

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

22nd February 2017

Newsletter #158



Vodafone Warriors in Palmerston North



Isiah Papalii and Tu Toa student



Issac Luke talks to Chris McQueen



Mannering waves out to fans



RTS shaking hands with Sam Lisone



Shaun, Sam, Issac and Jacob



Young fans in Palmerston North



By David Kemeys

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

Welcome aboard Kieran – at last!

YOU CAN almost guarantee that when you have to do things by a certain time something critical will happen the next day, and so it was last week with the news Kieran Foran had had his contract registered, breaking the day after we sent the newsletter.

Since then the talkback lines have been going mental, roughly divided into two camps. The first is that is brilliant, it's exciting, it will make all the difference etc. The second is the nothing is going to change, the forwards are still lightweight, we are doomed etc.

I love the Vodafone Warriors and our fan base. Talk about glass half empty.

Name me one side in the NRL, with the possible exception of the Eels, who might well feel reluctant to take him back, who would not be glad of Foran on the roster.

Mark Geyer came out and said Foran had the ability to take us into the top four, talkback responded by bagging Shaun Johnson, with the usual crap about he has to step up, he's inconsistent blah, blah blah.

Unbelievable.

In the meantime, all praise to Vodafone Warriors managing director Jim Doyle for getting it done, even if the pyramids were built faster.

I am not one for conspiracy theories but I do wonder if it would have taken this long if a Sydney club wanted him, and I also think the not until round three ruling is absurd.

It all means, as we all know by now, the 26-year-old won't make our back-to-back opening Mt Smart

games against Newcastle (March 5) and Melbourne (March 10), but will be able to play against the Dogs in Dunedin on March 17.

Foran has had a tough time, and I for one wish him all the best, because playing footy is what he does.

“Naturally we are keen to see Kieran back on the field as soon as possible but we have always highlighted that the most important thing is to ensure Kieran is mentally and physically ready for the demands of the NRL,” Doyle said.

The man himself reckons he would have been keen as mustard to start in round one, as anyone who heard him at the Nines can attest.

“But both the club and NRL have put my welfare first throughout, so I am just happy my contract is registered and I now have a date for my return.”

What irks me is that the NRL says Foran's return is subject to a further psychological assessment to ensure he is in the right frame of mind to play.

I'd have thought anything that subjected him to more testing was almost certain to mess with his head, and make the situation worse, not better.

Kieran Foran: Rep Honours: 20 Tests for Kiwis (2009-2015), NRL All Stars (2013 & 2015)

NRL Debut: Manly v Canberra, Brookvale, 2009. 156 appearances (2009-2016), Manly: 147, Parramatta: 9 (2016), with 148 points (35 tries, 4 goals).

More on next page...

Trial Form Lifts

Just last week I cautioned one trial loss did not mean much, and one trial win, this time against the Gold Coast Titans, doesn't either.

But fullback and new captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck was pretty impressive as we won 26-6, running who knows how many metres, breaking tackles, looking sound under the high ball and laying on tries for those around him.

We all know how we suffered when we lost him to injury last year, so please rugby league gods, cut us some slack and leave our fullbacks alone for a change would you.

The injury toll won't have pleased either camp though, the Titans ending up with two players in hospital, and the Warriors losing Ryan Hoffman to a foot strain, and Charlie Gubb hurting his neck in a tackle. The sight of Hoffman in a moon boot was less than encouraging.

With Hoffman out early, Bunty Afoa played the whole game, and looked good doing it, Albert Vete made some punishing runs, James Gavet was his usual confrontational no nonsense self, and generally speaking, the defence was a big step up from the week before.

Solomone Kata might be a bit nervous though, his hands letting him down time after time.

It was Simon Mannering who did the talking after the game, saying he was pleased with the win but still thinks we can get better.

"Both teams were pretty rusty at times, especially towards the end of that second half when it got pretty scrappy. But it was an improvement on last week. We were more consistent throughout, but there are still things we have to do better."

Warriors 26 (Isaiah Papalii, Tuimoala Lolohea, David Fusitua, James Gavet, Simon Mannering tries; Shaun Johnson 3 con) Titans 6 (Nathan Davis try, Ash Taylor con).

No Bull From Bull

Great to see Queenslander Jacob "Bull" Lillyman expressing the view that Stephen Kearney has brought a new "vibe" to the club.

Warriors fans have had their faith badly dented by some pretty average football in recent years, and the knockers, of which there are many, are never slow to

tell us we are dreaming if we think anything is going to change.

I am praying that they do. Not necessarily Premiership winning form, but certainly a side that gives what is a minimum requirement for any Kearney-coached side - 100%.

Lillyman believes Kearney can make a difference, and at the risk of repeating myself, come March 5 when the Knights arrive, he can get off to a good start by winning first up for a bloody change.

Lillyman says he's noticed a change in preseason. "There is a different feel around the place. I don't want to be making any bold predictions, but it does feel like a different team and I know everyone's keen to get out there and get stuck in."

Best of all, Lillyman told Dave Long on Stuff, while some that is down to Kearney, the players have stepped up too. "A lot of the boys have taken ownership of what's happened in the past. They want to make amends and that's really showing at training."

Nines Blame Game

It was hugely amusing to listen to all the back and forth after Duco's Dean Lonergan blamed the demise of the Auckland Nines on the Warriors.

I really like Dean. He's a straight up sort of a bloke, has never done me any harm, and I'd go so far as to say he's a good bastard, and as much as we don't like it, he has a point.

Tell me the club doing better would not make a difference to how you feel about the event.

It's contracted to Auckland next year, but we all know the NRL wants it in Australia.

You'd have to feel sorry for Duco if it does go, because they worked bloody hard to make it happen.

Brisbane, Melbourne and even Perth have been touted, but Sydney is the obvious place. That's where most of the clubs are, and a couple of thousand supporters from each and Bob's your uncle.



More on next page...

The Lowe Down

Rugby league great Graham Lowe is using his connections to help students at the Manukau Institute of Technology's School of Sport.

The free sports programme - the Certificate in Sport and Exercise Lowie Foundation Programme (level 2) - is an opportunity for league lovers to get a qualification and learn about pathways in professional league.

Graham has never forgotten what his father told him: "The ordinary can make it."

He was a like a lot of young people in South Auckland, unsure of what the future held, but those words guided him long after his dad had passed away.

Today "Lowie" says he was motivated by the talent in South Auckland to create an opportunity for those passionate about sport to have a pathway to learning about professional sport.

He understands school is not always a good match for everyone, and wanted to create an environment where students could play and learn, so students will train every day and Lowe will use his many league contacts across the NRL to enhance the learning and experiences of the students in all facets of league.

MIT lecturers will ensure students are supported in their learning and that it is related to the sport industry, so 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 sport.

Classes start on February 27, and the programme will be based at MIT Kolmar in Papatoetoe and the Otara North Campus

It's a great chance, especially for those who didn't finish all their school levels (NCEA level 2 and 3), to get an education and career pathway.

MIT, is a great place and can also support students into learning in other areas, such as building, automotive and teaching. Interested? Contact Michelle Parsons at michelle.parsons@manukau.ac.nz

Oops, Our Apologies He Tauaa

Crikey, we robbed He Tauaa Rugby League Club of its well-deserved honours last week, incorrectly saying the Rams were grassroots club of the year in Southland. That honour actually went to He Tauaa. Sorry about that guys.

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All the boys up early for the 2017 breakfast launch at Skycity this morning Bodene Thompson, Erin Clark, Charlie Gubb.



At the Vodafone warriors 2017 launch.



Former Vodafone Warriors. Ben Henry - player development manager, Jerome Ropati - community ambassador and assistant coach ISP team at the breakfast.



John Cornwell from Scott Electrical - proud business supporter of the Vodafone Warriors and Richard Ware one of his valued customers.



From the left Junior Pauga, Bunty Afoa, Ofahiki ogden, Jazz Tevaga, Nathaniel Roache.



Janine and Trevor sefont from Fleetline Canopies Henderson Auckland at the 2017 Warriors breakfast launch..



Some of the crowd at the breakfast.



Memberships Team before the Vodafone Warriors 2017 Season Launch at SKYCITY Theatre. From L-R Charlotte McKell, Georgina Temm and Shani Willemsen.



Selena Hawkins Field Producer, Breakfast TVNZ, Brodie Kane - Sports Presenter, Breakfast TVNZ, Judith Collins - National Minister.



From the left CEO Vodafone - Russell Stanners, Vodafone Warriors Board Member - Cameron George, Head of Media Change at the TAB - Louise Chapman, Assistant Coach Andrew McFadden, CEO Vodafone Warriors - Jim Doyle, Vodafone Warriors Board Member - Niki Schuck



The 2017 team poster.



'Our' 2017 Vodafone warriors Captain Roger Tuivasa-Sheck addressing the Sponsors and members at the breakfast launch.



Head coach Stephen Kearny being interviewed by Jenny May Clarkson about the upcoming 2017 season and explaining working 'above the line' at all times.



James Gavet and Shaun Johnson.



Jenny May interviewed several players at the breakfast including Kieran Foran our new recruit for 2017.



Jim Doyle THE managing director of the Vodafone addressing the audience at the 2017 breakfast launch Skycity.



Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman delighted to meet the 2017 Vodafone Warriors Captain.



My old mate Dexter with the coach. Just a note Dexter won't be here for the first game. Unbelievable!



Some of the sponsors. From left Colin the Sponsorship Manager at Canterbury, Brent Carter General Manager Sales & Customer Care at TNT, Kevin Loft Northern Regional Manager for Suzuki New Zealand. Greg Bramwell - ASICS Brand Manager





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)

Who Will Mourn The Anzac Test?



Kiwis perform the Haka following the Kiwis v Kangaroos, Brisbane, Australia on May 3, 2015. Photo www.photosport.nz

WHAT WE call the Anzac Test was born in 1997 amidst the turmoil of the Super League War and will be put out of its misery after the eighteenth match on May 5. The venue, Canberra, just happens to be the old home ground of Kangaroos coach Mal Meninga. But, more fittingly, a fixture which flared into life during a fierce internal conflagration is about to be entombed for all time at the home of Australia's national war memorial. When last played in Canberra four years ago it attracted a near capacity crowd. But there might not be too many mourners on either side of the Tasman when the Last Post is sounded.

Those who did not understand criticised it for not always being played on April 25, regardless of what day of the week the holiday might fall. The first match was, but no others. The critics mistook the Anzac Test for an Anzac Day Test. For some years the Australians even shied away from any reference to our mutual memorial day and adopted sponsors' names. In this country, at least, Anzac Test became common usage for what was essentially a mid-season international which gravitated to a Friday night in early May. In Australia it became part of a representative weekend which also involved several Pacific nations.

Those Pacific fixtures will continue this year and, apparently, into the future under the rich new NRL television deal. Fox Sports recently reported the Jillaroos and Kiwi Ferns – who are to play the curtain-raiser at Canberra on May 5 – will also extend their rivalry, as will the Junior Kangaroos and Junior Kiwis. As with everything about the NRL, that remains to be seen. What is confirmed for this year is a match between Wayne Bennett's England and Samoa in Sydney on May 6. Bennett has promised British clubs that of the dozen or so players to travel from England there will be no more than three from any one club.

Bennett is experiencing some of the club resistance towards releasing players all too familiar to New Zealand coaches. A major reason the Kangaroos have won fifteen of the seventeen Anzac Tests, many of them by convincing margins, has been the struggle the Kiwis have had fielding anything like their best team. Current coach David Kidwell has surely not forgotten how a desperate Frank Endacott called him in from Parramatta's reserve grade team in 2000 and borrowed a Kiwis track suit top and cap from another player so Kidwell could front the television cameras. The Kangaroos won that mis-match 52-0.

The Anzac Test was then parked away for three seasons when the NRL decided it would be more appropriate to stage a later mid-season Test after the State of Origin series. A jet-lagged Great Britain side was thrashed 64-10 in 2002, so the great minds across the Tasman invited the Kiwis back the following July. But NRL clubs were just as reluctant to release players in July as they had been in May and Australia won 48-6. So the Anzac Test was reinstated in 2004, disguised as the Bundaberg Rum Test and later the VB Test. But people still called it the Anzac Test and it has continued annually through to this season.

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Under Super League, the first two Anzac Tests were played home and away. The Kangaroos won the inaugural game 34-22 in Sydney and the Kiwis replied with a stunning 22-10 victory at North Harbour Stadium in 1998. Stephen Kearney missed the Test through suspension and Tony Puletua withdrew injured when poised to become New Zealand's youngest Test forward. Prop Johnny Lomax suffered a neck injury in the second minute, unleashing Terry Hermansson from the bench to play the game of his life. Ruben Wiki discovered life in the forwards for the first time when Endacott switched him from the centres.

But the NRL was never going to hide behind any of this namby-pamby home and away stuff. They have constantly hidden behind a series of television deals to demand the Kangaroos have ground advantage. The only exception was in 2012 when the Australians won 20-12 at Eden Park. Late kick-offs were timed for Australian audiences. Also gone by the board was the Super League policy of bringing a neutral referee from Britain to give the occasion more credibility. For years we have put up with NRL referees struggling to remember how to control a match without the presence of a second referee to lend a hand.

New Zealand's second victory occurred at Brisbane in 2015, in the wake of the Kiwis' Four Nations triumph the previous year. Manu Vatuvei was awarded the Charles Savory Medal (named in honour of a Kiwi who died at Gallipoli in the First World War) for his two-try performance in a 26-12 result. On that occasion the Aussies suspended young wing Dallin Watene-Zelezniak, Kearney was Kiwis head coach and Kidwell was his assistant. It was about then that rumours emerged predicting the demise of the Anzac Test and since then the NRL has used it as a promotional tool in regional centres Newcastle and Canberra.

Warriors Save Man on Fishing Trip



The boys after a hard day fishing.

A WARRIORS' PRESEASON fishing trip turned into a rescue mission after a man went missing at an Auckland beach.

The team had been fishing on a boat about a kilometre off Takapuna beach when the call came in that the 20-year-old man had been swept away from the beach.

Utility back Matt Allwood spotted the man and alerted the captain of the boat he was on, that he could see something unusual in the water...

Read the rest of the Stuff article here: <http://bit.ly/2kGqQQY>

If you wish to **subscribe** to the newsletter go to:
www.sirpeterleitch.co.nz

Going to the Vodafone Warriors Game in Hamilton on the 19th of May?

Well, I have chartered a bus that you can hitch a ride on free of charge. If you're keen email me your details at pcleitch@xtra.co.nz

Friday 19th May 2017

3pm - Depart The Falls Carpark, 22 Alderman Drive, Henderson

3:45pm - Depart Papatoetoe Train Station, Station Road, Papatoetoe (opposite Papatoetoe West School)

4pm - Depart Homai Train Station, Dalgety Drive Carpark (bus stop is inside the carpark), Manurewa

Arrival at Waikato Stadium by 6pm. Return after the match.

ITS ON IN THE TRON!

Date: Friday May 19th

Who: Mighty Vodafone Warriors v St George Illawara Dragons

Where: FMG Stadium Waikato Hamilton

Box Office: Open at FMG Stadium Waikato at 4 pm on day of game

Tickets: Ticketek.co.nz 0800ticketek – 0800 842538 – Hamilton I-site

Gates: 5.45 pm

NYC Kick Off: 5.55 pm

NRL Kick Off: 8.00 pm Vodafone Warriors v St George Illawara Dragons



Sir Peter Leitch Lounge for Vodafone Warriors vs St George Illawara in Hamilton

Price: \$120 + GST per ticket

Be entertained by the one and only Sir Peter Leitch QSM, the 19th Vodafone Warrior. Located on level three of the Brian Perry Stand, the Sir Peter Leitch Lounge gives you the opportunity to enjoy pre and post-match hospitality with covered grandstand seating to take in the match. Your ticket includes a delicious carvery and drink on arrival along with access to your own private bar.

Package includes:

- Hosted by Sir Peter Leitch – the 19th Vodafone Warrior
- Exclusive access to the Sir Peter Leitch Lounge
- Covered grandstand seating
- Buffet style carvery
- Complimentary drink on arrival and cash bar facilities
- Special guests, post-match interviews and live entertainment

IF YOUR KEEN CONTACT: Glenn Critchley - Glenn@warriors.kiwi





By Shane Hurndell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

Life Memberships for Bay Pair

Andy Cracknell and Kevin Tamati. Photo courtesy of Hawkes Bay Today

ONE BLOKE is a Kiwi legend, the other better known at provincial level. But former Kiwis prop Kevin Tamati and long-serving referee Andy Cracknell or “Sinbin Andy” as he is better known were equally as deserving of their life memberships at Rugby League Hawke’s Bay’s recent annual meeting.

Bridge Pa-born Tamati, 63, played 22 tests for the Kiwis from 1979-‘85 and during his prime regularly returned to his home province to stage coaching sessions. Before leaving the Bay last year to take up a property investment business opportunity in Australia he was RLHB chairman and referee co-ordinator.

Among his numerous honours are his induction into the New Zealand Rugby League Legends of League in 1995, being named an Auckland Rugby League Immortal and being selected in the Wellington Rugby League’s Team of the Century in 2012, the same year he was named at prop in the Petone Panthers’ Team of the Century. Tamati is perhaps best known for his sideline brawl with Kangaroos prop Greg Dowling after the pair had been sent to the sinbin by French referee Julien Rascagneres during the first test in 1985.

“When I get introduced to new people, for clarification they want to know are you THE Kevin Tamati?”

“It happened, it’s part of history, Greg and I aren’t bosom buddies but we get on with life. It hasn’t held me back in any way, shape or form. I want to be remembered as a player who was worthy of 22 test caps, not just for my stoush with Dowling,” Tamati said before his farewell function.

The former co-ordinator for Hawke’s Bay Community Action Youth and Drugs playing and coaching records will ensure he is remembered for more than that 1985 test. As a player he turned out for the Panthers, Upper Hutt, Randwick and Northcote Tigers clubs in New Zealand and the Widnes and Warrington clubs in the United Kingdom. A former New Zealand Maori player and coach, Tamati, ad coaching stints with the Salford, Chorley Borough and Whitehaven clubs in the United Kingdom.

During the 1984 season Tamati made national headlines when he played for Northcote Tigers on Saturdays and on Sundays he flew down to Wellington to play for Randwick.

Former Flaxmere Falcons backrower Cracknell, 65, has completed 37 years of continuous refereeing in the Bay and will be back for another season this year. The same year he took up the whistle in league he also started netball umpiring and he hasn’t missed a season in either code since.

In the 1990s it was common for the Paki Paki-raised Cracknell to umpire up to six netball games in a morning before heading off to control a premier or premier reserve grade game of league.

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“As I’ve got older my tolerance levels have decreased. The league players know I don’t muck around ... any sinbin offence they’re gone. Sinbin Andy is probably more applicable now than when I was in my prime,” he said with a laugh.

His interpretation of the 10-metre rule is legendary.

“I love an open game and have always had a big 10 metres. Smart players and coaches adjust ... they know I’m consistent with it,” Cracknell said.

A team leader in the freezers at Silver Fern Farms Pacific Plant at Whakatatu for the past 41 years, Cracknell, doesn’t do any gym work.

“All the heavy lifting I do in the freezers is my gym work. I don’t do any warm ups either ... just like in my playing days I come straight out of the shed and into the game.”

We couldn’t resist turning Cracknell into a selector before ending the interview. Here is his Unicorns team, a selection containing what he considered the best players in their respective positions during his days with the whistle:

Peter Cordtz, Shane Foster, Maurice Cook, Dexter Traill, Richard Broughton, Tip Heretaunga, Larry Jacobs, Len Mataira, Peter Harmer, Mark Taurima, Ngavii Pekepo, Neil O’Dowd, Willie Tiopira.

Tickets for the exciting third round battle between the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs and the New Zealand Warriors are now on sale. The match will be held at Forsyth Barr Stadium, Dunedin, on Friday 17 March – St Patrick’s Day. This is the first in-season NRL match to be held at the Stadium and as well as Kieran Foran’s first game for the Warriors. Don’t miss out, get your tickets now from www.ticketmaster.co.nz

If you would like to be part of a suite, or host in your own personal corporate suite, contact Tania Good for further details tania.good@dunedinvenues.co.nz.

ON SALE NOW

FRIDAY | 8:00PM (NZDT)

MARCH 17

WWW.TICKETMASTER.CO.NZ

FORSYTH BARR STADIUM

KIA Major Partner

Steve Anngow Rugby League Paddy's Day Dunedin Tour

From Christchurch and thinking of going to the Vodafone Warriors vs Bulldogs game in Dunedin? Then check this out. Steve has accommodation and a 40 seat bus booked. It leaves Christchurch 10am Friday from Oshea’s Marhsland Rd. Stays the night in Dunedin and returns to Christchurch Saturday. Cost is \$200pp including game ticket, accommodation and return bus trip. If you wish to join the trip email steveanngow@gmail.com

Historian to Research Rugby League in New Zealand

Compiled By Ryan Bodman

AUCKLAND RESEARCHER Ryan Bodman has been awarded the 2017 Friends of the Turnbull Library Grant of \$15,000 to assist in researching his new project, a social and cultural history of rugby league in New Zealand.

Ryan is an independent researcher, at present a contracted historian to the Waitangi Tribunal. His project arose out of his earlier research into the trade union movement, when support for the game of rugby league – introduced into New Zealand in 1907 – emerged as a recurring theme.

“In the early days rugby league faced sustained antagonism from rugby union’s governing bodies. Forced to the margins of New Zealand society, the game developed a unique culture and ethos,” he explains. “It was popular amongst similarly marginalised groups such as Irish Catholics, Kiingitanga Māori, Pacific Islanders and working-class communities, who embraced the game as a source of community identity and cultural pride”.

Ryan suggests that many aspects of the game’s social and cultural history are not well known because historical enquiries are often informed by middle-class interests. However, his project aims to explore rugby league’s unique ethos and culture, as well as the modern game’s emergence from the sporting shadows in the context of economic, social and political changes that have shaped present-day New Zealand.

In announcing the award, Rachel Underwood, President of the Friends of the Turnbull Library said: “Ryan Bodman is a hardworking, highly talented scholar whose book will explore some little-known aspects of the relationship between sport and social class from the start of the twentieth century to the present. We are extremely pleased to contribute to this major project which will be of considerable public interest. Ryan will have access to the rich and diverse collections held in the Alexander Turnbull Library, including oral history and photographic archives.”

As well sources held in the Alexander Turnbull Library, the project relies on a number of oral history interviews conducted with leaguies throughout the country, and the many historical books written on the sport to date, including the important works of John Coffey, a correspondent for the Sir Peter Leitch Club Newsletter.

If you would like to talk to Ryan about his project, you can contact him on ryankb@gmail.com. He loves to hear about people’s experiences in the game, and is always on the look-out for photos to include in the book that capture the history of the sport and the communities who made it what it is today.



Left: France versus Wellington, Rugby League, 1951, credit Alexander Turnbull Library

Right: Ryan Bodman



By Miles Davis



Blues player Steven Luatua is tackled by Chiefs players during the Blues vs Chiefs pre season Super Rugby match. Feb 2017. Photo www.photosport.nz

Players Lured to Riches Abroad

THE LURE of the black jersey is no longer powerful enough to keep all aspirants in New Zealand. Steven Luatua is the latest to be lured by the riches offered abroad and is sure to be followed by many others.

After the advent of the professional era the New Zealand Rugby Union has done a magnificent job in keeping the All Blacks at the top of the rugby tree despite operating from arguably the weakest commercial position. Whilst they have the best product they have access to the smallest market. New Zealand's four and half millions consumers is a long way behind those of its main competitors. Australia has over 23 million potential punters whilst the likes of France and England have over double that. And in professional sport numbers count more than the success of the team, which puts the AB's at a disadvantage. The number of potential fans to watch games, buy merchandise and, even more importantly, to buy sponsors' products count more than points on the scoreboard at the final whistle.

One of the main tools used by the NZRU was to decree that only players appearing in Super Rugby and provincial rugby would be eligible to be selected for the All Blacks. For the large part this tactic has been successful but as the overseas carrot grows ever larger there will be more pressure to review this stance.

Steve Hansen's reaction to Luatua's departure may be an indication that the pressure is starting to tell. Whilst it is natural for a coach to be upset by the loss of a squad member, Hansen's barb at Bristol coach Pat Lam, suggesting that as an ex-New Zealander he should be more concerned with a Kiwi player's career prospects was misplaced and a sign that the

All Blacks coach is a worried man. Firstly Lam is not an ex-New Zealander he is a Kiwi working overseas (don't forget Hansen spent a fair time enjoying the spoils offered in foreign lands). Secondly why should the prospect of continuing to represent the All Blacks be in the best interest of a player? Luatua is not guaranteed a place in the All Blacks so why should he put his future, and that of his family, in the hands of selectors rather than his own? Another factor in Luatua's departure, and that which will be considered by most Polynesian players, is their cultural ties to family. When Luatua talks about securing his family's future he is not just referring to his partner and children he is referring to his wider family who he also wishes to be uplifted by his earning potential. This is common with many Polynesians who take on a wider role in supporting their family given the chance.

It is therefore perfectly understandable that a person in that situation should make a decision that gives them the opportunity to guarantee a secure future for their family.

The NZRU, even at the risk of weakening local competitions, may eventually have to consider selecting players from overseas to play for the All Blacks. They have a limited source of income so why not get some other entity to pay the weekly wages for some of their stars as long as they can secure their release when needed.

One thing the NZRU can be assured of though is before the season is over some future star will have sprung up to replace Luatua.



By Ben Francis

Warriors Made the Right Call Naming Roger Tuivasa-Sheck Captain

*Roger Tuivasa-Sheck during a Vodafone Warriors training session.
Photo www.photosport.nz*

IKNOW IT'S only been one preseason game, but that is all I needed to see to know that Stephen Kearney made the right call naming Roger Tuivasa-Sheck as captain of the Warriors for the 2017 season.

Like many I was surprised to see Roger named captain in the first place. Personally I was expecting co-captains but it's already been proven that Tuivasa-Sheck is the right man for the job.

The 23-year old showed all the qualities of a leader during the Warriors 26-6 win over the Gold Coast Titans in Palmerston North over the weekend.

The former Sydney Rooster had a hand in the Warriors first three tries and made some crucial runs in the lead-up to those tries. Along with that, Tuivasa-Sheck made some great plays on defence and appeared to be communicating around the field well to the younger players.

Warriors veteran forward Jacob Lillyman said during the week the club made the right call naming Tuivasa-Sheck captain in his second year with the club.

"It's a great appointment with the big picture in mind in terms of the future," said Lillyman.

"He probably wasn't everybody's first choice, but you have to look at what he does on the training field and the way he prepares himself every week.

"He's a great example to everyone, especially the young guys. It will be great for his development as a player and he will be there for a long time."

Tuivasa-Sheck will be hoping to get through the year without any major injuries after tearing his ACL in round seven against the Bulldogs last season.

The Warriors will spend the next fortnight focusing on their opening match of the NRL season against the Newcastle Knights on March 5 at Mount Smart Stadium.

The Warriors have not won their first match of the season since 2009, but that was also the last time the Warriors played their season-opening match at Mount Smart.

Shaun Johnson: Across the Mekong - is a revealing, behind the scenes documentary that follows one of the NRL's biggest stars, as he and his family discover their Laotian roots and his mother's tale of escape. Filmed on location in Laos, the documentary is a reminder that family is the ultimate team. From bustling markets to Buddhist blessings, you'll see a side of Shaun that isn't on show when he laces up the boots on game day.

Date: February 27th, 8.30pm - Where: SKY Sport 2

Watch the trailer here: <http://bit.ly/2m9wmbW>





By Miles Davis

Ali's A Knockout In His New Role

*Ali Lauitiiti during a Vodafone Warriors training session. June 2016.
Photo www.photosport.nz*

ALI LAUITIITI burst on to the NRL scene with the Warriors in 1998 scoring a try on his debut against North Sydney. Four years later he was named NRL second-rower of the year and was a member of the Warriors side that made it to the Grand Final. Hard to believe that within 2 years the Warriors would be in a big slump, having lost 5 of their first 6 games, and Lauitiiti would end up becoming collateral damage. An under-pressure (and many would say erratic) CEO Mick Watson called Lauitiiti into his office. He asked him to write on a whiteboard things that were important to him in life. When Lauitiiti put family/religion above the Warriors, Watson lost the plot and essentially fired the star second-rower, even going to the lengths of having him escorted off the premises.

A player of his talent was always going to be in hot demand and it was Leeds Rhinos who won the race for the then 24 year old's signature. As a home-boy, born and bred in Auckland, it was with trepidation that Lauitiiti set off for the other side of the world with his wife for company and support. He says that his fears were ungrounded and that they both settled in very quickly with the locals adopting them and making them feel at home. He repaid them handsomely scoring 63 tries in 196 games in an 8 year stint during which the Rhinos won 4 grand finals and 2 World Club Challenges. After Leeds he moved to Wakefield Trinity Wildcats playing a further 94 games scoring 20 tries before deciding that it was time to move home to be closer to his and his wife's family. He also managed to squeeze in 19 tests for the Kiwis and 4 for Samoa.

On returning he obtained a 1 year second-tier contract with the Vodafone Warriors but with the body feeling the effects of an 18 year career there was a need to look for another career. It was a side-line chat at kid's sport that led to the vocation he is now pursuing - a Youth Worker for Fonua Ola, a government funded social services provider based in Auckland and dealing mainly with Pacific Islanders. In his new role of mentoring and supporting young Polynesians Lauitiiti can draw on his league experience seeing himself as both a coach and a team-mate. He sees himself doing this for a few years whilst also upskilling himself. He also mentioned that his wife had some exciting ventures she was planning but felt he would probably be a hindrance rather than help and would let her handle that.

Most of the kids he deals with were born after his heyday so have no recollection of his Warrior exploits or his legendary status. Their heroes are Shaun Johnson and Manu Vatuvei. Lauitiiti prefers it that way, saying that he would rather they get to know Ali the man than Ali the rugby league Legend. I have a feeling they won't be disappointed when they do.

Watch Ali score vs St Helens in Grand Final play-off 2005 @ 7min20secs of clip: <http://bit.ly/2loLEcT>

Ali scores a try (then nearly starts a fight vs Great Britain, Tri-nations 2005 @ 10min 33 seconds don't watch the rest of it as it is painful for the Kiwis):

<http://bit.ly/2l1Fpuu>

Ali says goodbye to the Leeds fans:

<http://bit.ly/2m6msaX>

The Crusaders Clash With The Brumbies Provides Plenty Of Interest In Round 1

By John Deaker



PREPARE YOURSELF for New Zealand teams to again dominate Super rugby in 2017. The Kiwi team's superior depth right across the park is likely to again have people debating how Australia get as many teams as New Zealand do in the competition, not to mention how South Africa get six!

The Highlanders v Chiefs is the standout local derby in Round One. But the match I'll take the most interest in this week is the match between traditional trans-tasman rivals the Crusaders and Brumbies. The fact that they are the most successful Super rugby teams from their respective countries makes this an appropriate clash to feature in the first week.

Both teams made magnificent starts to last year's competition but have lost some key players from their squads for 2017. The Brumbies have the bigger concern because Australia doesn't have the same depth to fill the gaps left when game-breakers like Joe Tomane have taken off overseas. David Pocock and Nemani Nadolo stand out as the most influential players these teams have lost from their ranks.

The Brumbies halves combination looks to be an area the Crusaders will be able to really expose: Joe Powell and Wharenui Hawera (from Southland) appear to be their likely 9/10 combination for this week. How Bryn Hall and Richie Mo'unga come together as a unit will also be interesting and crucial to whether the Crusaders can make the most out of the strong platform their All Black-laden pack is likely to provide.

We all got plenty of enjoyment out of watching Nemani Nadolo in Crusaders colours in recent years. He won't be round this season but I expect 35 test Wallaby Digby Ioane to be an able replacement. He's my early call for top try-scorer in the competition.

How Scott Robertson handles the role of head coach taking over from Todd Blackadder is another fascination the Crusaders first match will provide.

The competition format remains flawed but I intend to try not to let that detract from watching at least one top game of Super rugby each week through this year's Super 18. This match on Saturday night should be a good one with the Crusaders very likely to stamp their mark on the competition with a convincing victory.

Vodafone Warriors 2017 Downer NRL Auckland Nines Jersey Winners

- Renea Kahi - Feilding
- Jordon Erick - Patumahoe
- Mark Cambell - Te Atatu
- Steve Collins - Glen Eden
- Robert Mulholland - Palmerston North
- Mark Rayner - Tauranga
- Robyn Rota - Australia
- Judy Wilson - Hokitika
- Robert Thompson - Mt Eden
- Ranjit Lala - Papakura
- Ardan Lees - Auckland
- Bernie Brown - St Heliers
- Jeremy Bateman - Napier
- Gus Stowers - Papakura
- Gary Payne - Green Bay
- Peter Clifford - North Shore
- Roger Broughton - Christchurch
- Tony Kimi - Australia
- Graheme Lee - Tauranga
- Fiona Passi - Mangere East
- Charmaine Shaw - Christchurch

Congratulations winners. Your jerseys will be posted later this week. Don't forget to send us a picture of you wearing it!



Pt Chevalier and Otahuhu win at Sportsafe ARL Nines

By Auckland Rugby League

PT CHEVALIER have claimed their first Sportsafe ARL Nines Championship title, downing Hibiscus Coast 16-12 in the grand final at Stanmore Bay on Saturday.

Despite entering the competition as underdogs -with a team predominantly made up of open age restricted players- the Raiders were the surprise team to beat on Saturday, winning all but one game to secure their spot in the grand final against the Pirates.

The Raiders were first to put points on the board.

Heading in-field from the right edge, lock Chris Watkins dribbled a kick through to centre Kyle Dean who chased to score under the posts. Prop Blake James added the extras to lead 6-0.

Pt Chevalier quickly replied, mounting on attack in the middle of the park before a looming Siua Otunuku passed wide to Preston Riki who scored on the right edge.

An unsuccessful conversion kept the Raiders in front 6-4.

The Pirates scored another in quick succession, with winger Saula Solomona whose fast pace couldn't be beaten, finding an open space to score on the left edge and taking an 8-6 lead at half time.

Despite going down 14-4 in their previous encounter, Pt Chevalier were straight out the gates in the second half showcasing some good line speed and a defensively well-structured squad.

Finding some momentum, prop Siliga Kepaoa stormed through the pack before fullback Tevita Latu passed out wide. Otunuku carried the ball with forward Arden McCarthy in support to cut-in and cross over the line.

With only two minutes left on the clock, the Raiders needed to score to have any chance of winning the game.

Settling 10 metres off the line, Raiders prop Blake James showed some classy footwork to score under the sticks, converting his own try to square things up at 12 all.

But Pt Chevalier hit back with Latu dotting down field before being stopped just short of the line.

A quick play of the ball and Riki crossed for his second to seal the 16-12 victory and claiming the 2017 Sportsafe ARL Nines Championship title.

Pt Chevalier coach Zane Pocklington said he was happy with the result and how well they played the Nines format.

"It's been a great day of footy," he said.

"We've been able to see where we're at with pre-season, what we need to work on and check out the competition in both the Fox and Sharman divisions."

Pocklington admits he was impressed with the Raiders performance.

"Hibiscus Coast jumped out of nowhere and gave us a fright at the start to be honest."

"Overall, it's been an enjoyable day and we look forward to defending the Nines title next year."

Host and chairwoman of the Hibiscus Coast Rugby League Club, Karen Gibbons said the tournament was played in great spirits.

"It has been a real honour to host our fellow clubs, players, family and friends at Hibiscus today," she said.

Continued on next page...

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"Special thanks must go to the sponsors, Sportsafe and ARL for all their support in running the day."

Gibbons said she was proud of the Raiders efforts.

"I don't think they expected to make it this far in the competition," she said.

"They did a fabulous job. It was a great effort and we [Hibiscus Coast Rugby League Club and the community] are all very proud of how well they played."

Meanwhile in the plate division, Otahuhu showed they have every intention of charming the Sharman Cup competition this year, taking down Mt Albert 20-4 in the Plate grand final.

Otahuhu scored first after recovering from a loose ball and attacking the left edge.

A fast cut out pass from second rower George Vuna caught the ball just short of the line before centre Rawiri Witehira crossed to score.

It wasn't long before they crossed for another, with winger Tom Va'afusuaga splitting down the middle from dummy to score under the posts. Centre Wesley

Tauti converted to lead 10-0 at the break.

Slowly but surely Mt Albert found their feet in the contest though, after winger Mark Graham scrambled over the line from dummy half.

But further tries to Otahuhu prop Connor Purcell and another to Witehira extended their lead. Tauti converted his second to secure the 20-4 win.

Championship final

Pt Chevalier 16 (Preston Riki x2, Saula Solomona, Arden McCarthy tries) BEAT Hibiscus Coast 12 (Kyle Dean, Blake James tries; Blake James x2 goals). HT 8-6.

Plate final

Otahuhu 20 (Rawiri Witehira x2, Tom Va'afusuaga, Connor Purcell tries; Wesley Tauti x2 goals) BEAT Mt Albert 4 (Mark Graham x1 try). HT 10-0.

[Click here](#) for full results from the Sportsafe ARL Nines.

[Click here](#) to watch games from the Sportsafe ARL Nines.



Pt Chevalier celebrate first ARL Nines title



Otahuhu vs Mt Albert - ARL Nines



HAD DINNER with Vodafone Warriors Assistant Coach, former England Head Coach and Sydney Roosters Assistant Coach, Steve McNamara on Tuesday night. He is a top bloke and will be great for the club!



Daryl Batchelor Expat Butcher

By Denise Traill aka Dexter's wife

RECENTLY WE travelled with Sir Peter and Lady Janice to Sunshine Coast for the pre-season trial between the “Mighty Vodafone Warriors” and Melbourne Storm. Upon landing in Brisbane, we took a little detour to the suburb of Capalaba to visit a very special butcher shop.

“Capalaba’s Butcher Shop” is owned by Kiwi expats, Daryl and Kaz Batchelor, more importantly, Daryl is my elder brother. That’s a story in itself since we only about 15 years ago after one was adopted out at birth.

Daryl and Kaz relocated across the ditch following the 2010/2011 Christchurch earthquakes but remain proud Cantabrians which makes for interesting debate when our households talk about that other code. One topic there is unwavering consensus is support and loyalty for the “Mighty Vodafone Warriors”, particularly between Daryl and my husband Dexter. On the other hand, I have been known to get that glazed look as they debate the myriad fortunes and their solutions to fix them, which is often when I take my cue and leave the room. In putting this on paper I’ve just wondered if that is a classic ploy on their part?

Such is Daryl’s passion for rugby league, he applied to be a part of the Warrior’s Council for away members. When advised he was successful, in his own words Daryl said he was “rapt, very humbled to be part of the club”, and that pretty much sums up Daryl.

From earthquake recovery to settling into Brisbane life, I was proud to finally visit the small enclave of shops where Daryl’s butchery is located. It isn’t easy for expat Kiwis living and earning a crust across the ditch, I am always amazed at their resilience especially when Kiwis can often be considered more foe than friend, particularly with officialdom.

First impressions count, therefore my unbiased consumer eye found “Capalaba’s Butcher Shop” had immediate external presence with classic crisp black and white signage over a window full of enticing mouth-watering meats expertly cut and displayed. Inside you’re met with a classic Kiwi butcher welcome by the man himself, aptly adorned with tools of the trade, knives on the hip belt and butcher apron, only thing missing was the pencil behind the ear but that’s me probably showing my age.

A surprise visit by NZ’s most famous butcher included thorough inspection of operations and expert tutelage on how to handle sausages, say no more.

Proud sister I am, but it wasn’t just me who thought the goods offered were quality, in a family like environment which espouses hard work, cleanliness and pride, acknowledging people have choice and they choose to spend their hard earned money with them.

Daryl has just taken on an apprentice who joins the full time staff after spending the last couple of years helping out after school. Naturally, the apprentice follows league but currently supports the Rabbitohs. In his usual banter, Darryl reckons he’s young and impressionable and will work on him! When the young lad finishes his apprenticeship, Daryl will take him to the NRL grand final as reward.

“Capalaba’s Butcher Shop”, Brisbane is where to head if you want the best of fresh meat cuts and indulge in passionate debate on all issues league, actually extend that to all sporting codes with a good amount of humour and stick. Just remember to let Daryl know his sister (you know, the much younger, stunning, successful and annoying one) told you about him.



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Reader Mail



I am ready to Rock 'N' Roll got my 2017 Lounge Pass Car Park Pass Bring on Sunday March 5th Welcome Home to Mt Smart Stadium

From
Joyce Putohe



KIA ORA club members. I won a jersey through the newsletter and chose to donate it back as it was too big BUTCH heard about my offer and kindly gave me one that was my size

Billy Davis - One Happy Chappy and I love the newsletter

THANKS TO Sir Peter and the team for this fantastic prize. Totally stoked. - Phil a big warriors fan.



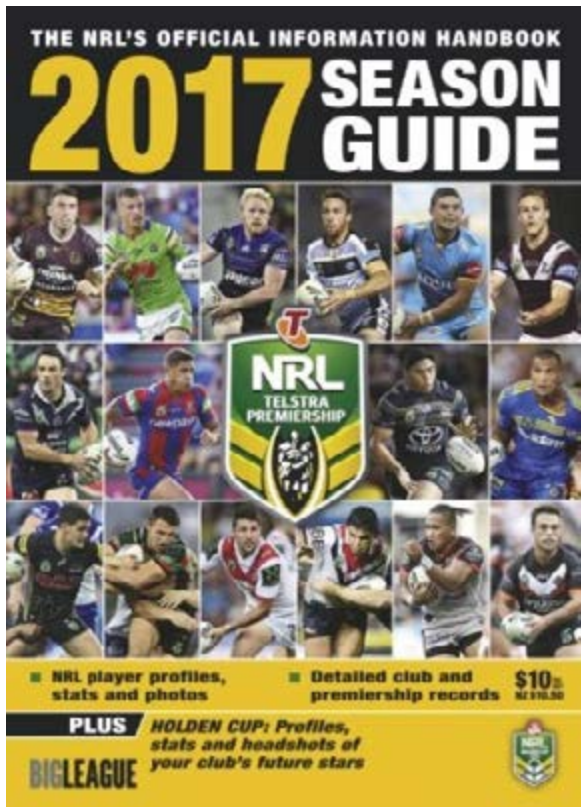
THESE TWO gentlemen share a lot more in common than just good looks and plastic surgery.

Both have suffered horrific burn injuries, Graeme (left) whilst firefighting in Taranaki and Simon (right) in a stock car accident in the Manawatu.

Pictured at the trial match Vs GC Titans at Palmerston North during the half time debrief, Simon and Graeme agree that their recovery was expedited by the kindness and love shown by Sir Peter and the Vodafone Warriors. Isn't it great to have good mates!

Chris Harrison from Mt Eden please contact the Butcher on 021936105!

You won a prize but it was returned with the wrong address and we want you to receive it!



The NRL's Official Information Handbook

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We have limited copies of the NRL season guide for sale \$10 per copy plus \$2 postage just email: pcleitch@xtra.co.nz with your details to order your copy!

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