



Sir Peter Leitch's MAD BUTCHER CLUB

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Newsletter *Extra* 11 SEPT 2014

Sorry for the second Newsletter in as many days, but I thought this item would be of interest to all you League fans.

As the headline says, the Southland Rams are deserving of some glory, and a win against the Tasman Titans this weekend could be just the thing to put them at the top and see Southland rugby league shine.

You might like to send the Rams a text or email of support to show we Kiwis love battlers!

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The coach's number for a text **027 439 3275**

The Southland Rams league team beat Canterbury for the first time on Saturday and is now one win away from hosting the 2014 South Island provincial final. **Logan Savory** takes a look at Southland's quiet achievers on the sporting front and their unique pathway to success.

Gutsy Rams deserve some glory

They roll into the Collegiate Rugby Club grounds in Invercargill for training, fresh from their jobs as bricklayers, meat workers, electricians, coal miners and truck drivers.

It's a rush to transform themselves from their day jobs to slipping on the boots to get into practice mode. That alone has its challenges.

Meet the Southland Rams rugby league team.

For hooker Daniel Low, he makes the dash from his job at the Solid Energy coalmine in Ohai to make the Tuesday and Thursday night trainings in Invercargill.

It's over an hour's drive but he usually can get there by 6.15pm to make the start of training at 6.30pm. Tea is able to be slotted in on the run.

Low says it is not a chore, it is a love of his.

Even injured players Kaza Neilson and Matthew Low make that same mad dash from their respective jobs to ensure they are there to at least to support their team-mates at training.

After the rush the players – under the dimly lit lights at Collegiate – are marshalled by coach Greg Dawson.

At 7pm key player Korey Pennicott has to duck away for a bit – he has to play the role of grandfather and pick up the kids. He stresses he will be back, and



Warming up: Southland Rams players, from left, Daniel Low, Tuki Hiko and Pehi Te Whare take part in Tuesday night's training.

Photos: NICOLE JOHNSTONE/FAIRFAX NZ 629896753

sure enough he returns soon after to resume training.

The 34-year-old has a nine year-old daughter and 19-year-son, and that son himself has two kids of his own.

For Pennicott it is a struggle, but it is simply life. That everyday life is mixed in with the attempt to try and find some success for Southland rugby league and the province in general.

"By the time you finish work, you walk in the door, grab your boots and walk back out to go straight to training," Pennicott says.

There is no unity in as far as what the Rams players are wearing at training – various NRL team uniforms get a look in, along with all sorts of other types of shorts and tops.

There is no fancy team training kit – unlike the norm with many representative teams in the current sporting era.

However, unity is still a word that can be attached to the Southland Rams as a whole.

Low says it is more than a rugby league team. "We've become pretty good mates over the last couple of years, we've pretty much become a family," he says.

For Low it is literally his family.

His identical twin brother Matthew is also in the team and his mum, Cheryl, is the team manager.

The Rams are Southland sports little battlers, the little battlers who keep on giving at the moment.

There's not a whole heap of fanfare to the Rams, but bit by bit this group of mates are gaining



Man in charge: Southland Rams coach Greg Dawson keeps a close eye on training. 629896752

respect from the wider Southland sporting community.

Last year they progressed to make the South Island provincial final, before being toppled by Canterbury in the decider.

A year on and the Rams are three wins from three games in the 2014 South Island competition.

Their latest victory on Saturday, over Canterbury, was an historic one – it is believed to be the first time the Rams had ever picked up a victory over a Canterbury team.

With the 30-20 win will come another spot in the South Island final this year, but they are not all that keen on leaving it at that.

On Saturday night at Rugby Park in Invercargill they will play their final round-robin game, this one is against the

Tasman Titans. Win against the Titans and the following weekend's final will be at home in Invercargill.

For Pennicott it is a special time to be involved. He played his first game for the Rams 15 years ago as a teenager and says there is something unique about where the 2014 lot are at as they chase a home final and potentially a title.

He has watched first-hand the highs and lows of Southland rugby league over the years. He says being part of a team which beat Canterbury on Saturday was the highest of highs.

"At times over the years we would only get 10 or 12 at trainings and were lucky to even get a team. But now everyone wants to play, everyone is fighting for a position in the team. We are getting about 22 to



Moral support: Injured Rams players Kaza Neilson, left, and Matthew Low support their team-mates at training. 629896751

25 at training," Pennicott says.

The special bond it seems stems from a couple of years back.

The Rams made the 2012 South Island final but the catch was the final was in Nelson against the Tasman Titans.

Southland District Rugby League was broke, flying to Nelson wasn't an option. In fact the cost of a bus wasn't even a goer for the cash-strapped Rams.

It was slipping from their reach until the players decided they were desperate to make it and took on the road trip to Nelson in mini-vans. They tripped through the night, taking turns at driving.

At 3am they made a stop in Christchurch and took some time to bunk down on the floor of now captain Chee Turuwhenua's friends place. After a couple of hours sleep they continued the

journey through to Nelson to take on the South Island final. All up it was a 13-hour mini-van ride and following it they were delivered the heartbreak of losing 26-24.

At the time, both the mini-van ride and the result was painful but that experience has pointed the Rams in the right direction.

The group has developed a hard edge and will fight for the right results, whatever obstacles are put in front of them.

On the back of that marathon trip to Nelson, Road Safety Southland has also now come on board as a sponsor, to try help ensure the Rams are better equipped financially.

"There is now a lot of belief and a lot of heart in this team," Pennicott says, summing up where they are at at the moment. logan.savory@stl.co.nz

You can also read this article online by clicking on this link:

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/sport/10483683/Gutsy-Southland-Rams-deserve-some-glory>

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with the legendary gossip columnist David Hartnell, guaranteed this will be a night of fun and laughter, and by attending the event you will receive a signed copy of David's book!

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Ticket price includes light nibbles

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Get Blue during Blue September!

It's September and me and my mates are throwing our support behind the **Prostate Cancer Foundation's** campaign to encourage men to **Get Blue** and get checked for prostate cancer!

It's simple – if you're a bloke and you're over 40, get to your doctor for an annual prostate check. If you're over 50 then do consider having both a PSA blood test and a DRE (digital rectal examination). It doesn't hurt (I promise!) and it might save your life!

Prostate cancer kills more than 600 of us blokes each year - more than the road toll! 1 in 10 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime, and the odds go up if someone in your family has had prostate cancer. Don't let yourself be the '1'! Get tested!

The **Vodafone Warriors** are lending their support as the first 'team' of Blue Face ambassadors for Blue September, along with **Frankie Stevens, Buck Shelford, Stu Wilson, Brett McGregor, Ray Woolf, Mike Puru, Brendon Pongia, Slade McFarland, Joe Naufahu, Kerre McIvor, Tarun Mohanbhai, David Hartnell, Tony Marsh** and **Darcy Perry**. And me!

Visit www.blueseptember.co.nz to find out how to **Get Blue** and to find out more about **Bikers in Blue** motorbike ride from Pakuranga to Albany this Sunday 14 September, **Dave Hartnell's Celebrity Quiz Night** on Friday 26 September or the Auckland **'Best of the Blues'** on Saturday 27 September.

Want to win one of 2 copies (1 signed) of Ray Warren's latest book called **The VOICE**, plus one of 2 copies of Phil Gifford's book **Cadillac Dreams?? Of COURSE you do!** Simply send a stamped envelope to

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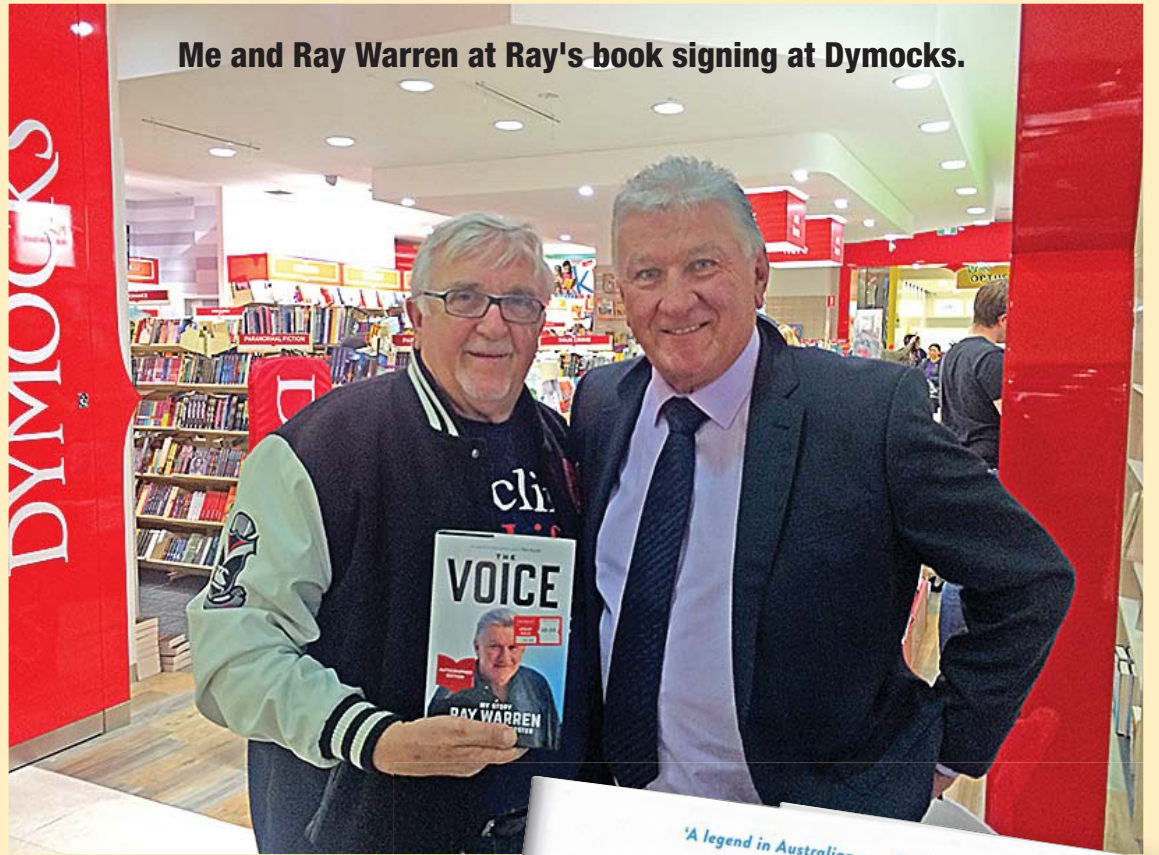
**Drawn on Friday the
19th of September, 2014.**

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AND ON THE BACK OF THE ENVELOPE
write your name and address... AND PHONE!

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I caught up with a broadcasting legend and mate Ray Warren, known as THE VOICE OF RUGBY LEAGUE and is on RADIO TRIPLE M Sydney. His nickname is RABBITS and is a top bloke. He has just put out another book, THE VOICE, and its a great read!



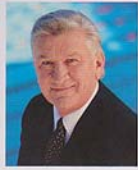
Me and Ray Warren at Ray's book signing at Dymocks.

Ray 'Rabbits' Warren is the legendary voice of Australian sports commentary. People tell him he must have drunk a bottle of scotch and smoked a packet of cigarettes every day to have the voice that he has. That's not the case – at least, not anymore ...

The son of a railway worker, Ray placed his first bet on a horse called Playboy at the age of just six, and won. A lifelong love of the track – and the punt – was born.

During his remarkable broadcasting career, which has now spanned almost five decades, Ray has called three Melbourne Cups, Commonwealth and Olympic Games swimming, and countless rugby league matches alongside his mates Fatty, Sterlo and Gus.

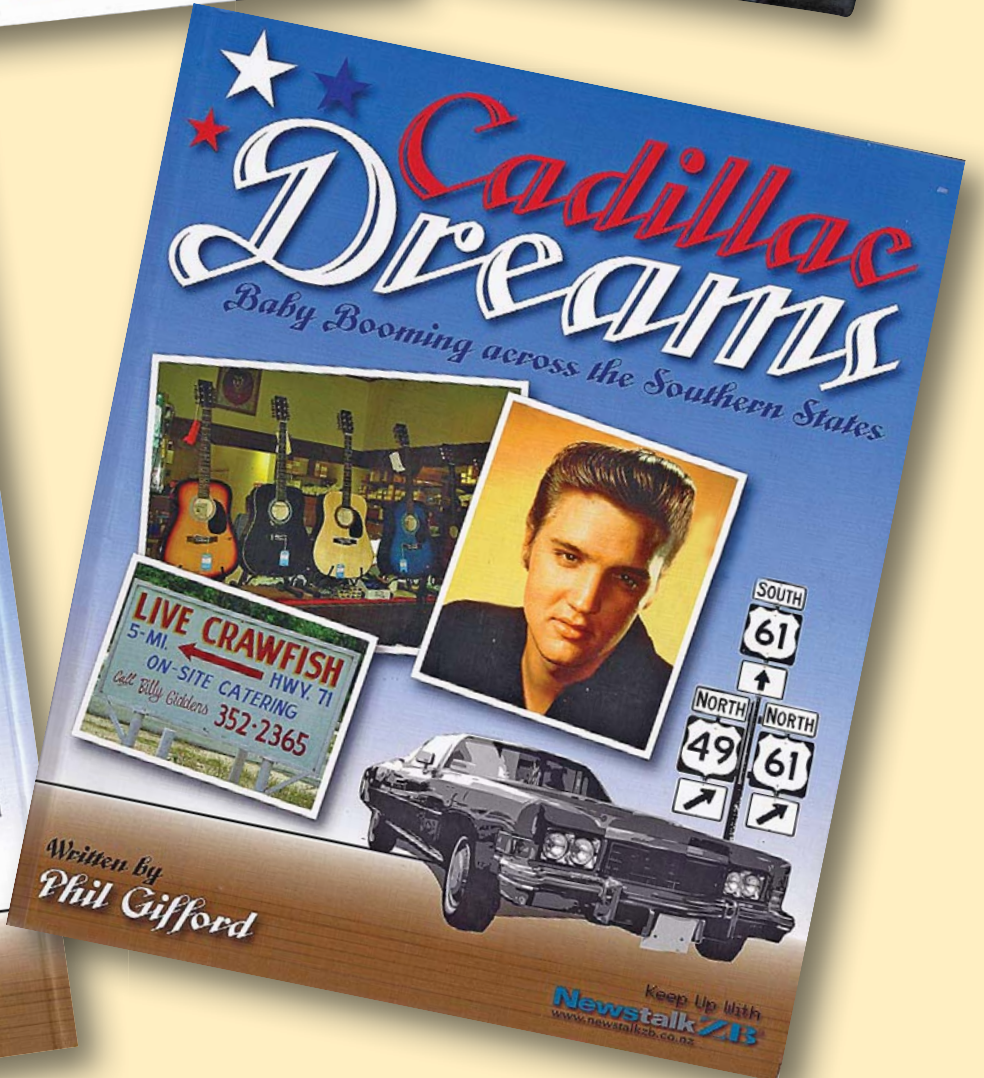
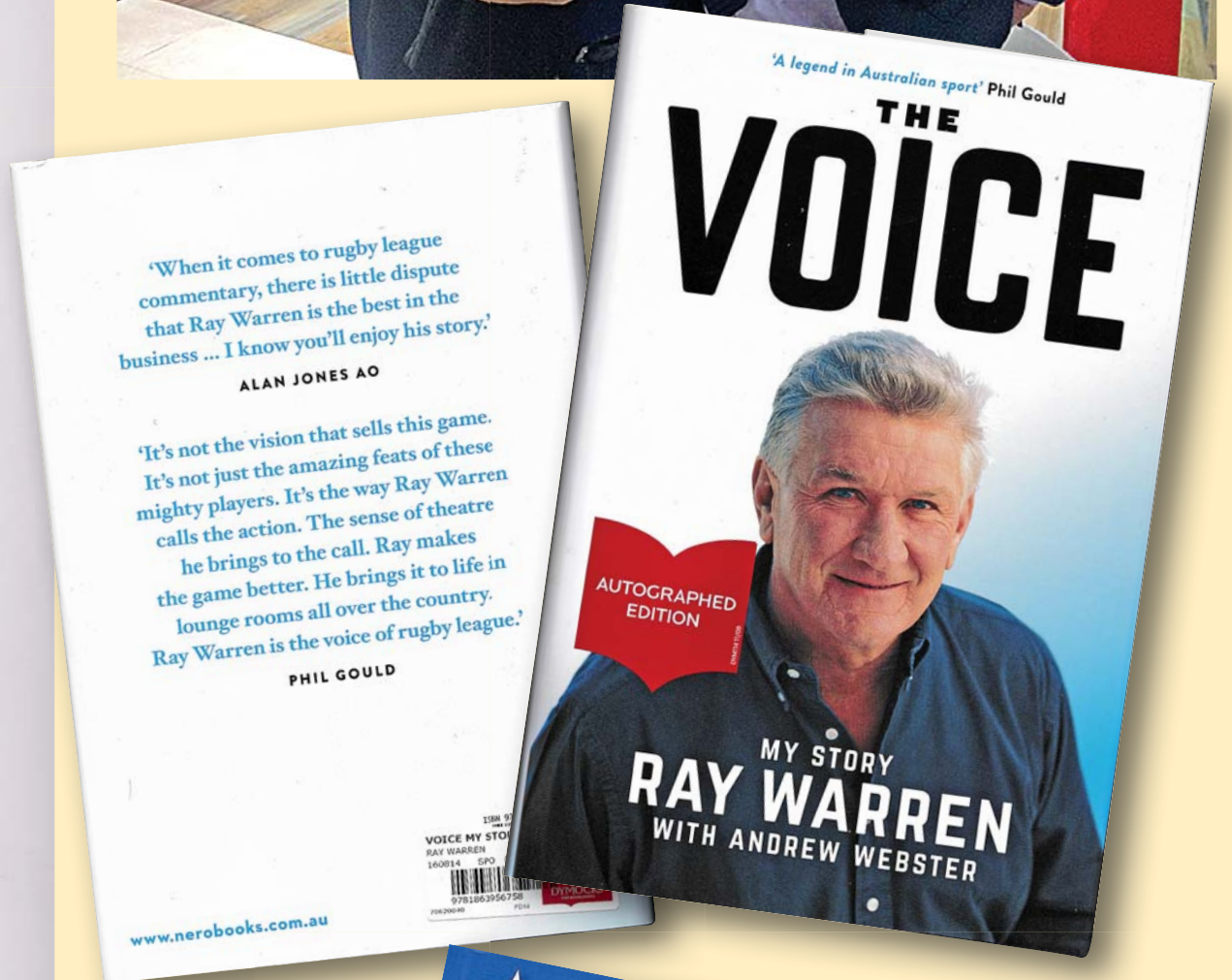
Here, for the first time, Ray reveals the man behind the microphone. He speaks of the great highs and devastating lows of his career and life in the same way he calls every sporting event: with great passion, colour and candour.



RAY WARREN is one of the most experienced sports broadcasters in Australia. The son of a railway worker, he began calling racing and rugby league in country NSW in 1966, and worked for several radio stations and Channel Ten before joining the Nine Network in 1989. In addition to being the doyen of rugby league commentators, he is 'the voice of the pool' and has broadcast Commonwealth and Olympic Games swimming, most recently at London 2012.

ANDREW WEBSTER is Chief Sports Writer for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He has written about sport – particularly rugby league – for more than 17 years at a range of publications. He has covered Kangaroo tours, summer and winter Olympic Games, and the FIFA World Cup. He also appears regularly on Channel Nine. He has written and contributed to several books, including the widely acclaimed *Supercouch: The Life and Times of Jack Gibson*.

Cover design: Peter Long
Cover and author photographs courtesy of the Nine Network





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Here are the team that help me make the newsletter each week, Between us we make the newsletter happen - and like everything it is a team effort.



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