

NEW ZEALAND
RUGBY LEAGUE™

Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

9th November 2016

Newsletter #147



Kiwis v Kangaroos

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.nz



WE LIKE to make it tough on ourselves do we not?
When Shaun Johnson crashed over with seconds to go against the Aussies it looked for a moment like we would be lining up a kick to level the game and steal an unlikely point.

But it was not to be, held up, and we lost 14-8.

Now it is all about the win-loss records, and points for and against.

The calculators must be out in Edinburgh as David Kidwell and his team try to figure out all the permutations.

It's a complicated process, but it all hinges on England beating Australia.

If they lose, we must beat Scotland –and let's face it, that seems likely, but then again so did the All Blacks smashing Ireland in Chicago, and we all know what happened there.

The Scots were no easy-beats in the early game at Coventry, and put up a pretty decent showing before eventually losing to England 38-12.

Getting absolutely flogged in the penalty count did not do them any favours, and a one-eyed whistler might have trouble in our game figuring out who he is supposed to be favouring, given we also give away more penalties than Pete does sausages.

To up our chances, we need to win by a decent margin. I am no mathematician, so I could quite easily be putting you crook here, but the way I see it, we have to actually win by more than 31 points to go ahead of England in for and against – and then they get to play a day later anyway.

So I can't see Kidwell resting a lot of players just in case.

Of course if England lose, which I still think likely, it is all irrelevant.

What worries me most is that the entire tournament appears to have been set up to favour England and Australia, and you do not have to be a genius to figure out that would be the preferred final for our broadcasting friends.

Cynical bastard that I am, I would not be hugely surprised to see England pull off an upset.

I was at a function in the week and happened to be wearing a Kiwis jacket, and a league fan asked if I thought we would beat Australia at the weekend, to which, and to my shame, I said no.

And so it proved to be.

But in my defence I did add that I believed we would reach the final, and that we would win it – and I still think so, though I might be thinking with my heart rather than my head.

All this talk of hoodoos and psychological edges is crap.

Think back to Perth. Australia dusted us good and proper.

We have been limping closer since, and the Kangaroos will, despite their dominance, be wondering how we stayed in it and almost nicked a point.

They do not leak many points, and have a great defence, and superb game management. But their attack has not set the world on fire and one Aussie commentator on radio actually called them boring.

I wouldn't mind being that boring all the same.

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We know, despite our current world rating, that the Aussies are pretty damn good, and we have actually only beaten them four times in the last 10 years.

We have not started well, and if we can fix that, it will build pressure on the Roos, who like to lead.

Our goal line defence has been exceptional, and not flash in the middle of the park, so an improved effort there would not hurt.

I'd be devising a game plan that targeted Blake Ferguson too. He might have been man of the match in Coventry, but he's rocks and diamonds.

As I say, if England beat the Aussies and we can't run up a cricket score against the Jocks, none of this will matter.

But be cheered that while our record against the Green and Gold is not brilliant, it is still better than England's. They haven't won since 2006.

New Role For Morgan

Former Warriors defensive coach, Justin Morgan, who is now filling that role with the Kiwis, has a new job as a commentator with the BBC.

The cynics, and given our defensive woes last season there are quite a few, will wish him well because he doesn't have much of a future teaching NRL players how to defend.

Morgan will be part of the BBC's coverage of the England v Australia clash on Monday morning.

New Strip Unveiled

The Vodafone Warriors have unveiled our new kits for next year's NRL season. The new home jersey features a stylised league V and a koru pattern running down the sides, but retains the black, red and silver. The away jersey looks almost white but is actually light grey on the chest and back.

Now I know this from the club's website, where it says that in Maori culture, an unfurling silver fern frond symbolises new life, growth, strength and peace, while the koru represents nurturing, care and protection. And you thought it was just a league jersey.



Foran Against?

There was a good piece on Stuff recently, although it did nothing to clear up the where are we with the Kieran Foran story all the same.

Foran has signed a one-year deal for 2017, but his future is still undecided because the contract is yet to be approved by the NRL, who apparently want assurances over the player's mental health.

But the story featured last year's wonder signing Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, who of course we did not see the best of because of the cruel injury that ruined his season.

RTS is backing Foran to make a big impact and he is keen to play with his fellow Kiwis international.

"A few of us guys are still in awe that he's here and just the person he is. He's played international tests and he's played continuously well for Manly and Parramatta. That's what this club is trying to find, that consistency. That's what we buzz about, he's got what we want."

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Foran has been at Mt Smart for weeks alongside RTS as they work on their rehabilitation.

Only a moron – and there are quite a few who call radio – would fail to recognise Foran, who is bloody talented, won't ease the pressure on Shaun Johnson.

If RTS says he is the bomb, that's good enough for me. Last time I looked, RTS was a bit better at the game than me.

Southern Boys Get The Call

Two Canterbury Bulls, half Tevin Arona, and centre Matt Sauni, have signed pre-season contracts to take a shot at playing for our reserves.

Both played for the New Zealand Residents team that beat the Maori side and recruitment manager Tony Iro pounced.

Arona has played for the Raiders' age-group teams, up to the 20s, but it is Sauni's first involvement with an NRL club.

Lifeline For Lockie

Former Warrior Kevin Locke is back in the NRL after Manly threw him a lifeline.

Pessimists are lining up already to put money on him scoring a hat-trick against us.

Locke, still only 27, has not played in the NRL since we showed him the door in 2014, and he failed in the UK after a string of incidents.

He later talked about battling mental health issues, depression in particular.

Now he says time in the workforce like the rest of us poor mugs, has made him hungry to give it another go.

"I took a lot of things for granted. I feel like a young kid with a dream again."

I will not hear a bad word said about the bloke because I was there in Christchurch when he just about killed himself smashing into the posts to get us home against the Roosters, in conditions that Eskimos would have been shivering in.

It was pretty much the only bright spot of a miserable weekend that has faded in my memory, while Locke's heroics are still fresh.

"It is my last shot and that's how I take it," he said.

You go Kevin, just remember to play like a carthorse if you face us.

Pete Checks In

Pete gave me a call after Coventry and was pretty upbeat despite the loss, proud of the way the boys had hung in there.

He did have some questions over our defensive effort in the first half, but said the change in attitude in the second was plain to see and, like the rest of us, he was praying the bunker was going to give Johnson the green light.

But as he said, credit where it is due, the Aussies played well and dominated the first half, while we responded with a ton of grit – and you can't ask for much more.

The boys were off to Scotland for a few nights ahead of the clash with Scotland, and he says rest assured, the boys are leaving nothing to chance and not taking anything lightly.

What he did not want to talk about was the All Blacks losing to Ireland. "I want to talk about Ireland beating the All Blacks. They were magnificent and good luck to them."

Pete was especially pleased, with all this talk about arrogance, to see us go down with good grace, the management team quick to congratulate their opposites. "It made me proud we were not wheeling out excuses.

Ireland's win reminds us, Pete said, that every dog has its day. "Hopefully we can beat Scotland, book a place in the final, and have ours. So go the Kiwis."

Italy Gets The Job Done

The pasta nibblers have claimed the 14th and final place at the Rugby League World Cup.

Italy won the European Federation qualifier, beating the Russian Bear to qualify for their second consecutive cup.

We are co-hosting with Australia of course, with three pool games also to be played in Papua New Guinea.

So the final line-up has now been decided, with Australia, England, Fiji, France, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Scotland, Tonga, USA and Wales competing.



By Grant Chapman
NZRL
Communications
Manager

Kiwis Comeback Fall Short of Kangaroos



New Zealand players sing the anthem. Photo www.photosport.nz

KIWIS HALF Shaun Johnson came within an ace of stealing an unlikely result against world champions Australia, but he and his New Zealand side fell short 14-8 in their Four Nations clash at Coventry.

One week after engineering a one-point win over hosts England in their tournament opener, Johnson appeared out of sorts for most of this encounter, but burst to life over the final 10 minutes to bring his side within an ace of victory.

Trailing 14-4, he chipped ahead on the final tackle of a set, regathered in midfield and spread the ball to centre Shaun Kenny-Dowall, who drew the last defender and sent Jordan Rapana over in the corner.

Johnson's conversion attempt was wide, but a converted try could still snatch a draw.

With the final seconds counting down, Johnson found another chink in the Kangaroos' defensive armour and plunged over the try-line, but was wrapped up by Australian fullback Darius Boyd and was unable to force the ball.

The thriller ended, with Gerard Beale's in-goal speculator forced dead.

"We had a chance, but it wasn't to be," lamented Johnson afterwards. "We had plenty of opportunities at the end, we just came up short."

"A few things let us down, we just couldn't build the pressure we wanted. We just have to get better."

Australia dominated the first half, running in tries to wing Blake Ferguson and half Johnathan Thurston to lead 10-0 at the break. They probably should have been further ahead, but made more errors than their counterparts, who could not get a fair share of possession.

But the reigning Four Nations champions began the second half with far more determination, rewarded when centre Solomone Kata bullocked his way over for his first try in the black jersey.

Ultimately, the win slipped from the Kiwis' fingers through ill-discipline. Twice, they were penalised in the tackle in front of their own posts and Thurston's kicking boot stretched the advantage to 14-4.

It was an improved performance on their previous two outings against Australia, though – the 16-0 loss in Newcastle in May and 26-6 in Perth three weeks ago.

The Kiwis still hold the inside running on a spot in the Four Nations final. They must beat Scotland convincingly in Workington on Friday and hope Australia can keep England at bay on Sunday.

If England win, the two final berths will likely be decided on a countback of points difference, so the margin of victory over the Scots becomes vital to New Zealand's hopes.

Australia 14 (Blake Ferguson & Johnathan Thurston tries; Thurston 3 goals) NZ Kiwis 8 (Solomone Kata & Jordan Rapana tries)



By John Coffey QSM
Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)

Selection Dilemma for Kidwell

Jesse Bromwich leads his side out in the match against Australia. Photo www.photosport.nz

KIWIS COACH David Kidwell faces a selection dilemma as he looks ahead to his team's Four Nations defence against the Kangaroos in the final at Liverpool on November 14 (3am NZ time). That, of course, is supposing there are no major upsets when New Zealand plays Scotland at Workington and Australia plays England at London's Olympic Stadium in the round-robin matches this weekend.

The Kangaroos are assured of being in the final, with the Kiwis their probable opponents. England can upset that prediction only by beating Australia and also finishing with a superior points differential than New Zealand. So Kidwell needs to be mindful the expected victory over Scotland must be by a sizeable margin. The Scots earned credit on Sunday for holding England to four points at halftime before losing 38-12.

For much of Sunday's 14-8 loss to Australia it appeared glaringly obvious Kidwell would need to make changes, firstly experimenting against the Scots – who the Kiwis beat 40-4 at the 2013 World Cup – before throwing something new at the Kangaroos. At 10-0 it was looking very much like a replay of the 16-0 Anzac Test and 26-6 Perth Test defeats, with the Australians seemingly poised to become increasingly dominant.

But this time the Kiwis not only kept their rivals try-less for the last 65 minutes, they also struck back with two tries of their own after trailing by 10 points at halftime. Solomon Kata's score from dummy-half might have been written off as an aberration, but the thrilling Jordan Rapana try after Shaun Johnson's stunning chip kick, regather and pass proved there was indeed a previously hidden touch of brilliance in the Kiwis' backline.

Johnson also got over the Australian goal-line in the last minute, only to be prevented from forcing the ball for a possible draw. Until that late flurry of passing, penetration and pace, the Kangaroos's defence was unshakable. Even the rampaging Jason Taumalolo and Martin Taupau were restrained in midfield. The Kiwis also tackled themselves to a near standstill and forced their opponents into more than the usual number of errors.

Kangaroos skipper Cameron Smith showed the Kiwis increasing respect. In the early stages he declined an easy penalty goal and was rewarded with a try in the following set. But after Kata's try reduced the margin to six points the Kangaroos twice took the points on offer when Australian referee Ben Cummins caught the Kiwis delaying the play-the-ball on fifth tackles. Goal kicks were all that separated the teams at the finish.

New Zealand again started slowly, conceding the first two penalties and tries to wing Blake Ferguson, who was Man of the Match after retaining his position only because of injury to Josh Mansour, and scrum-half Johnathan Thurston. Both times the Kiwis were exposed on their right flank, although covering players got to, and missed, Ferguson and Thurston. To their credit, Kata and Gerard Beale remedied that problem.

Continued on next page...

Australia benefited from 64 per cent possession in the first half and received an overall 7-4 penalty advantage (4-1 in the second half) from Cummins. But we could not quibble at the rulings, with Taupau, Tohu Harris and Adam Blair all being guilty of offending on the last tackles. Overall, though, it was a tremendously gritty effort, and the British commentators were not alone wondering why the Kangaroos were not 20 points up by halftime.

Kangaroo pressure exposed some old problems. Johnson was given no respite by the onrushing defence and never trapped the Kangaroos with his grubber kicks. His best effort was wasted when Ferguson evaded five Kiwis and got back into the field of play. Shaun Kenny-Dowall made two more costly handling errors when tries were looming but was the vital middle man between Johnson and Rapana for the second Kiwis try.

Kidwell must now decide whether to rest anyone against Scotland and give the likes of Joseph Tapine, James Fisher-Harris, Te Maire Martin and David Fusitu'a debuts against Scotland; or to stay with his established line-up in the expectation they will further develop their combinations. But there is now no doubt the Kiwis deserve to be in the final and the Kangaroos are hopefully aware they cannot be complacent against England.

Four Nations results:

Game 3: England 38 (Whitehead 2, Percival, Hall, McGillvary, Gale, Farrell tries; Gale 5 goals) beat Scotland 12 (Linnett, Russell, Ferguson tries). Halftime: 12-8.

Game 4: Australia 14 (Ferguson, Thurston tries; Thurston 3 goals) beat New Zealand 8 (Kata, Rapana tries). Halftime: 10-0.

Packing a Punch at Carlaw Park

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



THE BEWILDERING sequence of stories and speculation about where Joseph Parker's fight for the WBO version of the world heavyweight boxing championship against Mexican Andy Ruiz Jr might be held prompted several radio commentators to immediately rule out an Auckland outdoor venue such as Eden Park or Mt Smart Stadium. They were unanimous the December weather would be too risky.

While I would not advocate staging any sport at Eden Park, the choice of Mt Smart would actually resurrect a proud New Zealand tradition of holding big-time professional boxing at rectangular football grounds. The most notable venues have been Wellington's Athletic Park and Auckland's Carlaw Park, which in their prime were respectively the home of the union and league codes in their cities.

Boxing was big in Greymouth when I was a kid and I recalled hearing of brilliant Dannevirke southpaw Barry Brown's 1954 British Empire title triumph at another Wellington icon, the Basin Reserve. I was equally aware that Carlaw Park had hosted many famous bouts during the 1960s featuring outstanding boxers with Pacific heritage such as Tuna Scanlan, Manny Santos and Toro George, plus renowned American Eddie Cotton.

It did not take long delving into the excellent BoxRec website to locate the records of those fighters, plus others. The trail took me back to Wairoa-born Maurice Strickland's loss to Auckland Don Mullett for the New Zealand heavyweight championship at Athletic Park in 1942. That was the last of Strickland's 55 professional bouts, having returned home after fashioning a formidable record in Britain and the United States.

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That was Mullett's second appearance at Athletic Park. He also fought outdoors at Petone Recreation Ground, Wilding Park in Christchurch, and at both the Stratford Recreation Ground and Stratford Racecourse. Among Strickland's other New Zealand venues was the Palmerston North Show Grounds. The weather obviously did not deter promoters back in the day, even allocating outdoor bouts as far south as Christchurch.

Barry Brown was New Zealand's Sportsman of the Year in 1953 and beat South African Gerard Draper for the British Empire welterweight championship. Draper was a 1948 Olympic gold medallist who lived in the United States, but Brown knocked him down three times before the referee called a half in the seventh round. When Brown lost his title to Australian George Barnes it was at another outdoor venue, the Sydney Sports Ground.

Other Athletic Park contests that emerged on my brief search included a 1959 victory by Wellington's Billy Beazley over New Caledonian Francois Anewy and New Zealand heavyweight title-holder Sonny Pehi's 1960 win over Fijian Moiese Varasikete and 1961 loss to Wellington's Bluey Allen. Tuna Scanlan also fought there in 1959 and 1962, beating local pug Jack O'Leary and losing to multiple Australian champion Clive Stewart.

Just a thought: rugby league was barred from Athletic Park from 1908 to 1990 by rugby union authorities on the pretext of so-called professionalism. Yet they granted permission for these openly professional boxers to punch for pay on their hallowed turf, and probably demanded ringside seats as part of the deal. What did they think was in the brown paper bags the promoters were giving the boxers? Ham sandwiches?

Rugby league's spiritual home Carlaw Park had no such hang-ups about professionalism and fans packed the concrete terraces. Scanlan was a special attraction, winning all seven bouts from 1961 to 1965. A highlight was his victory over Gomeo Brennan, of the Bahamas, for the British Empire middleweight title. After Scanlan relinquished the belt, Brennan returned to Carlaw Park to win the vacant title and also defend it against Aucklander Earl Nikora.

Both Manny Santos and Toro George were British Empire champions. A youthful Santos won his second pro fight at Carlaw Park in 1965 before claiming his lightweight title in the Wellington Town Hall two years later, while George beat Freddie Wicks at Carlaw Park in 1968 on the way to winning his featherweight title at Melbourne's Festival Hall. Scanlan was born in Samoa, Santos in Tonga and George in Rarotonga but all were Auckland sporting heroes.

A popular visitor during the heyday of Carlaw Park boxing was American Eddie Cotton, who beat George Mahoni twice in 1960, Johnny Halafifi in 1961, Sipa Fine in 1966 and Bobby Stininato in 1967. The last two were late in his career, either side of an unsuccessful 1966 challenge to Jose Torres for the world light heavyweight title in Las Vegas. Cotton was then 40 years old and he fought only twice more after the win over Stininato.

BoxRec does not include crowd figures or weather conditions but I seriously doubt the Wellington and Auckland weather was perfect for every feature fight at Athletic and Carlaw parks. The only photograph I have seen showed an apparently dry night at Athletic Park in February 1959, with strong lighting (but no canopy) strung above the ring and spectators seated on on-field chairs and benches and in a nearby grandstand.

Thought you might enjoy this. Watch me and some of the boys stuck inside an elevator in our hotel.

Check it out on Facebook: [Click here to watch](#)

- Sir Peter Leitch

On Tour in Edinburgh, Scotland



On the train heading to Edinburgh.



Welcome to Edinburgh, Scotland.



Edinburgh at night. All lit up by Christmas decorations.



This is an old school which is now apartments. So many lovely old buildings around Edinburgh.



We took a visit to Edinburgh castle.



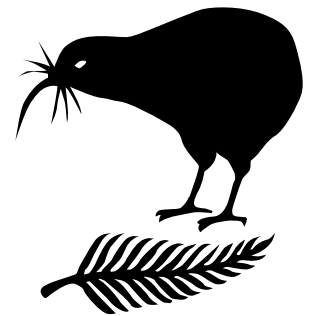
View from the castle.



Another view from the castle.



Canons on show at the Edinburgh castle.



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Hi

MY NAME is Lee Johnson. I'm the one with the picture frame with all the Shaun Johnson cards in it. I would just like to say thank you for the opportunity to meet my favourite player, it has really completed my life. I can't wait to save up and come over to watch the Warriors in person.

Ps I'm the biggest UK fan of the warriors

Four Nations Referee Appointments - Round 3

AN INTERNATIONAL panel has announced the match official appointments for the third round of Ladbrokes Four Nations games.

NRL referee Ben Cummins will be the man in the middle for the game between New Zealand and Scotland at Derwent Park, Workington on Friday November 11. Robert Hicks will take charge of the game on Sunday, between England and Australia at the London Stadium.

The match official appointments for this round of games have been awarded on merit, based on the performances of the referees in the first two rounds of games. The three-person panel making these decisions consists of Steve Ganson (RFL Head of Match Officials), Tony Archer (NRL General Manager Officiating) and Luke Watts (NZRL National Referee Development Officer).

The full appointments for the third round are as follows:

New Zealand V Scotland, Friday November 11 (KO 8.00PM), Derwent Park, Workington

Referee: B Cummins

Touch Judges: J Child, C Kendall

Reserve Referee: G Sutton

Video Referee: B Thaler

England v Australia, Sunday November 13 (KO 2.00PM), London Stadium

Referee: R Hicks

Touch Judges: A Elliott, M Craven

Reserve Referee: B Cummins

Video Referee: B Sutton

What the Kiwis Are Up to Today

7.30 - 9.30am: Breakfast

9.00am: Monitoring/Hydration/Strapping

9.30am: Preview in team meeting room. Ready to depart for training

10.00am: Depart hotel and travel by bus to training ground

10.15 - 10.30am: Arrive at training venue. Weights and wrestle sessions followed by field session and recovery

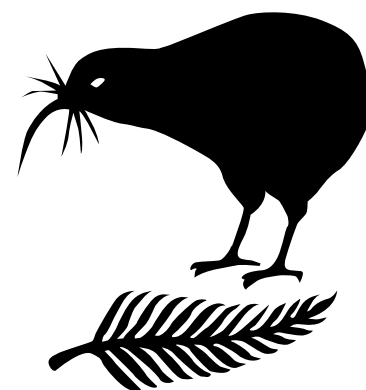
1.00pm: Depart training venue

1.30pm - 2pm: Lunch and media following lunch

6.00pm: Dinner

7.00pm: Phone media

7.00pm: Compulsory massage commences



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THIS YEAR has been a mixed one for Australian sports fans. Just a few days ago the Kangaroos and Wallabies had good wins over New Zealand and Wales respectively. The Wallabies were impressive in their five tries to one win at Cardiff and this gave them their 12th successive Test win over the Welshmen during the past eight years. We should have more joy this weekend when they take on Scotland but the week after that, they play the Irish in Dublin. This will be a tough task as we are very aware that the men in green ended the All Blacks 18 match unbeaten Test winning streak.

But cricket is a worry. After being belted by Sri Lanka on their home wickets in the three Tests during July-August, we were thrashed by South Africa at Perth a couple of days ago by 177 runs and they were without their key bowler, Dale Steyn. The Springboks will go into the second Test this Saturday in Hobart with plenty of confidence and if the weather holds out, will be favourites to cause Steve Smith and his men more grief. Because there are four football codes played throughout Australia during the winter, cricket is the game we follow on a country-wide basis. It is our national game and it doesn't go down well when we are performing the way we are at present.

At the Rio Olympics earlier in the year, we won eight Gold Medals. This was less than we probably expected but most of these were surprise wins by quality young people and that is very pleasing. South Australian, Kyle Chalmers won the 100 metre freestyle swimming final and he was only 18 years and one month old. This was the first time Australia had won that event since Michael Wenden AM, MBE, did it at Mexico in 1968. Victorian Mack Horton, age 20, took out the 400 metre freestyle, beating his unpopular rival, Sun Yang from China. Chloe Esposito, 25, won the womens modern pentathlon and Kim Brennan, 31, powered her way to the womens single sculls title. Tom Burton, 26, collected the mens laser class sailing event and Catherine Skinner, 26, came home with the womens trap shooting Gold Medal. Our womens four by 100 metres freestyle relay team were expected to win and they did this well, while our womens Sevens Rugby Team were all class on their way to victory. This very popular win will have a large and positive effect on rugby generally throughout Australia.

While on Gold Medal Australian Olympians, I must mention Anna Meares OAM. Now 33, the coal-

miners daughter from Blackwater in Queensland, has retired from her sport. She is a four time Olympian in cycling and won medals at all four Games. She won Gold in the 500 metre time trial at 2004 in Athens and then another Gold in the womens sprint at London 2012. Altogether, in Olympic Games, she has two Golds one Silver and three Bronzes. In World Championships, she has won 11 Gold, nine Silver and six Bronze, while in Commonwealth Games, she has five Gold, two Silver and a Bronze. This is an incredible record. At the World Championships at Los Angeles in January 2008, she suffered a broken neck in a bad fall, but showed amazing courage to come back from this and win an Olympic Gold four years later.

While some people, particularly on our side of the Tasman, believe that the Four Nations title is coming to Australia, I feel it is far from a foregone conclusion. Both teams finished with two tries each at Coventry on Saturday and while Shaun Johnson is a member of the Kiwi side, they can win the game. Isn't he a pleasure to watch? If only he could have got the ball down in the last minute of the game. The Kiwi goal line defence, especially in the first half, was terrific. And what about Solomone Kata's first Test try? We all know he has plenty of power and determination, but he showed he was a thinking player in the 49th minute, when he dashed into dummy half and raced around the blindside for his try. On the negative side, there were several fifth tackle penalties against the New Zealanders and coach David Kidwell will certainly mention this in the lead-up to the final. While there can be no questioning Shaun Kenny-Dowall's effort in every game he plays, there must be some concerns about his handling errors in his last two Tests against Australia. He wasn't good in this department in Perth and then on Saturday he dropped the ball with an unmarked Jordan Rapana outside him and only about 25 metres from the tryline.

It will be interesting to see if anything comes from the battle of the coaches in Sunday's Australia-England clash in London (Monday morning in our part of the world). Mal Meninga has had plenty to say about his rival, Wayne Bennett in the past couple of weeks, while England have to win to have any chance of reaching the Four Nations final.

Seven Northlanders Picked in NZ Super Rugby Squads

By Ben Francis



SEVEN NORTHLAND players will suit up between four New Zealand Super Rugby franchises in 2017. Five players will be returning to the same squads they played for in 2016.

Dan Pryor will be returning to the Highlanders for his third straight season. The 28-year old has played 33 games for the Dunedin based club and was a part of the squad which won the Super Rugby title in 2015.

Jone Macilai-Tori will also be playing his third season of Super Rugby, but the blockbusting winger will continue his duties with the Crusaders. The 26-year has only played 14 games for the Crusaders as he has had to play behind Neman Nadolo and Johnny McNicholl.

The Blues have signed four Northlanders to their squad. Captain Matt Moulds, Junior All Black Sam Nick, Maori All Black Kara Pryor and newcomer Josh Goodhue.

Moulds will look to add to his three Super Rugby games in 2017 while Nock will hope to add to his lone game which came against the Hurricanes. Pryor played 13 games for the Blues in his debut Super Rugby season which was rewarded with being selected for the Maori All Blacks Northern Tour. Pryor started for the side in their 54-7 win over the USA in Chicago. Goodhue impressed for Northland in 2016 which includes a hat trick against Canterbury. His twin brother Jack played for Canterbury in the Mitre 10 Cup and will hope to make his Super Rugby debut for the Crusaders in 2017.

The Chiefs have picked up one of Northland's most promising players with fullback Solomon Alaimalo. The 20-year old made his debut for Northland this year and was one of the best players of 2016. Alaimalo will have a fight on his hands to make the final Chiefs squad but based on his performances with Northland he will have no trouble.

More Northlanders could end up making Super Rugby squads, the Melbourne Rebels have yet to announce if Dan Hawkins will return, but it does not seem likely after they signed Wellington first-five Jackson Garden-Bachop. Northland prop Namathai Waa who is also on tour with the Maori All Blacks was not picked up. Waa played in four games for the Blues in 2016, and inform number-8 and Northland player of the year Matt Matich was not signed too.

Some players are often picked up during the season so expect these three to possibly be added somewhere during the season. The more Taniwha that are in Super Rugby squads, the stronger Northland rugby will get.

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South Africa's Comeback Victory Was Amazing and Sets Up a Mouth-watering Series

By John Deaker



IRELAND'S WIN over the All Blacks in the sport that's our national game was the result during the week that stopped us in our tracks. Australia's loss to South Africa in the first cricket test in Perth was a result that rocked the Australians nearly as much in their own National game.

This was a particularly significant result considering when South Africa lost Dale Steyn for the match early on Day 2 the Australians were 166 for 1 chasing 242. Few people would have predicted that the Proteas could dig deep and not only remain competitive in the match but end up winning it convincingly by 177 runs.

The South African victory was highlighted by some great centuries in the second innings by JP Duminy and Dean Elgar and classy bowling from Vernon Philander and 21 year-old man-of-the-match Kagiso Rabada. Even without Steyn and their best batsman AB De Villiers (out of the series with injury) the South Africans had enough classy players to allow their great fighting spirit to come to the fore. The win has now paved the way for extremely exciting second and third tests.

One of the fascinations to watch as the series progresses is not just how the Australians react with the bat and the ball but how their group of players hold themselves on and off the field. David Warner is a magnificent player but is one of the most hated men in world cricket because of the way he has handled himself over the years. On the topic of sledging he recently said in the Phil Hughes inquest that there wasn't "Any in the game at the moment at all".

He went on to say that "Direct threats to any player ... that's totally gone. I don't even know if that was in the game. I've never been pointed at and said any words of any malice."

People that have watched not only David Warner but the Australian cricket team over time know that they will always sledge to some degree – and it will always be worse when they are under pressure. Watching how the Australians react will be particularly interesting for New Zealanders and Indians. Many New Zealanders favourite sport is watching Australia lose at anything. However, an even more acrimonious hate of the Australians can be found in India or even just among Indian communities around the world. South Africans have all the momentum in this series after staging such a remarkable comeback and they'll have hundreds of millions of people around the world cheering for them when the second test starts on Saturday.

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RLWC Tour of New Zealand

NEW ZEALANDERS will have the opportunity to get up close to the Paul Barrière Trophy, when the Rugby League World Cup trophy tours the land of the long white cloud ahead of next year's Rugby League World Cup that will run 27 October – 2 December 2017.

Starting Thursday 3 November 2016 and until Wednesday 16 November 2016, the Paul Barrière Trophy will make over twenty visits across Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch.

RLWC2017 General Manager – New Zealand Operations, Andrea Nelson, said the next fortnight provides a rare opportunity for fans to see in person what the world's greatest rugby league players will be vying for when New Zealand co-hosts the tournament with Australia.

“We are thrilled to be able to bring the Paul Barrière Trophy to New Zealand and give fans from across Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch the chance to have their photo with the World Cup trophy.

“The Paul Barrière Trophy as it's known now, was made ahead of the first World Cup back in 1954 and is steeped in history – including the glorious occasion when the Kiwis held it aloft as world champions in 2008.

“There are a number of public events as part of the trophy tour and we encourage all fans to embrace this unique opportunity to get up close with the ultimate prize in international rugby league.”

Rugby League World Cup Trophy Tour Itinerary

8 November 2016 - Tokoroa & Putaruru

11.00am – 3.00pm Strathmore School, Tokoroa Intermediate & High School

5.00pm – 9.30pm South Waikato District Sports Awards – Putaruru

9 November 2016 – New Lynn

11.00am – 1.00pm NZRL Playgroups Fun Day – New Lynn

11 November 2016 – Christchurch

10.30am – 11.30am Westfield Riccarton (Public event)

12.00pm – 2.00pm Christchurch A&P Show (Public event)

12 November 2016 – Christchurch

9.00am – 3.00pm Pacific Series Rugby League Tournament – Wainoni Park, Christchurch

16 November 2016 – Huntly & Ngaruawahia

10.00am – 1.00pm Schools Tour Rakaumanga, Huntly College, Ngaruawahia High School

5.00pm – 9.30pm Waikato District Sports Awards – Waahi Pa, Huntly



Tickets are now on sale for the seven Rugby League World Cup 2017 games to be played in New Zealand. Tickets start from just \$10 kids and concessions, \$20 adults and \$45 for a family of four.

Buy today to secure the best seats at the best prices at RLWC2017.com.

The Rugby League World Cup Visits Hamilton and Whangarei

THE RUGBY League World Cup Tour of New Zealand kicked off in Hamilton on Thursday 3 November.

The day started with an amazing powhiri from students at Nawton School. The children were so excited to have the trophy at their school, and showed their appreciation by performing a haka and waiata for us.

The Paul Barrière Trophy stopped at six locations across the city, including Sport Waikato, Hamilton City Council, Centre Place and Te Awa Shopping Centre. The tour was a great opportunity for the general public to get up close with the World Cup.

Excitement for the tournament is building in the city, with Hamilton hosting two games at Waikato stadium next year including the Kiwis vs Tonga on 11 November 2017.

There are two matches in Hamilton next year:

- 4 November: Samoa v Tonga – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton
- 11 November: New Zealand v Tonga – Waikato Stadium, Hamilton

Tickets are now on sale now, starting from just \$10 for kids, \$20 adults and \$45 for a family of four. Buy today to secure the best seats at the best prices at RLWC2017.com.

The trophy also headed north to the Whangarei Lions Fireworks Spectacular on Saturday 5 November at Toll Stadium.

With well over 10,000 people in attendance, plenty of locals took the opportunity to take a photo with the trophy. Although there are no games in Whangarei next year, there was still a high level of interest in the tournament from the public.

The tour continues this week with the Cup visiting Tokoroa, Putaruru, New Lynn and Christchurch. For more information on the tour head to RLWC2017.com.



Nawton School

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PRESENTS

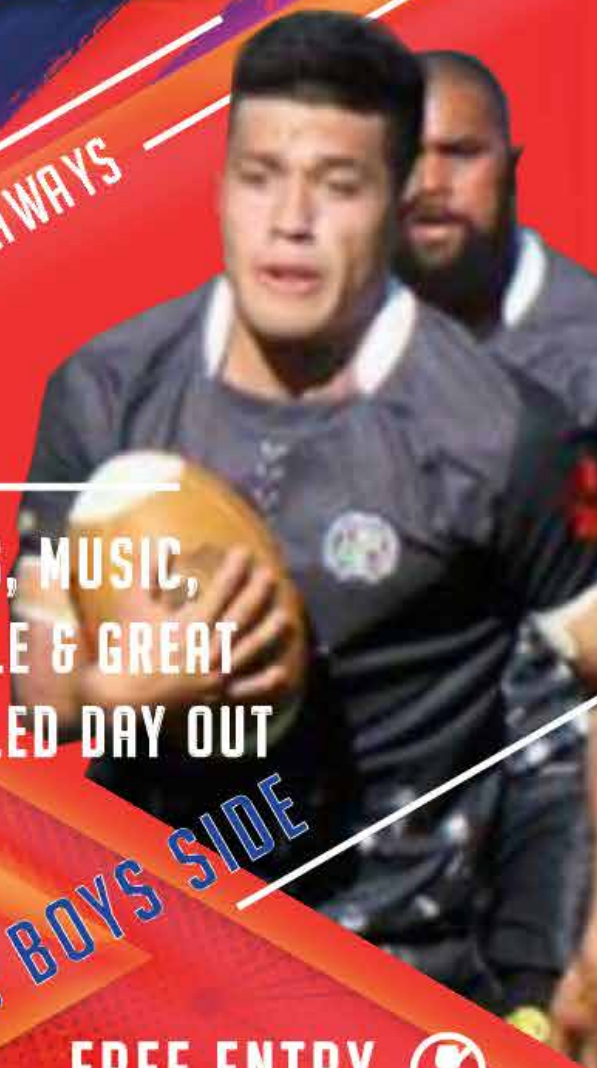


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Helping Out a Friend

By Aaron Lawton - Vodafone Warriors Fan Engagement Manager

LET ME apologise in advance. This guest column isn't about the Vodafone Warriors or rugby league at all. But it is about giving – something Sir Peter does all the time - and I couldn't think of a better place to talk about this than in his newsletter. Anyhow, enough of that. You're busy so I'll keep this short. A couple of weeks ago I had a phone call from a buddy of mine, Andrew Porteous, that left me numb. The bad news is that just days after his son Martin was born, he was diagnosed with stage four oesophageal cancer – at the age of 33 no less. The good news is that Andrew is an absolute fighter and planning to kick cancer's ass! His mates are all in his corner for the big fight and helping raise funds so he can pay for a drug that could give him his best chance of survival. If you are in a position to donate, please click on the link below. Every last cent helps. And even if you can't donate, please keep Andrew and his young family in your prayers. We want him in the stands with us next year and cheering on the boys when the Vodafone Warriors win the NRL title.

[Click here:
https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/andrewporteous](https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/andrewporteous)



Get all the inside action on the Kiwis tour. Follow Sir Peter Leitch! Click on the icons...



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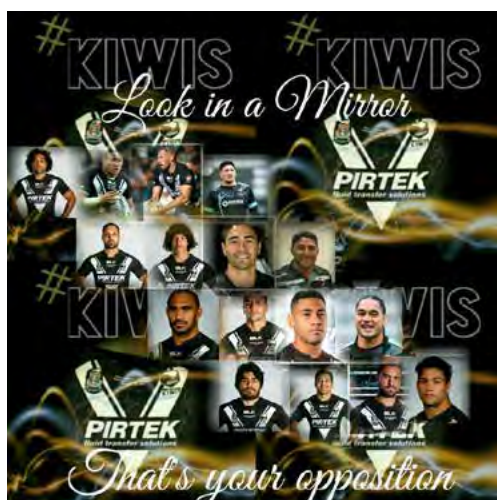


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Kiwis Artwork by Joyce Putohe





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*Ends Midnight, Sunday 13th November.

Vodafone Warriors Unveil 2017 Kit

by Richard Becht

FULLBACK ROGER Tuivasa-Sheck and hooker Nathaniel Roache model the new strips which boast key design changes from the jersey the Vodafone Warriors wore in 2015 and 2016.

The jerseys are now available on pre-order through www.warriorsstore.co.nz

The Canterbury of New Zealand designs feature a stylised traditional rugby league V (or chevron) and a distinctive koru pattern running down the sides of the jerseys.

In Maori culture, a new unfurling silver fern frond symbolises new life, growth, strength and peace. The koru also represents nurturing, care and protection.

The Vodafone Warriors' full 2017 training range was revealed last week and is also available on pre-order now.

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