



# Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

## Newsletter

6<sup>th</sup> August 2015

#84

**This Saturday the Vodafone Warriors take on the Sharks in Wellington**

### **C**RON- **C**ULLA **H**AULED

back a 10-0 halftime deficit to beat us 18-14 on Saturday.

Two tries from winger Valentine Holmes quickly negated our advantage and Cronulla then took the lead through a Ricky Leutele try, holding on to take the points.

At least we could celebrate Manu Vatuvei being back on the field, and he was very good throughout the night.

I did have a heart stopping moment though when Sam Tomkins threw a superb short pass to put Simon Mannering through. He was tackled short, the ball came back and Lolohea picked it up to put the ball down. It went upstairs as a 'no try' call for review. Replays seemed to indicate Mannering had pushed the ball back in contact but the video referees upheld the on-field call. It was game over.

### **Bring On The Dragons**

As I said, front rower Charlie Gubb is set for one of the highlights of his career after being named to play an NRL match in his hometown for the first time against St George in Wellington (5pm).

He was used in the New South Wales Cup side when the Voda-

fone Warriors took an NRL home game to the Capital for the first time in 2013, and again last year.

But this time the 25-year-old Wellington College old boy will be in the top grade playing in front of family and friends alongside fellow local rugby league products Simon Mannering and Ben Matulino.

Gubb will be appearing in just his sixth game this season and the 12th of an NRL career that started in 2013.

"We couldn't be more pleased for Charlie now he has the chance to play an NRL game at home," said Vodafone Warriors head coach Andrew McFadden.

"It's been great having him back in the side with the energy he gives us.

With back rowers Ryan Hoffman (calf) and Bodene Thompson (ankle) still sidelined, McFadden has made just one change to the side that lost to Cronulla, with Jonathan Wright in the centres for Konrad Hurrell.

The Vodafone Warriors' third loss on end has seen them slip to ninth.

"The energy was there against Cronulla but we need to be better defensively, in our execution and our effort," said McFadden.

"With the changes we had we were disjointed last week, which wasn't unexpected, but we're going to need big improvements in what is a huge game for us.

"We enjoy being able to play in Wellington and we've loved the way the people from around the region have supported us the last two times we've been down there."

The Vodafone Warriors go into their 23rd clash against the Dragons boasting just four wins, three of which were achieved at Mt Smart. It's eight years since they last beat them (44-16 in Auckland in 2007); the only survivors from the victory are Mannering – who scored two tries in the centres – and wing Manu Vatuvei.

Vatuvei went try-less last week but made a game-high 195 metres from 14 runs in his first match in more than a month. He remains four tries short of 150 career tries.

Vodafone Warriors: Sam Tomkins, Ken Maumalo, Jonathan Wright, Solomone Kata, Manu Vatuvei, Chad Townsend, Tui-moala Lolohea, Jacob Lillyman, Nathan Friend, Albert Vete, Ben Matulino, Simon Mannering, Sebastine Ikahihifo. Interchange: Siliva Havili, Sam Lisone, Charlie Gubb, Raymond Faitala-Mariner. Dominique Peyroux.

## NSW Side Digs Deep

Doubles from wing Saula Solomona and back rower Dominique Peyroux helped the Vodafone Warriors to a 30-28 win over Newtown on Saturday to ensure they retained a share of the competition lead in the New South Wales Cup.

Twice the Warriors had healthy leads, going out 18-0 early in the game and 30-18 in the second half only for the Jets to come back each time.

Two tries for Solomona and Peyroux's first, boosted by Mason Lino's on-target goal kicking, had the Vodafone Warriors bolting to an 18-0 lead after only 12 minutes. That lead had evaporated by halftime with former Vodafone Junior Warrior Kurt Kara grabbing a double to have it all tied up at 18-18.

Peyroux's second and another Lino conversion made it 24-18 with 30 minutes to go before captain John Palavi scored – when the Warriors were down to 12 men – to extend the lead to 12 points.

With seven minutes to play the Jets had the margin down to 28-30 leaving the Vodafone Warriors with some anxious moments as they held on for their 12th win of the season.

**Check out the photos on page:10**

### Juniors Edged Too

The Vodafone Junior Warriors' run of home losses extended to six after a tight 22-20 defeat by Cronulla. We fell just short of snatching a late match-winner, slipping a spot to sixth on the table.

The Vodafone Junior Warriors had opportunities but didn't profit until the 76th minute when Brad

Abbey scored his second try. The chance of a draw was lost when the conversion attempt from a handy angle went wide.

The race for a spot in the top four is still on. We are still just a point out of fourth.

### Wainuiomata Makes Us Welcome

What a night I had when I went over the hill to the Wainuiomata Rugby League Club. The welcome and hospitality were outstanding.

Of course Wainuiomata play the grand final of the Wellington Rugby League competition against Te Aroha Eels at Westpac Stadium on Saturday, kick off 12.30pm.

For those of you who don't know, Wainuiomata are one of the Wellington's most successful clubs and one of my fondest memories is when they once came to Carlaw Park for the final of the Lion Red Cup.

They had a big contingent of supporters up for the game and they were told in no uncertain terms that they were not to go on the field.

Well that was a waste of breath because they marched the entire length of the ground, it was – in an official capacity, terrible – and as a lover of the game, one of the most brilliant and funny things I have ever seen.

On Saturday the club has six buses booked for the final, and just quietly, they are confident of getting the job done and perhaps adding another name to the club's history, which already includes former Kiwis David Faiumu, Paul Whaitira, the Lomax brothers John and David, and even current Blues coach and All Black legend Tana Umaga.

It would be excellent to see a big crowd on hand for the local final, because it is a special day for the players involved, and running out in front of an empty stadium might well take the gloss off it.

Tickets to Saturday's match are still available from [www.warriors.kiwi](http://www.warriors.kiwi) or from Ticketek, or even the Wellington train station or the performing art centre.

### Meet The Players

Don't forget, there is a signing session at Rydges Hotel on Friday at 5pm. Wear your Warriors gear and come along and show your support. It's your chance to get up close and personal and grab a moment with one of your favourites.

### Game Details

**Box Office: 11.30am**

**Gates Open: 12.15pm**

**Wellington Rugby League Grand**

**Final: Tearoha Eels V Wainuiomata Lions - Kick Off 12.35pm**

**NYC: Vodafone Warriors V St George Dragons - Kick Off 2.40pm**

**NRL: Vodafone Warriors V St George Dragons Kick-off: 5pm**

### Vodafone Warriors Are Doing Two Public Events In Wellington

Today 6th August 12.30 – 1.15pm  
Wendy's Paraparaumu Store also  
Tonight 6th August 7.30 – 8.30pm  
Vodafone Warriors Members/Fan Function at The Residence Bar, 120 Courtenay Place, Te Aro. The Butcher will be attending.

Present at both of these events will be Ben Henry, Thomas Leuluai, Tof Siple, Jerome Ropati and Ruben Wiki.

Airport arrivals THIS Friday morning 1-50pm NZ 439 all welcome to meet the team.

# What the Boys Got Up to in Wellington

## Te Aro Primary School



Ben Henry helps out a young reader at Te Aro primary school during a visit as a part of Konica Minolta League in Libraries.



Ben Henry signs an autograph for a young fan at Te Aro primary school.



Evans Bay Intermediate showing their support with Toafofoa Siple and Thomas Leuluai.



Toafofoa Siple answering students questions at Evans Bay Intermediate.



Te Aro school shouting 'WARRIORS!' for this photo in support of this weekend's game.

## Wainui Rugby League Club



Check out this fantastic sign out at the Wainui league club rooms.



I met some massive Vodafone Warriors fans out at the Wainui-o-mata rugby league club this week.



The kids at Wainui rugby league club are big supporters of the Vodafone Warriors!

## Wainuiomata



The boys handed out rain jackets with Kids Can this afternoon.



Thomas Leuluai with the kids at Bishop Viard College.



Wainuiomata intermediate school.

# Make Sure You Watch The NRL Footy Show **Tonight**

The NRL Footy Show screens on Sky Sport 2 tonight and will feature Beau Ryan and his adventures in Wellington.

“Beau Knows Wellington featuring a special appearance from Koni. It’s a big Voice special with the Madden brothers and Delta Goodrem on the panel and the Highway of Happiness wraps up. Talk soon my friend!! - Glenny”



Make Sure You Watch The NRL Footy Show **Tonight**



## Wellington Ticket Prices



Gold (covered & uncovered)	Price	Silver (covered & uncovered)	Price
Adult	\$47	Adult	\$27
Child	\$11	Child	\$11
Family	\$102	Family	\$62

\*Includes booking fees not including credit card fees of 2.55%



# VODAFONE WARRIORS V DRAGONS

SAT 8TH AUGUST 2015\* / WESTPAC STADIUM

**This Saturday**

### CAPTAIN'S CLUB LOUNGE (LEVEL 2 LOUNGE)

Enjoy match day in style with our premier hospitality option. Located on Level 2, the Captain's Club Lounge provides you with the perfect environment in which to entertain clients and guests. With exceptional catering, player appearances and exclusive post-match entertainment the Captain's Club Lounge offers the best of Vodafone Warriors hospitality.

#### Package includes:

- Reserved table for 10 with premium match-day seating;
- Hospitality for 1.5 hours pre-match, during the match and 1 hour post-match;
- Four course menu including entrée, buffet main, dessert and cheeseboard;
- A selection of wine, beer and non-alcoholic beverages;
- A dedicated Master of Ceremonies and special guest speakers;
- Exclusive post-match function with player appearances and live entertainment;
- Match programmes;
- Host service

Price: \$2,995 +GST per table of 10 (all inclusive)    \$295 +GST per person

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**Make sure you get to the ground early  
to see the Wellington Rugby League  
Premier Grand Final**

**This**  
**Saturday**  
**Westpac Stadium**



**V**



**WRL Premier Grand Final 12.30pm**  
**Warriors v Dragons NYC Holden Cup 2.40pm**  
**Warriors v Dragons NRL 5pm**  
**This Saturday Gates open 12.15pm This Saturday**

# Wellington Ticket Winners



Thank you very much for the tickets we won. We are excited and looking forward to going to this Saturdays game in Wellington.

## Rising Talent Working Towards a Black Jersey

**S**HE HAS speed to burn and normally one of the smallest on the field but Manurewa youngster Joephy Daniels is determined to do the hard yards to earn a Kiwi Fern jersey. A naturally talented athlete who has played all sports on offer either as a student at James Cook High School or through Club sports she has represented Counties Manukau in netball, athletics, touch, tag and 7's rugby. She first played rugby league in the Girls Secondary School competition and has been a fan of it ever since. "I love the whole vibe of Rugby League, the mental and the physical challenge it offers you. The adrenaline rush you get after your first tackle, and scoring tries makes you want more", says Joephy.

She has definitely caught the eye of Coaches and has recently been selected in the Counties Manukau Sting-rays squad who travel to Rotorua for September Nationals, a step in the ladder to becoming a Kiwi Fern. Her Marlins Club Coach Rusty Matua agrees, "She has lots of potential to go far in the game not just 13 a side but also the recent NRL 9's platform that is now on offer. Like any player she has her areas to work on namely getting fitter, stronger and improvement in tackle technique. She trains hard and is luckily enough to be surrounded by team mates who work hard on and off the field and are perfect role models to the younger generation in terms of what it takes to go all the way".

She has the ability to play wing or fullback and one of her league idols is Sarina Fiso the current Kiwi Ferns fullback, "She's my idol, she's so inspiring, supportive and leads by example. I couldn't have a better player to teach me and learn from. I think she's one of the best female league players in the World so I try to take on as much as possible from her and one day I hope to wear her No 1 jersey, after she's retired of course".

Keep an ear out for the name as we may just see her in a Kiwi Fern jersey one day soon.



# SIR PETER LEITCH APPRECIATION DAY - STACEY JONES LOUNGE



Behind every great Man there is a great woman, Lorraine McKee presents Lady Janice Leitch an arrangement of tulips, on behalf of the Mad Butchers Club..



Bodene Thompson talks with Tony Feasey.



Colin Stevenson had his fares shouted by his daughters for his birthday to watch his Sharks.



Don Graham bagpipes Simon and Sir Peter into the lounge.



Emily and Tahlia Stevenson from Sydney.



Fats who does lot of work with youth in Wellington.



Howie Tamati and Bill Wavish.



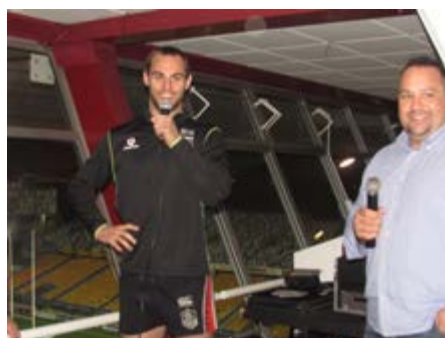
Max (plays for the Northcote Tigers and was awarded Player of the Day that morning for scoring 2 tries) is hoisted by Tony Feasey our mc.



Our wonderful Resident Poms serenading Sir Peter.



Peter the Pom asks Ryan Hoffman about the pies.



Special thanks to Simon who came up to the lounge after the game to say a few words.



Sir Peters cake recognising his 20 yrs as the 19th Warrior.



# Will the Real Mad Butcher Please Stand Up?



## Ziah Tuai-Cowan's Special Day

**I**T WAS a very special day in the Mad Butcher lounge for young Ziah Tuai-Cowan and his dad Andy on Saturday. Ziah is just 4 years old, as a 2 year old he was diagnosed with a life threatening heart condition - Coarctation of the Aorta. He had to endure a 9 hour emergency heart operation and ongoing treatment since. Radio Sports Martin Devlin heard Ziah's story and spoke to Sir Peter, between them they organised a dream day out for the young Warriors fan.

**Andy summed up their day in the following way:**

"For Ziah to have been given the privilege to meet Sir Peter and be welcomed to the Mad Butcher lounge was very special - every person we met in the lounge was so approachable and so friendly. We as a family are so very humbled by this.

Ziah's day yesterday meant the world to him in so many ways. On arrival we were invited on the Official Stadium Tour, a behind the scenes look around Mt Smart with a very knowledgeable guide was an opportunity we would not normally get - it was a fantastic and informative tour. Back in the Lounge Sir Peter gifted us pop-corn and an official souvenir programme. We were seated in the special VIP reserved seats beside Lady Janice, and with the windows open we were able to soak up the atmosphere from the best seats in the house! Watching his favourite team live was a dream come true for Ziah!

Just when we thought it couldn't get any better Sir Peter delivered a ball and this was the icing on the cake. Ziah slept with his ball last night and carry's his programme with him all over the place. Ziah loves the Warriors and he loves Manu and Shaun Johnson! - he is running around being Manu as we speak!

To say thank you to Martin and Sir Peter does not really do it justice - we are so very, very honoured, humbled and privileged to partake in the most wonderful day at Mt Smart Stadium with Sir Peter Leitch. Yesterday Ziah and myself got to meet and spend time with one of the most special New Zealanders this country has ever produced - so from Ziah and all his family THANK YOU, THANK YOU AND THANK YOU!!



Ziah and Sir Peter

# NSW Vodafone Warriors at Henson Park

## THE WARRIORS COLLECT TWO VALUABLE NSW CUP POINTS AT HENSON PARK.

Both teams were at less than full strength when the Newtown Jets, the Cronulla Sharks partnership club, hosted the New Zealand Warriors in Round 21 of the NSW Cup at Henson Park last Saturday.

The Jets needed to win to stay in contention for the top eight, while the Warriors were fighting to maintain their place as joint competition leaders. The visitors ran up an early 18-0 lead but the Jets rallied and pulled back to level pegging at 18-all at halftime.

The second half saw some thrilling football with well-taken tries and near misses by both sides. The Warriors regained the lead through two more converted tries, but Newtown fought back again to trail 30-28 with less than ten minutes left to play. The Warriors had some hair-raising moments but hung on to secure a valuable away win against determined opponents who were playing in front of a partisan home crowd.

Steve Rapira was particularly strong for the Warriors along with other experienced forwards John Palavi, David Bhana, Dominique Peyroux and Nathaniel Roache. Halfback Mason Lino's impeccable goal kicking, including two sideline conversions in the opening ten minutes, proved to be the difference between the two teams in the end.

Warriors coach Stacey Jones said he was concerned when the Jets pulled back to draw level at 18-all, but he was confident that his boys had the ability to defend their narrow lead late in the game.



New Zealand Warriors NSW Cup lock forward David Bhana shows he has been well coached as a junior.



A tremendous shot of Saula Solomona scoring against Newtown at Henson Park on Saturday.



The New Zealand Warriors NSW Cup team after defeating Newtown at Henson Park on Saturday.

Hello Sir Peter,

What a terrific shot of Stacey Jones getting a closer look at his players in the thrilling NSW Cup match played at Henson Park on Saturday.

The Warriors won 30-28 after the scores had been locked up 18-all at halftime.

You've produced some tremendous sporting people in New Zealand over the years – but in my view none better than this terrific little bloke!

Photo taken by Mario Facchini.

All the best, Glen Dwyer  
Media Officer Newtown RLFC.



Stacey Jones at Henson Park.



Two New Zealand Warriors supporters at Henson Park on Saturday.



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# Lyall Bay Dad's Club

## Kia Ora Sir Peter

**I**T WAS great to meet you last Monday at the Wellington launch for the Warriors vs Dragons game at Midland Park. I was introduced to you by Shaun Chait one of the other founders of Dad's Club and you suggested we send you our story for your newsletter.

Shaun and I meet through our daughters being in the same class at school, there was an instant connection when we realised we are both huge leaguies and have very similar life memory's of how the game of rugby league has shaped our lives' as adults. We were both big fans of the game growing up as kids, Shaun supported the Roosters and I supported the Canberra Raiders back in the late 80's early 90's.

As kids my club was Marist Northern (Wellington), I have fond memories of playing Saturday and then watching my Dad play followed by a lot of time in the club rooms bonding with other whanau who also had this great love for the game. One of my fondest memories was sitting on Dads shoulders at athletic park with my childhood hero's in the Kiwi's going toe to toe with the mighty Aussies – it makes the afro on my back stand up just thinking about the intensity of that day. Shaun's early memories are of his parents getting him up in the middle of the night with a cocoa and popcorn to watch the kiwis play England – this was the days of the Sorensen brothers, O'Hara, Filipina and Huey McGahan, Kemp and the Iro's etc. Then once they started screening Winfield cup on TV 1 he used to run his own tipping comp with friends and family. We both still have our sets of league cards and jersey's we collected as kids – this was a match made in league heaven!

So of course the obvious happened, I invited Shaun around to watch the first State of Origin game this year and as we were getting into the game Shaun said to me "how many guys like us are in their living room on their own right now?". Straight away a light bulb went off in my head and that's how the idea of Dad's club was born. In fact we had to re-watch the game the next day as we became consumed in the conversation of planning Dad's Club.

Our first plan of attack we needed a venue – Shaun organised a meeting with the president of our local bowling club in Lyall Bay, he was keen to give us a go. (This has turned into a lucrative venture for them

also). With our tails up it was off to a great start, just like a game of league we had a venue now we needed the players to take the field – recruitment time!

We put an ad in the school newsletter and printed some business cards (pic attached) and word spread fast! 2 weeks after we came up with this concept we held our first get-together, we got over 20 Dad's turn up to watch league, unwind over a few brews, play darts and shoot some pool. The feedback has been amazing, so many positive comments from the Dad's saying they really needed an outlet like this.

After 2 months into Dad's club we have over 30 members on our private Facebook page (Friday Night Dads Club) and over 50 guys on our database.

Our common denominator outside of being fathers is our love for rugby league; it often dominates our conversation, how can we continue to ignite the passion for the youth coming through, the same way it was done for us at grass roots level. We are passionate about this and as a club we are now seeking any opportunities to do this.

Hopefully this will encourage other like minded guys of Aoteroa to follow suit and get together, because watching a good game with good company will always upgrade your soul. The game of Rugby League has brought fathers together like never seen before.

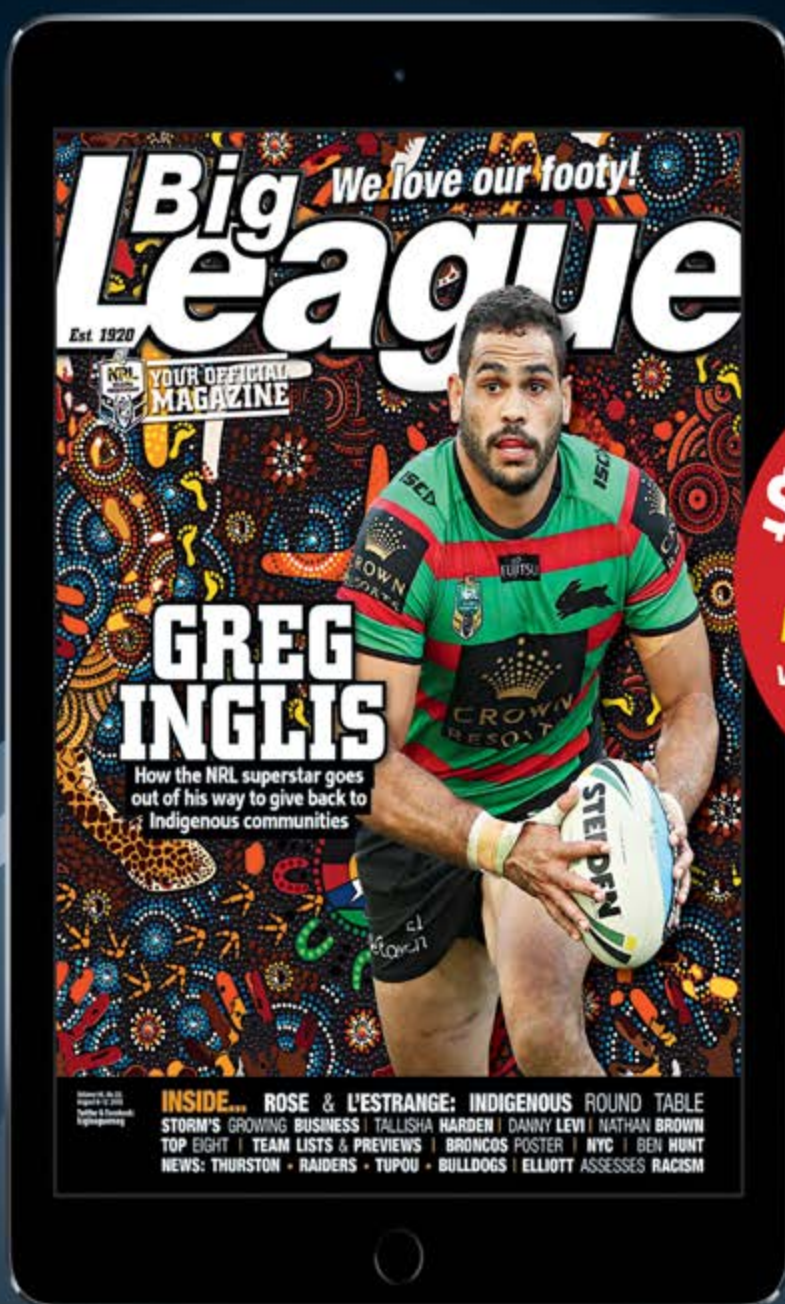
Our members are actively signing up to the Warriors Proud and we will all be going to the cake tin to support our beloved Warriors on the 8th August – so see ya there guys! GO THE WARRIORS!

From Ruka Rarere - Lyall Bay Dads Club

Kia Kaha.

	<p>A local club for local Dads</p> <p>Phone: Shaun: 0276 274 204 Ruka: 0274 213 065</p> <p>Where: Lyall Bay Bowls Club 53 Apu Cres</p> <p>When: Selected Fridays Nights</p> <p> Join us on Facebook Friday Night Dads Club</p>
<p>Chill out with...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sport on TV</li><li>Pool</li><li>Cheap Drinks</li><li>Darts</li></ul>	

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# Joshua Uta wins Player of the Year at SAS College Rugby League awards breakfast

**M**ANUREWA HIGH School's Joshua Uta has been crowned SAS College Rugby League Player of the Year at an awards breakfast this morning.

The 16-year-old year 11 student (pictured with Vodafone Warriors managing director Jim Doyle) played a starring role for the southern school in 2015, as they qualified for the Championship division and fell just short of making the finals.

Already a development squad member with the Vodafone Warriors, Uta said he hoped the college gong would open more doors for him in rugby league.

"I am pretty happy with the award, but my teammates helped me get there with their hard work through the season," Uta said.

"I want to try and make the Vodafone Junior Warriors in the next year or so, I have been signed with them for almost a year now and I am hoping this award gets my name out there."

Coach of the Year for the Premier competition went to St Paul's mentor Phil Sargeant, while Kelston duo Sharon Mackey and Toni Humphreys were awarded Manager of the Year.

St Paul's fullback Samuel Filimoeatu topped the try-scoring with eight, while teammate Beau Cordtz was top points scorer with 46.

In the U/15 nine-aside competition Star To'a (St Paul's) swept the major awards, winning MVP and top try and points scorer.

The U/85kg competition MVP was shared between Nofoaiga Limoni (Mangere College) and Joseph Williams (Howick College).



Joshua Uta and Jim Doyle



Photos from Auckland Rugby League SAS College Awards

## ARL Results

### Appliance Shed Fox Memorial Premiership

Marist 20 Howick 14  
 Glenora 6 Otara 44  
 Mt Albert 50 Mangere East 16  
 Otahuhu 20 Pt Chevalier 40  
 Papakura 28 Northcote 8



### SAS Sharman Cup

Ellerslie 50 Waitemata 12  
 Glenfield 18 Ponsonby 44  
 Manukau 8 Mt Wellington 50  
 Manurewa 30 Hibiscus Coast 0  
 New Lynn 10 Pakuranga 28  
 Papatoetoe 34 Bay Roskill 22  
 Richmond 28 East Coast Bays 24  
 Te Atatu bye

# Visiting the Lounge Was a Complete Treat - Glenn Moir (A Christchurch Fan)

**M**Y FATHER and I were given tickets to the Warriors v Sharks for our birthdays. Our wives had to book flights and accommodation to get us up from Christchurch of course and before the trip I contacted the Butcher, telling him we were coming and saying we'd love to meet him. Dad has had a rough year and is still a bit crook so it was going to be a real highlight.

I learned the day was to be an appreciation of all the Butcher has done so I expected he would be too busy for us - how wrong I was! When the day arrived I rang from Christchurch and was greeted with: "I'm on the radio and will ring you back." I was amazed when I got a call five minutes later.

When I asked if we could get into the lounge, Sir Peter said to ring Dave McGee (someone I knew from the Halswell club where I have coached for 14 years) to get access.

On getting to the ground Sir Peter sent us on a tour of the facilities. On starting, someone I knew called out from the crowd and I recognised a guy I had coached in junior footy in Canterbury, who now has a contract with the Warriors.

As the tour went on a couple of people realised dad was struggling and helped him get around.

"Fats" and "Shorty" were up from Wellington and loving the experience as much as us as we were introduced to Vodafone Warriors CEO Jim Doyle, former captain Monty Betham, and other people who make the organisation tick.

As we walked through the Western Stand admiring the Butcher's memorabilia we were reminded that his generosity is not limited to league. There are numerous charities and sports that benefit.

On the tour the struggle to retain Mt Smart as our venue was brought home to us. This ground has too much history and money invested in it for the club to be moved to an inferior ground.

On getting back to the lounge we were greeted by the Butcher, where he gave a small speech and mentioned "Fats" as being the only Mongrel Mob member who had been into the lounge, but all the talk was about what Fats did for both the game and kids in Wellington.

At halftime Ryan Hoffman and Bodene Thompson spoke to us. I reflected later that with guys of that calibre on the sideline it was no wonder the edge defence struggled.

After a postgame presentation to the Butcher, captain Simon Mannering came up and gave us some of his time, telling us some of what Sir Peter does for the club, and giving a match-day post-mortem.

When we finally left I was about to call a taxi when the Butcher pulled up and told us to get in before dropping us back at the motel!

When we tried to discuss the result his comment was "no-one died", which puts it into perspective.

It was an unbelievable experience and I thank you and your team very much Butcher.

If I had to summarise this man in one word I'd say "People". He makes time for people from all walks of life, a lesson we could all take on board.



# Fan Photos



Here's a picture from my mates Stags do last weekend that I thought you may enjoy.  
**Ben Rzoska**

# Photos with the Ferns



Frank Pritchard and Greg Eastwood with Katrina Grant, Bailey Mes, Leana De Bruin, Jodi Brown, Casey Kopua, Laura Langman, Esther Malloy

**Raelene Castle**

The Bulldog players mix it with the silver ferns at the Dogies club.

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# Reidy, Fagan Recognised for Lifetimes of Service

By Grant Chapman

**B**ETWEEN THEM, they've contributed well over a century of service to rugby league in New Zealand, so it was fitting that former Kiwis Brian Reidy and Jack Fagan should become NZRL life members on the same day.

Reidy (Kiwi #383) and Fagan (Kiwi #401) played together in national teams of the 1960s, through international careers that overlapped from 1961-65.

"Jack and I have had careers that have mirrored each other over the years," said "Speedy" Reidy. "We've played against each other - Jack for Ponsonby and myself for Marist - and we were both in the Kiwis side together.

"We had two tours together to the UK and France for three months at a time, and after our retirement from football, we both became involved in the administrative side of it."

Reidy, who played 21 tests, is a life member of the NZRL Kiwis Association, was secretary/treasurer for more than 45 years and still serves as treasurer. He is also a founding member and treasurer of the NZRL Museum, and a member of NZRL and Auckland Rugby League judiciaries.

Fagan played 53 games for the Kiwis, including 17 tests, and later coached NZ Universities (1968-71). He was also NZ Universities Rugby League chairman for three years and a founding member of the Auckland Leagues Club.

He has been vice chairman of the NZRL Kiwis Association for more than 20 years and has served on the NZRL Museum board since it formed in 2004. Fagan has also been on the NZ judiciary committee for 34 years.

"It's a pleasure to accept this honour and great to do it with Jack," said Reidy.

A third new life member - former NZRL chairman Sel Pearson - missed the induction ceremony at NZRL House last weekend, but will be honoured at a future date.

Their addition brings the number of life members to 18 - John Bray, Jim Campbell, Ray Cranch, Ken English, Fagan, Cathy Friend, Allen Gore, Don Hammond, Ray Haffenden, Peter Kerridge, Bud Lisle, Tom McKeown, Trevor Maxwell, Pearson, Reidy, Gerald Ryan, Howie Tamati and Bill Whitehead.



## Barry Ross' Four Hour Lunch



**F**ROM BARRY Ross' right Michael Cleary (six Rugby union Tests for the Wallabies, Bronze Medal in 100 yards final at 1962 Commonwealth Games, eight rugby league tests for the Kangaroos, three Grand Final wins with South Sydney, NSW Minister of Sport 1981 to 1988), Brian Doyle (well known Irish comedian), Billy Smith (26 Tests for Australia, four Grand Final wins with St. George), John Peard ( 8 Tests, 2 Grand Final wins with the Roosters), Johnny Raper ( 39 Tests, 8 Grand Final wins with St. George, Immortal, Australian team of the Century) Carol Raper.

# Siliva Havili

By Grant Chapman

**N**Z KIWIS & Warriors hooker Siliva Havili has suddenly become an unlikely role model for young rugby league players trying to find their futures in the game.

Last week, Havili (Kiwi #784) graduated with a Bachelor of Human Sciences, majoring in podiatry.

The Tongan hooker is widely regarded as a promising young player, who has struggled to find a regular spot in the Warriors rotation behind veterans Nathan Friend and Thomas Leuluai.

With Kiwis star Issac Luke joining the club next year, Havili recently took matters into his own hands, signing a contract with St George Dragons for 2016.

But it's his off-field achievements that should impress the league fraternity most.

At a time when NZ Rugby League and the NRL are stressing the need for youngsters to secure careers away from the game, Havili has done just that, ensuring that he will have a profession to fall back on if things don't go his way on the paddock.

Warriors welfare & education manager Jerry Seuseu has worked closely with Havili, since he joined the club as a St Paul's College star.

"Although bright, he wasn't sure if he had completed enough credits in Year 12, due to all his football commitments that year," says Seuseu (Kiwi #692).

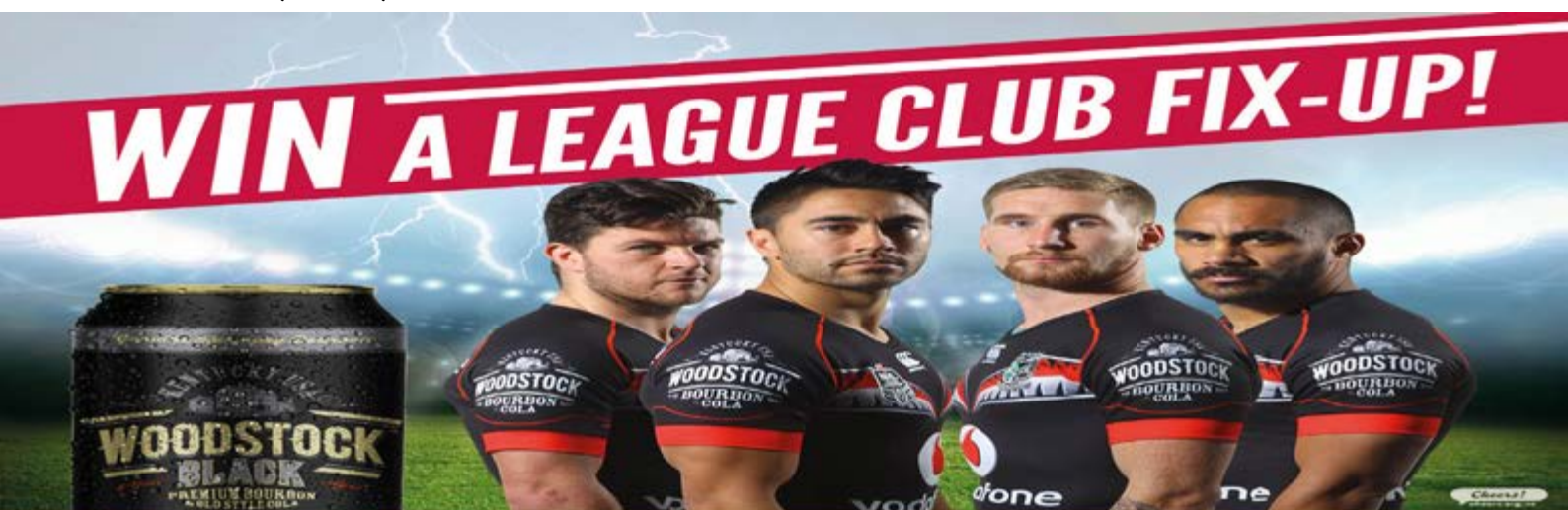
"At the end of the 2010 year, he was contemplating a 'Foundations' course to get some of his grads up, so he could attend university. Principal Mark Rice and old Joe Vagana, who was at St Paul's as his mentor, would often ring to discuss Siliva's progress and play/study balance."

That balance has been carefully managed through Havili's early years, during which he has also played internationally for both NZ and Tonga.

"His senior lecturers tell me the opportunities available to him as a Pasifika male graduate are endless," says Seuseu. "The community needs him."

"So let's celebrate the boy with the flat feet, who will go down as one of the players to come through the NYC system, and all its hurdles and challenges, to become a poster boy for what is possible."

"His hard work and commitment to getting the job done will be held up as a benchmark of what is possible for any young man entering our development system at the club."



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# The JWH Question

By John Coffey QSM



**L**AST WEEK I advocated the recall of Benji Marshall to the Kiwis for their upcoming short tour of Britain, a move that would seem logical now there is a halfback vacancy created by Shaun Johnson's untimely injury.

More difficult to debate is whether fiery prop Jared Waerea-Hargreaves should also be reinstated to the Kiwis. He last played for his country in the 2013 World Cup final loss to the Kangaroos at Old Trafford, when no-one was more disappointing than JWH.

Far from being the devastating banner-carrier he was for the title-winning Sydney Roosters that season, JWH would have struggled to burst through a wet paper bag at the World Cup. Last year he made himself unavailable for the Four Nations, citing "burnt out".

By then he had been overtaken by Jesse Bromwich, Ben Matulino, Sam Moea and a revitalised Adam Blair, while Martin Taupau and Greg Eastwood can be utilised as interchange props. All of these players have shared in New Zealand's three consecutive victories over Australia at the Four Nations tournament and/or in the 2015 Anzac Test.

The Sydney media, not known for analysing Kiwis coach Stephen Kearney's options to any depth, continues to refer to JWH as a surprise exclusion from the Kiwis and keeps quoting his desire to get back in the black-and-white jersey.

Fair enough, but he has to earn it. Last Friday he showed what he is capable of by powering the Roosters to a remarkable win over Canterbury Bulldogs in one of the matches of the season. The Roosters had led 22-0 before conceding the next 28 points.

JWH rediscovered his rampaging, snorting, top form in turning a tide which was threatening to drown the Roosters. He charged through the Bulldogs defence to set up the try which ultimately led to a 38-28 victory, and was acclaimed as Man of the Match.

I can't comment on that award. For much of the evening I was juggling five channels, those showing the Roosters v Bulldogs and Storm v Tigers, the Ashes cricket Test, harness racing from Addington and Auckland, and, whisper it quietly, Coronation Street.

But Channel 9 does not give many such awards to

New Zealanders, and I take its word JWH deserved it. Which means he earned in from a game which also featured Moea and Eastwood, and fellow international props Sam Kasiano and James Graham.

I saw enough to note that JWH got into a slapping contest with Kasiano and heatedly traded insults with Graham, who will likely lead the England forwards in the three Tests against the Kiwis in November.

Interviewed after fulltime, JWH said the Roosters had "calmly" evaluated the situation before staging their memorable comeback. Calmness is not one of his natural traits. Kearney will no doubt evaluate JWH's questionable disciplinary record, past and current, and whether he will again be "burnt out" if the Roosters go deep into the NRL play-offs.

Of the previously mentioned Kiwis, Blair and Taupau were sitting out suspensions last weekend, while Moea left the field with a reported dislocated wrist which will need surgery. His availability must be in some doubt. There could be a vacancy in the prop rotation.

But the whole JWH debate might become irrelevant. He also told the interviewer his partner was expecting their first child. Fatherhood could take precedence over such trifling matters as a Test series in which New Zealand will defend its number one international ranking.

The list of those already unavailable unfortunately grew last weekend when the luckless Dallin Wattene-Zalezniak required surgery to repair a collapsed lung. DWZ was prevented from making his Kiwis debut by a freak foot injury last year and by a suspension earlier this season.

Already out of Kiwis tour contention are Warriors trio Johnson, Thomas Leuluai and Ben Henry. Dean Whare is nursing a broken thumb, a cloud hangs over Shaun Kenny-Dowall's football future, Moea's wrist injury is a concern and Jason Nightingale limped off last Sunday after aggravating an ankle problem.

The good news story has been the return of Matt Duffie to the Melbourne Storm wing after missing 66 NRL rounds because of shoulder and knee operations. Duffie has suffered a distressing run of serious injuries since his only Kiwis appearance in the 2011 Anzac Test. He might not make the upcoming tour but it is great to see him back in action.

# What's Happening Up North

By Ben Francis



## What's Happening Up North

**F**IRSTLY I would love to thank Sir Peter for the invite to the Stacey Jones Lounge on his appreciation day last weekend. It was awesome to see the great man get honoured for his services not only in Rugby League but in numerous community organisations/charities across the country. It was disappointing the boys didn't get the W but the atmosphere in the lounge and even in the stands was remarkable. As I have wrote about before the atmosphere at Mount Smart is unbeatable and Saturday was a perfect example to why the Warriors should remain at Mount Smart. Congratulations Peter you deserve it, and I can not thank you enough for the opportunity to contribute weekly to your newsletter.

### Rugby League

**D**EFENDING SCOTT Electrical Premiership champions Otangarei Knights have been eliminated in the minor semi finals. Otangarei had a matchup with the Moerewa Tigers. Things looked very promising in the first half by the reigning champions as the led 18-10 at the break, but a strong start to the second half by Moerewa shot them into the lead which they never gave up. They went on to win 28-22 and knock out the champions. With four losses in their last six matches heading into the game Moerewa head coach Dave Bristow complemented his side about getting back in the winners circle saying "I'm glad to get on the horse and ride it again - it's been a long, long time since we had a win." Moerewa will now face the Takahiwai Warriors in the major semi final.

In the earlier game the Hokianga Pioneers had a tough, tough 40-32 win over the Portland Panthers. Much like the match up between the two sides back In round 15 before the game was called off, Hokian-ga established an early lead before Portland started fighting back. The fightback wasn't enough in the end as Hokianga beat Portland for the third time this season and set up a major semi final date with the Hikurangi Stags. Pioneers coach Jason Smith was happy with his sides efforts post game. "Credit to Portland, they played well and came out here and gave it to us. But credit to our boys, they've come a long way, I'm proud of them at the moment."

## Basketball

**B**ASKETBALL IS a sport that I'm passionate about and I played in my high school years, and in the North basketball's growth is getting bigger and bigger by the day. Basketball is a growing sport around the country in large part to the success of the NZ Breakers in the last five years winning four NBL titles (2011-2013 and 2015) and the rise of Steven Adams in the NBA along with the rise of other future prospects like Jack Salt and Tai Wynyard.

Three people behind the rise of basketball in the North is Jamie Mason, Dave Pirini and Raymond Cameron. All are former Northland Suns representatives and have a goal of growing the sport in Northland. Last Friday they help organised scrimmage basketball games for people all over the North to come participate in. Around 35-40 people showed up to participate from junior high school kids through to former Suns players and other locals. Raymond Cameron spoke before the playing starting saying "it's all about the growth about basketball in North and having fun." Jamie Manson spoke to Allen and myself on our sports show about basketball in the a North saying he wanted to see a basketball team in every school or every kid been given the chance to participate in basketball. We can expect more events like this to happen around Northland.

### Rugby Union

**T**WO WEEKS ago the finals for the Bayleys Premier Divison, Reserves and Divison 2 were played and this weekend it was the grand final for Northland's other two premier finals. In the Bay Of Islands final KeriKeri played Ohaewai. KeriKeri had a dominating regular season with only one defeat which came in the first round (V Moerewa). KeriKeri went on to win the Minor Premiership. Ohaewai also had a dominant campaign, they finished second on the table and only had three defeats (two v KeriKeri 26-20 and 30-27 respectively.) Based on that it was set to be a cracker final, however it was not the case KeriKeri had no trouble this time against Ohaewai brushing them aside 31-15. In the Mangonui Divison the final was played between Awanui and Eastern. Both teams were the dominant teams through out the season also and played out an excellent game of rugby, Awanui coming out on top 26-20.

# We Can't Deny That Drugs Threat To All Sports Is Real

By John Deaker



**T**HE SPORTING world was shocked this week by the revelation that a third of the athletics medals in endurance events at Olympics and World Championships between 2001 and 2012 were won by athletes who recorded suspicious blood tests. This announcement woke a lot of people up to the fact that wide-spread drug use is prevalent in more sports than just cycling.

Fortunately at this stage our most popular oval ball codes in New Zealand - rugby union and rugby league - have been able to stay 'mainly' drug-free. For many years both codes have been conscious of the drugs threat and have been signed up to the World Anti-doping Association. This has meant that even though the odd person might abuse or cheat the system the top athletes and teams have been pre-dominantly operating on an equal playing field.

ASADA's investigation into Cronulla last year was a bit of a wake-up call for some people who naively thought Australasian sport and particularly the oval ball codes were totally clean. The investigation also showed how seriously administrators and politicians view the threat of drugs to sport - and what lengths they are prepared to go to ensure sports remain clean.

The reality is that DRUGS DO WORK – that's why they call them performance enhancing! So as all sports have become more lucrative and people have become more famous for their sporting achievements the temptation has become even greater for people to obtain the best assistance possible – legal or illegal – to help them achieve their goals. In situations like the Cronulla peptides scandal we've also become more aware of the grey area there is at times between what is legal and what isn't.

The great thing about ball sports is there is so much different skill required to reach the top level of these sports. For other sports more purely reliant on endurance and power ( like the Marathon or the 100 metres ) there is not as many ways for people to get better at their chosen sports. In other words Jonathon Thurston or Richie McCaw has a better chance of being the best in the world at their sport without using drugs than Usain Bolt does.

One of the more silly suggestions we sometimes hear whenever there is revelations made of extensive drug-use in sports is that the best solution would be to allow athletes to just use whatever they wanted – and by doing that we'd save a lot of time and money that's currently invested in drug testing and research.

These are ridiculous suggestions. If we allowed open-slather drug-use in sports it's very likely the health and even the lives of many young men would be compromised. For females the repercussions could be even more serious as many of them would test the limits ( much more than currently do! ) of the many ways they can artificially boost their testosterone levels. The performance gap between those who were willing to gamble on their own health and those who weren't would be just as ridiculous.

WADA gets criticized a lot but they are simply trying to do the best job they can with the limited resources they have available to them. As fans of rugby and league we can only hope that they continue to at least remain within touching distance of the scientists and athletes that try to cheat the system. Only then will we be able to continue to appreciate the great skill athlete's showcase each weekend without questioning how those same people came to be so big and fast in the first place.

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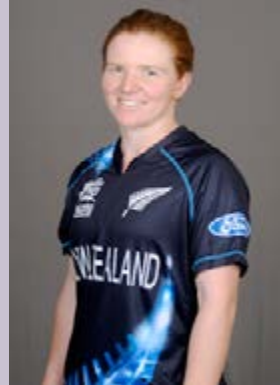
**BRYN HALL**

*NZ Maori & Nth Harbour Rugby*

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*...and more of **KONI HURRELL**  
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# Canterbury Rugby League Club Grand Final - Linwood Keas V Papanui Tigers

**K**EAS PLAYER-COACH Andrew Auimatagi was equally enthusiastic about heading back to Rugby League Park.

"It's awesome. It was great to go and have a go Linwood Keas and Papanui Tigers square off for the Pat Smith Trophy in the 49th Canterbury Rugby League premiership Grand Final at AMI Stadium on Sunday.

The minor premiership-winning Tigers advanced to the decider with a 26-16 preliminary final victory over the gallant Riccarton Knights last Saturday, bouncing back from a crushing 56-4 loss to the second-placed Keas on the first weekend of the playoffs.

Papanui is chasing its 11th Grand Final success, last prevailing in 1998. Linwood won the last of its four titles in 2008, when the Keas downed the Tigers 30-22 in the decider.

This year's Grand Final represents a momentous occasion for Rugby League in the region – it will be the first played at the code's spiritual home, Rugby League Park (formerly Addington Showground), since 2012. Rugby Union has taken up residence at the ground since the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, and the 13-a-side game has been forced to use Denton Oval as its base over the last few seasons.

Both sides are revelling in the return to the scene of so many of Canterbury Rugby League's greatest occasions.

"It's outstanding," Tigers coach Johnny Pritchard said. "The captains were down there yesterday for their photos and they were soaking it up. The boys will be getting down there on Saturday for the captain's run and I'm sure everyone will be quite excited, as well as the Rugby League community as a whole."

"It's ok around there yesterday," Auimatagi said. "It brings back memories as a young kid, the field and everything, trying to remember where everything was. It still has that feeling, you know, that it's the home of Rugby League."

The match kicks off at 2pm on Sunday. Get down to AMI Stadium and support both teams in what shapes as a cracking decider! Head to [canterburyrugbyleague.co.nz](http://canterburyrugbyleague.co.nz) for further details.

## **Tigers Back On Track Ahead Of Grand Final Showdown**

Papanui's momentous table-topping campaign was

in danger of coming to a gut-wrenching anti-climax after a shock 56-4 finals thrashing at the hands of Linwood, but a hard-fought 26-16 preliminary final victory over in-form Riccarton last Saturday has provided the Tigers with another crack at the Keas – and an opportunity to snare the club's first Canterbury Rugby League Grand Final win since 1998.

After dropping just one competition point in the first 13 rounds to clinch the minor premiership, the Tigers crashed to a 40-12 loss to Hornby Panthers in their final regular-season match, before being swamped by the Keas a week later. Tigers coach Johnny Pritchard offered a simple explanation for the preliminary final turnaround.

"I think the boys just got hungry again," Pritchard said. "They banded together quite well actually. (The coaching staff) were just there to facilitate it. Training last week was based on finding the passion for the game again and we just fixed a few areas where we went wrong against Linwood."

Although Papanui's early-season winning streak was one of the most remarkable stories of the 2015 CRL premiership, Pritchard admitted that it had become a weight on the team's shoulders and was a trigger for their recent fortnight-long slump.

"In some ways it did. Not because we were unbeaten, but because the boys hadn't felt defeat. They never really had to deal with that sort of adversity," he said.

"And the fact that we didn't really square away the problems after (the loss to) Hornby before the game against Linwood. We didn't really sit down and talk through it."

Win or lose on Sunday, there's no question Papanui's resurgence this season has exceeded expectations. Winless wooden spooners in 2012, the Tigers finished sixth the following season and second-last in 2014 with only four victories in each campaign.

But some astute recruitment in the off-season rejuvenated the fallen heavyweights, and Pritchard was full of praise for the way his new-look squad had come together from the outset.

"(I'm) immensely proud, they've worked really hard. At the start of the year if you asked us what our biggest problem was, it was going to be blending them together. But to their credit the boys came together quite well."

*Continued on next page...*

Another key influence on the Tigers' success has been the addition of Canterbury Rugby League stalwart and former Auckland Warriors star Shane Endacott, who steered Halswell to the premiership in 2011, as a coaching advisor.

"Shane Endacott has been absolutely amazing this year. To be fair, he's been a godsend. He's helped with the link between coach and players, and he's been a great mentor for myself," Pritchard lauded.

The coach stressed that his side won't be resting on its laurels ahead of the Grand Final showdown, and that the Tigers – who downed Linwood 40-32 in the opening week of the competition before the the Keas scored an emotion-charged 46-8 win in Round 8 just days after the tragic death of club stalwart Teni Tuli (competition points were shared after the Tigers gave up their home-ground advantage for the match) – aren't carrying any mental baggage into the decider despite the heavy finals loss to the Keas. Pritchard was clear about the areas the Tigers need to concentrate on.

"I guess the slate is sort of wiped clean. There's a few areas that we definitely need to work on – our attitude in defence is one of them," he said.

"Last week we didn't manage that for the whole 80 minutes – we probably didn't manage it for 40 to be fair – but when we did, we were bang on. We just need to encourage that intensity level from the get go.

"We need to be disciplined, first and foremost. We need to be on the right side of the penalty count. We found out a two weeks ago you can't invite (Linwood) into your 20-metre zone. Second of all, I think line speed is key."

Grand Final experience is scarce amongst the Papanui line-up – which will be led on Sunday by co-captains Izic Placid and JJ Smith – but Pritchard isn't unduly concerned.

"We'll just share it amongst the team and let them enjoy their moments. Myself and Shane (Endacott) and a few of the other senior men will get around and have a chat to them and just settle the nerves leading into the game.

"There's a few that haven't been there before but they've all got really good heads on their shoulders. If we can calm them down before the game I'm pretty sure we'll be right."

Importantly, Papanui is set to take a near full-

strength squad into the decider after carrying a few niggles into the do-or-die clash with the Knights.

"We had a few injury concerns, but they seemed to be ones that needed a good, hard run out. And everyone shaped up fine – certainly a lot better than the week before – at the pool session on Sunday. But I guess we'll have to reassess those when we catch up with everybody at training," Pritchard said.

It has been a long time between drinks for the Tigers, with their last premiership win coming in 1998. Since then, Grand Final losses in 2008 and 2010 – to Linwood and Hornby respectively – are the closest the club has come to securing Canterbury Rugby League's greatest prize.

Consequently, Pritchard said the atmosphere in and around the club, and particularly amongst the Tigers' supporters, has been outstanding.

"Everybody's lifted. The supporters have been fantastic all year and they've only got better. The last two Saturdays down at Halswell (Domain), it just lifts the guys – it's been amazing.

"I dare say it's going to be even better on Sunday."

### **Keas Primed For One Last Effort For Fallen Brother**

Linwood's feat in reaching the Grand Final just two months after the tragic death of club legend Teni Tuli is truly one of the most inspirational and poignant stories in Canterbury Rugby League's century-long narrative, but the Keas are gearing up for one more mighty effort for their spiritual leader.

Long-serving forward Tuli, 42, died on June 2 after suffering a heart attack at training, just days before he was due to play his 300th and final game for Linwood.

Understandably, the emotions are still raw for the Keas, but player-coach Andrew Auimatagi – whose association with Tuli goes back to when Auimatagi was a nine-year-old Linwood junior, before the pair became long-time teammates – said Tuli's memory has spurred the side to great heights.

Linwood defeated ladder-leading Papanui 46-8 in a stirring performance on the weekend following Tuli's death and eventually finished second on the table behind the Tigers, before obliterating the minor premiers 56-4 in the first week of the finals to propel the club into its first decider since 2009.

*Continued on next page...*



"It's something that no one can really be ready for, losing a teammate and a brother. We've done a fairly good job of honouring Teni so far I think, and we hope to put in a good performance on Sunday and we'll just see what the outcome is there," Auimatagi said.

"But we never for one moment forget about him. He's always there with us in our training and on game day, so (the Grand Final) will be a special day in terms of honouring him.

"We'll definitely remember him, but it will mainly about our performance and getting the best out of ourselves. Teni is a big part of our preparation, in terms of our motivation, (but) we won't talk about him in great length until after the game I think.

"But he's definitely right there in spirit in our hearts when we take the field."

Keeping a lid on that emotion has been important for the Keas, however, and particularly so as they negotiated the week off while Papanui and Riccarton squared off for the other Grand Final berth.

While momentum is an important factor at this time of the season and the bye can sometimes prove detrimental, Auimatagi viewed the break as a positive ahead of the Keas' fourth clash of 2015 against the Tigers.

"We had a good week at training, pretty much just stuck to our same routine and on the weekend we had a good session and a bit of a pool recovery session as well. (We're) trying to keep things as normal as possible," the coach said.

"We've definitely appreciated the break. Our training intensity has still been there, so we haven't been too worried about the whole momentum thing. It's good to freshen the boys up and the guys with some niggly injuries have had some extra time (to recover).

Despite outscoring Papanui 102 points to 12 in the clubs' last two encounters (the Tigers emerged victorious 40-32 in the opening week of the premierships), Auimatagi emphasised that complacency would not be an issue for his Linwood outfit, and the Keas would be relying on the processes and structures that have proved successful so far this season.

"It's all about performance so we're just worried about controlling what we can control to the best of our ability. (We're) not too worried about past results.

"We're not getting too far ahead of ourselves. The intensity will be up a level, but just making sure the boys back themselves and keep on doing what we've been doing all year."

Club stalwart Auimatagi was also wary of the dangers the Tigers team present, even if their meeting just a fortnight ago was a total mismatch.

"They've got some good players in their team that can expose you if you're not on your game. Like I said, we're trying to focus more on our game. (But) they've got Izic (Placid) who will steer them around and a few players that like to dart out of dummy-half, the odd player that can cause you trouble. So we'll talk about that at training, but it's mainly about how we prepare."

One area where Linwood boasts a significant advantage this weekend is Grand Final experience. Auimatagi will be playing in his sixth CRL premierships decider, while Siona Tuiloma is set to appear in his eighth Grand Final; the veteran duo played alongside Teni Tuli in their first way back in 2002.

Meanwhile, there are several survivors from the Kea's 2008 Grand Final success, including Auimatagi, Tuiloma, Alex Todd, Iuma Malitalo and Agaese Fiso. The Sauni brothers, Paul, Matt and Erwin, have previously featured in deciders for Halswell. Fiso and Paul Sauni will co-captain the Keas on Sunday.

"We'll talk about what we've learnt from being in Grand Finals and share some memories with the boys and go from there. Make some new memories," Auimatagi enthused.

Although Linwood has consistently been amongst the title contenders in recent years, it has been a difficult time for the club since the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. But the spirit in the club and the Linwood community has prevailed.

"It's been great to finally have a place we can meet on a Saturday after games. We've been out of clubrooms since the earthquakes, so to be able to go to the Woolston club for our after-match functions and mingle with the juniors and the rest of our club has been great," Auimatagi said.

"I think that's definitely helped in terms of supporting each other. We get to see each other on a Saturday night. The relationships are still as strong as ever and everyone just looks out for each other."

Continued from previous page...

Regardless of the result at Rugby League Park on Sunday, 2015 has proved a watershed year for Linwood – and not just for the premiers side. The Keas' success across the grades has created a huge buzz in and around the club, which is a testament to hard work and perseverance under adversity according to Auimatagi.

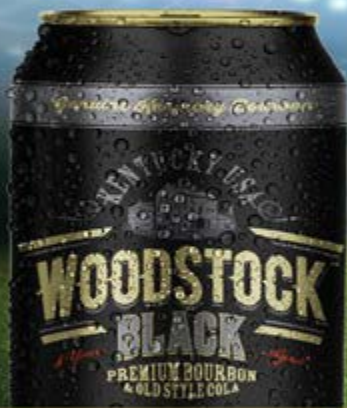
"Everyone's really excited. We've got us and the premier reserves in the Grand Final, so it's been an awesome achievement for both of our senior teams to get that far. And there's a few junior teams doing really well, with our 13s qualifying for their Grand Final. Everybody enjoys this time of the year, especially if you've got teams competing for a title.

"We've had our backs against the wall for a while if you think about not having a home base there in terms of our clubrooms, but our players and our community have stuck together and we're really starting to see some rewards there.

"There's some really good talent coming through the junior grades so we just need to keep building on it."



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# WIN 1 of 4 Rugby League Rivalries Book

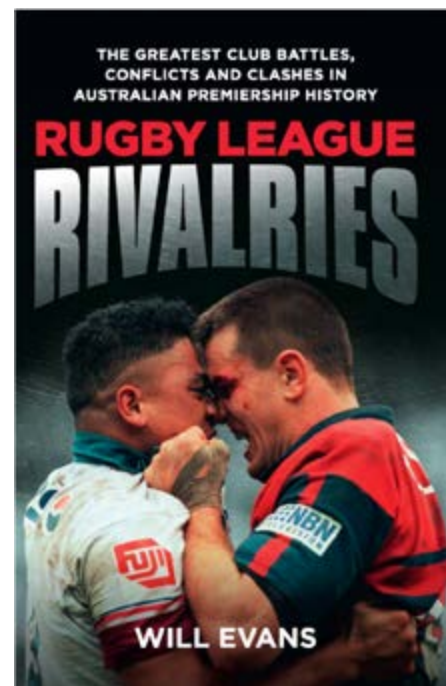
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