

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

15th February 2017

Newsletter

#157

Only Warriors Fans Could Panic Before the Season Starts

By David Kemeys

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



OKAY, WE were grim at the Nines, and we lost our first trial against Melbourne 30-18, after leading 18-0 at one point.

But bloody hell, it was trial. It doesn't matter.

Only Vodafone Warriors fans – and I use the word cautiously – would take to the air and start banging on about how it is all doom and gloom, and an indicator of how poor we will be, that nothing has changed, that new coach Stephen Kearney has no idea what he is doing, and on, and on, and on.

Unbelievable. We were without Ben Matulino, Jacob Lillyman, Simon Mannering, Bodene Thompson, Manu Vatuvei, Issac Luke and Sam Lisone, and the Storm didn't bother with Cameron Smith, Cooper Cronk, Jesse Bromwich, Will Chambers or Tohu Harris.

So neither side was busting a gut to put out a best 13.

Mind you, conceding 30 unanswered points is not great, but it's not a pointer to our 2017 campaign.

It's just a trial, a hit-out, a chance to try things, to get some conditioning...

From what I hear, and I hear it mainly from Pete, who was on the Sunshine Coast, we were pretty good in the first half.

New captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck got back to work, and emerged unscathed, and the while the second half was entirely different, both sides fielded fringe players and youngsters.

I can recall pre-seasons where we went unbeaten, and then played like dogs when the season started. I can recall being flogged in pre-season and then playing like dogs when the season started.

The important part is the playing like dogs when the season started.

That's got to change and we all know it, and the Warriors have made plenty of noise about wanting to shake-off the easy-beats early on tag. The Nines team was part of that strategy.

Come the Knights on March 5, no one is going to care what we did in pre-season.

Besides which, we have the Titans in Palmerston North this weekend, and it's likely Kearney will take the chance to roll out some of our bigger guns as the season proper looms.

So ease up on the panic would you, you're doing my head in.

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And if you ever needed proof that there is more to life than winning league matches, spare a thought for the loved ones of All Black Sione Lauaki, dead at just 35, from renal and cardiovascular problems.

He played 17 tests for the All Blacks, and but for Jerry Collins and Rodney So'oialo ahead of him, might have played a lot more, I know, because Sir Graham Henry said so.

His former Chiefs teammate Roger Randle had lots of nice things to say about the quiet Tongan-born loose forward, but added: "It's just a bloody sad time. He was a bloody good man."

New Zealanders instantly anoint sainthood when a former All Black dies. It's understandable, but it's wrong.

Lauaki might have been a 17 test All Black but don't forget he got a diversion after his first assault, underwent anger management training after a wilful damage incident, and also had a lucrative deal with a Japanese club torn up after pleading guilty to another assault charge.

Don't get me wrong, it's terrible when anyone dies at such a young age, especially for his family, and I would not wish ill on anyone.

Actually that's not true. Andrew Fifita for one could disappear from the face of the earth and I wouldn't shed any tears.

Score One For Ruben

Ruben Wiki, fresh from a comeback at 44 at the Nines, got inducted into the New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame at the Halberg Awards last week. The only other Warrior to be there is Stacey Jones, although league does have Albert Baskerville, Tom Baxter, Mark Graham, Ces Mountford, Charlie Seeling, George Smith and Des White included.

Say what you like about a perhaps underwhelming return at the Nines, Wiki played 16 first-grade seasons, establishing a Test-appearances world record at 55 for the Kiwis, and captained his country.

We all know the journey, but how many players can boast making their international debut – in Ruben's case in 1994 – and then being selected every year for the next 12 years?

In 2005 he captained the Kiwis and was man of the match when we smacked Oz 24-0 (Peter's greatest

triumph) in the Tri-Nations final.

With 225 games for the Raiders, and 87 for us, in 2008 he became the first and only New Zealander to reach 300 first-grade matches. When he retired his total was 312.

Well-deserved. Could not happen to a better bloke.



Wiki Whanau arriving at Halberg Awards e



Ruben Wiki and wife Santa on the red carpet



The Sports Hall of Fame Inductee is Ruben Wiki at the 54th Halberg Awards

Boo Hoo Ben Barba

Make sure you have some tissues handy before you read too much further.

Cronulla coke consumer Ben Barba has accused the NRL of double standards over his treatment, but says he's ready to "move on" from league.

Boo hoo Ben.

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Do one you drug raddled arse.

Barba is apparently anxious over his move to French rugby but says unlike him, NRL players who have been in a similar position have been allowed to train with their clubs.

“I didn’t know what was going on,” Barba told Fox Sports. “I didn’t know when I was allowed to go back to training. I just had to ask the question why I was different.”

The 2012 Dally M medallist said he would look back on his NRL career with mixed emotions.

Me too actually, are scorn, derision, and sarcasm actually emotions?

Mind you, he did give me a laugh with this line (get it).

“Obviously, I would have liked it to run a bit more smoothly than my career did go.”

You think.

Kiwis For Canberra

This year’s Anzac test against Australia will be in Canberra’s GIO Stadium on Friday, May 5.

NRL football head Brian Canavan said GIO was a fitting venue for a “very special match”.

“Canberra fans are always passionate, so it will be great for them to be able to see international league at its best.”

Kangaroos Coach Mal Meninga said the match would be especially significant in a World Cup year.

“It’s important to win against the Kiwis at any time, but on this occasion there will be the added incentive of the cup. Both sides will be looking to put on the best performance possible.”

The test will be a double header –the Jillaroos taking on the Kiwi Ferns first up.

ACT chief minister Andrew Barr said Canberra had proven an ideal city to host games. “In 2013 a sell-out crowd of almost 26,000 packed GIO when the Kangaroos beat the Kiwis 32-12. I have no doubt Canberra will embrace the chance to see their heroes in action again.”

Tickets are available from www.nrl.com/tickets

Give Yourself A Break Sam

I see former Vodafone Warrior Sam Tomkins has admitted his time with us was a disappointment. That’s one word for it.

He arrived from Wigan as an England international with a big reputation.

I recall him getting off to a flying start and looking sharp at the Nines.

He’s a bit hard on himself, because in his first year he played every game, and scored 13 tries.

Mind you, we came off a 42-0 flogging of Gold Coast and had to beat Penrith in our final game of the year to make the eight. We lost.

In his second year he got injured – adding to the curse of the No 1 jersey at Mt Smart.

Tomkins only managed 13 games all year, and one try.

“That second year was tough, I am not going to lie, I was sick of being injured and not being able to help the team.”

His partner gave birth to their first child and Tomkins decided to pull the plug and go home.

But he loved it here and was a great bloke. “The Warriors are a fantastic club. I made some friends for life.”

I have actually heard Tomkins mentioned in the worst signings of all time debate.

Admittedly he came with a reputation he never lived up to, so the sense of disappointment was always going to be heightened.

But he wouldn’t even come close to a making the top 10 list of our duds.

My current favourite, and everyone will have one, for absolute clanger is Shaun Lane.

Anyone believe we got the best end of the deal when Raymond Faitala-Mariner went to the Bulldogs and we got Lane in exchange?

Lane arrived to much hype about his physical prowess, being a really tall bloke, made his debut against St George, and vanished, never to be seen again.

Mind you, he’ll probably come back and haunt us, since he is at Manly these days.



TRAIN FOR YOUR GAME

ROGER TUIVASA-SHECK

#CommittedToTheGame

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SHOP NOW

Vodafone Warriors in Aussie



Ata Hingano and Junior Pauga.



Roger Tuivasa-Sheck leads out the team.



Mason Lino kicks a conversion.



It was great to talk to coach Stephen Kearney while the game was on.



So many loyal fans at the game.



The crowd at the game.



Awesome fans at the game!



Great to catch up with Andy one of our great supporters at the game



It may not have been a Warriors jersey but it was my beloved mighty Mangere East Hawks jersey where my Rugby League journey started 50 years ago.



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Name:
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To enter: YOU MUST subscribe to Sir Peter Leitch Club Newsletter.

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

Winner will be drawn on 22/02/17

At Last, The Footy Season

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)



WITH ALL the abbreviated stuff (sevens, nines and tens, not to mention Twenty/20) just about finished and already forgotten, it was quite something to watch the first games of real, red-blooded 13-a-side footy last weekend. There were heat waves in Australia and threats of snow in Britain, but the Indigenous All Stars match against the so-called World All Stars in Newcastle and the opening Super League round in England set the scene for a season which will not end until the World Cup final at Brisbane on December 2. That is almost 10 months away!

The most startling moment occurred not on the field but in the Newcastle commentary box when Phil Gould supported Johnathan Thurston's suggestion that the Indigenous team should be taken on tour. Gould agreed with JT it would be a great idea for them to be pitted against tier-two nations as well as sides such as New Zealand Maori. But then he took a massive leap past Thurston's plan by recommending they also be included in future World Cups and even Four Nations series. Maybe the intoxicating sight of some real football caused Gould to get carried away.

Let's start with the less likely of the two. Adding the Indigenous All Stars to the Four Nations would – unless it was increased to Five Nations – cut out the tier-two country (whether it be Samoa, Fiji, France, Scotland or PNG) that Thurston was campaigning for them to play. As for the World Cup, Gould appears to have forgotten the widespread criticism when Aotearoa Maori participated in the 2000 tournament. Of course, it is highly unlikely that Australian officials would want their Kangaroos to be weakened for any of these major events anyway.

The All Stars match will not be played in 2018 because so many top-line players will still be recovering from the World Cup, but probably returns in 2019. It is interesting to see how the Australians have embraced it in comparison to the disappearance of our former Maori v Pakeha fixtures which were claimed to be not politically correct and even accused of being racist. Annual Maori v Pakeha games were removed from many leagues' schedules, most notably Auckland where they had boosted the Injured Players Fund and acted as an Anzac Day representative trial.

We had our first experience of the supposedly new-look and considerably faster NRL Bunker on Friday night and it generally worked well. But its introduction in 2016 was also greeted with acclaim until the first human error crept in. Many viewers would have had doubts about the legality of first World All Stars try and whether the ball ever made contact with the goal-line. The best angle was obscured by a touch judge and the Bunker officials went along with the referee's opinion of "try". It had all the appearances of cricket's "umpire's call".

Seven reserves and unlimited interchanges were permitted during the game. World All Stars coach Mal Meninga swapped his entire forward pack and halfback during the break after the first quarter. Maybe Mal was taking a tip from the previous week's Super Bowl in America. Whatever, the Indigenous players were more committed to their cause and had more quality players as they spurred away to a decisive victory. Indigenous and NSW coach Laurie Daley must be rueing that Origin wins are not so easily achieved. But at Origin time many of his Indigenous stars are wearing maroon.

The first Super League game televised by Sky Sports resulted in a narrow win for St Helens over Leeds Rhinos and provided a significant individual milestone. It was Rob Burrow's 500th first-class appearance, which includes 20 for Great Britain or England and just about all the others as halfback or hooker for Leeds in a 17-year career. But, at 34, the diminutive Burrow has no chance of overhauling fullback Jim Sullivan, who played 774 times for Wigan from 1921 to 1946, 31 for other clubs as a wartime guest, 26 for Wales, 25 for Great Britain, three for England, one for British Empire XIII and six for Other Nationalities – a total of 866.

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On Saturday there was a one-sided match between Castleford Tigers and Leigh Centurions. Promoted to replace Hull Kingston Rovers in Super League, Leigh predictably fielded a mix of veterans clinging to their fading careers and youngsters eager to establish a foothold. Fifth in 2016, Castleford has gained former Leeds fullback Zac Hardaker, who played for Penrith last season while covering the 25km that separate the two Yorkshire clubs. Long-suffering Castleford fans still have to put up with their old Wheldon Road ground, built in 1926, just two years after Carlaw Park.

Several attempts to replace it with a modern stadium have failed and the main grandstand looks decrepit even at night. But it was there that the 1971 Kiwis clinched their historic series triumph over Great Britain, our first on British soil for 64 years. I recall there was no enclosed press box, just two rows of benches at the back of the stand. So when a young New Zealand Press Association reporter instinctively raised his hands to acclaim Phillip Orchard's winning try, he also flicked his portable typewriter down into the neck of the unfortunate British journalist sitting in the row below him. Yes, I apologised!

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Enjoy a night of entertainment with Mike King, Megan Alatini, Mika Haka and friends, all using their talents for good - profits to Mike King's keytolife.org.nz and MikaHakaFoundation.co.nz

Mike King is a comedy legend, with a political savvy that will have you in fits of laughter. Megan's sultry vocals will bring the room to a standstill, and Mika's ambiguous costumes and music from his new album "Swimming with Sharks", featuring Keisha Castle-Hughes, will be launched with guest dancers.

Please book your show tickets now at iTicket <http://bit.ly/2lgFR7K>

For pre-show dinner booths or private rooms please call Halo 09 869 4160

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SATURDAY**

**THIS
SATURDAY**

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HAKA**

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18 FEBRUARY

CNR GREYS AVE. & MAYORAL DR., AK





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)

Can Kiwis Repeat History?

The Kiwis celebrate with the World Cup. RLWC final between the Australian Kangaroos and the New Zealand Kiwis at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane, Australia. Saturday 22 November 2008. Photo www.photosport.nz

DURING THE silly season – that period when many news media folk are on holiday and those left behind make their predictions for the year ahead – the sporting fortune tellers have given the Kiwis no chance of winning the 2017 Rugby League World Cup. One Fairfax scribe who made his predictions listed 18 major events and omitted the RLWC completely! It was probably a blessing after his assertion the Warriors were in for another woeful season.

One can only wonder what these “experts” would have made of New Zealand’s prospects of bringing home the 2008 World Cup trophy from Australia had they been making their current predictions over the 2007-08 festive season. Believe it or not, the Kiwis were even less of a chance then than they are now. Yet on that magical November night at Suncorp Stadium they roared back from a 10-point deficit to rout the Kangaroos by 34-20 in a massive upset.

Looking back, the Kiwis also had a new coach during 2007. Brian McClennan completed his successful term and was off to Leeds, handing the reins to fellow Aucklander Gary Kemble. McClennan signed off with a 30-6 loss to the Kangaroos in the 2007 Anzac Test in Brisbane, a disappointing result in the wake of the 2005 Tri-Nations triumph in Britain and taking the Kangaroos into golden point before losing a thrilling 2006 Tri-Nations final at Sydney.

Kemble experienced a disastrous debut with a record 58-0 thrashing from Australia in the NZRL Centenary Test at Wellington. It did not help that new wing Luke Covell dislocated an elbow in the fourth minute, full-back Krisnan Inu became a virtual passenger until his shoulder injury forced him from the field, and Steve Matai was sent off in the twenty-fourth minute for the high tackle which severely concussed opposing centre Mark Gasnier.

The Kiwis then embarked on a totally forgettable northern tour, without the services of the above-mentioned trio but also big names such as Benji Marshall, Nathan Cayless, Sonny Bill Williams, Brent Webb and Jerome Ropati. In hindsight, the first and third Tests were lost by the semi-respectable scores of 14-20 and 22-28. It was the second Test at Hull which really hurt. Great Britain’s 44-0 victory was its biggest winning margin in 100 years of rivalry.

France also threatened to beat Kemble’s Kiwis in New Zealand’s first Test in Paris since 1961. The home side led twice before two late converted tries got the Kiwis home by 22-14. When they returned home there was an ugly post-tour wrangle which included a call -- voiced loudest by Kiwis captain Roy Asotasi and experienced forward David Kidwell -- for Kemble to be sacked. They got their way and the NZRL replaced Kemble with Stephen Kearney.

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Spot the similarities with 2016-17. This time Kearney, like McClennan, has moved on from the Kiwis to coach a club – the Warriors – and his farewell to the international scene was marked by a disappointing 16-0 Anzac Test loss at Newcastle. Ironically, Kidwell was promoted to succeed him and made his debut in a 26-6 defeat at Perth. The Kiwis then returned to Britain, this time for a Four Nations series, which culminated in a disastrous 34-8 loss to the Kangaroos after a shock draw with Scotland.

During 2016 the Kiwis, under Kearney and Kidwell, were beaten four times by Australia. Of them, only the 14-8 Four Nations loss at Coventry could be considered close. The Kangaroos were dominant but could not kick on from a 10-0 halftime lead and Shaun Johnson went within a whisker of snatching an improbable last-minute draw. Kidwell's first win was a commendable 17-16 thriller against England, followed by that dreadful draw with Scotland and the one-sided final.

So the Kangaroos will again inevitably start a World Cup year as overwhelming favourites to retain the trophy they regained in 2013. Unlike the unfortunate Kemble, there is no threat to Kidwell's job. In fact, everybody seems to be in agreement that Kidwell needs the same leg-up given to Kearney in 2008 by pairing him with an experienced assistant coach. Kearney, of course, had the benefit of Wayne Bennett's vast knowledge of football and footballers.

Now that Bennett is wearing an England track suit at international level, the NZRL is casting around for another assistant. My pick – had he been available -- would have been Ivan Cleary because of his extensive knowledge of the Kiwi football psyche during his long time as a player and coach with the Warriors and at the 2013 World Cup. But Cleary will be carrying the Lebanon coaching clipboard at the World Cup, so perhaps the NZRL did not pursue him.

We might also recall that the Kearney-Bennett partnership was not a stunning success from the start. They actually began with a 28-12 loss in the 2008 Australian Centenary Test and a 30-6 thumping in the opening round of the World Cup. Sandwiched between those losses was a romp over Tonga at Mount Smart. The 2008 Kiwis then progressed from a convincing win over Papua New Guinea and two tense defeats of England leading up to the World Cup final.

Kidwell and his assistant will face the last Anzac Test in early May and any warm-up game the NZRL arranges before their World Cup pool matches against Samoa (at Auckland on October 28), Scotland (at Christchurch on November 4) and Tonga (at Hamilton on November 11). Their quarter-final is expected to be in Wellington on November 18 and semi-final in Auckland on November 25. The World Cup final will again be at Suncorp Stadium, on December 2.

What are the odds of the 2008 “miracle” happening all over again?

THIS SUNDAY



NRL TRIAL MATCH
SUMMER SMASH
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**SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 19
2PM**

**GOLD COAST
TITANS**
AQUIS



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

Steve Sumner

By Miles Davis



BLACKPOOL IS renowned for its illuminations but in 1973 it was one of its footballing products that came to New Zealand to light up the sporting scene. Enter Steven Paul Sumner.

Sumner had spent his youth career with Preston North End and Blackpool and was tempted to travel to the other side of the world as a 17 year old by Christchurch United. While they obviously recognised his talent even they surely wouldn't have anticipated the impact he would have on the round-ball game in the land where rugby was king.

Originally intending to spend a couple of years down-under he was enamoured with New Zealand and made it his permanent home. On the domestic scene he carved out a magnificent career with Christchurch United, Gisborne City and Manurewa, amassing a record 6 Chatham Cups and 5 National League titles. It was however for the national side that he would arguably leave the greatest impression.

First selected for the All Whites in 1976 he went on to make 105 appearances, scoring 27 goals (including a record 6 in one game). It was as captain of the side that he became part of New Zealand sporting folklore. He led the first All White side to qualify for a FIFA World Cup in 1982 (playing more games – 15 – and travelling more miles than any side in history to qualify) and scored the first ever goal by an Australasian side in that tournament. In 2010 he was awarded the prestigious FIFA Order of Merit, world football's highest honour. He joined the likes of Pele, Bobby Moore, Bobby Charlton and Franz Beckenbauer as members of that exclusive club.

I was watching that game against Scotland in 1982 with my new Kiwi girlfriend (who went on to become my wife and mother of my 2 eldest) and granted instant hero status to the buccaneering, moustachioed hero who scored against the Auld Enemy. Little did I realise he would later become my friend.

On the field he was a fearsome and uncompromising opponent and an undoubted leader of men. Off the field he was forthright with his opinion but also warm, compassionate and full of humour. His indomitable spirit was no better illustrated than during the most testing fixture of his life – his battle against prostate cancer. Steve kept me regularly updated as to how his fight was going and no matter how tough it became he was always upbeat. Not once was there a negative message or a sign of self-pity. Every update left me feeling uplifted and in admiration for his strength and selflessness. He encouraged us to focus on appreciating and enjoying the good things in life, on loving our families and friends. I can only wonder at how many men will live longer lives due to his constant encouragement to get themselves tested.

There is no doubt that Steve will rightly be remembered for his immense contribution to New Zealand football but my foremost memory of him will be the courage and humour he showed while facing up to his inevitable passing. If I can be half the man he was when I face my end I will feel I have done a more than decent job. Thank you Steve.



Pele Sumner and Zico FIFA Order of Merit.



Steve Sumner.

Check out Steve Sumner on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/xKTNf6ntUMU> and https://youtu.be/GhndXP_dZUo?t=1m40s



By Miles Davis

Nines and Tens



*Chiefs celebrate winning the 2 day Tens tournament in Brisbane.
Photo www.photosport.nz*

13 AND 15 seem to me numbers that are working perfectly well so why change? There is a trend in the modern era to sell watered down versions of the oval ball code to the punters and despite some initial success there are obvious signs that the concept is failing to fully engage the audience.

The 9's in Auckland were initially a great commercial success. Eden Park was sold out as the fans greeted the new tournament with enthusiasm. Much of that was due to two factors 1. The teams were ones they supported week in week out through the NRL season and had done so for years 2. The top players from all the clubs were included in the squads.

The NRL clubs had made a commitment to the tournament that made it a marketable commodity to an audience suffering withdrawal symptoms since the end of the previous season. When the second season came around it was obvious that the clubs' commitment to the tournament was already wavering. Less front-line players were included and it became obvious that the focus was on the tough NRL season coming up. This year's event saw even less stars appearing and the fans reacted with lower interest and attention. The reaction was fair enough, if clubs don't give it full focus then why should the fans?

The 10's in Brisbane didn't even have the start the 9's did with the event failing to fully engage the audience with it becoming obvious early on that most of the stars would not be taking part.

In an era where both codes have full and very competitive seasons one has to ask why try adding more? The answer is television and promoters. Satellite television is always looking to fill its schedules and has shown over the decades that it is happy to bastardize sport to do so. Promoters have rapidly cottoned on to this and are constantly looking to come up with new products they can hawk off to the broadcasters. The good of the sport involved is a secondary interest for both entities as it is their bank accounts that are foremost on their minds.

Administrators also think of their bank accounts which is why they allow their sport to be used in this manner but those on the coal-face, coaches and players, are less happy as their focus is the legitimate championship which is on the horizon.

Fans hopefully will have the final say. It would not surprise me if the 9's is played in Australia next season as it has obviously lost its lustre in Auckland. It may survive over there for a while as there is a much bigger League audience there but it will soon die off if the stars don't turn up.

There is also talk of the 10's coming over to Auckland where there is a bigger Union audience. This could also work for a couple of years but again will die a death if you cannot guarantee top line players.

Personally I will be glad when they both die and we can get back to focusing on the magnificent NRL and Super Rugby competitions which surely provide enough oval ball code to satisfy even the biggest appetite.



I live in Sydney's Sutherland Shire, home of the Cronulla Sharks. Known throughout the remainder of Sydney as "The Shire," locals were elated when they won their first ever NRL Premiership in 2016 and are keen to see them complete the double this Monday morning (Sydney time), when they clash with Wigan for the World Club Championship. This will not be an easy game to win as Wigan will be playing at home and in their conditions. The Sharks will go from the excessive Sydney heat of the past two weeks to the bleak and very cold conditions in England's north. Sharks Coach Shane Flanagan named a 20 man squad for the game and they flew out of Sydney on Saturday night in business class. Four players are missing from Cronulla's 17 man squad from last year's Grand Final win. They are wingers Valentine Holmes and Sosaia Feki, who are both on the injured list, hooker Michael Ennis, who has retired and fullback, Ben Barba, who has signed to play rugby union with French club, Toulon.

Three Cronulla players did well for the Indigenous team in their 34-8 over the World All Stars in Newcastle on Friday night. These three are Jack Bird, Andrew Fifita and Wade Graham and each one will play a key role for their team in England. The match will begin at 2am, Sydney time on Monday morning and the Cronulla Leagues Club will remain open from midnight on Sunday so that fans can watch the game live on the big screen.

Wigan have had plenty of experience in World Club Challenge games. They have played in six of these matches, winning three and losing three. Their first win was on 7 October 1987, when coached by New Zealander, Graham Lowe, they beat Manly 8-2 in a rugged and tryless clash at their old home ground, Central Park. One of the Wigan props in this match was Shaun Wane, who is now the current Wigan coach. On 2 October 1991, the John Monie-coached Wigan defeated Penrith 21-4 at Liverpool soccer team's Anfield Park. Then on 1 June 1994, in a major upset, another Kiwi, Graeme West, coached Wigan in their 20-14 win over the Broncos at Brisbane's ANZ Stadium. Shaun Edwards, who now works as an assistant coach for the Welsh rugby union team, played in all three Wigan World Club Championship wins. Now 50 years of age, Edwards is the only schoolboy to captain England at both rugby league and rugby union.

Wigan's three losses were against the Broncos in 1992, the Dragons in 2011 and the Roosters in 2014.

The venue of this year's game is DW Stadium in Wigan. Owned by Wigan Football club, the stadium was opened in 1999 and until 2009 was known as JJB Stadium. The maximum capacity is 25,138 and the ground record of 25,133, was set in May 2008, when Wigan soccer team played Manchester United.

So far this year, Wigan won two trial matches against Leigh (50-10 on 21 January) and the Catalans Dragons (26-22 on 28 January) and then won their opening Super League competition match 26-16 against Salford, at Salford, on 11 February.

The day before the Wigan-Sharks game, the Broncos meet Warrington at Halliwell Jones Stadium at 8pm Saturday night in England. For Sydney sidlers that is 7am on Sunday morning. Warrington were beaten 20-12 by the Catalans Dragons in their opening Super League game on 11 February at Gilbert Brutus Stadium in France. Former St. George/Illawarra Dragons, Broncos and North Queensland Cowboys forward, Ashton Sims, is with the Warrington Wolves and could take the field against his old club. Almost 32 years of age, Sims represented Fiji in the last World Cup, along with his two brothers, Tariq and Korbin. The youngest brother, Korbin will play with the Broncos in 2017 but did not make the trip to England, as he only signed with Brisbane three weeks ago.

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On Sunday afternoon in Sydney, St. George/Illawarra and South Sydney will clash in the 34th Charity Shield contest. The first of these was played in 1982, while there were no games in 2000 and 2001 when Souths were omitted from the NRL. From 1982 until 1999, the St. George Dragons played Souths, but from 2002 until the present, it has been the St. George/Illawarra Dragons taking on the Rabbitohs. There have been five drawn games, St. George and St. George/Illawarra have won 16 matches between them while Souths have had 12 victories. This year's game will be played at 4pm at ANZ Stadium. Souths have won the last four Charity Shield games with the Dragons last win in 2012. Fox Sports will televise the match live.

After the inaugural Brisbane Global Tens rugby union tournament over the past weekend, it appears as if the strength of Super Rugby will remain in New Zealand. The Chiefs were worthy winners with their captain, Liam Messam, leading by example. He turns 33 in March but the 43 Test All Black still has plenty to offer the Chiefs. He has played 146 Super rugby matches for the Chiefs and has won two Commonwealth Games Gold Medals with the New Zealand Sevens team. The Chiefs beat another New Zealand side, the Crusaders in the final, while none of the five Australian teams could reach the semi finals. In fact just two Aussie teams, the Queensland Reds and the Western Force, made the quarter finals.

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Hearing Dogs

Dear Sir Peter and Newsletter Readers

STEVE AND Colina have been telling me all about the support you are all giving us for our 'stamp' fundraiser.

This is greatly appreciated - here is a photo Steve took of the volunteers table where they cut around them and sort them for packaging off to Australia.

You are most welcome to visit us any time you are in Taranaki - would love to show you how the dogs work,

Kind regards, Clare - General Manager, Hearing Dogs: <http://hearingdogs.org.nz/>

If you have any old stamps or a collection that you would like to donate to a charity, Hearing Dogs are looking for your help.

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By Shane Hurdell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

Harris is The Talk of Hastings

Tohu Harris - 2016 Ladbrokes Four Nations - New Zealand Kiwis Training
Photo www.photosport.nz

IT'S BEEN a fortnight since the Vodafone Warriors signed Hawke's Bay-raised Tohu Harris.

But the four-year deal is still a hot topic in the streets of Hastings, where 25-year-old grew up.

Staff at the Rebel are anticipating a rush for Warriors gear when family, and supporters from his Waipatu Maraë-based Tamatea club, realise it's time to swap their Storm attire out.

One supporter who may be slow to change is his father Paul. "I'll still support the Storm. I'm used to getting a ribbing when I wear my Storm colours to the Warriors club," he said, referring to a group of mates who watch the Warriors games in a shed on a Hastings property.

"When the time comes I will swap my colours. I will follow the Warriors, but I will still follow the Storm because I know all the guys there. This year we have to help get them to another grand final, and help them win it."

He says after seven years of regular flights across the Tasman to support his son, it will be a welcome relief on the family budget to have road trips.

"We'll go to most home games ... we'll probably have to take a bus, and that's just for the family," he quipped, as he referred to the size of the Harris whanau.

Mum Dale says the move is all about family and being closer to home. "Tohu has had seven years in Melbourne. It's time for him to have another phase in his career and play for a New Zealand team."

Tohu, wife Natalie and their nine-month-old son

Harlan, were in Hawke's Bay for a week at Christmas.

Harlan became a world-wide internet sensation last year for his reaction to his Dad teaching him the popular Ngati Kahungunu haka Tika Tonu.

"We've grown to love the Storm because they have been good to Tohu. We will always have a soft spot for them, particularly the players his age, who have come through with him. We wish them well, but Tohu's the No 1 priority."

Dale says it won't be hard for her to swap her Storm colours. "The Warriors are a New Zealand team we have always followed. The family are excited because they all know we will be able to go and watch Tohu play. That is something we haven't all been able to do ... as I said it's all about family."

Tohu's Storm teammates got to experience Harris whanau and Tamatea hospitality when they were hosted at Waipatu before their 2015 NRL clash against St George in Napier.

Among the club members that day was Adrian Rowlands, who had a stint with Souths in 1985, and who was the man who told Tohu's father in 2007 his son would make the NRL.

That year Tohu won the MVP award playing for the Hawke's Bay under-15s in Wellington. It was also the year Storm scouts first expressed an interest.

"Tohu was one of those one-in-a-million blokes when he was coming through. He didn't drink, smoke, or even have a girlfriend," Rowlands told Tohu's 2015 Storm teammates. Roll on Tohu's first outing in our colours!



By John Deaker

Enjoying Our Opposition's Talent and Success is Tough



AB de Villiers of South Africa bats hits six during the 2016 International T20 Series cricket match between South Africa and England. Photo www.photosport.nz

THE BLACK Caps' series against South Africa starts this Friday with a T20 match at Eden Park. One feature of this series is that AB de Villiers is back in the Proteas side after struggling with an elbow injury the last few months. De Villiers is not only one of the most successful batsman in world cricket, he's also one of the most enjoyable to watch.

The fact that De Villiers bats faster than Brendon McCullum in one-dayers (McCullum's career Strike-rate was 96.37 v De Villiers 99.95) while having an average more than 20 runs higher than him (53.60) explains why this guy can consistently thrills crowds for long periods of time. It's a bit of a cliché to say it but De Villiers literally changes games – and does it very quickly. He's also one of those players who in this 'Twenty20 era' has become phenomenally consistent at executing outrageous shots like the ramp and reverse sweep.

As a cricketing purist I'd love to see De Villiers batting at his best in New Zealand. On the flipside though, if he bats for an hour it's very likely that South Africa will score a huge total and be much more likely to win that match. The perfect scenario is probably for us to get some small glimpses of what De Villiers is capable of with the bat but always see him back in the pavilion before he gets to 50.

The situation with De Villiers isn't one that's unique to cricket. When the North Queensland Cowboys come to Mount Smart Stadium you feel privileged to watch Jonathon Thurston play – but you certainly don't want to see him showcase against the Warriors of why he's one of the greatest rugby league players of all time!

One thing De Villiers has in common with Thurston is that he is a good man and is a great ambassador for his sport. This makes them slightly easier people to watch dominating the teams we support than it is to watch arrogant Australian's like David Warner smashing us round the park. Good luck to AB De Villiers on Friday – but good luck in small doses.

Ruben Wiki Jersey Winners

- Brad Davidson - Taupo
- Rosa and Peter - Timaru
- Phil Love half – Auckland
- Consolation prize for the furthest entry Phil Norton - London in the UK



Raiders Set to Host SportSafe ARL Nines

THE AUCKLAND Rugby League pre-season is kicking off in Hibiscus Coast this weekend when Premier-ship teams go head-to-head for bragging rights and the Nines trophy at the annual Sportsafe ARL Nines.

Customarily held in Whitianga, the Raiders are set to host this year's event with the beach, sun and top class footy all on display at Auckland's Stanmore Bay on Saturday February 18.

Papakura will return to defend their title for a third consecutive year, while Mangere East, Otahuhu, Pakuranga, Marist and Hibiscus Coast have all entered for the first time.

The tournament augurs well for the season, with the Sea Eagles going on to win the 2016 SAS Fox Memorial competition.

"Hibiscus Coast Rugby League Club are absolutely thrilled to be hosting such a fantastic event," says chair-woman Karen Gibbons.

"Auckland's Stanmore Bay provides an ideal venue that allows players and team staff to involve families."

"We have the fields, clubrooms, playgrounds for the little ones, the beach across the road and a pool next door.

"It's also a great pre-season opportunity for teams to see where they're at with their training," she adds.

"Bring your sportsmanship, enjoy the exciting games, catch up with players from all clubs, let the families enjoy the surroundings and stay for entertainment and food into the evening.

Tournament times and draw to be confirmed pending additional team registrations* Keep up to date on the Auckland Rugby League website at www.aucklandleague.co.nz



Papakura win back to back Nines.

IN A classic case of 'Paying it Forward', Tom the Pom in Tapanui gave the shirt he won 18 months ago to his Mother-in-law, Faye, as she had no Warriors shirt (you may recall seeing picture of Faye, Tom and the Tapanui township sign?). In our December draw, Toms wife, Vicki, a staunch Storm fan, entered and won a Nines jersey, and as Tom has a birthday in February it was an ideal extra to go with the early present of a trip from the deep South, to see the Auckland Nines early in February. He's pictured here with Warriors captain, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck. RTS was just one of the many RL faces Tom got to meet on Sunday, as a very happy guest of The Mad Butcher, in his corporate lounge, where he made 6 new Pommie mates, all of em from Lancashire, not Yorkshire, (that's for you, Miles Davis).



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March 10th, 11th, 12th 2017

Southland Rugby League News

Southland Goes Saturday

THE SOUTHLAND District Rugby League has ditched playing on Sundays and will instead team up with Otago to play club league on Saturdays.

Since the 1990s Southland has played its club competition on Sundays. But in December Southland Rugby League members voted to join Otago and change to Saturdays.

While there were a couple of votes against, the majority were in favour of what will be the biggest shake-up to Southland's club competition in years.

The plan is for four Southland clubs to join four Otago clubs to form a new eight-team competition that will start on March 25.

SDRL president Jane Ballantyne said Otago originally raised the idea and playing against Otago clubs was seen as a good way to provide something different for Southland's players, rather than playing the same teams each week in a four-team Southland competition.

The move will provide challenges but comes on the back of the success the Southland Rams in 2016.

Southland clubs are likely to lose some players to rugby on Saturday, but catering for them on Sundays was also difficult. Some clubs relied on rugby players to top them up, but many league players also played rugby on Saturdays, only to be out of action for Sunday with injuries.

“It is a one-year trial at this stage. Southland is going to see how it goes.”



Players, coaches, management, ref, youth and supporters from Southland take a tribute photo to the Warriors, RIP Eddie Hei Hei, and show their love for Sir Peter Leitch (if you look closely enough, in the middle is a Mad Butcher doll – sorry we lost his pants.

Rams Set To Go Again!

THE SOUTHLAND Rams won the South Island championships, going unbeaten against Otago, West Coast, Canterbury and Tasman, to advance to the National Championships.

They travelled to play Taranaki, and won 22-8, before losing to Waikato in Invercargill, losing the chance to advance to the national premiership .

In August the Rams will gear up again for the South Island competition, facing Otago, West Coast, Canterbury, Tasman and, new to the competition, a team from Timaru.

As well as winning the South Island competition, and being runners-up in the Championship, the Rams had some notable success, being named the NZRL grassroots club of the year, with Alana Lockhorst

becoming NZ Residents manager, and being a finalist in the Pirtek volunteer of the year.

The goal for 2017 is a simple one - go a game further and reach the Premiership.

The Rams are looking for a head coach though - email lanzsdrl@outlook.co.nz



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Reader Mail

Hi Peter & team

FIRSTLY THANK you very much for the Auckland Nines Book & the Sticker's one for Trevor's car & one for mine, Much appreciated.

But because we weren't able to be there I orderd A Tee Shirt & a Stubby Holder.

Guess what?? I Met Shaun Johnson's Grandfather Allan & His wife Anna.

Even took a photo of him & got him to sign it how cool is that.

Again Thanx for the Book & Stickers.

Your Friends,

Tui & Trevor



Thank you Sir Peter for the tickets. So awesome GB Lama family.



In Aussie



Me and Dexter were sent to the sin bin in Aussie.

Continued on next page...



My old mate Dexter with Simon Ball a ex kiwi who runs the Sunshine Coast stadium and does a great job.



Big thank you to my mate Carl at Doncaster RL club for the cool gear and program.

Continued from previous page...

It was great to catch up with former DB BITTER Warriors coach John Monie on the Sunshine Coast. You can check out the interview with him here:

<http://sirpeterleitch.co.nz/videos.php?p=566>



John had to show me his fantastic BBQ AREA it's fair to say I was very impressed



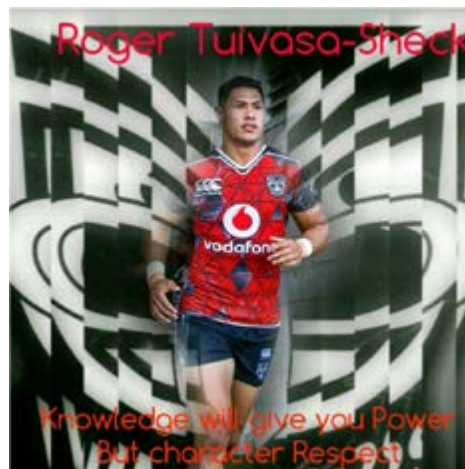
John proudly show me his photo of Mt Smart on our first ever game against the Broncos

Was great to catch up with former Vodafone player Wade McKinnon last week so I took the opportunity to have a chat with him enjoy: <http://sirpeterleitch.co.nz/videos.php?p=564>

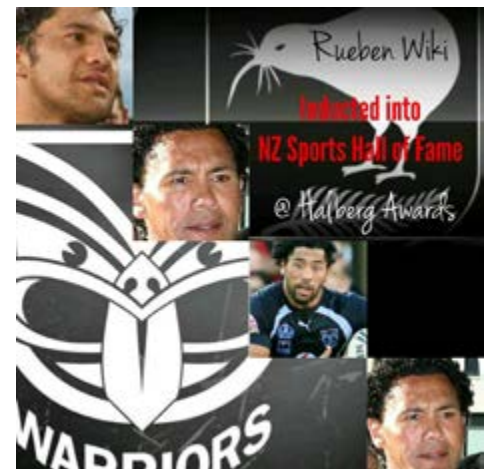
Was also great to catch up with one of the up-and-coming stars of Rugby League, Brendon Smith, who hails from Waiheke Island. Check out the interview here: <http://sirpeterleitch.co.nz/videos.php?p=565>



Just to wish our Team nothing but the best for the game coming up.



No Bounds No Limits - #Warriors 4 Life.



Congratulations #Kiwi #Warrior Rueben Wiki Inducted into the NZ Sports Hall of Fame tonight @ the Halberg Awards.

Warriors Artwork - by Joyce Putohe



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

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.

How you can help:

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We welcome any item for the live or silent auction.

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Experienced Forwards Return for Final Trial

by Richard Becht

SEASONED SIMON Mannering, Jacob Lillyman and Issac Luke have all been named for the Vodafone Warriors' second and final NRL trial – the 'Summer Smash' – against the Gold Coast Titans at the Central Energy Trust Arena in Palmerston North on Sunday (2.00pm kick-off).

The three players weren't used in either the Downer NRL Auckland Nines or last Saturday's first pre-season hit-out against the Melbourne Storm on the Sunshine Coast.

Boasting almost 700 NRL appearances between them they will provide a significant boost to the starting pack this weekend.

The 286-game Ryan Hoffman was the only vastly experienced forward fielded against the Storm; he was among six players taken off at halftime when the Vodafone Warriors led 18-6 before going on to lose 18-30.

Lillyman and Luke start alongside prop Sam Lisone, who played in the Nines and also represented the club in the NRL All Stars in Newcastle last Friday night. Hoffman and Bunty Afoa are again the starting second rowers with Mannering at loose forward.

The only change to the backline used against the Storm is at standoff where Ata Hingano is paired with halfback Shaun Johnson. Captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck has his second run after a successful return in the first half last week.

"It's a real boost for us to be able to have those experienced lads in the forwards," said Vodafone Warriors head coach Stephen Kearney.

"We know the Titans will bring plenty in what is a vital hit-out for us ahead of the season.

"There were some really good signs against Melbourne but we need to show further improvement this Sunday."

The bench includes Albert Vete, James Gavet, Wel-

lingtonian Charlie Gubb and Blake Ayshford.

The last time the Vodafone Warriors played a match in Manawatu was a trial against Central Districts at Palmerston North Showgrounds on the original Auckland Warriors' national tour before their debut in the competition in 1995.

The Vodafone Warriors' advance party arrives in the city tomorrow for a schedule of NRL Community Carnival appearances and activities on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

NRL squad members Ligi Sao and Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad will join the club's Harvey Norman Community Warriors ambassadors Jerome Ropati and Georgia Hale visiting 12 local schools to introduce them to the ACC Everyday Athlete and Konica Minolta League in Libraries programmes as well as the KidsCan 'Raincoats for Kids' initiative.

There'll be a signing session at Harvey Norman's store in 339 Main Street West in Palmerston North at 5.30pm tomorrow.

The Vodafone Warriors, who arrive in Palmerston North on Friday, will hold an open training session at Central Energy Trust Arena at 11.00am on Saturday. It's followed by a signing session at the Keen Kiwi Rugby League Festival at 1.00pm.

VODAFONE WARRIORS v GOLD COAST TITANS

Central Energy Trust Arena, Palmerston North

2.00pm, Sunday, February 19, 2017

1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck(c)	13 Simon Mannering(vc)
2 Tuimoala Lolohea	
3 David Fusitua	Interchange:
4 Solomon Kata	32 Albert Vete
5 Ken Maumalo	22 James Gavet
6 Ata Hingano	11 Blake Ayshford
7 Shaun Johnson	17 Junior Pauga
8 Sam Lisone	18 James Bell
26 Issac Luke	20 Charlie Gubb
16 Jacob Lillyman	28 Mason Lino
15 Bunty Afoa	21 Isaiah Papalii
12 Ryan Hoffman	25 Erin Clark



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FREE SPORT PROGRAMME WITH GRAHAM LOWE!

Graham Lowe has partnered with the MIT School of Sport to provide an opportunity for rugby league lovers to get a qualification for free and learn about pathways in professional rugby league.

"The ordinary man can make it" Ron Lowe (Graham's Dad)



Graham was so similar to many in South Auckland, unsure of what the future held, his dad's words guided him long after he passed away.

Graham was motivated by the talent in the South Auckland area to create an opportunity for those passionate about sport to have a pathway onto further learning and experience in professional sport.

The free programme is one semester long, at level 2 and graduates are awarded a Certificate in Sport and Exercise.

He understands that school is not always a good match for everyone and wanted to create an environment where students can play and learn.

Students will train every day and Graham will use his many league contacts across the NRL to enhance the learning and experiences of the students in all facets of rugby league. The MIT lecturers will ensure that students are supported in their learning and that it is related to the sport industry so the students see the value in going to class.

Pathways include study at Diploma and Degree level, and employment in strength and conditioning, coaching and administration in the sport industry. MIT will also support students into learning in other areas such as building, automotive and teaching.

Let's grow this great game of ours!

Classes start on the 27th February 2017.



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AUSTRALIA VS NEW ZEALAND

ANZAC TEST MATCH

**GIO STADIUM
CANBERRA**
FRIDAY 5 MAY 2017

International Rugby League Kicks Off in Canberra in 2017

2017 is the year of the Rugby League World Cup and to kick off the International season, Australia will play host to New Zealand in the annual ANZAC Test Match. Returning from their successful Four Nations tour, the Kangaroos will be out to defend their number one position as they continue their build to the Rugby League World Cup.

This year, don't miss out on being a part of the Kangaroos Supporter Bay. Wear your green and gold with pride amongst fellow supporters, with an Australian scarf and wig included in each ticket purchase for this bay.

As an NRL.com subscriber don't miss your opportunity to secure the seats to this blockbuster match at GIO Stadium, Canberra on Friday May 5th. Get in before the general public and purchase your tickets in this pre-sale.

Pre-sale Details

Start time: 3pm Tuesday February 14

Password: NRL2017

Ticket Limit: 4 tickets

End time 5pm Monday May 1

Pricing: See below

Category	Adult	Conc. / Junior	Family
Cat A	\$95*	\$90*	NA
Cat B	\$75*	\$65*	\$220*
Cat C	\$45*	\$35*	\$125*

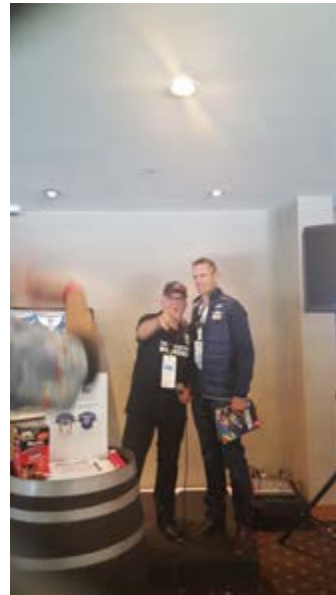
Buy Now



The guys were grateful to have Surf Life Guards on hand while they had a dip.



The Vodafone Warriors getting ready for a swim to cool off in Aussie.



IT WAS great to have these two former Vodafone Warriors players in our lounge at the Nines. Konrad Hurrell who is now at the Titans (the Vodafone Warriors will play them this Sunday in Palmerston North) and Michael Luck who is now at the Cowboys. Two great guys.

If you wish to **subscribe** or **unsubscribe** please email Stephan Maier at stephan.maier@medstar.co.nz

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Without the help of these brands the Sir Peter Leitch Club and Newsletter wouldn't be as fantastic as it is. If you do get the opportunity please support them whenever you can.



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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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