the Leopards only slightly behind on differential.

Otahuhu face a monumental challenge to stay up when they face Glenora this weekend while Richmond have the chance to get in front of Howick when they battle it out at Paparoa Park.

Meanwhile, Marist will host Mangere East in the ARL Game of the Round and will be played on Maori TV on Sunday at 3.30pm.

## SAS Fox Memorial Premiership Rd 11

Howick 22 Mt Albert 20  
Richmond 28 Otahuhu 34  
Glenora 27 Marist 16  
Pt Chevalier 6 Papakura 15  
Mangere East 38 Northcote 6

## SAS Fox Memorial Rd 12 Fixtures

Northcote v Pt Chevalier @ Birkenhead 2.30pm  
Marist v Mangere East @ Murray Halberg 2.30pm  
Otahuhu v Glenora @ Murray Halberg 11am  
Howick v Richmond @ Paparoa Park 2.30pm  
Papakura v Mt Albert @ Prince Edward 2.30pm

## Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Rd 11

Bay Roskill 64 New Lynn 16  
Ellerslie 12 Te Atatu 20  
East Coast Bays 18 Manukau 18  
Papatoetoe 24 Manurewa 22  
Glenfield 14 Otara 18  
Hibiscus Coast 66 Ponsonby 16  
Mt Wellington 12 Pakuranga 74  
Waitemata BYE

## Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Rd 12 Fixtures

Otara v Te Atatu @ Ngati Otara Park 2.30pm  
Glenfield v Hibiscus Coast @ Sunnynook Park 2.30pm  
New Lynn v Ellerslie @ Lawson Park 2.30pm  
Ponsonby v Mt Wellington @ Victoria Park 2.30pm  
Bay Roskill v East Coast Bays @ Blockhouse Bay 2.30pm  
Pakuranga v Manurewa @ Ti Rakau Park 2.30pm  
Manukau v Waitemata @ Moyle Park 2.30pm  
Papatoetoe BYE



### ARL Games Televised Live Nationwide on Maori TV

Otahuhu v Glenora @ Murray Halberg 11am to be aired on  
Maori TV Saturday July 2 at 3.30pm

Marist v Mangere East @ Murray Halberg 2.30pm to be aired on  
Maori TV Saturday July 3 at 3.30pm







# Vodafone Warriors Secure Kata until 2019

*by Richard Becht*

**A CONTRACT EXTENSION** signed today will keep outstanding centre Solomone Kata at the Vodafone Warriors until at least the end of the 2019 NRL season.

The 21-year-old Tonga international has missed just one of a possible 38 matches since making his first-grade debut against Newcastle in the opening round of the 2015 season.

The specialist left edge centre, who has 22 tries in his 37 games, was the team's top try-scorer with 12 last year and he again leads this year with 10 in 13 appearances.

In confirming Kata's contract, Vodafone Warriors recruitment and development manager Tony Iro also announced deals for five of the club's other most promising young players.

Giant wing Ken Maumalo (21) and 2016 NRL rookie Jazz Tevaga (20) have signed to the end of the 2018 season and the club's 2015 Vodafone NYC player of the year Bunty Afoa (19) has been secured to the end of 2019.

Vodafone Junior Warriors utility Erin Clark (18) and back rower Ofahiki Ogden (20), who have both been given ISP experience this season, have deals to the end of 2017 while prop Patrick Sipley (24), older brother of rookie NRL front rower Toafofoa, also has a one-year deal; Sipley was introduced to the ISP side last season and has again been used by coach Stacey Jones this year.

"Sol has made fantastic progress jumping straight from the NYC into the NRL last year," said Iro.

"He has proved to be not only one of the game's most damaging centres but also one of the most consistent. The NRL coaching staff are hugely impressed with him.

"We've moved to secure him long-term and we're

also delighted with the way Ken, Jazz, Bunty, Erin and Pat are developing. It's especially pleasing for us seeing Sol, Ken, Jazz, Bunty and Erin come through our NYC side while Pat shows there's a pathway from local football as well."

Kata, Maumalo, Tevaga and Afoa were all in the club's NYC premierships-winning side in 2014.

Kata's rapid rise from rookie to first-choice NRL centre follows an impressive introduction to rugby league after playing First XV rugby union for Sacred Heart College in Auckland.

After scoring 11 tries in 17 matches in the 2013 NYC season, he was used sparingly in the grade in 2014 as he was developed in the club's reserve grade side. He returned for the NYC finals, scoring a hat-trick and winning the Jack Gibson Medal in the grand final. He made 34 consecutive NRL appearances following his debut before his run was broken by a one-match suspension last month.

Maumalo played eight NRL games last year after debuting against Parramatta. He came back into the NRL team for the first time this year replacing the injured Manu Vatuvei for last Sunday's 12-10 win over the Sydney Roosters; he's in the side again for this week's encounter with Cronulla.

Tevaga, an ISP regular, made the first of his six NRL appearances this season against Melbourne in round three while Afoa, who has played more than 50 NYC games, made his ISP debut last year, was reintroduced to the side last week and has been named to line up in the grade again this week.

This weekend Clark again starts at loose forward for the NYC side against Cronulla while Sipley is on the bench for the ISP team against North Sydney at Mount Smart Stadium #2 on Saturday.

# Warriors Pop Up Store

**M**ANU VATUVEI, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Bodene Thompson and Ali Lauitiiti were on hand to mark the opening of a Vodafone Warriors Pop Up Store in rugby league's heartland in Papatoetoe last week. Located in Hunters Plaza beside the food court and Kmart, the store will be open seven days a week for six weeks until August 7.

The full range of the club's official 2016 apparel made by Canterbury of New Zealand is available plus supporters' gear for men, women and kids and an array of accessories.

Vatuvei, Tuivasa-Sheck and Lauitiiti were all brought up on the other side of the southern motorway in neighbouring Otara.



Pop Up Store Inside.



Pop Up Store Kids Stand.



Pop Up Store Mens Stand.



Pop Up Store Players.





# Final 6 Rounds

## By Richard Becht



Details for the last six rounds of the NRL season released today have confirmed the Vodafone Warriors will finish their campaign with back-to-back Sunday games at Mount Smart Stadium.

In announcing times and dates for the last six rounds of the year, the NRL has handed the Vodafone Warriors a 6.00pm kick-off on Sunday, September 4 for their last regular season match against Parramatta.

The previous week the Vodafone Warriors will play Wests Tigers at Mount Smart Stadium at 4.00pm on Sunday, August 28.

The remaining two home games confirmed today have been scheduled for Saturdays.

In round 21, the Vodafone Warriors will host Penrith at 5.00pm on July 30 while in round 23 they face South Sydney at 7.30pm on August 13.

### 2016 NRL DRAW

Rounds 16-26 (NB: local kick-off times listed)

16 - 5.30pm, Sat June 25 v Sharks @ Southern Cross Group Stadium, Sydney

17 - 5pm, Sat July 2 v Titans @ Mt Smart Stadium

18 - Bye - July 8-11

19 - 3.30pm, Sat July 16 v Sea Eagles @ nib Stadium, Perth

20 - 3pm, Sat July 23 v Raiders @ GIO Stadium, Canberra

21 - 5pm, Sat July 30 v Panthers @ Mt Smart Stadium

22 - 2pm, Sun Aug 7 v Titans @ Cbus Super Stadium, GC

23 - 7.30pm, Sat Aug 13 v Rabbitohs @ Mt Smart Stadium

24 - 7.30pm, Sat Aug 20 v Cowboys @ 1300SMILES Stadium, Townsville

25 - 4pm, Sun Aug 28 v Wests Tigers @ Mt Smart Stadium

26 - 6pm, Sun Sept 4 v Eels @ Mt Smart Stadium

### FINALS

1 September 9-11 - Qualifying Semi Finals

2 September 16-17 - Semi Finals

3 September 23-24 - Preliminary Finals

4 October 2 - Grand Final



2016 DRAW FINALISED	
Round 21	5PM, SAT 30 JUL HOME v PANTHERS
Round 22	2PM, SUN 7 AUG AWAY v TITANS
Round 23	7.30PM, SAT 13 AUG HOME v RABBITOHS
Round 24	7.30PM, SAT 20 AUG AWAY v COWBOYS
Round 25	4PM, SUN 28 AUG HOME v TIGERS
Round 26	6PM, SUN 4 SEP HOME v EELS

# Vodafone Warriors Double 250 Celebration

By Richard Becht



**T**HERE ARE 500 special reasons to be at Mount Smart Stadium when the Vodafone Warriors face Gold Coast this Saturday night (5.00pm kick-off; match day sponsor: TNT).

Simon Mannering provides half of them when he makes his 250th NRL appearance, becoming only the second player to reach the milestone behind the great Stacey Jones. The other 250 reasons belong to Mount Smart Stadium itself.

It just so happens that on the same night Mannering is hitting 250 career games, the ground that means so much to so many rugby league supporters, is staging the Vodafone Warriors' 250th home game since it became the club's base in 1995.

Ahead lies a week of reminiscing about both Mannering's contribution and the stadium's place in people's hearts as they recall a string of famous moments at the club's home.

The 29-year-old Mannering has been a colossus for the Vodafone Warriors since he was first seen at first-grade level in the club's 10th anniversary clash against Brisbane at Mount Smart Stadium on June 26, 2005.

The man known as 'Junior' has turned out performances of consistent quality with metronomic precision. He is an absolute machine.

As much was on display yet again in the Vodafone Warriors' heartbreaking 18-19 golden point loss to competition leader Cronulla on Saturday night.

He worked himself to a literal standstill, so much so head coach Andrew McFadden had to take him off the field three minutes into the first period of extra time because he had given everything he had.

In 83 minutes Mannering made a mammoth 67 tackles including two critical try savers in the opening period, most notably his stop on Sharks standoff James Maloney just metres short of the Vodafone Warriors' goal-line. Mannering also carried the ball 11 times for 84 metres in the toughest zone of the contest in the middle of the park.

Last year he effected 1092 tackles with just 27 missed tackles in 24 games while he also made more than 2500 metres with the ball.

In 13 games so far this season – he has missed two through injury – he has made 590 tackles and more than 1200 metres.

Throughout this week there will be a flow of content on Mannering before his 250-game feat is recognised as the key feature of the game day programme for Saturday's match against the Titans. There will be various stories and interviews on [www.warriors.kiwi](http://www.warriors.kiwi) and through the club's social media channels paying tribute to the four-times player of the year and the club's captain for a record 136 games from 2010-2015.

Similarly, it's a time to recall Mount Smart Stadium's magic moments from opening night on March 10, 1995, Jones' 100th appearance in 1999, to the first home final against the Canberra Raiders in 2002, the 200th appearances – all for the Vodafone Warriors – by both Mannering and Manu Vatuvei and much more.

A special week indeed.

## #Mannering250

## #MtSmart250

# Robson Granted Release To Return To Sydney

By Richard Becht



**V**ODAFONE WARRIORS utility Jeff Robson has been granted an early release from his contract on compassionate grounds.

The 33-year-old joined the club on a one-year contract while his wife Gabi and the couple's special needs daughter Charlotte remained in Sydney.

He appeared in the Vodafone Warriors' first six matches of the season and had a seventh outing against St George Illawarra on May 1.

Vodafone Warriors recruitment and development manager Tony Iro said Robson, who has been playing for the club's Intrust Super Premiership side, was keen to see out his contract but his family situation had been challenging.

"With Shaun (Johnson) and Tommy (Leuluai) coming back from surgery, we signed Jeff to give us experienced cover in the halves," said Iro.

"While Shaun started the season Tommy didn't so, having Jeff in the squad was a major benefit given his vast experience and the professional attitude he brought to the club.

"More recently Tommy has been back in the side and we also have Tui (Lolohea), Ata (Hingano) and Mason (Lino) as options in the halves.

"However, it has been difficult for Jeff on a personal level being separated from his family and we certainly support him in his desire to be back with them."

Robson was grateful for the opportunity he had to play NRL football for the Vodafone Warriors after previous experience with Manly, Parramatta and Cronulla.

"I've really enjoyed coming over to New Zealand to be a part of this club. It's a great set-up and I've appreciated the opportunities I've had," he said.

"I would have liked to see my contract through but in the end my family is far more important. I haven't seen a lot of them and I'm extremely grateful (coach) Cappy (McFadden), Tony, Jim (Doyle) and everyone else has been so understanding.

"I wish the boys and the coaching staff all the best for the rest of the season. I'll be taking a special interest in their progress."

Robson has played 166 NRL games since his debut in 2004.

## Gordon Gibbons Luncheon



Andre and his son Dylan big fans of the Vodafone Warriors.

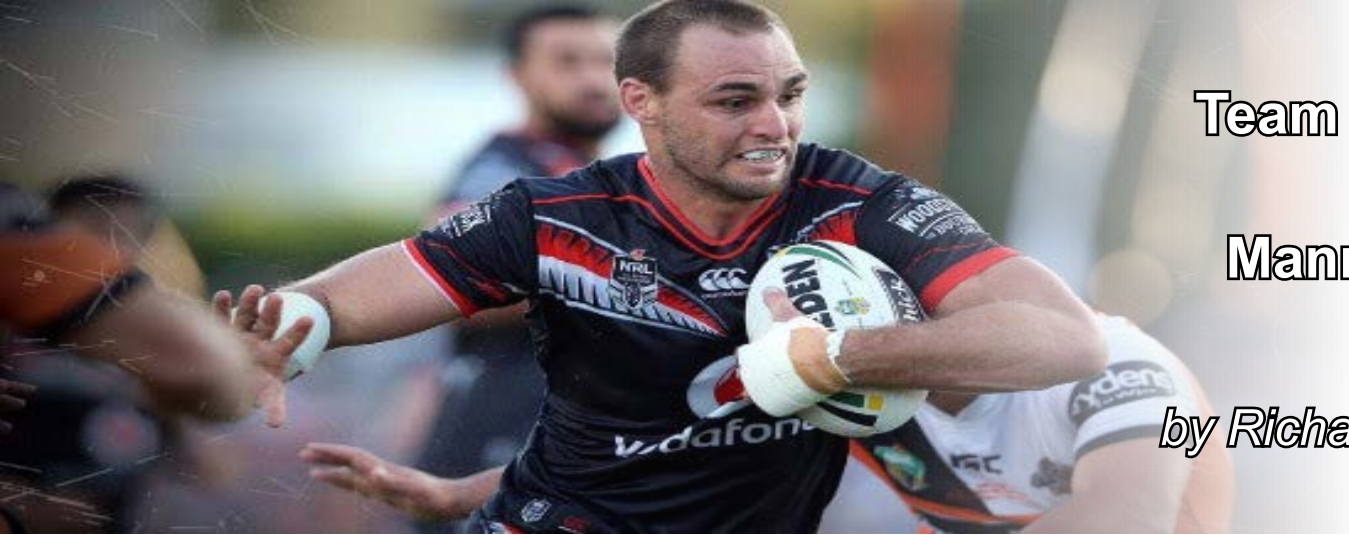
4 former Kiwis and 3 were former Warriors now working at the Vodafone Warriors:

Tony Iro - Kiwi no. 606 Recruitment  
Duane Mann - Kiwi no. 609, Warrior no. 9 - Academy  
Jerome Ropati - Kiwi no. 716, Warriors no. 108 - Community  
Jerry Seuseu - Kiwi no. 692, Warriors no. 50 - Player Welfare





**Team Named  
for  
Mannerings  
250th**  
*by Richard Becht*



**S**IMON MANNERING and Mount Smart Stadium will be in sharp focus for a unique double 250 celebration when the Vodafone Warriors host the Gold Coast Titans in Saturday's 17th-round NRL clash (5.00pm kick-off; match day sponsor: TNT).

The 29-year-old Mannering, one of the modern-day game's most consistent and durable players, will become only the second player after the great Stacey Jones to appear in 250 NRL matches for the Vodafone Warriors.

**VODAFONE WARRIORS**

- 1 David Fusitu'a
- 2 Tuimoala Lolohea
- 3 Blake Ayshford
- 4 Solomone Kata
- 5 Ken Maumalo
- 6 Thomas Leuluai
- 7 Shaun Johnson
- 8 Jacob Lillyman
- 9 Issac Luke
- 10 Albert Vete
- 11 Bodene Thompson
- 12 Ryan Hoffman (c)
- 13 Simon Mannering

**Interchange**

- 14 Nathaniel Roache
- 15 Sam Lisone
- 16 Ben Matulino
- 17 Charlie Gubb

**VODAFONE WARRIORS v GOLD TITANS**

**Mount Smart Stadium, Auckland**

**5pm, Saturday, July 2**



**REFEREE:** Matt Cecchin

**ASSIST REFEREE:** Chris James

**TOUCH JUDGES:** Rickey MacFarlane & Shane Rehm

**STANDBY:** Jon Stone

**REVIEW OFFICIALS:** Bryan Norrie & Jared Maxwell

**SENIOR RO:** Bernard Sutton



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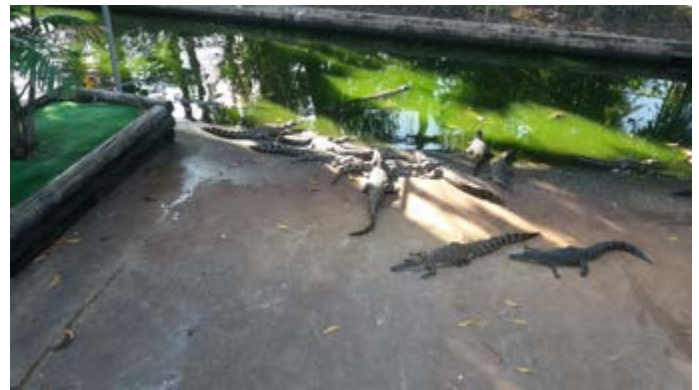




# Reader Mail



Craig Smith's (who played for the Kiwis and Newcastle Knights) kids Lani and Tane love their Vodafone Warriors jerseys.



Ian & Marcia Stacey Jones lounge members who are traveling around Australia found a great place for a feed in Darwin



Dave McKee enjoying a great dinner



Nigel Vagana X Kiwi who had a long a career with Canterbury Bulldogs, Souths and Cronulla sharks.

**WE WERE** in the Chairmans Lounge thanks to the generosity of Peter Thompson from Barfoot Thompson.

The Grace Hotel was amazing accommodation, huge rooms beautiful bathroom, bedroom. We had a meal at Jamie Olivers Italian restaurant on Friday night, which was brilliant, great staff,, great meals, great wine. Thanks once again Peter Thompson from Barfoot Thompson.

We would like to Thank Peter Thompson for a wonderful rugby league experience and once in a life time experience.

From Dave and Lorraine Mckee



Lorraine McKee, Dane Sorensen and Dave McKee. Enjoyed chatting with Dane as he was an all time favourite player of ours..



Where Dave and Lorraine enjoyed an awesome meal at Jamie Oliver's Restaurant in Sydney



# More Reader Mail

Hi Sir Pete,

**I** HOPE YOU'RE well mate!

Firstly thanks for liking my page Warrior Nation - it means a lot indeed. I look up to you Sir Pete and believe I have similar values, I love Rugby League and the Vodafone Warriors...as you know my goal is to have a real supporters base over here in Australia, and we are slowly getting there. I know that if I can reach out to each and every fan here I can have a say in where they sit as we need to sit together. Last Saturday night at Shark Park was the best crowd I have ever seen there supporting the boys - I was so proud.

Warrior Nation contacted the Sharks RLC and mentioned we wanted to bring a large supporters base down there for the Round 15 match up. They jumped on board as it was the last Warriors match in Sydney for the year and offered us discounted tickets - plus an opportunity to allow fans onto the field for a photo opportunity! Pete - we sold over 100 tickets for the match. The noise at times was deafening out the Sharks supporters time after time! The Warriors have the best supporters.

Attached are a few pics - The U20's team had just finished warming down and were happy to let some of the Warrior Nation kids sit for a photo, and the other is of a few of the supporters on field.

Our last chance to see the boys play besides Far North QLD is versus Canberra in 3 weeks..a few of us will be heading down the Hume Highway to the nations capital!

See you soon!

Warrior Nation

RICHARD - TRUE WARRIOR / WAR-976438 DEBBIE - TRUE WARRIOR / WAR-467325



Richard and Debbie



Fans on the field with the U20 boys



Fans on the field after the game.



**Our Vodafone Warriors fans at shark park. Love the fans**



On Sunday Janice and I attended June's 95th birthday party. Note she's holding M8. June has been a member of the Mad Butcher Club, now Sir Peter Leitch Club, for many years. All our members wish her a happy birthday and many more years to come.

# BIG LEAGUE

## THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 17 ISSUE...

Jam-packed with FEATURES and NEWS, plus columnist **BEN HUNT** 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

- The **Cronulla Sharks** completed a record-equalling 11 consecutive wins last weekend and are aiming to make history with 12 against Parramatta in Round 17. We speak to club legend Mat Rogers about the premiership that got away in 1999 and why the team of 2016 has their best chance of breaking the 49-year drought yet.

- The **Newcastle Old Boys** are a tight-knight group, but their bond was strengthened even further after embarking on the mission of a lifetime in Papua New Guinea. Raising money for the **Mark Hughes Foundation**, Hughes, Paul Harragon, Billy Peden and others trekked the 284 kilometres through the Kokoda Trail to help out their close mate while raising big money for brain cancer research and awareness.

- **Brisbane** winger Corey Oates is a second-rower at heart, which is why his rise to representative football has been so remarkable. *Big League* chats to Broncos and **Queensland** team-mate Darius Boyd about the 21-year-old star.

- Also, **James Gavet** reveals his plan to help the homeless and less fortunate as much as he can; **John Palavi** talks about how he balances studying medicine with trying to crack the NRL; and we review all the action from **State of Origin II**.

**PLUS...** The Analyst takes a closer look at the **Sydney Roosters** and why they might not be going as bad as their results indicate and we take a look at the Top 8 rugby league politicians.

**AND:** Little League, lower grade previews and an Origin highlights poster.



### THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

On sale at newsagents, supermarkets and at the ground from

**Thursday, June 30**

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**250**  
NRL GAMES



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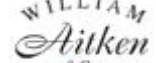


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Here is the team that help me put together the newsletter each week. We have a number of fantastic contributors who send in content each week that along with my editorial gets wrapped up by our graphic designer and sent out by our distribution man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

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**Colin MacKenzie** - Assistant Editor  
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