

20 YEARS
VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

Newsletter

29th August 2015

#87

Mt Smart Stadium By Barry Ross



ALTHOUGH I have been involved with league in some way for around 60 years, last Saturday was my first visit to Mt Smart. The result wasn't what we wanted, but I still came away hugely impressed.

Like many who braved the wrath of our host in the Mad Butcher's Club up in the Stacey Jones Lounge, I was amazed by Sir Peter's energy. Everyone in the league world knows what an asset he is to our game in general, and to the Warriors and NZRL in particular.

But when you are close enough to see the time and effort he puts in, you are left gobsmacked.

I've been fortunate enough to be a friend of Sir Peter's for 10 years or so now, and many times I've seen the personable and caring man behind the gruff exterior. His charity work is legendary and that speaks volumes for his attitude to people in need.

Despite being noticeably ill with the flu, he came to the airport on Friday to pick up Thomas George and myself. Then he insisted we have lunch with him and some friends in Auckland. And what a lunch. Close to three hours of laughter, friendship, along with excellent food and drink, gave both Thomas and I some great memories.

Thomas, is the Deputy Speaker of the NSW Parliament and he had never met Sir Pete. But after only a few minutes it was as if they had been friends for years. He was in Auckland to see his son, Cameron George, who is the CEO of Auckland Racing and a committed Warriors supporter.

So Thomas, Cameron and I, plus an old friend of mine, rugby writer Bob Howitt, arrived at Mt Smart around 5.15pm. Soon after, along with 60 or so others from the lounge, we were taken on a stadium tour, by Doubtful Dexter, who in his previous life was a standover man for the Kremlin.

Like everyone else I was amazed at Sir Peter's memorabilia in the eastern stand. Howitt was quick to say: "There is nothing as good as that anywhere in New Zealand."

And like most at the match I was thrilled when the Warriors led 16-0 after 14 minutes. Luck did not play a part, just great football from the home team. Then came the long injury break for the injured James Tamou. While it could not be avoided, it certainly did the Warriors no favours.

In Australia, the Warriors great attacking play leaves us in awe. While it may not seem likely after the last few weeks, their time will come.

With Issac Luke, Shaun Johnson and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck as their spine for next year, they will score plenty of tries, and I for one, can't wait.

Keep supporting the Warriors and be part of the crowd next season.

We Got Thrashed

THE VODAFONE Warriors made an astonishing start with three tries in 12 minutes but the Cowboys took total control at Mt Smart in a game where we really did not expect much different.

Nine unanswered tries to win 50-16, a record over us at Mt Smart made it a depressing night.

Johnathan Thurston had the ball on a string.

Tuimoala Lolohea's footwork was magnificent for his try, then Mason Lino pushed through a grubber for Ken Maumalo to score, and Lolohea did the same to send in Dominique Peyroux to make it 16-0 after 12 minutes. I think we all dared to dream, but it rapidly became a nightmare.

The injury to James Tamou stopped the game for an eternity and it was all one way traffic after that.

The visitors made it 50 without response with their ninth try of the night.

Not Much To Celebrate But...

Simon Mannering made an astonishing 64 tackles against the Cowboys and missed just one. In the process he took his season's tally past 1000. Mannering started the round with 958 tackles and now has a total of 1022, while Brisbane hooker McCullough made 54 tackles against the Sydney Roosters to sit on 1036 for the season to date.

We only managed to complete 19 of our 29 sets, the Cowboys did 38 of 42. It was the same old story too, 11 errors to the Cowboys four, and they murdered us in the tackle breaks 36 to 17, and in the line breaks 8-2.

We made an astonishing 382 tackles, the Cowboys only had to bother 241 times. As well as Mannering, Nathan Friend chipped in with 55, Albert Vete 38, Bodene Thompson 37, Dominique Peyroux 36, Charlie Gubb 30, and Sione Lousi 27.

Not too many had much to cheer about but Ken Maumalo was our busiest with 12 runs, Jonathan Wright, Simon Mannering and Ryan Hoffman all made 11. Tuimoala Lolohea was the only player to go over 100 metres, managing 119.



Surgery For Lillyman

Prop Jacob Lillyman is booked in for surgery after confirmation he had his cheekbone broken in the opening seconds of the match against North Queensland. The 31-year-old was injured in the first tackle of the game when he collided with three Cowboys defenders.

He is the third Vodafone Warrior to have season-ending surgery in the last month, joining Shaun Johnson (ankle) and Manu Vatuvei (shoulder).

The injury leaves us without our two first-choice front rowers for next Sunday's clash against Wests Tigers with Ben Matulino still suspended.

So by my reckoning that is Glen Fisiiahi, David Fusitu'a, Ben Henry, Johnson, Ngani Laumape, Thomas Leuluai, Lillyman and Vatuvei all gone. Depressing list isn't it?

Not The Send-off Anyone Wanted

The last home game of the year is always a chance to send off departing players in style, but there was none of that on Saturday.

I for one am sorry to see 10-season veteran Sam Rapira ago. Hell of a nice guy and I really wish him all the best in the Super League.

Rapira, will continue his playing career with Huddersfield. With 173 appearances in all, Sam is sixth on our all-time list, and holds the record for most games in the front row.

Three players took the field for the last time at home - hooker Nathan Friend (84 games), fullback Sam Tomkins (36) and centre Dominique Peyroux (22).

Others given a send-off were standoff Chad Townsend (40), back rower Sebastine Ikahihifo (37), centre Ngani Laumape (30), fullback/wing Glen Fisiiahi (25) and Siliva Havili (14).

Talent Recognised

The NRL.com writer Jack Brady identified his top rookies the other day, and Solomone Kata and Tuimoala Lolohea made the list, Solomone at five and Tui at two.

The full list was Shaun Lane (Bulldogs), Kyle Lovett (Tigers), Aaron Gray (Rabbitohs), Chris Grevsmuhl (Rabbitohs), Kane Elgey (Titans), Kata (Warriors), Reagan Campbell-Gillard (Panthers),

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

Euan Aitken (Dragons), Lolohea (Warriors), Jack Bird (Sharks).

This is what he had to say about Kata: Having boomed on to the scene at the Auckland Nines – where he made the Team of the Tournament – Kata has built on his early-season success to play every game for the Warriors this season, becoming quite the crowd favourite across the ditch.

He's produced the fifth-most tackle breaks in the competition and has proved he's not a one trick pony by also averaging 114.5 metres per game and scoring 11 tries.

And about Lolohea: Not expected to have played as many games as he has this season, Lolohea still qualifies as a 2015 rookie after playing just three games last year. Having quickly become the Warriors' Mr Fix-It, Lolohea has filled in at halfback, in the centres, on the wing and at fullback during different times of the year. Amazingly quick, the 20-year-old is currently undergoing a litmus test – with Shaun Johnson out for the season – as he looks to push for a permanent spot at five-eighth in 2016 with Chad Townsend Sharks-bound next year.

Juniors Downed Too

The Juniors hopes of finals footy are looking shaky after North Queensland won 24-10, the Cowboys' 12th win on end, which sent us to eighth.

Wests Tigers – our opponents next Sunday – climbed above us with a win over Cronulla and just two points behind in ninth is Melbourne.

Even our NSW side had nothing to cheer about

Penrith made it a 22-10 victory

over the Vodafone Warriors in a tough New South Wales Cup contest at Mt Smart on Saturday. The two teams went into the clash equal at the head of the table on 32 points alongside Wyong and the Mounties.

With halfback Mason Lino called up for his NRL debut, coach Stacey Jones used Northcote's Levi Norton in the halves in a reshuffled line-up that featured numerous players straight out of Auckland's Fox Memorial. Three of them were on the bench – Sione Fe'ao (Otahuhu), Uila Aiolupo (Otaru) and Ray Talimalie (Mangere East), along with Vodafone Junior Warriors prop Bunty Afoa, making his NSW Cup debut.

Team For The Tigers

Matt Allwood and Sebastine Ika-hihifo have been recalled for the Vodafone Warriors' NRL encounter with Wests Tigers at Campbelltown on Sunday (4pm NZT).

Allwood has been named on the wing for just his second NRL appearance of the season, while Ika-hihifo replaces the injured Jacob Lillyman at prop.

Bodene Thompson returns to the back row.

After joining from Canberra, Allwood scored in his debut against Brisbane in March. An ankle injury later sidelined him during a campaign in which he has made 11 appearances for the New South Wales Cup side.

Ika-hihifo has played predominantly in the NSW Cup but now returns for his eighth NRL outing of the season, while Thompson's inclusion ensures the experienced combination in the back row with Simon Mannering and Ryan Hoffman is restored.

After debuting as Vodafone Warrior No 202 last weekend, Mason Lino is again in the halves with his former Marist clubmate Tuimoala Lolohea.

“With Jake out and Ben Matulino still suspended we're missing a huge amount of experience in the front row but we know what Seb will give us, and Albie Vete was impressive with the way he kept pushing through and turning up against the Cowboys,” coach Andrew McFadden said.

We face a Wests Tigers side sitting last on the table on 18 points, with both teams coming off heavy defeats, the Tigers losing 40-18 to Cronulla.

Vodafone Warriors: Sam Tomkins, Allwood, Dominique Peyroux, Solomone Kata, Jonathan Wright, Lino, Lolohea, Ika-hihifo, Nathan Friend, Vete, Thompson, Hoffman, Mannering. Interchange: Konrad Hurrell, Sione Lousi, Charlie Gubb, Sam Lisone, John Palavi.

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Ben Henry with Sir Peter.



Callum From Brunner with Sir Peter.



Neil From Wellington with Callum from Brunner.



Glen Fisiiahi and David Fusitu'a.



Glen Fisiiahi talks about going back to rugby.



Hornby Rugby League, Vodafone Warriors & North Queensland Cowboys. Nicholas Narbey, Conley Saofai, Mark Cosgrove, Aaron Cooper, Greg Scanlan.



Issy Campbell with Sir Peter.



It was great to see so many people on the tour for our last home game of the session!



John and Wendy McElney Warriors fans from Te Puke.



Monique Harvey from Nelson with Sir Peter.



Garry Pegs win the Vodafone Jersey.



Neil Higgans from Dunedin with Sir Peter.



Neill and Julie had a great night. They were all the way from Dunedin.



President of the Greymouth Marist Rugby League Juniors Rodger presents Sir Peter with a club jersey at the game on Saturday night..



Rachael and Mark Krutz, Craig and Renee Leathley auction winners at the Stratford High School touring team netball fundraisers. Who came up to the cowboys game as part of the auction package.



Shane Endacott former Warrior gives a half time summary.



Steve Anngow from Christchurch with Nigel Smith one of the Lounge sponsors who drove up from Hamilton.



Thomas George MP from Australia and Barry Ross from Australia.

Dear the Mad Butcher and Tony,

THANK YOU so much for helping me have the best birthday ever :) It was amazing to come to the game and hang out with you in the lounge. I really enjoyed the tour of the stadium and seeing a picture of Butch Coll when he was a Kiwi. Dad got a video of that guy singing Happy Birthday to me!!

It was a shame that the Warriors lost, but at the end of the game I got a photo with Sam Tompkins.

On Sunday morning we went to Mission Bay for breakfast and my cousin took us to Kelly Tarltons before we had to go to the airport.

Thanks again - I hope you can come to Greymouth one day and see me play league.

From your friend,

Callum Brown (age 9)



NRL Biggest Threat to Kiwis Tour

By John Coffey QSM



THE BIGGEST threat to the Kiwis' number one international ranking might not be the England team they will encounter later this year but the National Rugby League officials in Australia who control the competition in which they play their club football.

Earlier this month the NRL, through its off-the-cuff rule changes and inconsistent judiciary system, almost simultaneously suspended four of our Test forwards, Ben Matulino, Martin Taupau, Adam Blair and Issac Luke, with Luke successfully fighting a second charge.

Surely the New Zealand Rugby League now has a case for informing the NRL it will not recognise any suspensions which extend into the Kiwis tour – they play a match against top club Leeds as their only preparation for the three-Test series.

Many people have long argued club suspensions should be served exclusively at club level. Now that the NRL is no longer consulting the International Rugby League Federation before deviating from the official laws of the game, the NZRL can argue any penalties incurred in “NRL football” should be served in “NRL football” – not in rugby league as we know it.

The NRL incredibly changed the law relating to shoulder charges a mere few hours before the kick-off of round 22. Manly, for one, did not receive proper notification before it took the field. There was no way Willie Mason should have been given a two-match suspension for breaching a rule no one in his club knew had been changed.

All players will not be treated equally as the NRL season winds down. Half of the clubs will play their last matches in early September. The others advance to the play offs, culminating with the grand final on October 4. One would expect those who incur suspensions would receive equal justice. Not so.

Once their club commitments are over the Kiwis and English players will turn their attention towards the Tests in November. Australian players will be putting their feet up and not pulling their boots on again until 2016 pre-season fixtures.

Let's say that a Kiwi star was to infringe in his last club game and faced a three-match ban. What incen-

tive is there for his club to fight for him, as Souths did for Luke last week? After all, Kiwis can work suspensions off by missing Tests for their country. The club will then have him for pre-season training and the risk of being injured in England is eliminated.

In comparison, Australian players can be “suspended” from meaningless pre-season games and still be available for the opening premiership round. That anomaly reduces a New Zealand v England Test match at the London Olympic stadium to the level of a pre-season romp in the bush. Is that justice? Not likely.

We hear plenty of emotional pleading from across the Tasman about how unfair it is to cost someone a State of Origin appearance (not to mention the \$30,000 match payment) or a grand final (as Luke experienced in 2014). But there is no-one in the Sydney media or NRL club scene who will voice similar comments about a New Zealander or an Englishman missing a Test match or three. The NRL showed its contempt for the international game by scrapping the Anzac Test without even conferring with the NZRL.

I once compiled a very long list of Kiwis suspended by Australian authorities from playing for their country, starting with Dean Bell at Eastern Suburbs in 1985. Eventually I chucked it in the waste basket as a lost cause. That was even before the NRL regarded itself as being of such importance as to ignore the official playing laws of rugby league.

When the Fifita brothers recently harassed a referee in an A grade game, the Penrith Junior Rugby League banned them for 12 months. But the NRL recognises only the six-match ban subsequently imposed on them by their Cronulla club. Conveniently, they will be free to play in the NRL finals.

Why should the NZRL not use the Fifita case as a precedent for different rugby league bodies recognising different punishments for the same infringement?

Win 1 of 2 Signed 2015 Vodafone Warriors Jerseys

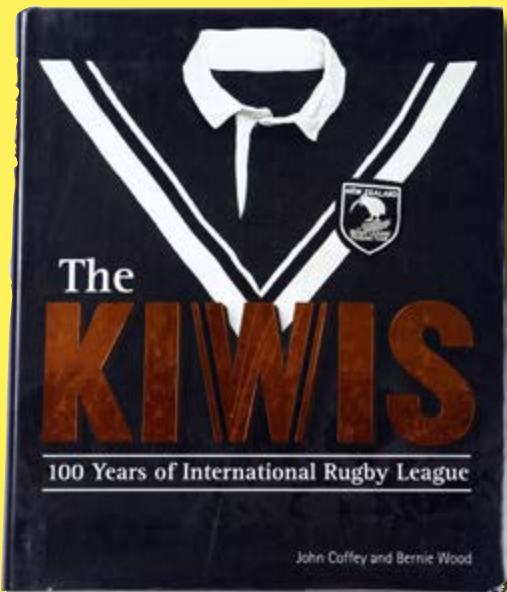
Only 5 Days Left - Get your entries in now!



1



2



Conciliation Prize:
The Kiwis 100 Years of
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John Coffey and Bernie Wood

To enter: **YOU MUST** subscribe to
Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club
Newsletter, only one entry per
person. Competition closes on
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Manukau, Auckland

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Fox Memorial: The first weekend of the Auckland Rugby League's competition threw up some cracking matches. Pt Chevalier thrashed Marist 48-10 in the Appliance Shed Fox Memorial, sending the Saints crashing out of the competition and booking the Pirates a place in the next round, where they will face Papakura for a spot in the grand final. Mt Albert went straight into the big dance by winning 20-16 against Papakura.

Fox Memorial Premier 1st: Papakura's Reserves fell 40-32 to Glenora, while Pt Chev's Reserves triumphed 26-16 over Mt Albert.

SAS Sharman Cup: The matches were tight, a nine-point margin in the 19-10 win Bay Roskill recorded over Pakuranga, and just two points in Manurewa's 24-22 win over Mt Wellington. Bay Roskill play again this weekend against Te Atatu for a spot in the grand final, and Manurewa face Richmond.

SAS Sharman Cup Premiers Hibiscus Coast beat Ponsonby 28-24, and Te Atatu edged the East Coast Barracudas 32-28, to set up the grand final.

Open age restricted: Auckland's smallest club, the Waiheke Rams, won their grand final 10-8 over the Hibiscus Coast Raiders. Waiheke has just one team, and won 17 from 17 with just 22 registered players and no lower grades to promote from. The support of the fans kept the team rolling. League is a game of fairytales, so great to see the minnows of Auckland come up trumps.

Premier 2nd Championship: Richmond Tokes 38-26 winners over the Bay Roskill God Squad. Pennant: Pt Chevalier Pirates 36 Otago Scorpion Kings 26.

U18s: Manurewa Marlins 26 Marist Brothers 24.

U20s: Otara 28 Mangere East 27.

Women's Comp: The semis of the women's comp were also played, with the Richmond Roses dealing to the Otahuhu Bluez 30-18, and Papakura far too good for Manurewa, winning 30-4.

It's great to see all those wonderful names from our great local clubs because they are the real background of our game. Sure I love the Kiwis and the Vodafone Warriors, but it is truly wonderful to see all those parents, family and friends out supporting their local clubs.

The only thing missing for me was the Mangere East Hawks name. Not a stellar year for a club that has a special place in my heart, but there is always another season.

There may not be a load of silverware in the cabinet, but there were plenty of smiles and cheers, and friendships forged, and that is what it is all about. It's too easy to forget that is what sport is about.

Congratulations To St Paul's

St Paul's College is the top secondary school rugby league team in Auckland, edging out Kelston Boys' High 23-20 to win the SAS College Rugby League grand final.

The title marks a return to dominance for the perennial heavyweight, which surrendered both the Auckland and national titles to Kelston last year.

After the match St Paul's coach Phil Sargent, who has been with the school's team since 2002, said it was a victory built on defensive pressure early in sets.

"We put a lot of emphasis on the

first three tackles in defence. We pushed that in the first half and put them under pressure. We are pretty happy with the result. It was a bit close in the end but we are happy with how the boys played."

Albert Goes Back To School

When Albert Vete was at St Kentigern College he was scouted by the Vodafone Warriors. He signed and, after impressing in the NYC programme, was invited into the club's NRL squad in October 2013.

However, after completing the 2014 without securing a debut or a fulltime contract, Vete was left contemplating his options. Fast forward 10 months and the 2015 season has seen the rise of Vete as a premier league product.

His belief in his ability has made him our stand-out rookie prop, featuring in 19 games so far this season, and he has been signed for two more years.

Despite the success, Vete has nurtured an ongoing relationship with St Kentigern College and, in particular, the school's PE department.

Vete is in his final year of a Bachelor of Education at the University of Auckland and spends time at the school giving back to the students and ticking off valuable teaching experience.

The head of PE and mentor James Went, who taught Vete when he was a student at St Kentigern, notes: "Albert has been great to have around. The students really respond to him and the fact that he was once a pupil here."



St Paul's Claim Thrilling SAS College Rugby League Grand Final

ST PAUL'S College have returned to the top of secondary school rugby league in Auckland, edging out Kelston Boys High School 23-20 to win the SAS College Rugby League grand final on Saturday.



The title marks a return to dominance for the perennial heavyweights, who surrendered both the Auckland and national titles to Kelston last year.

A first-half double to eventual Man of the Match winner Sean Tofa-Timoteo did much of the damage, while St Paul's captain Beau Cordtz stood up with his kicking game and moments of individual brilliance in attack.

Further tries to Cordtz, and James Manoa, coupled with three conversions and a field goal from Cordtz ensured St Paul's were on top for the majority of the game.

Four-pointers to Kelston's Fongi Tali, Setefano Maava, Delaney Chaney-Puata meant the game went down to the final minute, but the St Paul's line managed to hold out, securing a 23-20 win and a return to the top of school rugby league in Auckland.

After the match St Paul's coach Phil Sargent, who has been with the school's team since 2002, said it was a victory built off defensive pressure early in sets.

"We put a lot of emphasis on the first three tackles in defence, we pushed that in the first half and put them under pressure, then they kicked the ball out on the full or turned it over, which gave us better field positioning," he said.

"We were composed, completed our sets and played some good structured football.

"We are pretty happy with the result, it was a bit close in the end but we are happy with how the boys played," he said.

St Paul's 23 (Sean Tofa-Timoteo x2, Beau Cordtz, James Manoa tries; Beau Cordtz 3 goals; Beau Cordtz 1 field goal.) BEAT Kelston 20 (Fongi Tali, Setefano Maava, Delaney Chaney-Puata tries; Austin Masiutama 2 goals, Tairelle Parker 2 goals.) HT: 12-8. At Birkenhead War



Sean Tofa-Timoteo on the break.



Soane Hufanga charges towards the line.



St Paul's College.

Auckland Grand Finals in Full Swing

FOUR MORE Auckland Rugby League grand finals were held on Sunday, August 23 at Mount Smart Stadium #2.

Up first was the Upright Access U/18's final, which turned out to be a thrilling encounter, eventually won 26-24 by Manurewa over Marist.

A highlight of that match was the performance of Marist hooker Sean Tofa-Timoteo, who scored a double less than 12 hours after doing the same for his St Paul's College side in their SAS College Rugby League grand final win over Kelston.



Pt Chevalier proved too tough for Otara in the Premier 2nd Pennant final, winning 36-18.

Current Vodafone Warriors Ben Henry and John Palavi were among the crowd who gathered to watch the Bay Roskill God Squad try and defend their Premier 2nd Championship title, while there was some star power on the field as well, with former Kiwi international Jerome Ropati lining up for the Bay Roskill side.

In the end that wasn't enough to get them over the line though, as the Richmond Tokes overpowered them to win 38-26.

The final game saw the Waiheke Rams claim the Open Age Restricted title, edging out the Hibiscus Coast Raiders 12-8.

This Saturday sees major semi-finals for the SAS Sharman Cup (11.00am), Women (12.45pm), Appliance Shed Fox Memorial (2.35pm) and grand final for the U/20 Open (4.00pm).

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$2 per person under the age of 15 (bring ID).

Get out and sport some top level local rugby league action!

Full results from Sunday, August 23

U/18 - Manurewa 26 Marist 24

Premier 2nd Pennant - Pt Chevalier 36 Otara 18

Premier 2nd Championship - Richmond Tokes 38 Bay Roskill 26



Well done to the Waiheke Rams winning their final. Despite being the only team at their club they won every game this season.



Manurewa Under 18.

Jone's Vulcans on Track for the Top 4

By John Deaker



IT'S NOT all doom and gloom around Warriors HQ with Stacey Jones's Vulcans team already guaranteed a top 4 position in the NSW Cup's finals series. This week they take on the competition leaders the Mounties (Canberra's Reserve team) in their final regular season match. It's a relief for Jones to already have their top 4 position guaranteed going in to this week. Not only is the match against the top team, it's also similar to other weeks he's experienced as the coach of the 'feeder' team to the Warriors where there is challenges beyond his control in just trying to field a quality team of 17 each week.

"It can be a bit tricky because of the three types of players we have," Jones explains.

"We have our experienced players that drop down from the NRL, then we have our part time players who are involved with the local Fox comp – and then we have some Under 20's players. And the Fox competition is hurting us a bit at the moment too with their finals going on and their local clubs requiring their services.

Adapting to the constantly changing list of players available to him has been one of the major adjustments Jones has had to make this year as he's taken the next step in his coaching career following his successful stint with the Under 20's. The Warriors lengthy list of injuries has naturally had a flow-down effect on the Vulcan's resources while they've also had their own injuries crop up too.

Mason Lino has been one of the more recent 'losses' to Jones after he'd been a key part of the Vulcans 2015 campaign. It's likely Jones will get him back on board as his team pushes on to the NSW Cup finals series.

"He's been playing with a bit more confidence this year," says Jones.

"He was coming back from a shoulder reconstruction last year. The thing about Mason is that he knows the limitations of this game. He could be the type of player that plays a lot of first grade" Jones speculates.

"He might not do anything flash but he knows how to get the team round the park... He's more like the Cooper Cronk than a Shaun Johnson type player."

The regulations state that players can return to the team if they've played more games in the NSW Cup than they've played in the NRL. This will mean peo-

ple like Sam Rapira and Dominique Peyroux are also possibilities to be involved with the Vulcans come finals time.

Jones has been assisted by Willie Swann off the field this season with John Palavi captaining the team. The 'Little General' Jones, who captained the Warriors and the Kiwis with such dignity himself, has also been impressed by David Bhana's leadership

"The guys who deserve a rap are the mainstays of our team, John Palavi and David Bhana - those two guys are the leaders of our team and keep people pretty grounded around them regardless of whether they're young local guys or the full timers."

All the finals series for the NSW Cup will be based in Australia. Travelling across the Tasman so often during the season has been challenging for the team and is clearly a disadvantage they have compared to all their opponents.

"Travel is a tough one for us," says Jones.

"We're the only team that has to travel in this competition. The only time when the other teams travel is once a year to us."

Despite this clear disadvantage the obvious benefit of having the team travel is that it genuinely helps conditions New Zealand players to this travelling obstacle that players face when they push up in to the Warriors ranks.

If the Vulcans manage to win the NSW Cup there is also an exciting reward that awaits them. Last year was the first time that the NSW Cup winner took on the Queensland Cup winner on the day of the NRL Grand Final and that initiative is going to continue indefinitely. First things first though: it's just nice for the Warriors club and their supporters to know that they're guaranteed of some players being involvement during finals football.

Nice Note of Thanks

I GOT THIS email from Craig Leathley, who joined us in the lounge at the weekend all the way from Taranaki, having bought the experience at a charity do!

Hi Sir Peter

I'd just like to thank you for the great weekend we had at the Mad Butcher's Lounge. I was part of the auction winners with Rachel Krutz from Stratford. I thank you for making the effort to pick us up at the hotel and transfer us to the game, in true Kiwi style in the back of the ute. I had a great night and enjoyed the tour. I am a firm believer the Warriors need to stay at Mt Smart, as they have really made it their home. Can you please pass on our thanks also to Dexter for helping us out around the place. It's great to see the team you have around you to support you where they can. Also can you please pass on a big thanks to David Kemeys your editor, as he ended up giving us a ride home just because he heard we were catching a taxi. I just love the big family atmosphere that you have in the lounge. It's a credit to the person you are and what you have stood for. You are a great ambassador for New Zealand in a lot of fields and charities and I admire that. You have done the hard yards and as we saw at the weekend, even though you should have been tucked up in bed, since you were sick, you were out there entertaining and making sure everyone was well looked after. Lastly, **I'm not a person that reads a lot, but after the auction at the Stratford Netball fundraiser, I haven't been able to put your book down. What a great book, What a Ride Mate!**

Craig

You are welcome mate. It was our pleasure to have you and thank you for your very kind words. Everyone involved with the lounge does it out of love of the game, and I am blessed to have good people around me who make it happen. I get all the credit, they do all the work!



TUIMOALA LOLOHEA scored a fantastic try during the NRL Rugby League match between the Vodafone Warriors and The North Queensland Cowboys

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz

canterbury

25% OFF

BUY NOW - WARRIORSSTORE.CO.NZ

Have you read my book? “What a Ride Mate!”

No? Then here's your chance!

First published in 2007, this book details my life. From the blurb:

Here is what readers had to say:

To be fair, I couldn't put the book down one Sunday, so my wife had to wash the car and mow the lawns, bloody good of her.

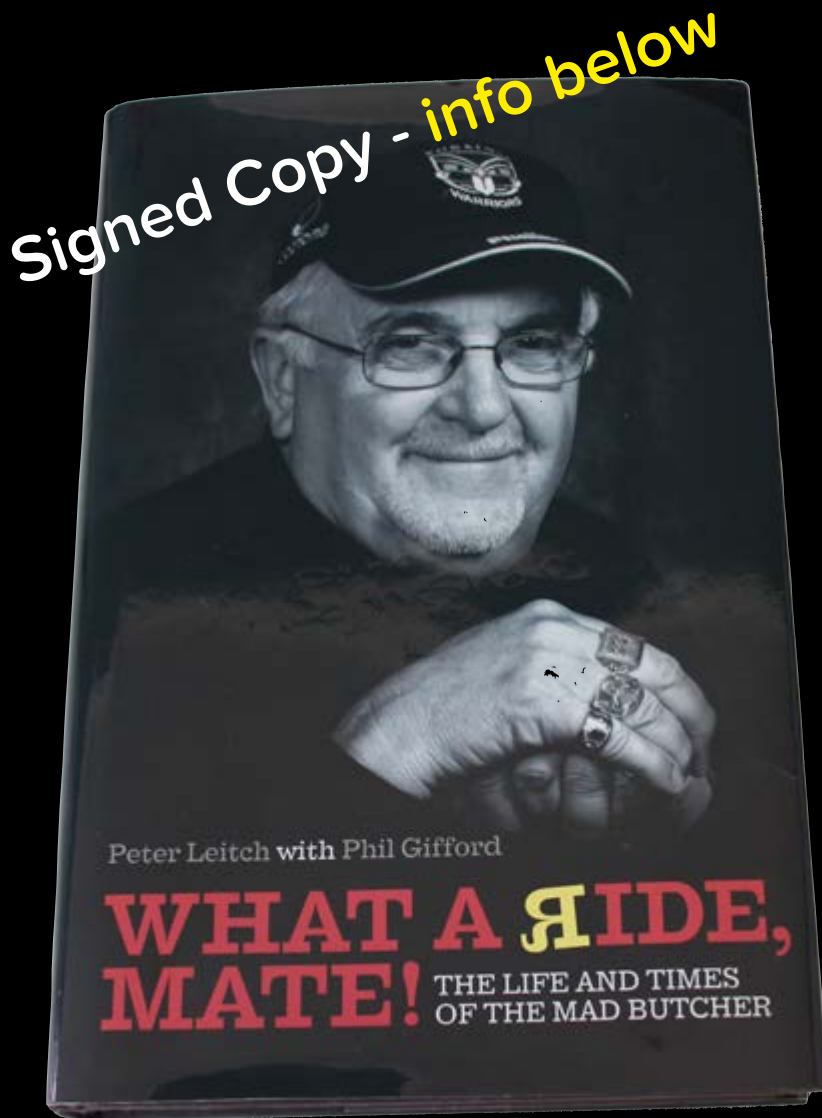
This is an amazing yarn about a great New Zealander who has proven that with a positive attitude, self-belief along with treating people respectfully anything is possible.

The message in this book can be life changing in such a positive way, so get your copy and “enjoy the ride mate”.

- Tony Stack

I confess I thoroughly enjoyed it and particularly the little stories from your childhood and the backgrounds of your Mum and Dad. I always think understanding who our parents are, what they cared about and their approach to life, gives us great insight into who we are. I also had no idea of the sheer number of people you know and who think so highly of you. I feel privileged to tell people I know you as a mate.

- Dave



We have just done a limited reprint of my book and as a special deal for readers you can get a copy for only \$25 including non-rural delivery inside New Zealand.

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Letter from Nelson Bays Volleyball

THANK YOU from the House of Sets – Nelson Bays Volleyball
We had no idea what was in store for us!

Through the annual local fundraiser Sponsorship Lottery for our Nelson Bays Volleyball Development Programme, two lucky sponsors found themselves winning MONDO donated air travel for two, one night's accommodation at the IBIS ELLERSLIE (thank you Patrick), match tickets to the WARRIORS v Cowboys match and an invite into the STACEY JONES Member's Lounge courtesy of the MAD BUTCHER!!

.....and what an experience for our lucky winners – TALLEYS NELSON and DUANE WHITING CONTRACTORS! The stories had been well shared back home, before the plane hit the tarmac back in Nelson.

Thank you DEXTER – wingman for the Mad Butcher – a great tour of the “home of the Warriors” to include the incredible collection of memorabilia from across the Warrior's 20 years, along with other pieces from many other sporting codes. Outstanding! Dexter - your quiet sense of time, space and patience is admired – and your leg-over on the ride to the stadium is still cause for much laughter!

Thank you SIR PETER – what is there left to say? Your hospitality was amazing! From the 12-man ute ride to the stadium, the dinner, the opportunity to watch the Warriors from the lounge, to hear from well-spoken, humorous and exceptionally presented Warriors (who obviously love you like their Dad!), to mix with great Warriors fans and enjoy a laugh a minute! Allan – the “old grey prick”, believes you got it wrong – he doesn't believe he is “grey”!

Thank you too, for sending down a copy of your book – WHAT A RIDE MATE Life and Times of the Mad Butcher is a “must read”I'm sending copies to my kids! Murray Deaker sets the scene perfectly and Phil Gifford completes the biography with a sense of humility, admiration, respect and enjoyment! To think however, that this book is just another way that Sir Peter will contribute to society - by donating the proceeds to charity – TIME FOR YOU ALL TO BUY A COPY.....enjoy the “Ride”, and in so doing, read a great biography of an iconic New Zealander – “to be fair” Sir Peter is a “bloody cracker”! I promise – you won't put the book down, and then you will finish how is it possible for one man to do so much, for so many, with such incredible energy and passion.....and love every minute doing it?

Thank you “Mate”!! Pam Brodie - Nelson Bays Volleyball



The team. Who all flew up from Nelson to watch the game. They had a ball.

Vera Campbell

Dear Sir Peter,

IT WAS lovely meeting you, Glen and Dexter on Saturday night. I am so grateful that you drew my name out to win your State Of Origin jersey & I'm still in shock that I have a piece of Queensland treasure in hand. I suddenly have a lot of new best friends now!

My daughter - Jaime, niece - Paige & I were truly overwhelmed with being able to visit you in your lounge. I steered clear of the windows as I'm a whimp when it comes to heights but looking around at all the memorabilia & player pics you have was amazing. Following that, I had a great night with work mates up in the corporate lounge (my first time in there too) & my girls finally managed to get their special moment with Shaun Johnson in the members tent & were absolutely over the moon. They were completely star struck and teary eyed after meeting him because they are huge fans & have been waiting all season for that moment. After such an awesome night it was unfortunate that our boys weren't able to capitalize on the lead they had in the first 15 minutes. But no matter what happens, we will still continue to support them hand over heart.

Many thanks again, Vera Campbell



Fully wired for footy

MANAGER'S LIFE IN RUGBY

Emma Herd

FIFTY years after his first involvement with top level rugby league, NRL ground manager Bob Lanigan has continued to move with the times.

So there was no hesitation from Mr Lanigan, 72, when iPads and iPhones became a key component of ground management this season.

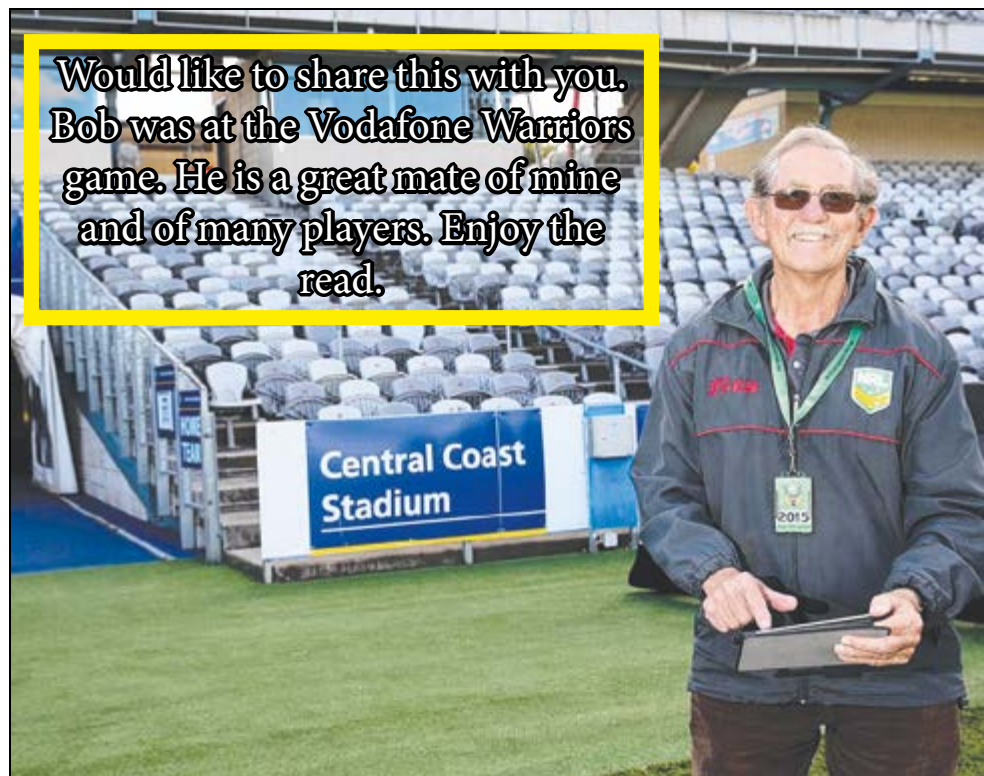
"I knew it was coming so last year I did a seniors course at Kincumber for the iPhone 6 and also an iPad course," he said.

"And I had 35 years with Telstra, so I've been in the technology business most of my life."

Sunday's match between the Bulldogs and the Titans at Central Coast Stadium, Gosford, is Mr Lanigan's final "home" match of his 17th season in the NRL.

He was also Central Coast Storm operations manager from 2007 to 2009.

Mr Lanigan started ground managing in 1999, after working as a trainer under John Monie at Woy



Would like to share this with you. Bob was at the Vodafone Warriors game. He is a great mate of mine and of many players. Enjoy the read.

NRL ground manager Bob Lanigan is keeping up with technology.

Picture: WAIDE MAGUIRE

Woy, Parramatta, Wigan and then with the Warriors in New Zealand. That work followed his own playing career, which included five years in first grade with Newtown as a goalkicking winger from 1965-69.

He continues to enjoy his ground management duties, which have seen him work at World Cups, grand finals, State of Origins and everything in between.

"It's a great job. It's nice to still be involved with the

game and keeping young."

While one of his grandchildren is a "footy head" like him, Mr Lanigan's wife Glenda isn't quite as keen.

"She watched when I used to play but she lets me do my own thing now," he said.



THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S ROUND 25 ISSUE...

Daly Cherry-Evans talks through the toughest year of his career.

FEATURES

- It was one of the most talked about stories of 2015 and now the dust has settled **Daly Cherry-Evans** talks about why he wanted to stay with Manly, what the future holds and what he has to say to everyone who questioned him;
- When **Glenn Stewart** arrived at South Sydney he had an instant bond with **Adam Reynolds**. This season Reynolds has been working hard on improving his game and enjoying the guidance from his new mate;
- **Jake Granville** would be just as happy working as a chippy as he is on the football field but luckily for the NRL and the Cowboys he's persisted with footy and is one of the form players this season;
- There's the fabled tapering effect or the benefit of momentum, but after crunching the numbers we can tell you what kind of form a team needs to be in to have the best chance in the finals;
- The Kiwis were underperforming and he was sacked from his NRL gig, but **Stephen Kearney** is enjoying his assistant role with the Broncos and has the New Zealand team primed for another World Cup tilt.

PLUS... **Greg Alexander** names the essential ingredient for each of the top eight; **Matt Elliott** talks through the impact of momentum to a team's chances; **Nathan Brown** dissects how the injuries to the Cowboys and Roosters will affect their premiership progress.

AND: Official team lists; Warren Smith's Big Clash preview of Storm v Cowboys; News: Bulldogs' defensive goal, Thaiday near being a one-club man, RTS's parting gift for JWH, Gordon's form motivation; Who's That Kid? Eels' Bevan French; Top 8 late season collapses.

PODCAST: Sam Ayoub on Robbie Farah, Luke Lewis, concussion, injuries, plus our fearless predictions.



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NEWSLIFEMEDIA

Feature See what you miss out on when you don't subscribe to Big League Magazine. Thanks to Big League for letting us use these two articles.

They're busy bruising opposition packs on the field, but off it Jared Waerea-Hargreaves and Suaia Matagi are two Kiwis who have more in common than you may think.

BELIEVE it or not, the mid-season trade of 105-kilogram Suaia Matagi from New Zealand isn't the most notable arrival at Roosters HQ this year. Not by a longshot, in the heart-warming category that is.

At the time of writing, the most talked about arrival was young Zahli Rae, the newborn daughter of hard-hitting Kiwi Jared Waerea-Hargreaves and his partner Chelsea Cormack, who welcomed her into the world last week.

"The last week has been awesome," Waerea-Hargreaves tells *Big League*. "It's by far the best time of my life fo far. I've thoroughly enjoyed the whole process of birth and it has been a magnificent experience for both myself and my partner."



Family Guys

Zahli may have a challenger soon, though. "Suaia's partner is due in the next couple of days," Waerea-Hargreaves says, "then we've got Blake Ferguson, whose partner is about four to six weeks behind us.

"It's just a fantastic vibe at the moment and we've all spoken about how we are going to be 'Daddy Day Care 24/7' at the Roosters."

HOME VIDEOS

There was a connection between Waerea-Hargreaves and Matagi long before the pair were adding to their families at the same time; before Matagi turned his life around and used football as an avenue of reform; before he made his NRL debut, while he was still running around for Te Atatu Roosters and Mount Albert Lions in the Auckland Rugby League competition; before anyone outside Auckland even knew who this Matagi bloke was.

Matagi developed a connection to Waerea-Hargreaves and fellow Sydney Roosters big man Sam Moa as he watched them perform hit-up after hit-up, run after run on video footage.

"I used to always do some video on Jared Waerea-Hargreaves and Sam Moa and stuff,"

the Kiwi international tells us. "That was something I used to do back in the days before the forwards. I used to look at that aggression they bring in both attack and defence and how it's still so controlled. That's something I've always tried to base my game around too, with the aggression and stuff, the boys feed off that.

"That was something I always used to do a couple of years ago, watching the videos and stuff. And then to get the opportunity to play alongside them is just a dream come true."

BACK IN BLACK

If Matagi had to choose a bloke to emulate, there would be few better options than Waerea-Hargreaves. The pair first encountered each other in a New Zealand-Samoa World Cup





BY
**SCOTT
BAILEY**
@scottybailey313

match in 2013 and it was there Matagi made an immediate impact on the Roosters prop.

"He ran straight at me and I thought 'wow, that's awesome,'" recounts Waerea-Hargreaves. "And then this year when I heard he signed with us, I was like 'wow, that is even more awesome!'"

Matagi's international career has taken flight since that hit-up—including making his Kiwi debut during last year's Four Nations. His new Roosters team-mate, however, has experienced a plateau at that level. He was 'rested' from the Four Nations and then officially dropped from the New Zealand side come the mid-year Test last May.

"It's definitely one of my goals to be there at the end of the year in that black jersey," Waerea-Hargreaves says. "Not making the side at the start of the year has given me some sort of drive to get there, it's exciting times.

"I've just got to do my job, consistency is probably my main goal here, perform well and hopefully I'll be in the black jersey at the end of the year."

Consistency has certainly become a feature of Waerea-Hargreaves' efforts in 2015; he averages 125 metres and

29 tackles per match and has completed almost 94 per cent of those he has attempted.

"You've come to expect him to play well," says fellow senior player Aidan Guerra.

"This year, a lot more than previous years, he's put back-to-back performances together and that's what we've come to expect from him, where he can get that go-forward going and come up with big plays, even as a front-rower.

"We look to him for inspiration at times as well as a couple of other players. He never lets us down."

That inspiration was on show again last week when the Roosters were forced to fight back against the lowly Eels. It was an inspiring run from Waerea-Hargreaves during the second half, in which

he carried several defenders for more than 10 metres to cross for a try, that put his team in front and helped them to victory.

The prop forward credits the heartbreak of that missed selection as the reason for his monstrous year.

"It gives me motivation to get back in there. Obviously there were reasons I wasn't picked and form was one of them. I've turned the page and am just looking forward to working hard to get back in the black jersey."

THE MAN

Usually when a journalist asks a player about a fellow team-mate, the standard replies are trotted out.

'He's a great guy, one of our hardest working at training,' you are told, before he adds: 'So-and-so is always the first guy in the gym and the last man out at the end of the day.'

So what does Waerea-Hargreaves say about Matagi based on the few months he has worked alongside him?

"Oh he's the man! He's the man bro. He's the boss," he exclaims. "He does not fear anything. He doesn't say much, you know what you're going to get from him and that's what you want. He goes hard and then he goes home.

"As soon as I heard the news that we had signed him I was off my seat. He's been awesome this year for us. He came over a little bit later but he works hard, he's willing to learn and you know what you're going to get from him."

The move has worked well for Matagi as well, it seems.

He was off-contract at the Warriors at the end of this season and was languishing in reserve grade there, but the Roosters offered him a lifeline and he's now back playing NRL.

"It was pretty tough at first," Matagi admits. "It was scary because I hadn't done anything like this before, but as a family we just wanted to see what else was out there.

"Things weren't working out at the Warriors. I got a call from the manager telling me there was an opportunity for me to come over. It took me a while to think about it, I didn't want to have any regrets and I just wanted to back myself and give it my all wherever I went.

"It was sad to leave the boys but at the same time it was a big step out of my comfort zone and I've learnt a lot."

A lot about football—he is now experiencing different structures and style at the Roosters—and a lot about life; for himself and his growing family (he's expecting his fourth child).

"It's beautiful and exciting at the same time," he says as he looks over the famed waters of Bondi Beach. "Especially to come [to Sydney] with the family, it's not just me for my career, it's the family as well.

"It's been good just to travel as a family, it's opened our eyes. We'd never been outside of Auckland. We've been there our whole lives.

"There's a bigger world out there than just New Zealand."

From AFL, union to the NRL, Solomone Kata has come a lot further than through a few codes to make his way to the top. By **MICHAEL BURGESS**

SOLOMONE Kata has arrived this year—from absolutely nowhere. Across the NRL there are compelling stories of players who have made it from unlikely beginnings, kids who have hailed from the back of beyond, or overcome significant personal obstacles to succeed. But it's hard to imagine a more unlikely journey than Kata's.

"When I found out about his background I nearly fell off my chair," says Warriors team-mate Ryan Hoffman. "It's amazing, quite unique."

This year Kata has been a shining light in a typically roller-coaster Warriors season—full of highs, lows and a sharp drop at the end. He's played in every game, scored 11 tries (equal top in the team), made 70 tackle busts (top) and matched up well against the best centres in the game. He's a rookie who's rocked—but that's only half the story. To understand Kata's journey, you need to take one yourself.

First, there's a 2,000km flight from Auckland to the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa — the hometown of Konrad Hurrell. By Tongan standards it's a bustling metropolis (24,000 people) with a supermarket, a bank and cafes, but you need to go further. From Nuku'alofa, a gruelling 22-hour ferry ride north takes you to the distant Vava'u archipelago. In a small village there you'll find the Kata family home.

"My family doesn't have much," says Kata, "Not much at all, but they tried to give me everything they could. Now it's my turn."

"Konrad [Hurrell's] story is well known," says Richard White, who manages both players. "But compared to Solomone, Konnie comes from the big smoke."

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Kata grew up on Vava'u Lahi, the principal island within the Vava'u group. Inland from Neiafu, the biggest town (6,000 inhabitants) you'll find his village—Leimatu'a, population 500—and take a step back in time.

It's a place where barter systems are still used alongside the local currency and travel on horseback is as common as cars. Shops, as we might define them, don't really exist. Tourism on the island is developing but most people in

Leimatu'a rely on subsistence farming. Taro, yam, sweet potato and cassava are common crops while mango and papaya trees also thrive in the tropical conditions.

"My father is a farmer," says Kata. "He grows taro and some other things for the family. We have horses, chickens, pigs. My mother looks after the house."

"Life hasn't really changed there," says Amon Ta'akimoeaka, who manages Kata alongside White. "It still centres on church, family and community. It's pretty simple."

Growing up, Kata shared a room with his five brothers.

"We only had two bedrooms so all my brothers were in one and in the other were our sisters. There was one bed, everyone else was on mattresses on the floor, but during the day we could sleep outside, under the trees."

Kata didn't own a pair of footy boots as a child, and a coconut shell was often the substitute for a football, but he was a keen sportsman and his first big opportunity came in AFL.

"A scout came to Vava'u to pick some players," recalls Kata. "He picked me...so I went to Nuku'alofa to play."

The 2009 AFL Youth Oceania Cup—including Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Nauru—finished with the home side, Tonga, triumphant.

"[At the end] they picked a team to go to Australia," says Kata. "I was picked, but you had to pay your own fare [and] I looked back at my family and they were struggling. I said no, I can't go."

However, another opportunity wasn't far away. Kata was selected—at halfback—for the Tonga under-18 rugby team and was noticed by coaches from Auckland's Sacred Heart College. The 16-year-old



Solomone Kata 2015

Games	21
Tries	11
Metres per game	114
Runs per match	11.4
Tackle busts	76
Line-breaks	11

A Bit of Sol

Article Courtesy of Big League Magazine

accepted a scholarship offer and moved to New Zealand in 2011, living in the school's 170-bed boarding house. He didn't speak English and had never been in a big city; it was like Crocodile Dundee's arrival in America, with an added language barrier.

"It was so hard for me, so I can't imagine what it was like for him," says Hurrell. "Auckland must have been like another world."

Kata was a hit at centre in the 1st XV, though it was tougher off the field.

"'Hello' was all the English I had", reflects Kata. "My classmates used to ask me things and I had no idea. I was so shy, I didn't talk to anyone."

Kata did well at Sacred Heart and by 2012 rugby and league scouts began to circle. He eventually opted for the Warriors.

Kata had never played league but learnt fast. He scored 11 tries (in 17 games) in the 2013 Holden Cup and was promoted to the NSW Cup side the following year.

He later returned to the Junior Warriors, as Stacey Jones's team made their memorable run from eighth place last season.

"If he didn't come back, we don't win the competition," says Jones. "It's as simple as that."

Kata scored three tries in the dramatic grand final win over Brisbane, but Jones highlights an earlier finals performance

against minor premiers Newcastle. Kata was marking Sione Mata'utia, who became the youngest ever Kangaroo in last year's Four Nations.

"Mata'utia was already a bit of a star but Sol tore him to shreds," says Jones. "People watching that day would think he was the first grader."



BREAKOUT YEAR: After Holden Cup success in 2014 (above), Kata has grown in attack (top) and defence (bottom).



MORE TO COME

Kata—who now lives with an uncle in east Auckland and finally has his own bedroom—joined the wider NRL squad for pre-season training ahead of the 2015 season. He was still quiet, relying on translation from compatriots like Manu Vatuvei and Hurrell to be able to follow some drills.

"He had potential but he was a bit raw and needed some work, especially defensively," says Hoffman. "But he's really surprised me with how far he has come."

Kata rarely looks overawed, even when duelling with top-line opposition.

"For me his coming of age moment was against the Roosters in Sydney (Round 19),"

says Hoffman. "Blake Ferguson got through him a few times (left) but Sol didn't drop his bundle at all. If that happened to me when I was Sol's age I would have been tripping over my bottom lip [and] worrying about what the coach was going to say. But Sol stuck with it, backing himself to keep going."

Kata has been the find of the year for the Warriors and it's frightening to imagine how good he could become.

"He's a skilful player but he's also tough," says coach

Andrew McFadden. "His progress has been remarkable but he's very focused."

That focus is because he is not just living a dream, he's changing the life of the entire Kata clan.

"You always hear people talking about doing it for their family," says Ta'akimoeaka. "But Sol actually is. He sends money home every month... imagine the impact when before there was no money."

He's also a good example for young hopefuls. Kata avoids social media and prefers to relax in his hotel room after games while others hit the town. He attends a local church whenever possible and studies English at the club.

"He doesn't cut corners, eats well, prepares well...he's pretty disciplined," says White. "He gives himself the best possible chance."

"Seeing his progression you get a sense of pride," says Hoffman. "I've seen how hard he works [and] he's been one of our best in that regard."

• Michael Burgess is the football and rugby league writer for the New Zealand Herald on Sunday. He was named the 2013 NZ football writer of the year and was a finalist in the Sports Reporter of the year at the 2014 Canon Media Awards.

Article Courtesy of Big League Magazine

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Rodger Hallberg - Marist Rugby League in Greymouth

THIS IS Finlay Brown, Callum Brown, Kristian Hallberg and Mackenzie Hallberg from Marist Rugby League Greymouth, back home with their goodies from the Mad Butcher Still buzzing from a great weekend being hosted by the legend himself, Keeping Junior Rugby League alive on the West Coast, Thanks heaps Sir Peter. Unforgettable.

Just a quick note to Thank you very much for hosting us on Saturday night the kids really loved it, they can't stop talking about you and their experience, we will defiantly try to make the trip again next year maybe with a few more kids from our club.

Once again many thanks for your hospitality

Rodger Hallberg, President Marist Rugby League Juniors, Greymouth



Finlay Brown, Callum Brown, Kristiain Hallberg and Mackenzie Hallberg all proudly wearing their Marist jerseys with their Warriors gear in front.

Prize Winner Marcia

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Marcia and Ian good lounge members supporting cancer society Daffodil Day on Saturday night.

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

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



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