

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

1st March 2017

Newsletter #159



Isaiah Papalii Sam Lisone Solomone Kata in the team huddle



Manu Vatuvei Solomone Kata kicking after training



Ofa Ogden Blake Ayshford



Shaun Johnson Manu Vatuvei having a laugh in the team huddle



Stephen Kearney talking To Solomone Kata

**Vodafone
Warriors Getting
Ready for the
Season Ahead!**

VODAFONE WARRIORS

2017 HOME DRAW



Rnd	TEAM	DATE	TIME	OPPOSITION	VENUE
1	NRL	Sun 5th March	4pm	Newcastle Knights	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP	Sun 5th March	1.45pm	Newcastle Knights	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Sun 5th March	11.45am	Newcastle Knights	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		11.30am		
2	NRL	Fri 10th March	8pm	Melbourne Storm	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Fri 10th March	5.45pm	Melbourne Storm	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		5.30pm		
5	NRL	Sun 2nd April	4pm	Gold Coast Titans	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP	Sun 2nd April	1.45pm	Blacktown Workers Sea Eagle	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Sun 2nd April	11.45am	Gold Coast Titans	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		11.30am		
6	NRL	Sun 9th April	4pm	Parramatta Eels	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Sun 9th April	1.45pm	Parramatta Eels	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP	Sun 9th April	11.45am	Newton Jets	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		11.30am		
9	NRL	Sun 30th April	4pm	Sydney Roosters	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Sun 30th April	1.45pm	Sydney Roosters	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP	Sun 30th April	11.45am	Wyong Roos	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		11.30am		
11	NRL	Fri 19th May	8pm	St George Illawarra Dragons	FMG Stadium
	NYC	Fri 19th May	5.45pm	St George Illawarra Dragons	FMG Stadium
	Gates		5.30pm		
12	NRL	Sat 27th May	7.30pm	Brisbane Broncos	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP	Sat 27th May	5.10pm	North Sydney Bears	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Sat 27th May	3.15pm	Brisbane Broncos	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		3.00pm		
16	NRL	Fri 23rd June	8pm	Canterbury Bulldogs	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Fri 23rd June	5.45pm	Canterbury Bulldogs	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		5.30pm		
19	NRL	Fri 14th July	8pm	Penrith Panthers	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC	Fri 14th July	5.45pm	Penrith Panthers	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates		5.30pm		
21	NRL			Cronulla Sharks	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP			Mounties	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC			Cronulla Sharks	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates				
23	NRL			Canberra Raiders	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP			Wentworthville	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC			Canberra Raiders	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates				
25	NRL			Manly Sea Eagles	Mt Smart Stadium
	ISP			Wests Tigers	Mt Smart Stadium
	NYC			Manly Sea Eagles	Mt Smart Stadium
	Gates				

It's finally here, the NRL season kicks off this Thursday night! Check out our home games for this season!



THIS SUNDAY

Kick off 4pm Mt Smart Stadium. Adults from \$15; Children from \$10

Buy now at Ticketek.co.nz/vodafonewarriors. Ticket terms and conditions, purchase conditions and transactions fees apply.



Vodafone Warriors poster available in THIS WEEKENDS Herald on Sunday



VODAFONE WARRIORS 2017

MAKORUANG, LIE SAG, HEARU PAMALL, TERIFOPIA SIPLEY, JAZZ TEBIRA, OFIRAI SODEN, BRIM CLARK, CHARLIE NICOLL, KLOVSTAD, SIBBYAFOA, JUNIOR PALUA, PEIRRE SIPLEY, ATOHANGANI, NIUT ALL-ROCK, NATHWIREL ROACHE, JAMES BELL, KEN MAUMALO, SAUNDY PUFFINBERGER, BEN SOUTHGATE, ALBERT VETE, SAMSON SAMAHANGI, JAMES GAVETT, JACOB LUTUMAI, SAM LINDSEY, RICHARD THOMPSON, ENZO DI GIUSE, ANDREW PERREA, TUMUAKA LANGRISH, JOE-JOSEPH WATA, KEVIN WATA, SHANEY JOHNSON, BRADLEY PEREPIA, DONOVAN PEAR, GUYMARA, MOUNU HAPETA

Table with player names, positions, and statistics for the Vodafone Warriors 2017 team.



Vodafone Warriors v Newcastle Knights

Sunday 5 March

Key Times and Activities:

- 11.30am - Gates, Fun Zone and Sir Peter Leitch Lounge Open
- 11.45am - NYC Kick off
- 1.45pm - ISP Kick Off
- 3.00pm - Get your photo taken down in the Harvey Norman Community Fun Zone with Vodafone Warriors players. Includes face painting and passing wall with prizes!
- 3:16pm - NRL Coin Toss
- 3:45pm - T-Shirt Cannon Time!
- 4.05pm - NRL Kick Off



Some New Faces at the Vodafone Warriors



Ben HENRY former player, Jerome Mamea - Pt Chev Pirates, Kenese Kenese - Mangere East Hawks, Jordan Pinnock - Brunner Bulls, Melino Fineanganofu - My Albert Lions, Troy Pulumaki - Mt Wellington Warriors, Joseph Vuna - Otahuhu Leopards all playing for NYC this year except Ben Henry!



3 young man in the NYC Liam Hampson - Keebra Park, Utah Ioka - Glen Ora, Nathan Newton- Pt Chev



Robert Knight, the physio for the ISP team in the New South Wales Cup, comes from a Rugby background and this is his first taste of Rugby League.

Grant Pocklington, NYC Coach for 2017. Grant and great success as a coach point Chevallier Pirates winning three Fox Memorial finals so I'm looking forward to see what he does this year with NYC team





Your Team v Newcastle Knights

by Richard Becht

VODAFONE WARRIORS head coach Stephen Kearney has today retained the same starting line-up used in the club's final trial for his debut NRL match in charge against the Newcastle Knights at Mount Smart Stadium on Sunday (4.00pm kick-off; game day sponsor: Vodafone).

Albert Vete and Charlie Gubb will again start in the front row as they did in the 26-6 win over the Gold Coast Titans in Palmerston North on February 19.

Ata Hingano is confirmed at standoff, Ken Maumalo on the left wing and Ryan Hoffman and Bunty Afoa are paired in the second row.

The match doubles as Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's first NRL outing since April 16 last year and also his first-grade debut as captain.

"Those players earned the opportunity for the first match of the season," said Kearney.

"There were a lot of good signs from them against the Titans. Having said that, there are lots of areas we need to improve on."

The NRL has instituted a new team-naming protocol this season which requires all clubs to list 21 players each Tuesday with the squad to be trimmed to 19 24 hours before the game. The final playing 17 – confirmed an hour before kick-off – must come from the 19-man group.

Kearney has included two players on the extended bench who are in line to make their NRL debuts – second rower Isaiah Papali'i (18) and utility Erin Clark (19).

Seasoned Jacob Lillyman and Sam Lisone, closing in on 50 NRL appearances, are also on the interchange along with second rower Bodene Thompson, half-back Mason Lino, prop James Gavet and centre Blake Ayshford.

The contest against the Knights marks the first time

the Vodafone Warriors have opened a season at their home ground since beating the Parramatta Eels 26-18 in 2009 (which happens to be the last time they've started a campaign with a victory).

As the season starts, veteran back rower Simon Mannering is only four matches short of topping Stacey Jones' club record 261 NRL appearances while halfback Shaun Johnson needs eight more points to top Jones' mark for most points (674).

Hoffman is 14 games away from joining the NRL's 300-game club, Tuivasa-Sheck needs nine more games to reach the 100-mark and right wing Tuimoala Lolohea plays his 49th game.

The Vodafone Warriors have an impressive recent record against Newcastle. They've won 10 of the last 11 contests at Mount Smart stretching back to 2006. If they win this one it will be the club's 249th victory overall.

The Vodafone Warriors begin their 2017 season with a triple-header on Sunday. In the first match the Vodafone Junior Warriors face the Knights in their NYC encounter (11.45am kick-off) followed by the Intrust Super Premiership match against Newcastle (1.45pm kick-off).

Vodafone Warriors

1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (C)	Interchange:
2 Tuimoala Lolohea	14 Erin Clark
3 David Fusitu'a	15 Jacob Lillyman
4 Solomon Kata	16 Sam Lisone
5 Ken Maumalo	17 Isaiah Papali'i
6 Mafoa'aeata Hingano	18 Bodene Thompson
7 Shaun Johnson	20 Mason Lino
8 Albert Vete	21 James Gavet
9 Issac Luke	22 Blake Ayshford
10 Charlie Gubb	
11 Bunty Afoa	Head Coach Stephen
12 Ryan Hoffman	Kearney
13 Simon Mannering	

This Is How They Will Finish, But It's Just A Guess

By David Kemeys

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



HERE WE go, Sunday looms and the Newcastle Knights come to town, with our first NRL season since Pete was in short trousers giving us a game we can win.

Please God.

Trying to predict the NRL is not easy, but every journalist in the land is pretty much required to give it a punt at the start of each season, so let's have a look at what my old Dave Long over at Fairfax had to say.

Now I am paraphrasing a lot of what Dave had to say, but he has a top eight of:

- 1 Sharks
- 2 Broncos
- 3 Cowboys
- 4 Warriors
- 5 Raiders
- 6 Storm
- 7 Titans
- 8 Roosters

Pretty much, he is delighted that the usual hype that begins our season, before despair kicks in, is absent this time around.

I could not agree more, I think we've all been burned once too often by that one.

I worked with Dave for a few years, and he is a good bastard, well half of that sentence anyway, but he sees, and damn it, I agree, talent across the park.

We have David Fusitu'a, RTS, Tuimoala Lolohea - in what has to be a make or break year, because I for one am sick of hearing about his potential. We have Solomone Kata, Kieran Foran, Shaun Johnson...

The worrying aspect of that is that there's not a forward's name amongst it.

But surely Simon Mannering, Isaac Luke, Bodene Thompson, Ryan Hoffman can put it together.

The worrying thing about that is there is not a prop's name amongst it.

That's where I see the challenge coming this year, because we need forwards to at least get parity, which

was seldom the case last year.

The other thing we could do with is better defence, and having abandoned the Justin Morgan "just put it down under the black dot" school of defensive tactics, surely we will get it with Stephen Kearney and Andrew McFadden on the job.

So Dave is picking the Warriors to hit the eight and maybe go further, but likes the Sharks to go back to back.

Two words for you Dave. Won't happen. Two more, Tony Williams...you're having a laugh.

There's been an array of ins and outs at every club and you'd have to say the Roosters won't be as crap as they were last year, while Manly will be (but will probably still be the Warriors bogey team - with Jonathan Wright getting a hat-trick), the Knights will struggle, and St George won't fare much better.

So by more reckoning, and I do differ from Dave, the top eight will be:

- 1 Cowboys
- 2 Storm
- 3 Broncos
- 4 Penrith
- 5 Sharks
- 6 Raiders
- 7 Warriors
- 8 Roosters

And since I've never had a problem making a complete dick of myself, I can even tell you how the rest will fare. The Knights will be last, with the Dragons keeping them company, and the Tigers flirting around there too. Manly will win a few but lose more, then the Dogs, Titans, and Eels will fight out 10 to 12, and Souths will be the unlucky club in ninth.

There, hardly any point actually playing them games if you ask me.

Keep it on file Mr Long. I'll buy you a box if you are closer than me!

More on next page...

So How Did I Get To Where I did?

Easy, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck will be a good captain, and a better player. We will finally set aside the curse of the fullback, and he will be our player of the year.

Making the indispensable Simon Mannering his vice-captain is not dumb either.

Throw in our coaching set-up, which might be a bit top heavy, but has plenty to offer.

Don't underestimate Stephen Kearney. He won't tolerate nonsense, knows he has to hit the ground running, and concentrate on his Kiwis prowess, not his Eels disaster.

Kieran Foran will add a lot more than James Leuluai, good though he was, could offer, and Ata Hingano might surprise a few too.

Also there is no Jonathan Wright to bomb try after try.

For Goodness Sake...

Did you see this week that Shaun Johnson and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck made the NRL's top 10 players in terms of popularity with women.

The list was Billy Slater, Johnathan Thurston, Matt Moylan, Sam Burgess, James Tedesco, Aaron Woods, Johnson, Greg Inglis, Tuivasa-Sheck and Brett Morris.

I know the NRL wants a bigger women's audience, but this is nonsense.

Apparently last season 47.2 million women watched league on TV, up on the 42.1 million in 2015. Women are now 37 per cent of the overall TV audience.

You're trying to tell me they watch because Shaun is cute?

Isn't it just possible women go the games and watch on TV for much the same reason as blokes?

Of course there's no need to answer that question if you come over to Mt Smart on the Waiheke ferry. To be fair if I was married to Bob or Lindsay I'd be looking for a bit of eye candy too.

Launch Underlines Determination

I got invited to the Warriors season launch but could not make it, but I was impressed with what I heard from several of our leaders.

Managing director Jim Doyle was up front about our

failures, but said the coaching set-up was the best in the NRL.

"We have been very, very hopeful in the past. We've stood here, hopeful that we have the right team, and hopeful that they would get us into the finals, and further. This year it is not about hope, it's about belief. We believe we have the right coaching staff, support staff and roster."

This weekend is going to tell us, that's for sure.

Yes, I am one of those who is getting fed up. Five seasons of misery will do that to you.

But this season has seen a remarkable lack of hype, and a quiet determination at the club.

"We want to get better every day, keep learning and keep improving," Shaun Johnson said at the launch.

That kind of talk actually worries me. I want them to be pretty bloody good from day one, and get better certainly. But all this "learning" stuff leaves me cold.

Hard Times For Big Ben

Spare a thought for Warriors front-rower Ben Matulino.

He did have a stellar year in 2016, then underwent knee surgery, only to end up battling an infection.

Big Ben did his knee during preseason training and had surgery in January.

That was likely to see him out for our first six games, but the infection means that will probably be longer.

With Matulino out, you don't need to be a genius to realise there is a spot open for a prop. Charlie Gubb any one?

The Mt Smart hero is off-contract so has all the motivation any player needs to lift his game.

And he'll have to if he wants another contract, or to entice another NRL club in for him.

In the off-season Cronulla and North Queensland both had a sniff, but the Warriors took up an option to retain him.

Gubbie got 14 appearances last season but copped seven-weeks for being a Warrior – oops, I mean a shoulder charge.

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He is a big fan favourite for his all or nothing defence and I for one want to see him make a big impact this year.

Coach Stephen Kearney is said to have been impressed by Gubb in pre-season.

Let's hope we see the Wellingtonian flying into it soon.

You Can Bet On It

So NRL chief executive Todd Greenberg wants life bans for anyone guilty of breaking betting rules.

Pretty rich when every league show gives the betting odds.

Greenberg reckons players get enough education and are aware of their responsibilities.

This all blew up of course after allegations Wests Tigers centre Tim Simona arranged bets to be placed on players he was marking.

Greenberg vowed to come down hard on anyone found in breach of the betting code.

Simona has been stood down from training and playing commitments while he is being investigated, but the NRL may cancel his registration.

It's not that hard. Here's the rule: No NRL employee, club employee, player, player manager or game offi-

cial is allowed to participate, or be directly or indirectly involved in any way, in gambling in relation to league.

Made In New Zealand

Shaun Johnson, Ata Hingano, Solomone Kata, David Fusitu'a, Manu Vatuvei, Ken Maumalo, and

Roger Tuivasa-Sheck.

Predicting teams is a fool's errand, especially with Vatuvei doubtful, but what I like about my backline is that they are all Kiwis.

That's got to be a good sign for the club.

We seem to turn out an endless supply of forwards, through our junior ranks, not so many backs.

Come Sunday against Newcastle even if Manu is ruled out, Tui Lolohea could slip in.

Blake Ayshford had a good combination with Kata last year, but was exposed on defence more than once.

Johnathan Wright has gone of course, Matt Allwood is still at the club, and will do a good job if he has to fill in somewhere, but him or Fusitu'a, not much of a choice in my book.

No big deal you say, Well the last time we had an all Kiwi backline was 14 years ago.



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Well Deserved

By Barry Ross



CONGRATULATIONS TO the two English sides for their wins over the weekend. In both cases the better side won and both Wigan and Warrington played some quality football. Obviously the two disallowed tries and the 12-7 penalty count against them did not help the Sharks against Wigan, but on the other hand, they squandered several excellent try scoring opportunities close to the Wigan line in the first 20 minutes. Coach Shane Flanagan was gracious after the 22-6 defeat saying “ they were too good for us and we were our own worst enemy. This is a fantastic stadium with fantastic supporters.”

He did make reference to the English referee, Robert Hicks, when he added, “ I will be glad to get back home to the two referee system. Tonight the 10 metres policing was poor and both sides were bewildered by some of the rulings. “

But the referee was not responsible for Cronulla’s loss. They made 16 handling errors and the defensive reading of many of their players, including centre Jack Bird, was not good.

For Wigan George Williams, 22, had a top game, while another 22 year old, winger, Joe Burgess, scored three well taken tries. Burgess played 13 matches with the Roosters then Souths in the NRL last year, scoring seven tries. Both clubs were not too interested in retaining him for this year, but on his form against Cronulla and his youth, he still has a lot to offer.

I was pleased to see 25 year old Frenchman, Morgan Escare, doing well in the match. Born in Perpignan, Escare joined Wigan for this season after four seasons in the English Super League competition with French club, the Catalan Dragons, where he scored 65 tries in his 91 matches. It is a long time since France were winning Test matches against major countries but it is great to see that they still can produce good players.

Although his Broncos were beaten 27-18 by Warrington on Saturday night, English time, Brisbane coach, Wayne Bennett, is a big fan of the concept of NRL teams regularly playing top English clubs. I agree with the Broncos coach and the more that can be done to promote our game in other parts of the world outside Australia, the better. I realise there are problems for southern hemisphere teams under the current system, but the powers that be in both Australia and England, should work on finding a satisfactory solution. The Broncos were down 20-0 after just 17 minutes against Warrington and found it tough to come back from that deficit. Now 34 years of age, former Australian, NSW State of Origin and Newcastle player, Kurt Gidley had a commanding game for Warrington from the fullback position. Gidley played 12 Tests, 12 State of Origin games and 251 NRL games for the Knights, scoring 1,226 points including 80 tries. He joined Warrington last season and finished with 250 points in his 32 games.

Immortal and Australian Team of the Century member, Bob Fulton, now 69, was born in Warrington and migrated to Wollongong, Australia with his family as a small boy. Fulton played one season with Warrington, back in 1969/70 and scored 16 tries in his 16 games.

In Sydney, South Sydney retained the Charity Shield with their 32-14 win over St. George/Illawarra on Sunday afternoon. I watched this game on TV and while the Rabbitohs did some good things, it was a dull game. On their form in this match, the Dragons have a long season in front of them. During the commentary, I heard that Kiwi and Dragons winger, Jason Nightingale, has scored 92 tries for the Dragons in his 221 NRL games. Now 30 years of age, the consistent Nightingale is the only player still with the Dragons from their 2010 Grand Final winning side. He has played 32 Tests (17 tries) for New Zealand and I hope he reaches the 100 NRL try mark before he retires. He deserves it.

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It is good that the NRL is working on team naming, in a bid to reduce problems with illegal gambling and also to help the average punter. For this season, all 16 clubs have to name a squad of 21 players on Tuesdays, consisting of 17 men selected in positions, four reserves and four others. The coach will then be allowed to reduce the number to 19 a day before kickoff, with the final 17, to be announced an hour before kickoff. There is still the chance for clubs to name a star player who has no chance of taking the field because of injury, in a bid to confuse their opponents. But the NRL will work to stop this.

The Super Rugby Union competition kicks off this Thursday night in Melbourne when the Auckland Blues take on the Rebels. The Union boys got in a week before the NRL begins.

There is plenty riding on the opening competition match between the Sharks and the Broncos at Cronulla this Thursday night. After both teams were beaten in England, the loser on Thursday will have suffered their second successive loss in a major game. It is a great first round as plenty of questions will be answered after the other seven round one games. On Friday night, will the under pressure Des Hasler steer his Bulldogs to a win over the Storm and will Robbie Farah pull out something special for Souths against the Tigers? On Saturday, Dragons coach Paul McGregor will be under the pump from the Panthers, while in North Queensland fans will want to see if the Raiders can continue their good form from 2016. In the third and last Saturday match, how will the Hayne plane fare against a Roosters outfit determined to have a good season. Newcastle has been tipped to be big improvers this year but the Warriors will be looking to knock this on the head at Mt. Smart on Sunday and in the last game of the round, Trent Barrett and his Sea Eagles will have a home ground advantage against long term rivals, Parramatta

To the right is a photo taken in September 1977. It is Canterbury's Barry Nelson and Ian Kennedy taking James "Jockey" Smith into Nowra court. Jockey Smith at the time was Australia's Public Enemy number one. They had caught him a few days earlier.

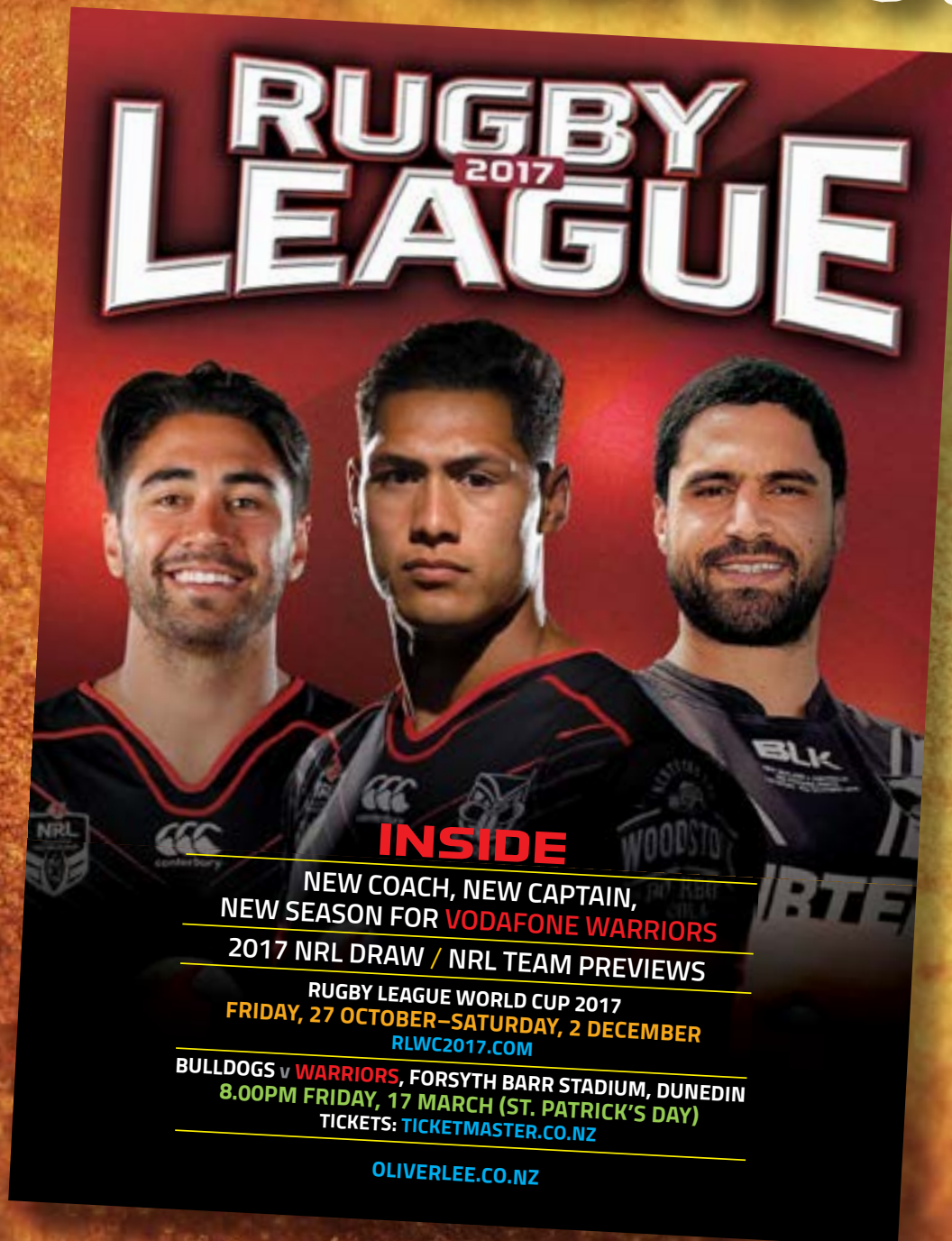
From left to right, Ian Kennedy, Jockey Smith in handcuffs, Barry Nelson, a uniformed local Nowra policeman.



OUR AUSSIE correspondent Barry Ross is a grandfather for the first time at the ripe old age of 75. His older son Nathan and Wife Zoe had their first child, Charlie William Ross, on the 7th of February. Welcome to the grandparent's club Barry, it's fantastic mate. – Sir Peter Leitch



RUGBY LEAGUE 2017



RUGBY LEAGUE 2017

INSIDE

NEW COACH, NEW CAPTAIN,
NEW SEASON FOR **VODAFONE WARRIORS**

2017 NRL DRAW / NRL TEAM PREVIEWS

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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)

Those Were the Days



The press box and goal posts are all that stand after the post-earthquake demolition of Rugby League Park. The photo is taken from the No.2 stand side, facing the ruins of the main stand. Photo Carol Crozier

IT WAS an amazing occasion, the night that Bruce Springsteen came to the venue in Addington previously known as the Show Grounds and Rugby League Park. The Boss drew more than 30,000 fans, a record which far surpassed any attracted when rugby league was the winter tenant over a 60-year period or by rugby union since it became Christchurch's temporary stadium after the 2010-11 earthquakes. Of course, the concertgoers could stand shoulder to shoulder on the field itself, a luxury not afforded the footy followers. Those of us sitting in the grandstands risked a stiff neck from looking sideways and simultaneously nodding with the music for three hours.

I have been to some of the few rugby league games – club grand finals and representative fixtures – played at what is now called AMI Stadium (the same name as forlorn, abandoned old Lancaster Park down the other end of Moorhouse Avenue). But I have heard of leaguies who won't go there while it is tainted by rugby union occupation. That's a shame because they will never get to return. Even before the Show Grounds were wrecked by the quakes the Christchurch City Council had tried to renege on a legal lease that extended through to 2038 and evict the Canterbury Rugby League to sell off the valuable property.

There is no way the ground will be given back, despite the lease, when, or if, the government and city council burden their tax and rate payers with the half billion dollar "sports" stadium demanded by the New Zealand Rugby Union or, horror of horrors, the All Blacks will never play meaningful opposition in the city again. Rugby league's new home is to be part of a multi-sports complex still on the drawing board. I understand the plan it includes a grandstand capable of sheltering a few hundred people on a typically cold and wet mid-winter day. That is the rather bleak future, but probably better than the current nothing.

Sitting next to me at the Springsteen concert was a recent arrival in Christchurch from Surrey in southern England. It was his first time at the venue and he asked me if I had been there before. I gave him a brief rundown of its history before Springsteen swung into action. A phone call from Hornby stalwart Jack Newson the next day brought home to me how much long-term rugby league fans in Christchurch miss their old stamping ground. Before his time and mine it had been used for the first-ever rugby league games in Canterbury in 1912 and was the CRL headquarters from 1951.

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Having been born and raised in Greymouth, I subscribe to the mantra that “once a Coaster, always a Coaster”. But I admit the Show Grounds, for all the faults, was special to me too. I first played there for a West Coast schoolboy team against a Canterbury side which included Frank Endacott as a curtain-raiser to the 1958 inter-island game. Along with thousands of others I left a measure of sweat and blood in the turf before hanging up the boots when the other Boss (my sports editor, not Springsteen) convinced me I would regret it all my life if an injury cost me a tour as New Zealand Press Association representative with the 1971 Kiwis to Britain and France.

As Jack Newson reminded me, the Show Grounds were the centre of the Canterbury rugby league universe when all eight premier teams played on the two playing fields every week. Anyone and everyone associated with the game could be found there. It was a journalists’ dream, for club football was important to the daily newspapers in that era. The ground was then owned by the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association but rugby league folk invested a small fortune erecting two grandstands to replace ancient wooden structures. Only Auckland’s iconic Carlaw Park hosted more international matches.

New Zealand won Tests against Australia, Great Britain and France. South Island beat the Kangaroos. Canterbury had wins over Great Britain and France. There were many great club rivalries and grand finals. There were legends such as Atkinson, Blanchard and Haig in the 1950s, Cooke, Bond and Irvine in the 1960s, Brereton, Broadhurst and Greengrass in the 1970s, Shelford, Todd and Wallace in the 1980s, Edwards, Pongia and Stuart in the 1990s. Arguably the greatest day was in 1993 when Endacott coached and Mark Nixon captained Canterbury to a stunning 36-12 provincial championship victory over an Auckland team stacked with professionals returning from Britain.

Its demise began when the A and P Association swapped land with the city council and moved. The council was a lax landlord, ignoring basic maintenance as it became increasingly aware of the land’s commercial value. At a time when the council spent millions at Lancaster Park, the CRL was waiting for a fence to enclose the playing area and carpark sealing to keep the dust down. When the council came up with its 2008 sports venue plan there was no provision for rugby league at all. Endacott led a successful fight to save the renamed Rugby League Park but the earthquakes later did the council’s dirty work for them. The grandstands survived the quakes, so the council and government had them knocked down to deliver rugby union a temporary stadium. It was a case of robbing the poor relation to pay the favoured son.

The Show Grounds could be flint hard in autumn, with the risk of infection from the animals which paraded at the annual show, or a mud heap in winter. But they were our infections and it was our mud heap until improved drainage provided players with a veritable carpet. There was never a real press box. We operated from an old Secretary’s Stand, then an ageing wooden stand, and finally from the A and P judges’ box. But, as Jack Newson reminded me, we had the good times, something current and future generations – let alone recent arrivals from Surrey -- will never know. It would have taken me longer a Springsteen concert to have explained it all to him.

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Back on the Roller-Coaster

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)



IT HAS become a media cliché that supporting the Warriors is akin to being on a roller-coaster. Unfortunately, the club's fans are all too well aware that they have not been soaring very high at all in recent years and that there have been far too many lows. Some have even feared the car might leave the rails altogether. But here we are again, strapped in to our seats and full of anticipation on the cusp of another NRL season.

Just about every Warriors campaign opens with at least one good reason for the supporters to be excited about the months ahead and this one is no exception. In 2017 the club has a new head coach (Stephen Kearney), a stronger support staff (including former England head coach Steve McNamara), a new captain (full-back Roger Tuivasa-Sheck) and the prospect of backroom boss Jim Doyle having made the buy of the season (stand-off half Kieran Foran).

All of them have been on their own personal career roller-coasters in recent years. Kearney bounced back from a torrid time with troubled Parramatta to lead the Kiwis to a succession of international triumphs. McNamara was dumped by his home nation after winning a 2015 home Test series against Kearney and the Kiwis. RTS's first season at Mount Smart was blighted by injury. Foran has clambered over numerous hurdles to return to the field.

We must keep everything in perspective and also look at how others view their prospects. I doubt you will find a New Zealand scribe who does not expect the club to be involved in the play-offs, and some have the Warriors placed in their top four. Contrast that with a poll of 16 "experts" – writers and former players – in the Sydney Daily Telegraph. Only seven of them believe the Warriors will make the top eight, and no-one had them rising higher than sixth.

The general rule is that a club must finish in the top four to have a realistic chance of winning the Grand Final on the first Sunday of October. A confident opening over the first six rounds (i.e. one quarter of the competition) takes a team a long way towards achieving that. It is an age since the Warriors have gotten out of the blocks well enough to be in contention at even that early stage of a season. The 2011 Grand Final seems to have been a long time ago.

But the draw over the first six rounds is favourable. The Warriors start at home against the wooden spoon holder, Newcastle Knights, on Sunday afternoon and then take on 2016 losing grand finalist Melbourne Storm, also at Mount Smart. The Canterbury Bulldogs conceded home ground advantage by moving their round-three game to Dunedin. The Warriors then play struggling St George-Illawarra in Sydney rather than the dreaded Wollongong before returning home for clashes with the Gold Coast Titans and Parramatta Eels.

Now I'm getting a little excited! But remember only 12 months ago we thought a first-up encounter with Wests Tigers would be a doddle, even in Campbelltown? How did we feel when the Tigers strolled off at half-time to a standing ovation and a 28-4 lead? This is truly one of the few sports competitions where the old adage about "any side can beat any other side on the day" keeps on recurring. The much-maligned Knights still had the full backing of a faithful Newcastle public during last year's horror run and will arrive with attitude.

The New Zealand TAB is not always an accurate guide to premiership prospects because it is overly wary of the Warriors being a one-country team. But the punters have astutely moved the Penrith Panthers from the sixth line to become favourites at \$7, just ahead of the Storm (\$7.50), Brisbane Broncos and North Queensland Cowboys (both \$8) and Canberra Raiders (\$9). The Warriors and Sydney Roosters are now equal sixth at \$10, clear of the champion Cronulla Sharks and South Sydney Rabbitohs (both \$15). You can virtually write your own ticket for the Knights and Dragons, which is just one reason why the Warriors must beat them both convincingly.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

That encouraging pre-season victory over the Titans at Palmerston North was tempered by the weakness of an injury-buffed opposition. However, there was much to be admired in the performances of the younger forwards and stand-off Ata Hingano, who has first crack at the number six jersey while Foran is undergoing an inexplicable two-match stand-down. While Simon Mannering can be relied upon to give his all, the in-house challenges will surely spark some of the other senior forwards into more action than we saw for much of last season.

Warriors supporters have waited too long to see their team in September football, and are now becoming just a little anxious about whether they will ever experience a lap of honour on Grand Final Day. They looked on as the reborn Rabbitohs won in 2014, the Cowboys rode home with the trophy in 2015 and the Sharks ended their excruciating 50-year wait in 2016. That leaves only the Titans (who entered the competition in 2007) and Warriors (1995) without a title, though the Eels have not won since 1986 and the Raiders last celebrated when Ruben Wiki was a rookie centre in 1994.

Waiau Needs Your Help

By Verdon Kelliher



WAIAU AND the surrounding rural district suffered badly as a consequence of the November 2016 7.8 earthquake. The small North Canterbury town with a population of approx. 250, was at the epi center of the quake which tragically took the life of one local woman.

Much of the Waiau community infrastructure was badly damaged. This includes the rugby, golf, tennis, netball and bowling clubs. The local Scout Den, play-center, historic church and cob cottage museum are all red stickered and the only hotel was destroyed.

In total Waiau had 39 buildings red stickered and to give a comparison, Kaikoura which has a population of 3,550, had 34. Many rural farms and families are now facing big challenges as they try to rebuild their

lives and businesses.

The community chose to fundraise for the pool first mostly because the village is surrounded by irrigation water races and a fast flowing river which means the kids need to be able to swim. The locals have raised \$139,000 so far but they have a long way to go to get the \$500,000 they need.

Your support no matter what the size, will be greatly appreciated

You can donate via <https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/waiauschoolpool>

You can also bid on a charity auction for two tickets and lounge passes to a Warriors game: <http://bit.ly/2lttF42>

Hazel McGregor RIP

By John Coffey QSM

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



THE RUGBY league world was saddened by the death last Saturday of Hazel McGregor, aged 92. Her immediate family has been heavily involved in the game in Auckland for more than 70 years, though the name can be traced back an entire century through her husband Ron's uncle, Doug McGregor, who was an All Black wing before becoming a Kiwi in 1919.

Ron McGregor was a statesman of the game, but before that he was an outstanding centre who toured Britain and France with the 1947-48 Kiwis. A serious jaw injury, his family commitments and a burgeoning career as an accountant caused his premature retirement later in 1948. Ron immediately turned his energies towards administration and in 1949 was elected secretary of the Auckland RL.

He held that position until 1962, when he was appointed to the New Zealand Rugby League, starting a 24-year involvement with the national body. That included 17 years as president and chairman, during which he presided over many of the sport's finest achievements on and off the field. He also spent a decade as secretary of the International Board.

Hazel McGregor stood with Ron every inch of that long journey and Ron was first to acknowledge that she deserved much of the credit for the recognition he received: a Queen's Jubilee Medal in 1977, the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 1983 Queen's Honours and a Queen's Service Medal (QSM). He was also a life member of the ARL, NZRL and International Board.

Their son Cameron is currently in his second term as Auckland Rugby League chairman, having been re-elected in 2016 after previously serving for 12 years through to 2013. Like his father, Cameron is a chartered accountant who has experienced the game as a player, administrator and in its governance. He is also chairman of the Carlaw Heritage Trust. Cameron was awarded an MNZM (Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit) in 2013 for his services to rugby league.

A service for Hazel will be held at All Saints Chapel, Purewa Cemetery, in Meadowbank on Saturday, March 4, at 10am.

McGREGOR,
Hazel Elizabeth.
Died peacefully on 25 February 2017, aged 92. Dearly loved wife of the late Ron. Loved mother and mother-in-law of Karen and John, and Cameron and Colleen. Nana to Jared and Rose, Shane and Vanessa, Daniel and Anne, and Kirsty and Graeme. Special Gran of Chante, Tahlia, Aston, Ariya, Beau, and Jackson. A wonderful mother, dearly loved by all, will be sadly missed. A Service for Hazel will be held at the All Saints Chapel, Purewa Cemetery, 100 St Johns Road, Meadowbank on Saturday 4th March at 10 am.

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By Shane Hurndell
Hawke's Bay Today
Sports Reporter

Te Ahu New RLHB Chairman

PPROMOTING YOUTH will be a priority for new Rugby League Hawke's Bay chairman Dion Te Ahu.

"If we can get more youth involved at 13s, 15s and 17s levels we might be able to turn our Spring season into a Winter one," Te Ahu said after he was elected last week.

The 2015 and '16 Central Vipers head coach in the national competition was referring to the fact the Bay's glamour club competition in recent years has been staged in Spring and this will again be the case this year with an August 12 start and October 14 finals day.

Te Ahu is eager to get at least two Ngati Kahungunu age group teams away to the New Zealand Maori Rangatahi tournament at Queen's Birthday Weekend. He is confident the Bay will be represented in the Rohe and Wahine divisions of the national Maori tournament in Rotorua at Labour Weekend.

With the responsibility of the chairman's job Te Ahu, 30, said he won't be doing as much hands-on coaching as he did previously but he will work on the developing of coaches. The former Hawke's Bay Unicorns co-coach said the Unicorns will again play in a Tri Series comp with Taranaki and Manawatu and this will give them an opportunity to play in a national competition.

Hawke's Bay clubs will also have the opportunity to play in a winter competition featuring composite club selections from the Bay, Taranaki and Manawatu.

A night shift team leader at McCain Foods in Hast-

ings, Te Ahu, is a former Bridge Pa club player. He also played for the Napier Tech Seals after he moved to the Bay from Auckland.

An age group league rep in Auckland, Te Ahu, also played 1st XV rugby for Orewa College alongside the likes of Shaun Johnson and Ben Te'o, who went on to play at NRL level.

"I coached Shaun when he played for our school's junior boys touch team. I tell everybody I taught him everything he knows, Te Ahu joked.

RLHB secretary Mike Tamati said he and his brother, former chairman and Kiwi legend Kevin Tamati, have been grooming Te Ahu for the chairman's job for a while.

"Dion will do a good job," Tamati said.

However he wasn't confident as Te Ahu about the chances of the Bay's main club competition switching back to winter as was the case when league was strong in the Bay in the mid 1990s.

"Netball and rugby will always be the main winter codes in the Bay but there is still a place for rugby league here," Tamati said.

The Bay's club rugby season begins on March 25 and continues until August 12. Most of the players who end up playing in the Spring league comp will have played club rugby at some level.

Joining Te Ahu and Mike Tamati on the RLHB board are the province's top referee and former Unicorns speedster Shane Foster, accounting whiz Lee Grace and long-time league administrator John "Yogi" Young.



By Miles Davis

Steve McNamara

Steve McNamara, Vodafone Warriors training session ahead of the weekends NRL Auckland Nines tournament, Photo www.photosport.nz

THIS SEASON the Vodafone Warriors have added a bit of the bulldog breed to their coaching staff with the arrival of former England coach Steve McNamara. Though only 45, McNamara brings a lifetime experience of rugby league to the table.

In a 14 year playing career he managed almost 300 appearances for Hull FC, Bradford Bulls, Wakefield Trinity Wildcats and Huddersfield Giants whilst also picking up 5 caps for Great Britain. A second-rower he managed 39 tries but also kicked over 600 goals. In the 1990/91 season he was part of the Hull FC squad that won the Premiership in England. To this day this remains Hull's sole win in this competition.

He was at Wakefield when they suffered massive financial problems and cancelled contracts of all players over the age of 24. A move which prompted the resignation of then Wakefield coach, and former Kiwi, Tony Kemp.

Upon finishing his playing career he took up a coaching securing a position with Bradford Bulls Academy and taking them to Grand Final success in his first season. In 2006 he was given the head coaches job with the senior side after the departure of Brian Noble. This appointment made him the youngest coach in England.

In 2007 he was also appointed England's assistant coach and when he ended his time at Bradford in 2010 he became England's head coach.

In 2013 he was within seconds of taking England to the World Cup final before having his heart broken by a last minute Shaun Johnson try for the Kiwis (he wasn't the only Pom who had a broken heart that day. But we forgive you Shaun).

Keen to keep developing his coaching, McNamara took up an assistant coaching position with the Sydney Roosters in time for the 2014 NRL season.

In 2016, despite having leading his England side to a series win over the Kiwis, he was replaced as England coach by Wayne Bennett. Naturally this was a bitterly disappointing event for McNamara "I was really disappointed and very frustrated, I am a very proud Englishman and really proud and privileged to coach my country. I really enjoyed the whole process of it. I was extremely disappointed but probably not too surprised. I was half ready for it. I invested so much into the team and program to get it to a stage where it was at, but you've got to move on. The disappointment was huge but I look back on that and it's been an incredible journey."

Although his family has moved back to England his focus is firmly on the NRL and his new position with the Vodafone Warriors "The time is right for the kids to get back and it's important they get their grades. From my side I've still got some things I really want to achieve over there (down-under). It's going be difficult but we can manage that".

Head coach Stephen Kearney got a close-up view of McNamara during their international duels as coaches and liked what he saw. He has no doubt that the Englishmen will add much value to the talented Vodafone Warriors coaching quartet. According to McNamara and Stacey Jones are already keeping each other on their toes with much banter permeating the training ground and club offices. It promises to be a fun season for Vodafone Warriors fans. Welcome to Auckland Steve.



By Miles Davis

Dan Vickerman

Dan Vickerman during the All Blacks v Australia Semi-Final match of the 2011 IRB Rugby World Cup. Photo www.photosport.nz

THE TRAGIC passing of Australian rugby star Dan Vickerman put the spotlight on two major issues – life after professional sport and society’s silent treatment of suicide.

The modern professional sportsman suffers more than his predecessors from lack of life experience and balance. Gone are the days when rugby, league, cricket or football stars had a life outside of sport that helped keep them on an even keel. Today’s legends are taken from school straight into the professional environment. Their every need is taken care of, they are told what to do and where and when to be. They rarely get to make decisions for themselves or learn about life in the real world. On and off the field they are idolised by the public and the media and put on a pedestal. When their careers come to an end they are quickly taken off that lofty perch and can often hit the ground with a bump.

Many professional outfits make efforts to prepare their players for life after sport but there needs to be much more done in this regard. Re-training of players, emotional support and post-career mentoring are essential to ensure that when they retire they have the best chance of adjusting to real life and being able to cope. Vickerman took greater steps than many to make sure he would make the change. He took 3 years out of international sport to study for a degree in Land Economy at Cambridge University. He knew that he had to prepare for life after the limelight was turned off but even that knowledge and the effort he put in was enough to get him through the transition.

Sport needs to make further efforts in this regard and to my mind so does the entity that makes the most out of sport – satellite television. They make fortunes out of the careers of sporting stars and have a social responsibility to take a major role in ensuring they have the best possible support after retirement. They should be leading the charge in ex-player rehabilitation and footing much of the bill for it.

In regards to suicide I am firmly of the conviction that we must talk openly about this whenever it happens and not keep quiet in a misguided attempt to reduce such incidents. Does a person who is contemplating suicide really need the example of others to convince them to take that final, tragic step? Of course not. What they need is to have reinforcement of the fact that they are not alone in their struggle. That many people suffer from that awful black dog that leads them to the brink. They need to know that there is always hope and that the world is there to listen to their problems, understand them and help them through it.

Keeping quiet is simply not working. It is time to talk openly about it and hopefully create an environment where those who are driven to suicidal thoughts feel comfortable enough to open up and seek help and support. It won’t work for everyone but it sure as hell will be more effective than staying quiet and pretending the issue does not exist.



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

By John Holloway

GET YA Warrior Faithful gears on season 2017 is underway. Before I go any further I must sadly report that the TIPPING COMP is not a runner this year due to time constraints resulting from the Tuesday deadline for the newsletter being shortened by a day to the Monday of each week. Just not enough time to organise picks from the various punters and prepare the spreadsheet let alone write up the column around games that only completed the day before...bugger, them's the breaks. However rather than sulk in the stands I will try a comment or two about key matches and forecasting a few winners. So here we go. It's a bit of an ask writing something different to the other guys in the newsletter especially as I don't have a clue what they are saying till I get the email like everyone else but that's the way the choccy wheaten crumbles mate.

Firstly, I'll give ya the Tip: This week I like the BRONCOS/STORM/RABBITS/PANTHERS/COWBOYS/ROOSTERS/WARRIORS/EELS. Stick the house on it! ...and for a look into the future...

1. Sharks will not repeat. The loss of key components Mickey the Grub Ennis and Benny "now you see him now you don't" Barba will be telling.
2. Manly likewise will miss old heads Snake Stewart, Captain Lyon, Steve Matai and up and comers Buhrer and Parcell. Storm standoff Blake Green, DCE and the Trbojevic kids will help but Uate won't.
3. The Storm will be the Storm as always there or thereabouts. Bellyache Bellamy the master coach and Stainless Smith the Master captain.
4. The Bulldogs will have less bite and Desperate Dessy will probably jump out the coaches box window.
5. The Maroons will stick it up the Blues again. Although if Daley carries through with the younger brigade them he might pinch a match.
6. Thurston will show signs of wear but still be better than most. Kiwi (or Aussie) prospect Kaylan Ponga is the big deal but a little out of -favour with his Knights switch next year. The Cowboys just shy of Octobers Big Day out.
7. The Panthers will scare the pants off most. A tough and talented maturing forward pack and a big arsenal out back. Top 4 and maybe more
8. The Broncos will come out bucking. Milford will throw off the shackles of an ordinary 2016, Rocky Roberts will screw up, Boyd will steady the ship but will it be enough? Not quite.
9. 9. The Roosters will crow again in 2017. Pearce will be a good boy, Latrelle Mitchell will develop further and the big backline will shine. Top 4 hitter.
10. St George drooping Dragons a no show and could pip the Knackerless Knights for the spoon.
- Mary McGregor will be keeping an eye on the Sits vacant column.
11. Did the Raiders peak last year? I think not, they will be a year older which will improve their young guns. When Croker gets back they will be Top 4 and threatening.
12. Souths will be better for Farrah. Starting without Reynolds will hurt but they look more settled this year. If GI fronts more they could finish around 6th and threaten.
13. The Titans will not have the surprise element this year. A few good names on the roster but a few flakeys as well, off the pace.
14. The Tigers will beat anybody on a good day. Woods has the dressing room now Farrahs a goner. Tedesco can dance, The halves can run rampant they will make the 8 just....maybe.
15. The Eels will be a big mover in 2017 on the back of the very talented Corey Norman. Hard Forwards, fast backs keep an eye on this mob.
16. King Kearney rules the Warrior waves. TVSheck will set the tone, Foran will flourish, Johnson will unleash, Fusitua will dazzle, Kata will Kill em, Luke will return to form, Mannering will stand tall as usual, the young gun forwards will advance and the mighty Warriors will give us heaps of opportunities to smile in 2017. You read it here first.... Kia kaha... Brothers and Sisters of the fortress of the Faithfull!!!!



Toronto Wolfpack Create History

By Ben Francis



THE TORONTO Wolfpack have created history by winning their first-ever game, beating amateur side Siddal 14-6 in the third round of the Challenge Cup in Halifax.

Toronto, the worlds first transatlantic sports team had to dig deep to secure victory in horrid conditions.

The hosts scored first through a penalty goal, but the Wolfpack responded shortly after when USA Eagles captain Ryan Burroughs scored the teams first ever try as they took a 4-2 lead into the break.

Siddal respond early in the second half to lead once again as George Ambler pounced on a grubber to go up 6-4.

Late tries from Greg Worthington and Adam Sidlow secured the win for Toronto.

Former Parramatta Eels fan-favourite Fuifui Moimoi was sent off late in the game for a dangerous tackle.

The Wolfpack begin the Kingstone Press League 1 season next week when they face the London Skolars. Despite the season beginning shortly, Toronto won't be playing in Canada until May.

They will be playing their first matches in England, followed with five matches in Canada to cut down costs. The owners are covering all the expenses for away teams traveling to Canada.

Former Leigh head coach Paul Rowley is in charge of the side, while their director of rugby is former Great Britain, Bradford Bulls and Wigan Warriors coach Brian Noble.

They have a goal to be in the Super League in the next five seasons.



STADIUM TOUR



Anyone coming from OUT OF TOWN (OR FROM IN TOWN!) TO THIS Sunday's game at Mt Smart & WANTS TO DO a TOUR OF THE STADIUM, come TO THE BACK OF THE West Stand (SOUTHERN END) & meet BY THE LIFT at 12.30pm. SIR PETER WILL TAKE THE TOUR and we may even meet & have a chat WITH Jim DOYLE, CEO OF THE MIGHTY Vodafone WARRIORS.



By John Deaker

Foran Remains the Key Change for 2017

AS I look ahead to the Warriors' season it's still hard to ignore the fact that Kieran Foran remains the key to the Warriors becoming a genuine contender to win the NRL in 2017. Yes, without Foran other changes like Stephen Kearney coming on board and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's return to the field could have made a significant difference and helped to get the Warriors back playing finals football. But Foran's likely return in Round 3 (now that the NRL have approved his contract) remains by far the biggest change from the past that could make the team in 2017 a realistic chance of winning the NRL for the first time in the club's history.

Even if he's not near his best form, Foran will still provide the structure and direction that the Warriors have lacked in recent years. Enabling Shaun Johnson to play a less-structured role that allows his X-factor to shine will be one of the greatest attributes that Foran will bring to the team. His ability to bring out the best in other people will also be crucial – that's what great players do (especially great halves like Foran), they make the players around them play better.

Getting back playing could also be great for Kieran Foran's rehabilitation from the many personal issues he's had. Rugby league is the thing that has bought him confidence and made him the happiest growing up. If he can bring the consistency to the Warriors' performances that he is capable of doing then I expect the local fans to fall in love with the man who has probably never been appreciated by main-stream sports fans in New Zealand for the great player that he is.

Re-injuring his shoulder (that he had operated on last year) would be as much of a concern for me as Foran 're-injuring' himself mentally. He's never been backward about throwing himself at players much bigger than him and getting through particularly the first few matches injury-free will be a relief to him and the club's management.

Off the field I trust Jim Doyle to have the processes in place to keep Foran mentally fit. Doyle's efforts to get Foran to the Warriors probably won't be fully appreciated even if Foran becomes the key to turning the Warriors fortunes around. Doyle has done the hard yards but his initiative to get Foran this far shows he'll also have the awareness that staying on top of Foran's mental fitness every day will be just as important now.

It will be strange watching the Warriors kick off the season without the Foran 'missing link' this weekend. Fortunately the players all have points to prove and take on a Newcastle team ripe for the picking so a 'Foran-less' side should be able to start the season with a win at home this Sunday.



By Richard Becht



Big Screen Makes a Big Scene

VODAFONE WARRIORS members and fans: Stand by for a visual feast when you arrive at Mount Smart Stadium for the club's NRL season-opening game day this Sunday.

There before your eyes you'll see the stadium's giant new big screen dominating the landscape at the northern end of the venue.

How big? Well it's comfortably the biggest high definition LED mega-screen in New Zealand and one of the biggest in the whole of Australia.

It promises to take the game day experience to a completely new visual level when the Vodafone Warriors kick off their 23rd NRL campaign against Newcastle this Sunday (4.00pm kick-off).

Lifted into position atop two huge pillars, the screen was successfully installed and tested on schedule in January.

At 212 square metres it's almost five times the size of the screens previously in use at Mount Smart Stadium; it measures 11 metres by 19 metres and will be used for a range of game day purposes including high-definition live action and replays.

The viewing experience at Mount Smart Stadium will provide a whole new ball game of its own. But you have to be at Mt Smart to experience it

All Over The World...

WE EVEN go international. I had a note from Gary Hankinson, who lives in England, last week.

He wrote to thank us for the newsletter, calling it a great read, and saying he particularly enjoyed the story on Ali, and the previous week's news on Graeme West, who he calls a "true Wigan legend".

Gary loves the newsletter and is hanging out for the start of the season.

The lucky bugger also told me he was off to Spain for a bit of a break with his lovely partner Paula, so his was getting even better.

Gary and Paula have finalised their plans for the RLWC2017, so I'm looking forward to hearing from him again with his itinerary.

- Sir Peter Leitch



Phil Doublet - The Day the Spire Fell

You may not have heard of Phil Doublet, but for those in Country Music circles in Australia & New Zealand he is one of the most respected of musicians. Synonymous with Luke O'Shea, as an integral member of his band 'Medicine Wheel' for more than a decade, Phil has graced the stage with Luke at the Golden Guitars in Australia, and has been part of the backing bands for many international artists on their visits down under as one of Australia and New Zealand's most prolific and finest of lead guitarists.

Phil is also an amazing songwriter with two independent albums to his name 'Stone & Wood' and his most recent album 'Endless Highway'. Phil is now making his way forth as a recording artist in his own right.

This week on the 22nd of February marks 6 years since the big Canterbury earthquake that claimed the lives of 185 people, seriously injured hundreds more and destroyed the Garden City of Christchurch. Phil and his family were in Canterbury that day and as many of us did, lost friends and love ones. From this experience Phil penned this very special song and the students of Canterbury film school assisted by creating this video that truly captures the full emotion of both the song and of the event. Out of respect for those who lost their lives, were injured and experienced the loss of the city, and in honour of the stoic attitude of the Cantabrians who wish to move on and rebuild their lives and their city, Phil re-releases this single and video from "Stone & Wood"

Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/mZkV7MEu2XM>



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RLWC Trophy Goes on Tour throughout New Zealand in February

By Harley Wall

NEW ZEALANDERS were recently given another opportunity to get up close to the Paul Barrière Trophy this month, when the Rugby League World Cup trophy travelled across the North Island.

The Paul Barrière Trophy made more than forty visits across six cities in the North Island, stopping in Tauranga, Hamilton, New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Wellington.

The tour began visiting schools in Tauranga and Hamilton, receiving a warm reception from young students who were keen to learn more about Rugby League. After Hamilton, the trophy went on a whirlwind tour right around Mount Taranaki, making fifteen stops in Waitara, New Plymouth, Opunake and Hawera. In addition to visiting schools, the trophy was on display at five Rugby League Clubs who were holding musters in anticipation for a big season ahead.

Following Taranaki, the trophy headed to Palmerston North for the Warriors vs Titans Pre-season NRL. On the same weekend, Mid Central Zone ran a junior league festival alongside the Warriors game, to grow the junior grades in the Manawatu. 250+ kids were taken through a series of skills and drill before they got a chance to meet NRL stars and also take a photo with the RLWC Trophy.

The trophy headed to the Capital for its final stop on the tour. We received a beautiful powhiri from the students of Brandon Intermediate in Porirua, who performed Maori, Samoan, Tongan and Cook Island Cultural items as part of the celebrations. Newly appointed Porirua Mayor Mike Tana was also a special guest, and spoke highly of what Rugby League means to their community. He is positive that there will be plenty of support from Porirua locals for the quarterfinal in Wellington on November 18.

The trophy has now returned to Australia, but we anticipate it's return at the end of August, before the tournament commences on October 28 in Auckland. A big thank you to all the clubs, schools and volunteers who assisted with the tour. We look forward to bringing the trophy through New Zealand later this year!



Waitara East School



Porirua Mayor Mike Tana with students from Brandon Intermediate



Students from Mount Maunganui College with the RLWC Trophy

Reader Mail



THANKS FOR the great Vodafone Warriors Nines jersey I won. I think I'll sleep in it

I love it thanks.

From: Bernie Brown



I RECEIVED MY Nines jersey on Friday, I have attached a photo for you. I passed this jersey onto a friend who is also a Warriors fan and is wheelchair bound, he was so grateful it brought tears to my eyes. Thank you. I have a good feeling that this is going to be a big year for the club!

Gary Payne



Sir Peter, and team

THANK YOU so much for the Ruben Wiki jersey! What a wicked shirt to win. Photo attached.

Have a great day mate,

Kind regards, Brad Davidson

Dear Sir Peter

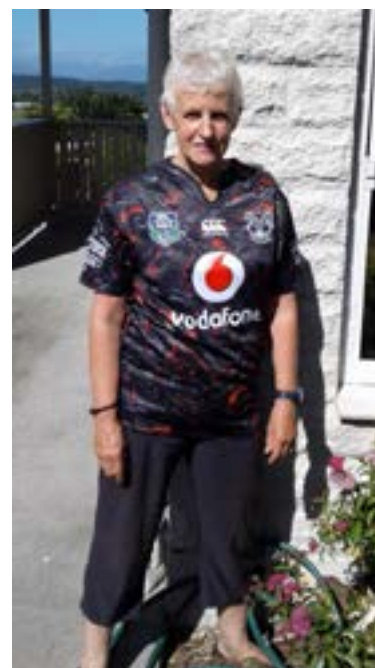
WOW – what a wonderful surprise to receive my Warriors 9s jersey!! It's a perfect fit! My grandsons, Aston & Seth are extremely envious of Nanas jersey – so much so, that they've gone and ordered one each!

We are a very staunch league family here in Hokitika, with all members of the family contributing to local & West Coast League in many roles. We sincerely appreciate the support given to our local club, Hokitika Taipos, by you Sir Peter – crikey we must owe you a feed of whitebait aye?! Keep doing what you're doing – NZ League wouldn't be the same without you!

Anyway once again – much thanks for the Nines jersey, I'll proudly wear it.

Kind regards

Judy Wilson



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THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 1 ISSUE...

NRL, HOLDEN CUP, INTRUST SUPER PREMIERSHIP, INTRUST SUPER CUP AND RON MASSEY CUP TEAM LISTS, PREVIEWS AND STATS!

INSIDE

- Our columnist **Ben Hunt** talks openly for the first time about his “agonising” decision to leave the Broncos at the end of the year for a big-money contract with the Dragons.
- **Robbie Farah** is coming up against his old club in a mouth-watering clash, but his rivalry with **Damien Cook** – who wants his NSW Origin jersey – is the real one to watch.
- Most punters are certain they’ll see **Jamal Idris** back on the field for the Wests Tigers but coach **Jason Taylor** says even crossing the stripe once will be a massive achievement for Idris, who had to put in the pre-season of his career to get fit.
- Newly minted Titans co-captain **Ryan James** knows there’s a weakness in his game and his is focused on addressing it in 2017. “I worked on disciplinary things in the pre-season. I just need to take away some of those penalties.”
- The boy from Tingha **Bevan French** comes from a long line of excellent players from the region. He talks about coming to terms with his overnight success in 2016 and finally nailing down the fullback position for the Eels.
- Frantically putting together your **NRL Fantasy** team for kick-off? NRL.com’s Lone Scout has all the ins and outs.

PLUS... We remember the **Top 8 debuts**, The Analyst runs the numbers on the **Sharks going back-to-back** and a **full NRL draw**.



ROUND 1

On sale at newsagents, supermarkets and at the ground from
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More Reader Mail



Hey Sir Peter and team

THANK YOU so much for the Jersey that I won in the recent competition.

I enjoy reading the Newsletter. We're certainly looking forward to the Season kicking off on Thursday, and it's great to have our first 2 games at home. See you at Mt Smart Stadium on Sunday!

Go the mighty Vodafone Warriors!

Yours sincerely

Ranjit Lala

Loyal Warriors Supporter



Hello Newsletter Team

Thank you!!!

My Prayers have been answered.

THIS IS me in My Ruben Wiki no8, 9's jersey that I won in your competition. I am a huge fan and admirer of Ruben's and have met him several times over the year's. I was thrilled to go see him play @ The Auckland 9's. We travelled up from Timaru in the South Island and when my husband

Peter brought his Warrior's 9's jersey at the merchandise stand, I said No, I'm going to win Ruben's jersey in THE NEWSLETTER competition, and I did. Ruben has signed it for me, thank you, thank you, I'm a lucky Mighty Vodafone Warriors and NZ Kiwi's fan.

Much Alofa's to You & Ruben

Rosa, From Timaru.

HI PETER, I would like to share this photo of the beautiful birthday cake that my daughter Lara Tauri made for my 66th birthday. The best present ever.

Regards Robbie
Matua Burns.

Let's go team Warriors



Dear Sir Peter

THANK YOU so much for the 2017 Vodafone Warriors Nines jersey.

Very excited for the 2017 season and look forward to catching up with you and other Vodafone Warriors members in the members marquee on Sunday.

Have a great week and go the mighty Vodafone Warriors.

Kind regards

Graeme Lee

DOORS OPEN AT 5PM



11.03.2017

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Relaxing on Waiheke



Bailey, Luca, Benji and Niwa who all play for the Waiheke Rams under 7s up and coming Shaun Johnson's so they say!



Jake, Baby Arani and Tui just popped in at Waiheke to catch up



A big thank you to Aaron for this fabulous piece of art he sent me as a gift it's carved out of Oamaru stone and is magnificent he can be contacted at aaronsmithdec71@gmail.com



Steve Cook the Past President of British Columbia Rugby Union was on Waiheke fishing with Sir Graham and me. Caught a fish - only problem was that it was too small and he had to throw it back. Poor Steve nearly cried.



Look who popped in to raid my beer fridge at Waiheke Miles Davis and his sons. Left is Jack who turned 16 on the day Miles (70) and Cole 14. The boys are very well mannered unlike their father.

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KNZM QSM**

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(Former Warrior & Kiwi)**

To book your table phone

Kevin Thorn 021355474 & Don Whyte 0211190268

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11.30am 12pm start	\$1000 Table of 10 Single sales available	Friday 7th April

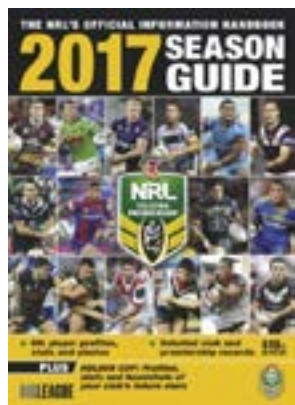
Food, beverages, auction & silent auction

50 Colombo Street



OUR MATE Dexter and the granddaughters in the UK. Dexter will be missing at the game this Sunday, instead on grandkids duty in England but will be back for the Storm game.

ONLY 10 LEFT GET IN QUICK!



The NRL's Official Information Handbook

2017 Season Guide for Sale

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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The Newsletter Team

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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