



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

19th December 2016

Newsletter #153

**Merry
Christmas
and a
Happy New
Year**

from the Newsletter Team



Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year from the Mad Butcher

By Sir Peter Leitch



WOULD YOU believe it, the final newsletter of the year –No 153.

I have to thank the team that puts it all together with me. We get it out every week, sometimes under some tough conditions, but we do it.

The newsletter is a real labour of love. It's done with great affection for the game of league and especially for our wonderful Vodafone Warriors.

We do not claim it is the world's slickest and most professional league newsletter, but I certainly doubt there is anything else like it anywhere on the planet.

Consider our contributors, John Holloway – who herds cats to get them to do the tipping; our Aussie correspondent Barry Ross – who had an operation this week and still filed on time; the promising writer John Deaker; one of the foremost league writers New Zealand has produced in John Coffey; former Suburban Newspapers and Sunday Star-Times editor David Kemeys – who could moan for England, young Ben Francis from up North, who is almost like our apprentice; and Hayden, who puts it all together, and who was a just a schoolboy when we started, and is now at university.

As we say, no one ever pays to put an ad in, and no one ever pays to get it.

My biggest thanks goes to the readers. Without people who subscribe there would be no point going to all this trouble now would there?

We could always do with a few more readers, so get anyone who loves the Vodafone Warriors and the great game of rugby league to visit my website, at www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz – which has just been revamped. They are more than welcome to join the fun.

As I look back on 2016 there were some lows, not least the poor performance of my beloved Vodafone Warriors, and a disappointing turnout to support the Kiwis in the United Kingdom for the Four Nations.

But there were also some highs, especially seeing Joseph Parker take out the WBO world heavyweight title, and more than anything, waking up every morning. If you do that you are having a good day!

So I will leave you all with my very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Please let it deliver for me a Premiership for the Warriors and the sight of the Kiwis winning the 2017 Rugby League World Cup.

But more than anything, please let me keep waking up each day.

*Took my mate Dexter with me to Waiheke over the weekend. We went for a kayak which started out well but next thing it was man over board. Got to love Dexter.
Note how we are both wearing life jackets.*





Merry Christmas



Jim Doyle

ITHINK IF you ask anyone who works at Vodafone Warriors HQ what we'll be wishing for this Christmas, the answer is obvious.

There's no doubting 2016 was a tough year and one in which we didn't achieve our lofty goals.

The good news is 2017 is just around the corner and we are expecting huge things from our Vodafone Warriors. The hard work never stops.

It's also worth noting that as we break for the holidays, there's a real sense of purpose about this place.

The boys have been busting their guts at training and, unlike the rest of us, will be living a Spartan existence over the festive period. It's part of the price they pay to be professional athletes.

As 2017 looms large on the horizon, I do also want to take this time to acknowledge the very many people who make this such an incredible organisation to work for.

To our sponsors, thank you. We wouldn't be here without your loyal support. It means to the world to us.

To our members, thank you. It's been a lean period, no doubt, but we'd love nothing more than to have this team deliver you that all-elusive premiership in 2017. You deserve it!

To the staff at our club who keep the engine ticking over, enjoy a well-earned break. I'm looking forward to seeing you all back on deck in January and fired up about what this organisation is going to achieve.

And last but certainly not least, to the Butcher, thank you. We are blessed as a club to have amazing fans – the best in the NRL actually - and you are right at the top of the list as our 19th man. Thank you for being an unwavering advocate for the Vodafone Warriors.

Roll on 2017. It's time to repay your faith.

Oh, and Merry Christmas everyone.

Jim Doyle

Vodafone Warriors Managing Director



More on the next page...



Russell Stanners



2016 HAS been another big year both for the Vodafone Warriors and for Vodafone. Every year our partnership becomes stronger and more enduring – the 2016 season marked 22 years together.

At Vodafone we are proud to be sponsors as well as loyal fans: in 2016 our people have continued to get behind the team they love, wearing their Vodafone Warriors kit on Fridays before a home game, and lining up to chat to the players when they visit our offices.

And we've enjoyed bringing more of our customers and fans closer to the team they love – through Vodafone Fantastic Fridays our customers can get great deals on tickets to Vodafone Warriors games all via the myVodafone app.

As 2016 draws to a close I'm looking forward to having a bit of down time over the summer. I'll be spending Christmas with my family at the beach and getting in as much fishing as I can.

So from my family to yours, I wish you a very merry Christmas and here's to a successful 2017 Vodafone Warriors season.

Russell Stanners
CEO Vodafone NZ



Jonathan Coleman

I WOULD LIKE to wish you all a Happy Christmas and best wishes for the new year.

2017 promises to be an exciting year with New Zealand co-hosting the Rugby League World Cup with Australia and PNG.

It's a great opportunity to grow the game of rugby league in New Zealand.

Having a world-class event of this calibre on our doorstep will help to increase excitement and engagement with the sport for our up-and-coming players and fans.

Here's to 2017!"

Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman
Minister of Health, Minister for
Sport and Recreation



Stacey Jones

MERRY CHRISTMAS to all!

Like everyone, I love reading Butchers newsletters (because it's not just about League)

I'll be having Xmas day with my family at home before heading North to Doubtless Bay on Boxing Day for a week or so.

Everyone stay safe and let's look forward to an exciting 2017 for everyone!

Stacey Jones - NRL Assistant Coach



Stephen Kearney

ON BEHALF of the Vodafone Warriors players & staff I'd like to wish all our readers a very merry Christmas & Happy new year, enjoy the holidays be safe & bring on 2017,

Head coach

Stephen Kearney



Jerry Seuseu

Hi All, Jerry Seuseu here, warrior number 50.

I am currently serving as the club Wellbeing and Education Manager.

2017 WILL be my 8th season looking after the programme. For me and my family it is always a special time of year. I will take time out on the 21st December to spend some time with the family and celebrate Christmas. It is always a special time for me my wife Kim and 3 teenage children. On Christmas Day we spend the morning with my 8 siblings, my widowed mum and their offspring - 4 nephews and 1 niece. We will be doing breakfast together at a restaurant in town before retiring to my brothers house to open presents. We usually find ourselves home for a late lunch as a family unit. As parents we like to use the time to reflect on the year and share a time of reflection and thanksgiving..

Traditionally we would visit Kim's family in the evening but they mostly flee the city so, If the weather is good we will end up at a local beach for a dip.

I want to wish all of the league community who receive Sir Peter Leitch's newsletter a very merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. I pray the Lord Jesus will grant to you the Peace and contentment that makes this season so great.

Jerry Seuseu
Welfare & Education Manager



Roger Tuivasa Sheck



MERRY MERRY Christmas everyone, hope you have an awesome holiday. Eat lots, wear sun-screen and be safe! Woohoo party season!

Love RTS!



Ryan Hoffman

MERRY CHRISTMAS to all of the Butch's readers and Vodafone Warriors supporters and their families. I hope you have safe and happy holidays. I'm heading to Melbourne with the family to spend it with my wife's family. My son is a bit worried that Santa may forget he is going to be there and not home but fingers crossed he finds us.

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from
Ryan Hoffman and the Hoffman family**



Simon Mannering

JUST WANT to wish all our members and supporters a very Merry Christmas. I hope you have a great time spent with family and friends and looking forward to catching up in the new year. All the very best.

Simon Mannering



Steve McNamara

Assistant Coach and Practical Joker

AUCKLAND HAS quickly become my 'home' after only 6 weeks living here. The welcome I have received from everyone at the Warriors and all the supporters I have met has been incredible. It is quite clear how passionate everybody is about bringing success to our team and I look forward to playing my part in helping us achieve this. We will wrap up our pre Xmas plans this Wednesday when I will be returning back to England for a short visit to see the family and hopefully enjoying a 'white' Xmas. I look forward to my return in early Jan to conclude our pre season plans and then get the season kicked off in earnest in March. Merry Xmas to all out there, have a great and safe one whilst making all your kids dreams come true.



Regards Steve McNamara



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All I Want for Christmas

By David Kemeys

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



PETE NEVER said anything to me about this newsletter ending up being pretty-much an all-year experience but he's a cheeky bugger like that.

So as I sit pondering our final newsletter of 2016, the season long gone and – having spent a lot of money with a competent therapist- erased from the mind, what do I want for Christmas?

1 – Roger Tuivasa Sheck would be good. The much talked about fullback curse can't surely haunt us again. We all looked forward to RTS lacing up the boots in our colours and were robbed of the chance to see the flying Kiwi at the back. So please deliver me a little bit of luck.

2 – Wingers. David Fusitua left to play where he plays best would be nice. He's an outstanding finisher and the chopping and changing position he copped this year did him no favours. Stick him out wide and tell him to continue his spectacular scoring feats. And I still love Manu Vatuvei in full flight on the wing. I can't remember watching the club when he wasn't part of it, so a good season for the man who is drawing inevitably towards the end would not go amiss. Tuimoala Lolohea remains in the mix and you know what, all I want is to stop hearing how much potential he has, and see some of it realised. At least we won't have to see Seldom Wright out there.

3 – Centres. Solomon K is still learning, and getting better, and don't tell me clubs would not snap your hand off to have him. You wouldn't say the same about Blake Ayshford, although he had a decent season on offense, not so much defence. We still feel light in the middle of the park.

4 – Kieran Foran.

5 – Shaun Johnson. Preferably with all the knockers off his back. Wouldn't it be lovely to see how he'd go behind a pack that got parity, let alone dominated.

6 – A back row that did not leave everything up to Simon Mannering.

7 – A front row that caught the ball, made tackles, and ground out yards.

8- Some new tricks. Can we please find some options from set plays close to the line.

9 – Mad Butcher Lounge fans who shut up when guests are on the microphone. Do you know how hard Pete works to get people to come up and talk to us?

10 – An NRL Premiership.

It might all sound a bit greedy, but Christmas Day happens also to be my birthday, which sucks by the way. So I get to ask for heaps.

What I suspect I'll actually get...socks.

Bring it on and thanks for reading. Remember, I'm just a fan, I don't pretend to be any kind of expert, and at the end of the day I'm proof of what they say about opinions, that just like arseholes, everyone's got one.

See you in the West Stand!

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Albert Looks To Future

Nice piece on Stuff at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/league/87680389/warriors-prop-albert-vete-still-learning-as-he-prepares-for-big-2017> about Albert Vete, who became one of our starting props this season.

It was not a stellar year but Albert told Marvin France he is only now beginning to feel comfortable.

“I feel like I've got the hang of things at the moment.”

We are already more than six weeks into pre-season and coach Stephen Kearney is only forward, and you can bet Albert is part of his plans.

He started our last 11 games, keeping Ben Matulino on the bench, not bad for a boy who has only been playing league for three years.

No matter how well he is going, this year is a big one, because he is off-contract at the end of 2017.

I can't see us standing back and letting this one go though.

“I've got a commitment to the club for another year so I'm definitely going to be putting my best foot forward.”

Locke Let Go

Manly have let Kevin Locke go, and our former fullback has signed for the Sunshine Coast Falcons on a one-year deal to the Queensland Cup.

He wanted a place in Trent Barrett's squad for the February trial but it was not to be.

Locke spent five years with us, and played eight tests for the Kiwis between 2011 and 2013, but went to Salford in England in 2014, where he ended up accusing the club of not paying him and bugged off to Wakefield, where things only got worse.

He had a miserable run with injuries and was also suspended for being involved in a car crash.

Thanks But No Thanks

Former captain Simon Mannering won't return as captain in 2017.

Ryan Hoffman wants to continue, although coach Stephen Kearney reckons nothing has been decided.

Mannering, 30, is keen to keep playing a supporting role to whoever is selected.

He was on Radio Sport recently and said: “I've done my time in that role... I just felt it was time for someone else to take the mantle.”

It has to be hard to be clearer than that surely.

It's great news that he is back at pre-season after recovering from knee surgery though.

More Fifita Nonsense

My award for arse of the year goes to Andrew Fifita, with Andrew Fifita second, and third place taken by Andrew Fifita.

This guy is a first-class dork.

His latest run-in saw him issued with a breach notice for his on-field support of convicted killer Kieran Loveridge, something he says he has “no regrets” over.

Loveridge is serving 10 years for manslaughter for an attack in King's Cross that left a man dead.

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Fifita reckons Loveridge has been a long-time friend and his gestures were only mean to lift his spirits.

Would the game miss this bloke?

Congratulations SBW

Serial code-hopper Sonny Bill Williams is a dad again.

The Kiwi and All Black star has a newborn daughter, Aisha.

SBW is married to a former Brazilian nightclub dancer, Alana Raffie, and they had their first daughter, Imaan, in 2014.

Under Fire Boss Hangs On

ARL commission chairman John Grant will stay on for another year, after NRL clubs apparently voted to retain him as long as he goes in a year.

Clubs rounded on Grant after he pulled an agreement to fund clubs at 130 per cent of the salary cap from 2018, as unaffordable,

Kearney Gets Demanding

New coach Stephen Kearney is apparently raising a few eyebrows over his demanding style, which others might of course prefer to call “high expectations”.

Tought titty to anyone who doesn't like it, because we have suffered long enough sides turning out at the start of the season that don't look as fit as the Te Atatu Roosters third grade.

Warriors managing director Jim Doyle made a video for the club website and said it's all about the intent to lift performance and work ethic, and improve our culture.

I'll vote for anything that does that.

It's pretty much a case of work harder, do better, and achieve more.

Kearney calls it “above the line”, and makes players accountable after every team exercise.

If it rids the club of what many believe is a “just do enough” attitude, it's all fine by me.

Decision On Foran Looming

Work is still going on as we seek to have Kieran Foran's contract approved for next season. Apparently a decision is expected in January.

Doyle reckons it's all “progressing well” and that Foran is “headed in the right direction”.

We are taking a well deserved break....

This is our **last newsletter** for the year. We will be back on the **25th January 2016** with all our regular contributors and the content you

love.





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Merry Christmas from Canterbury!

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Ross Taylor's Great Grandad was a Kangaroo

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)



I WAS GOING to write this column about our eight-day cruise from Sydney to New Caledonia and return. But I thought it would be unkind to rave on about the lovely weather and beaches in Noumea, Mare and the Isle of Pines. Not to mention the author inevitably eating too much, drinking even more, and spending delightful days on the open deck pretending to read a book while attractive bikini-clad young ladies wandered past on their way to the swimming pools.

So I diverted my subject to another highlight. No, it was not attending the first Chappell-Hadlee cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground, when Australian captain Steve Smith created a new ODI scoring record of 164. Fortunately, there was no television coverage of the other two games available on board the Pacific Pearl. I had first watched cricket at the SCG in 1967 when Aussie great Bob Simpson scored a century for NSW against New Zealand.

The “other” highlight actually followed the cruise, and was purchasing David Middleton’s 2016 Official Rugby League Annual, a quite incredible publication which includes every imaginable statistic from the past season – and many more statistics that only a guru such as Middleton would be capable of imagining. This was his 30th edition and he noted with some pride that in those three decades the price had risen by a mere \$2 (to \$19.50 in New Zealand).

Middleton is not just a numbers man. He is also an avid and tenacious rugby league historian. To someone who is like minded his tracing of Kangaroo number 59 – known only as C Ross for the last 107 years – was really special. A forward, Ross had played for Australia against the touring 1909 New Zealand Maori team. All that was known about him was his club (North Brisbane) and his having represented Queensland against the Maori prior to his Australian selection.

1909 was the first season for the Brisbane club competition and initial research in 2009 revealed Ross to be a recently arrived New Zealander. Because the 13-a-side code was also just starting up in his homeland, Middleton surmised Ross had almost certainly come from a rugby union background. He found two candidates, one having represented Canterbury and the other Wairarapa. Descendants of the Cantabrian were located and he was eliminated from the search.

That left Charles McIntosh Ross as a possibility. Intriguingly, he had played for Wairarapa in 1907-08 and 1912-13 – either side of that international fixture between the Kangaroos and Maori. A search of the births and deaths records revealed he was born in 1884 and died in 1973, making him 25 in 1909. Middleton renewed his quest through Wairarapa Archives in Masterton. District archivist Gareth Winter was able to tell him he was “on the right track”.

Winter had contacted one of Charles Ross’s grandsons, Neil Taylor, who confirmed his grandfather had played rugby league in Queensland. The family retained a number of his football caps, including one presented by the Queensland Rugby League. Further searches of the Wairarapa Age newspaper disclosed Ross had left the district in June 1909, en route to Queensland, and returned in November, “having played a good deal of football in Brisbane”.

Rugby league pioneers were invariably banned for life by the New Zealand Rugby Union, hence the careful mention that Ross had played “football” without specifying which code was involved. There were no eligibility rules in those days and there was nothing unusual about Ross gaining representative selection despite spending only a few months across the Tasman. By 1912 he was back with the Masterton Red Star club and representing Wairarapa again.

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Neil Taylor is the father of New Zealand cricketer Ross Taylor, who made his own indelible mark on Australian sport when scoring 290 (the highest Test score by any overseas player on Australian soil and the highest away Test score by a New Zealander) at Perth in November, 2015. Thanks to Middleton's diligence the mystery of Kangaroo number 59 has been solved and the Taylor family can celebrate two internationals in different sports a century apart.

The 266-page Annual contains reviews of every aspect – club, state, international, women's and junior – of the 2016 season, and provides historical records which include all State of Origin and Grand Final teams. There are also team photos of all NRL clubs plus Four Nations teams, the Kiwi Ferns and Australian Jillaroos, and complete lists of Kangaroos and Kiwis representatives. It also looks ahead to 2017 with NRL and World Cup draws and club player gains and losses. At less than twenty bucks it is a brilliant buy.

Footnote: Joseph Parker's victory over Andy Ruiz Jr in the WBO heavyweight title bout went unreported in the small daily newspaper available on our cruise ship. But there was coverage of the Auckland undercard bout featuring "rising Australian star" Jeff Horn, and also the victory of British heavyweight Anthony Joshua over American Eric Molina in Manchester for the IBF version of the heavyweight championship. Unfortunately, there was no escaping the cricket results!



Coffey family doing it tough on the Pacific Pearl, from left Gina, Nadia, John (in Warriors cap) and Shirley



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Kevin Barry Overlooked By Halbergs

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)



I WAS AT sea somewhere between New Caledonia and Sydney when Joseph Parker won the WBO heavyweight belt against Mexican Andy Ruiz Jr in Auckland earlier this month. But when my daughter discovered the result on her fancy phone and told me the closeness of the judges' scoring, my first thoughts were of looming controversy. Funnily enough, the name of Lance Revill quickly came to mind. Two days later I read all of the post-bout comments, both local and from overseas, both glowing and critical.

Parker's success was obviously huge in New Zealand, and would have been widely reported in Ruiz's homeland. Otherwise, it made little international impact outside of boxing circles. One paragraph in my Sydney newspaper. In Britain, where boxing is booming, Anthony Joshua claimed another version of the world title to completely overshadow Parker's victory, and the Fury cousins are also lurking. America is in serious need of a charismatic champion to restore the division to its glory days.

There should be no surprise about the cries of "home town decision" and "we wuz robbed" which followed the Parker split points decision. That's boxing. And it won't go away for some time yet. I recently got involved in a Facebook debate about whether West Coaster "Jersey" John Logan was the beneficiary of biased judging when he beat Australia's Empire Games champion and Olympic Games bronze medallist Tony Madigan in a six-round amateur fight at Greymouth. That was in 1963!

Madigan was also controversially beaten in his 1960 Olympic light heavyweight semi-final at Rome by American teenager Cassius Clay, who, of course, grew up to become Muhammad Ali. Clay out-pointed Madigan on all five judges' cards but there are still doubts about whether he deserved it. Even in Clay's home town of Louisville a local newspaper in a 2010 article commemorating the 50th anniversary of his gold medal triumph quoted a CBS presenter as saying Madigan was the true winner.

Two years later Madigan swept aside four opponents to win his Empire Games gold at Perth, while Logan was beaten by a Jamaican in his first bout. Madigan eliminated the Jamaican in their semi-final. Yet on that 1963 night in Greymouth's Army Drill Hall it was "Jersey" John's hand that was raised by referee Jack

Beban. Another Facebook contributor said Madigan's autobiography ended with a blank page – "one he was going to fill in when he met up with Logan again". But there never was a rematch.

So, good luck to Joseph Parker and his support crew. The WBO belt is a valuable stepping stone towards bigger things – and Joshua and company are certainly bigger things! A few days after Parker's win, the annual Halberg Award nominations were released and Parker was rightly included among them. He is again a contender, but far from a certain, for the Sportsman of the Year prize and ultimately the Supreme Award. But where was the nomination for coach Kevin Barry?

In total, there were 87 names in the various categories, including 18 coaches. Other rising stars in international sport such as pole vaulter Eliza McCartney and shot putter Tom Walsh were accompanied into the lists by their respective coaches. Can you name them? Does anyone have any doubts that Kevin Barry has been the inspiration behind Joseph Parker rising from a promising amateur boxer who failed to qualify for the 2012 Olympic Games to where he stands now?

The Halbergs have rankled with me since I was a judge in 1991 and 1992, before resigning. One of "our" decisions was to recognise Winter Olympic silver medallist Annelise Coberger ahead of Summer Olympic gold medallist Barbara Kendall. Several of those around our table (at least we met face to face in those days) felt that Barbara's board sailing was more a recreation than a serious sport! The system has changed since then but the Halbergs always produce plenty of heated debate.

Yet no-one seems to have noticed Kevin Barry's absence. Nominations are made by sports bodies and "others" and I have the feeling that Joseph Parker was belatedly added by the organisers who totally overlooked the man who got him there. I believe Barry has out-done his previous achievements with David Tua. Sure, Tua fought for the undisputed world title but he did start his professional career as an Olympic medallist and boasting one of the most lethal punches in the game. Parker was a comparative novice.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year to all our readers.

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INGREDIENTS

Juice of 1 orange
2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1/2 cup Chelsea Soft Brown Sugar
or Chelsea Dark Cane Sugar
1 cooked leg ham
1 Tbsp Chelsea Soft Brown Sugar
or Chelsea Dark Cane Sugar

PREP TIME: 2HRS 20MINS
COOK TIME: 30MINS
SERVES: 8

METHOD

Preheat oven to 220°C conventional or 200°C fan forced.
Combine orange juice, mustard and brown Sugar to form a glaze.
Remove the plastic bag from the ham. Loosen the rind around the edges of the ham with a small sharp knife, and using a larger long bladed knife, remove rind in one large piece. Score the fat diagonally at 2cm intervals and form a diamond pattern. Place the ham into a large dish with the glaze and allow to stand in the refrigerator for 2 hours. Turn twice to ensure the whole ham is covered in the glaze.

Place ham fat side up onto a roasting rack over a baking tray. Fill base with ¾ cup water.

Brush with glaze and cook for 30-40 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with extra sugar in the last 10 minutes of cooking to achieve a golden brown surface.

Legs of ham are preserved in brine, smoked and fully cooked.

3kg ham provides 10- 15 serves, 4kg ham 12-16 serves, 5kg ham 15 – 20 serves, 6 kg 18 -22 serves.

Five Sporting Events to Look Forward to in 2017

By Ben Francis



2016 HAS been a fantastic year for many reasons. This is my second year contributing to the newsletter and I am looking forward to contributing again next year.

I am very thankful for everything Sir Peter has done for me in the two years I have known him, from letting me contribute to this fantastic newsletter to helping me score a job as a digital sports producer at Newshub.

Only being twenty and working in one of the biggest media outlets in the country is incredible.

Looking ahead to 2017, here are five sporting events I will be looking forward to next year.

One of the big events taking place in New Zealand next year is the Rugby League World Cup. Many league fans are excited to have this event showcased in our great country, along with Australia and Papua New Guinea also hosting matches. I believe the most intriguing game during the pool stages of the competition will be the Kiwis against Scotland. As we all remember the Kiwis and The Braveheart's faced off during the Four Nations and the game finished in an 18 all draw. The Kiwis will want to crush Scotland to get some pay-back, while Scotland will want to do one better than a draw and upset the Kiwis. The Kiwis will also be facing Samoa and Tonga during pool play.

The other big sporting event in New Zealand next year is the British and Irish Lions tour. Many expect this Lions team to be the best ever and could possibly trouble the All Blacks, and maybe even win the series. The Lions only come here every 12 years, and for the fans who are lucky enough to attend the games should be expecting an atmosphere of a lifetime. It will be the first time the Lions will face Super Rugby sides after facing NPC teams in 2005. The Lions were involved in some close matches against the NPC teams but also had some big wins. It will be interesting to see how they go against NZ Super Rugby teams, the best in the competition. I'm expecting the All Blacks to win the series 2-1.

Shane van Gisbergen became the first Kiwi since Jim Richards to win an Australian tour car championship. It was an amazing moment to see van Gisbergen cross the line in third to clinch the title in Sydney earlier in the month. The Kiwi is aggressive on the track and is willing to go all out which appeals to some, and puts a target on his back at the same time. The Giz was in a tight battle with Jamie Whincup for the title and come out on top, it will be great to see the two teammates go head-to-head again in 2017, and with fellow kiwi Scott McLaughlan in the mix after finishing third in 2016, the V8 Supercars will be a great watch in 2017.

Looking abroad, I am looking forward to seeing two superstars trying to stamp their mark as the best in their sport. Firstly LeBron James who is gunning for his fourth NBA championship, if he is wanting to go down as the second best player ever, making the NBA finals this year is critical. Last year he did the impossible, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers to victory after trailing 3-1 in the series against the Golden State Warriors. The Cavs and Warriors are set to square off for a third straight year in the finals and continue their epic rivalry. The other athlete is Tom Brady competing for the New England Patriots. The Patriots will be competing in the NFL playoffs again this season led by Brady. Brady missed the first four games of the season due to suspension and has come back strong and with one goal, to win the NFL. If he achieves this he will go down as the best American Football player ever.

I am looking forward to one more thing in 2017, I might be optimistic here but I am looking forward to seeing the New Zealand Warriors win the NRL premiership. That's right Warriors will win NRL.

That is it from me. Have a fantastic Christmas and see you all again in 2017.



Plenty Happening

By Barry Ross



It may be just a week before Christmas but there is plenty happening in the NRL. The teams for the World All Stars-Indigenous All Stars game at Newcastle on 10 February has drawn plenty of media attention, mainly because of Andrew Fifita's selection in the Indigenous side. Just days before the teams were named, Fifita was given a breach notice by the NRL Integrity unit on 13 December for his support of a convicted criminal during the 2016 Telstra Premiership. He has five days to respond. NSW Coach, Laurie Daley will coach the Indigenous team, while Kangaroo coach, Mal Meninga, will look after the World All Stars. Daley attended the launch of the All Stars game at League Central in Sydney last Wednesday but flew out a few hours later for a holiday in the USA. While he said he has no problem with Fifita playing in the match, Meninga has hinted the Sharks forward should not have been selected. The general public certainly do not feel the same as the Australian coach because Fifita secured more than 25,000 votes to be selected in the team. The general feeling in media circles is that Fifita will not be given some matches on the sidelines but instead be fined \$20,000 or so.

With regard to the All Stars game, it is a pity that there was only room for one Warrior, Sam Lisone. The 2014 Junior Kiwi will give a good account of himself but I would have liked to see some other Warriors named.

The St. George/Illawarra Dragons had some good and bad news late last week. On Thursday, young halfback, Drew Hutchison suffered a cruciate ligament injury at training. He has arranged to have an operation before Christmas and will be out of the game for six months or more. Only 21 years of age, Dragons coach, Paul McGregor was confident that Hutchison would be the answer to the club's halfback problems in 2017. Already they have said they will not be chasing such players as Todd Carney, Chris Sandow or Jackson Hastings as a replacement but maybe these thoughts will change over the next few weeks. Carney has yet to be given permission to play NRL football again. Names such as Jai Field, Shaun Nona, Josh McCrone and Kurt Mann have all been mentioned as possibilities to fill the halfback roll.

Around the same time as Hutchison's misfortune, 20 year old forward, Luciano Leilua, resigned with the club for a further two years. Both Manly and Cronulla were keen to sign the young forward for the coming season. He is a local junior and played five first grade games this year. He was named in the NRL's under 20 team of the year for 2016 and won the Dragon's Paul McGregor Medal as National Youth Competition Player of the Year. Dragon forward, Joel Thompson, who has been named in the Indigenous team, has been doing some good work with the Clontarf Foundation, which helps to improve the lives of young Indigenous men.

Down in Melbourne, the Storm fans are hopeful that Billy Slater will make a successful comeback in 2017. The 33 year old has had two problem seasons with injury, playing just eight games in these two years, but according to Storm football manager, Frank Ponissi, he is on target to have his first full contact session on 5 January. Slater has played 278 first grade games with the Storm since joining them in 2003. He has 172 first grade tries to his credit, 25 Tests for Australia and 27 State of Origin games for Queensland.

While congratulations are certainly in order for New Zealand's Joseph Parker, I must also mention Australian boxing icon, Johnny Lewis OAM, who just a couple of weeks ago was named as an inductee in the Boxing Hall of Fame in New York. John, 72, has trained six World Champions and they are Jeff Harding, Jeff Fenech, Billy Dib, Gairy St. Clair, Virgil Hill and Kostya Tszyu. In 1990 Johnny was the trainer for coach Bob Fulton on the 1990 Kangaroo tour of England and France.

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Our cricketers appear to be back at the level Australians would like them to be. I was interested to read that rivals from the tied Australia-West Indies Test of 9 December 1960 caught up in Brisbane last week. Sir Garfield Sobers, who played for the West Indies in that match at the Gabba and scored 132 in his team's first innings, met with left arm Australian quick, Alan Davidson AM MBE, who broke his little finger before the game, but still took a total of 11 wickets. Now 80 years of age, Sobers scored 8,032 runs in his 93 Tests at an average of 57.8 and took 235 wickets. Davidson, 87, took 186 wickets at an average of 20.5 in his 44 Tests and scored 1,328 runs. The two cricketing legends were on stage at a Brisbane Racing Club lunch at Eagle Farm the day before the Australia-Pakistan Test began at the Gabba last Thursday. During the lunch, Davidson told the audience that he was paid a total of around 15,000 pounds (\$30,000) during his career. “

“Gee, that much,” Sobers said. The West Indian went on to add that the West Indians were paid five pounds a week during their 1957 tour of England.

Two of the Pakistani coaching staff, now in Australia, were involved with Aussie cricket not too long ago. Head coach, Micky Arthur was Australian coach before being dumped on the eve of the 2013 Australia-England Ashes campaign. One of Arthur's assistants, Steve Rixon, has also worked with the Australian team. Rixon was sacked from the Australian set-up after the 2013/14 Ashes series. Arthur was appointed to the Pakistan Head Coaching Role in May this year, while Rixon became one of his assistants just a month later. New Zealand Cricketers know 62 year old Rixon, who played 13 Tests for Australia, as the Kiwi Head coach for around three years from late 1996.

The Big Bash starts this week in Australia, on Tuesday night, 20 December at Spotless Stadium in Sydney, when the Sydney Thunder take on the Sydney Sixers.



Stay Safe on the Water this Summer

Wear a Life Jacket

Watch the video: [Click here](#)

2016 Was a Reminder Anything is Possible - On and Off The Field

By John Deaker



2016 WILL BE the year we were all reminded that anything is possible. On the field there were numerous examples of upsets, none better than Leicester City winning the English Premiership after paying \$2001 to do so before the season started. Off the field, Donald Trump's achievement was at least on a par with Cronulla's upset achievement of winning their first ever premiership after 50 years in the competition. Love him or hate him, (unfortunately we don't ALL hate him!) Trump showed many of the same characteristics the sportspeople and teams showed throughout their 'campaigns' to get their wins: Self belief, momentum that continually built confidence, the appeal of the underdog, a loyal fan-base that'd been hurt over the years and the ability to focus on the task at hand while not dwelling on failures from the past.

Leicester was the most stunning story internationally. This was no FA Cup knock out upset. This was a victory over the course of the full season when the team gets tested consistently in many areas. You definitely don't fluke an EPL victory! The Chicago Cubs' World Series victory wasn't far behind the magnitude of Leicester's win. It'd been 108 years since their last title but they also came back from 3-1 down against Cleveland in the finals series.

For me as a rugby league fan Cronulla's victory was the most special upset I witnessed. I found myself supporting them in the final when I didn't actually like a lot of their players. After the difficult years the club has been through their story became so inspirational I couldn't resist jumping on the bandwagon for a bit of a ride near the end. It was obvious that most of the individuals in their squad had bought into the concept of creating history for the club. If you weren't tempted to cheer them over the line for their players or coach Shane Flanagan you probably did so for the sake of their fans who had stood strong through such a difficult period. The scenes on and off the field provided a vivid reminder of why we love sport and the emotions it can bring out in athletes and their fans.

Many Australians would also have revelled in the Western Bulldogs winning the AFL Grand Final. They were an even bigger outsider than Cronulla, paying \$67 to win the title going in to the elimination finals stage.

For individuals in 2016, it's hard to look past a golf and tennis victory as being two standouts. Danny Willett won the US Masters after paying \$151 before the tournament started. Angelique Kerber's win in the Australian Open was nearly as much of an upset. She paid \$41 before the tournament started down under.

From a New Zealand perspective, Luuka Jones was the individual that stood out. Going in to the Olympics she was ranked 22nd in the world, so her Silver Medal was as much of a shock and a bonus for herself as it was to a nation that knows very little about canoe slalom.

When we reflect on New Zealand's team sports the All Blacks loss to Ireland was actually a standout result in light of the amount of people that had been complaining that their matches were getting boring because they were always winning so easily!

Yes, 2016 gave plenty of reminders why we love sport and why people play and watch the games: because anything can happen on any given day!



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Pacific Warrior The 2017 Heritage Jersey

By Richard Becht



PACIFIC WARRIOR, the Vodafone Warriors' 2017 heritage jersey, has been unveiled today and is now available on pre-order.

'Pacific Warrior' pays homage to the strip the original Auckland Warriors first wore into battle in their debut season in 1995.

In recent years, the special design has focused not only on the Vodafone Warriors' heritage in terms of their kits but also New Zealand's heritage as well as that of the players and the community together with the club's bloodlines.

While the 2017 design stays true to the 1995 jersey's colours, the jersey has been given a Pasifika flavour honouring the many proud Polynesian players who have represented the club over the past 22 seasons.

[Pre-Order Now: Click here](#)



Vodafone Warriors 2017 Trials

Saturday 11th February

Vs. Melbourne Storm

Sunshine Coast Stadium

Sunshine Coast



Sunday 19th February

Vs. Gold Coast Titans

Central Energy Trust Stadium

Palmerston North

[Purchase Tickets for the Gold Coast Match: Click here](#)



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SUMMER SMASH

VODAFONE WARRIORS v TITANS

2pm Sunday 19th February 2017

Gates open 11:30am, RNZ AirForce V NZ Army Kick off 12pm

Prices from: Adult \$20, Child (4-15) \$10, Family (2A 2C) \$50

Tickets available from www.ticketdirect.co.nz A service fee will apply. Enquire about our hospitality packages.
www.venuespn.co.nz ph:(06) 356 1505 haylee@venuespn.co.nz





Charity Fundraiser A day at the Ellerslie Races Saturday 18th February 2017

Did you know that 1 in 7 people over 50 will get Macular Degeneration? For thousands there is a treatment that can stop its progression. MDNZ is committed to slowing this epidemic.

Please support this fundraising event and help us save the sight of thousands of New Zealanders. Funds raised will support awareness campaigns, education, information and support for those with Macular Degeneration, their families and carers.

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Donate an auction item

We welcome any item for the live or silent auction.

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Invite 10 guests to be at your personal table for a fabulous day including a gourmet buffet lunch, celebrity guests, auctions, raffles, horse racing at its best and more!

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The ASICS NZ Team

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Awesome Winner



Giddy Peter,

THANK YOU so much for the prize! Absolutely stoked to win it. Gonna get it framed and hang it in my man-cave. Hope you and everyone involved in making these newsletters have a great xmas. Adam



Check out the Mad Butcher's Kiwi Jingle Bells on his website

www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz



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Wishing you all a happy holiday season and a wonderful new year from the team at Vodafone.

The end of the year is fast approaching and what a year it has been. We were thrilled to be able to reward thousands of customers through our Fantastic Fridays loyalty program and keep millions of Kiwis connected, in both happy and tough times. For all the Vodafone Warriors fans it was not the year we hoped for but we get to start afresh in 2017.





Supporting the Luke Tipene Trust "Helping Others"



Saturday February 11th 2017

Glenora Rugby League Club
Family Day

Harold Moody Reserve, Glendale Rd, Glen Eden

9.30am—Official Opening

Kids and Family activities, Bouncy Castles, Entertainment & Live Auction

Game 1 Luke Tipene Glenora Bears 18s Vs Vodafone Warriors 18s

Game 2: Glenora Prem vs Vodafone Warriors Selection

Game 3: Vodafone Warriors ISP Vs Vodafone Warriors NSW Cup

Entertainment and Raffles throughout the day

All funds raised go to the trust will be used to assist youth (individual or groups) between the age of 13-18 who are striving to achieve positive outcomes or striving to achieve excellence in their chosen

For information on how you can support please contact Sean Wilson - 0272712714

#LUKETIPENECELEBRATIONDAY

Bank account for any donations also kindly welcome; Luke Tipene Trust "Helping Others"

Westpac 03-01509-027955-00 " Luke Tipene Trust"

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Winner will be drawn on 17/01/17



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

Winner will be drawn on 17/01/17

League 4 Life are looking for an Administrator for 2017. Could it be you?

League 4 Life is looking for an administrator for approx. 20 hours per week at NZRL in Auckland. The League 4 Life Foundation Administrator is overall responsible for the administration of the League 4 Life foundation. This includes the following key responsibilities.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manage the grants application process with League 4 Life board
- Membership database management
- Organise League 4 Life key fundraising events
- Communications strategy with key stakeholders, including newsletters and marketing of the Foundation
- Review and refine existing League4Life programmes.
- Utilise the NZRL web site to improve accessibility of League 4 Life grants, membership and donations process.



If this sounds interesting contact Sir Peter on 021 936 105

Check out the Mad Butcher's Kiwi Jingle Bells on his website



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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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