



Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

8th October 2015

Newsletter #93

No advertisements are paid for in this newsletter.

What A week

IFLEW OUT with Air NZ in time to go the Dally M Awards – where the best of the NRL season is celebrated. It should have been renamed the Jonathan Thurston Show, and you can underline how good he really is after that final.

I owe a special vote of thanks to Vodafone Warriors CEO Jim Doyle and NRL boss Dave Smith, for organising the treatment I received. It was terrific to catch up with all the Kiwis in the NRL, and men like Cameron Smith and Billy Slater from the Storm.

Well Done The Menzies Hotel

Not surprisingly, I had a huge amount of work to do ahead of the 2005 Kiwis Reunion and fair play to the Menzies Hotel. They could not do enough for me. I totally recommend the place, the staff were awesome, nothing was too much trouble- and I am the first to admit I can be a bit demanding – but they totally got how important it was to me, and were right into having the Kiwis as guests.

Grand Final Lunch Date

I had the superb Carbine Club Grand Final lunch on Thursday, another chance to meet some of the good people I've been lucky enough to know through league.

I was especially pleased to be there for two men I greatly admire, and who have both been huge servants of the Vodafone Warriors.

The first was Manu Vatuvei, who was presented with his award to mark his 10 tries in 10 seasons achievement. Much has been written and said about Manu, and he deserves every word of it. He has been a huge servant for the Warriors and the Kiwis.

Less has been said about Sam Rapira, who ended his Warriors career this season to pursue a new challenge in the United Kingdom with Huddersfield.

Sam was presented with the Bronze Boot, and I could not have been more pleased for him.

He has toiled in the front row, given 100% of himself, and been one of the finest clubmen you could have hoped for.



My Grand Final Ticket

Continued on next page...

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It was a sensational event and it will live long in my memory.

Fan Site Out Of This World

My day was not over on that Thursday because I also visited Darling Harbour for the NRL Nation site. There were representatives from every NRL club there, not just the Grand Finalists, and it was brilliantly run and a credit to all involved.

It was tremendous to see something that is for the fans, because without them, the game would be nothing.

Even though I was starting tire, I then headed to the live broadcast of The Footy Show, where I even got to sit at NRL CEO Dave Smith's table next to the stage.

I have been to the show a few times and this one was out of this world, with the presenters in fine form.

Grand Final Day!

First you have to get there, and the people who run the trains in Auckland could learn a thing or two. Travel was free on the trains with your tickets, and they arrived regularly, on time, and ran to timetable. They moved thousands of people from all over the city, and all without a hitch.

Then they moved them all out again – although to be fair the queues were horrendous, and they could certainly do with some toilets outside the ground.

I had trouble believing my eyes when I looked at the queue we were in, it was so deep. And that was only the line to go into the city. On the other side of the platform the lines were just as long heading away for the city centre.

And So To The Game Itself

What an unbelievable experience. The stadium was packed and it was as hot as anything. The atmosphere was electric.

A try at the death to level the score and a sideline conversion to give the Cowboys their first ever NRL title – you could not script it.

The Jonathan Thurston fairytale was set for the crowning chapter but his kick curled back to the posts only to strike the upright and it was golden point.

Up he stepped, under enormous pressure, slotting the field goal that sent North Queensland into rapture, and broke Bronco hearts.

Without doubt it was the best final I have seen. I have been going for years, and I am certainly not alone in thinking that.

The doubters said they would struggle to sell an all Queensland final in Sydney but It was record crowd, and those who made the journey – some travelling for days – were treated to a special game.

How close can you get? After 30 weeks of football the two best teams can only be separated by golden point. Amazing, and proof of why I love league!

The NRL even thanked fans for their support. CEO Dave Smith said the crowd of 82,758 meant the Finals series was the most attended on record.

He said the Grand Final attracted a peak television audience of 4.48 million on the Nine Network – the second biggest Grand Final audience ever.

Final Is Worth A mint

You hear all sorts of claims about how much economic benefit

sports bring to host cities, and who would know how much gets spent on the NRL Grand Final. I do know I would not mind a chunk of it.

It is so big in Australia they even minted a special \$1 coin. It might only be a \$1, but you had to pay \$15 for them, and I have 10 to give away, and loads of programmes, so don't forget to enter.

Retiring Players Honoured

The NRL honoured 36 retiring players during the build-up to the Grand Final. They included Grand Final captains Justin Hodges (Broncos) and Clint Newton (Knights).

Also present for a lap of honour were David Stagg (Broncos), Frank Pritchard (Bulldogs), Glenn Hall (Cowboys), Bronson Harrison, Dan Hunt (Dragons), Richard Fa'aoaso, Matt Keating, Beau Champion (Eels), David Fa'alogo, Kurt Gidley (Knights), Nigel Plum, Sika Manu, Nathan Smith, David Simmons (Panthers), Bryce Gibbs (Sharks), Ben Lowe (Rabbitohs), Bryan Norrie, Tom Leary-Lahrs (Storm), Matthew Bell, Keith Galloway (Wests Tigers) and Sam Rapira (Warriors).

Other players retiring or departing following the 2015 NRL Telstra Premiership include Reni Maitua, Krisnan Inu (Bulldogs), Fuifui Moimoi (Eels), Timana Tahu (Knights), David Williams (Sea Eagles), Brent Kite (Panthers), Terry Campese, Dane Tilse (Raiders), Glenn Stewart, Lote Tuqiri (Souths), Ben Roberts (Storm) and Brad Tighe and David Taylor (Titans).

Win NRL Grand Final Souvenirs

Here is your chance to win a piece of rugby league history. We have 20 copies of the Grand Final Souvenir program from the game that was played on Sunday in Sydney and 10 commemorative coins for the first 10 program winners. These cannot be purchased in New Zealand but can be won by subscribing to the newsletter!



The Royal Australian Mint has produced a one dollar coin commemorating the 2015 NRL TELSTRA PREMIERSHIP SEASON costing \$15 AUD.

The program cost \$8 AUD. and is not available in NZ. It's 98 pages of the history of the NRL GRAND FINALS.

Grand Final Souvenirs
Giveaway
P.O Box 54295
The Marina 2144,
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To enter: **YOU MUST** subscribe to Sir Peter Leitch's Mad Butcher Club Newsletter, only one entry per person. Competition closes on **20 October 2015**.

Then post a stamped addressed envelope with your name, address, phone number to the address.

IN AUSSIE FOR THE NRL GRAND FINAL



Dennis Beazley from Hamilton at the Grand Final.



Harry & Johnny Wallace and Granddad Roger enjoying the grand final.



Robyn Tataurangi a big Vodafone Warriors fan and Philip the great golfers mum.



These Cowboys fans would of been very happy with result after traveling many miles to get to the game.



Wayne Clark from Waiheke island at the NRL GRAND FINAL.



The train station at ANZ STADIUM after the game and this is for only the trains heading to the city, packed but very well organised.



Man the train station was packed.



One very happy member was our Glenda having a photo with Jim Doyle.



Paul wanted to get up close to my lovely wife Janice while her mate Dale watched on.



Robbie Kearns former Melbourne player and Paul Whatuira who was part of the 2005 Kiwis Reunion and played in 2 Grand Finals with the Panthers & Tigers.



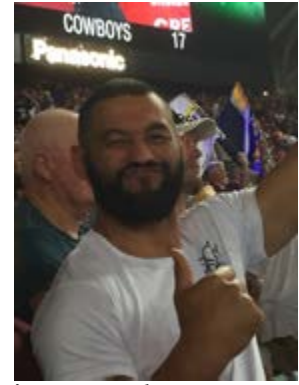
Pauls Grand Final tattoo.



David Solomona chilling out at the game after a heavy weekend enjoying the 2005 Kiwis reunion in Sydney.



Here I am with Lisa Wilkinson's partner Peter Fitzsimons, journalist and former Wallabies player and a good friend of Murray Deaker.



Here's one very happy ex Cowboy who played in their last Grand final appearance in 2005 Paul Rauhihi was here for the 2005 Kiwi team reunion.



I got to meet Nine Networks Breakfast TV Show Today host Lisa Wilkinson.



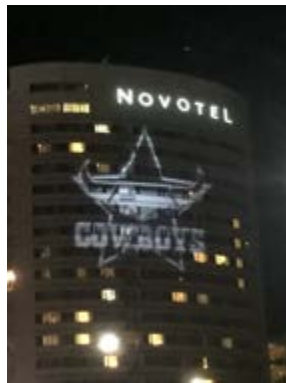
My bloody good mate Billy Slater from the Melbourne Storm a top bloke is Billy.



Shane Webcke former Broncos, Queensland and Australian player..



Taylor Adams who is playing rugby in Sydney is my mates son.



The Novotel Hotel straight after the game.



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VODAFONE WARRIORS
 Sponsors Grand Finalweek-end dinner at NRL Museum, Russell & Michelle (Vodafone), Danielle & Jason (Wendy's), Dean & Jeannie (NZME), Nick & Helena (Dewalt), Julie (Sky City), Brent (TNT), Craig (Independent Liquor), Justin & Harry Davis Rice (Bendon & Vodafone Warriors), Jim & Jo Doyle, Glen Chritchley & Sonia Shine, Bill Birnie, Gordon Gibbons, Jayne Hoffman, Josh Perkins, Tony Iro (Vodafone Warriors) and soon to be Vodafone Warriors Issac Luke & Roger Tuivasa-Sheck. Photo taken by Frank Puletua (ex Kiwi Star and Museum curator).



Jim Doyle with Issac Luke and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck before dinner at the NRL Museum..



The team Josh, Jayne, Jim, Glen and Gordy. Thanks to these guys a great weekend was had by all..



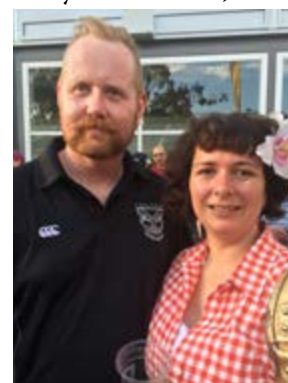
Alex Klementz, from Germany and Justin Davis-Rice (Bendon CEO and Warriors board member) and his two boys Hazza and Jack.



Jayne Hoffman (EA to Jim Doyle) and Jo Doyle..



Mark Spring from Vodafone Warrior sponsors DTR & his son Jacob, soaking up the sun in the Broncos Beer tent.



Nick Armiger Commercial Manager Stanley Black Decker (DEWALT)..



Russell Stanners (Vodafone CEO) and Michelle Stanners.



Grand Final Luncheon at the Carbine Club



Bruce thought it was cool to get a photo with the real NRL TROPHY AT THE CARBINE LUNCHEON.



Corene Strauss the CEO OF MEN OF LEAGUE FOUNDATION check them out on menofleague.com they do some great work in the rugby league community in Aussie.



Manu Vatuvei received a special award from Dave Smith the big boss of the NRL AT THE CARBINE LUNCHEON FOR HIS RECORD NUMBER OF TRIES HECHAS SCORED OVER THE TEN YEARS.



Sam Rapira received this trophy at the Carbine Luncheon every retiring player received one on the day.



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Grand Final

By Barry Ross



LIKE MANY at ANZ Stadium on Sunday, I was happy to see the Cowboys win their first Premiership. Johnathan Thurston was the reason that thousands switched their support to the North Queenslanders and no doubt more than half of the good 82,758 crowd at the game were hoping that fortune smiled on the popular Australian halfback. And it certainly did that.

Despite the Broncos excellent defence, particularly in the second half, Thurston would not give up. With only seconds remaining he jiggled and jagged, changing direction, before sending the ball to the Cowboys right side. When Townsville local junior, Kyle Feldt scored in the corner to tie the score at 16-all, the crowd went berserk. But more drama was to come. First Thurston hit the right upright with his curling conversion attempt and then star Bronco halfback, Ben Hunt, dropped the deep kickoff which began the Golden Point period. The stage was set for Thurston to deliver and he did soon after with his field goal from in front.

The Cowboys first season in top grade Rugby League was 1995. That year, they won just two of their 22 matches. On Sunday 30 April 1995 at Wollongong Showground, they beat the Illawarra Steelers 14-10 and on Saturday 8 July 1995 at home in the Willows Sports Complex, they defeated the Wests Magpies by 31-12. Jonathan Davies, the Welsh Rugby Union international and later Great Britain League star, playing five eighths, landed five of his six attempts at goal and potted a field goal in the win. Davies was then 32 years of age and played just

nine matches with the Cowboys, his first on 20 May against the Roosters in the 20-16 loss. Martin Bella, who played nine Tests for Australia, was also a major signing for the Cowboys first season.

Their first competition game was a home fixture on Saturday 11 March and a good crowd of 23,156 turned up to see the Bulldogs win 32-16. The Cowboys 16 points came from (Damian Gibson, Leigh Groves tries; Ian Dunemann 3, Damian Gibson goals). Reference, Tim Mander, sent Cowboys centre, Adrian Vowles off during this match.

The Cowboys team for their first ever Premiership game, from fullback, was Damian Gibson, David Bouveng, Adrian Vowles, Willie Morganson, John Skardon, Ian Dunemann, Laurie Spina(capt), Martin Bella, Dean Schifilliti, Andrew Whittington, Wayne Sing, Ian Russell, Paul Galea. Bench-Shane Christensen, Noel Solomon, George Bartlett, Leigh Groves.

Captain, Laurie Spina, was also 32 at this time and he had been playing in the local North Queensland competition, after making his name in Sydney with North Sydney, the Roosters and the Cronulla Sharks, where he played a total of 149 first grade games in eight seasons.

In Sunday's Grand Final, Jonathan Thurston played his 239th first grade match for the Cowboys and his 268th first grade match in total (29 with the Bulldogs). He now has 1,794 first grade points with 1,754 of these for the Cowboys.

An interesting point from the Grand Final day, was the number of New Zealand-born players

taking part in all three matches. From what I could count, and I may be wrong, there were 17 men who were born across the Tasman. With six, 17 man teams involved, that is 17 from a total of 102 players, or nearly 17 percent.

In first grade, the Cowboys James Tamou, Antonio Winterstein and Jason Taumalolo, plus the Broncos Adam Blair, Jordan Kahu, Alex Glenn and Kodi Nikorima, were born in New Zealand. In the under 20 Holden Cup Grand Final, won 34-18 by minor premiers Penrith, there were three Kiwis, Moses Leota and James Fisher-Harris from Penrith, along with Manly's Moses Noovao-McGreal.

In the State Championship Grand Final, the Ipswich Jets beat the Newcastle Knights by 26-12. Faka-hoko Teutau played with Ipswich, while Honeti Tuha, Joseph Tapine, Ken Tofilau, Carlos Tuimavave, Danny Levi and Marvin Filipo were on the Newcastle team sheet. Coached by the former Brisbane Bronco NRL players, the Walker brothers Shane and Ben, Ipswich beat the Townsville Blackhawks, 32-20 to win the club's first ever Queensland Cup title and so qualify for the State Championship. The State Championship was an entertaining affair although Ipswich Jets bench player, Billy McConnachie was lucky to stay on the field after punching Newcastle's Jake Mamo.

The punch, in the 61st minute, was easy seen after McConnachie, was third man into a bit of pushing and shoving between the Jets Matt Parcell and Newcastle's Mamo. Despite the NRL's no punching edict, McConnachie was not sent off, or even sin-binned.

JT's Superior Composure Under Pressure Was Crucial

By John Deaker



MUCH OF the buildup to Sunday's Grand Final focused on the halves pairings of Brisbane and North Queensland. One name stood out from the group of talented halves though, not just because of what Jonathon Thurston has achieved in rugby league but also because of the superior experience he had than the other three halves starting the Grand Final. Thurston's experience became an immensely valuable asset come the 'clutch' moments late in the Grand Final – and his composure under pressure compared to Ben Hunt was ultimately the key difference between the two teams.

North Queensland blew many great chances to level up the Grand Final in the last quarter of the match - but JT still kept his cool. A player with less experience than Thurston might have started experimenting and feeling asthough the footballing Gods weren't on the Cowboys side again. JT backed himself like he's done so many times before and eventually kept the ball alive under pressure to set up the try that tied up the match right on fulltime.

In contrast, Brisbane's halves pairing of Ben Hunt and Anthony Milford were placed in a position that was unfamiliar to them in the final quarter of the match - and they froze on the big stage. Leading by only four points through this period, they came up with a series of very negative plays late in the tackle counts, putting in grubber kicks for the line to soak up time when at least once they should have gone to the air or attacked the Cowboys' try line.

The term momentum is overused in sport but even after missing the conversion from the sideline at 16-16, JT's men literally had all the momentum once the'd forced it into extra time. Ben Hunt's knock on off the kick-off then almost served to put an exclamation mark on the value of experience in the heat of battle. Hunt is by no means a rookie, but when you compare his experience under extreme pressure to Thurston he was made to look like one.

Once Hunt dropped the ball from the restart the script from there seemed a foregone conclusion ; not only would rugby league fans get the fairy-tale result they wanted for North Queensland but their charismatic captain would seal the victory with his own boot. Cynics might even suggest that the greatest player in the world had merely been teasing them minutes earlier by hitting the post and delaying the inevitable!

North Queensland's win meant their nightmare run of crucial refereeing blunders in recent finals series' has come to an end. If Brisbane had won the final many people's analysis of the game would have been very different; an important TMO decision late in the first half of the match would probably have been scrutinized in much more detail - and Cowboys fans could justifiably have felt the'd got the rough end of the stick from the TMO. They may also have found it hard to forget the soft treatment the notoriously inconsistent NRL judiciary had given Justin Hodge's during the week.

JT made the process of nailing the winning drop-goal look a lot easier than it really was ; even for a man as cool under pressure as himself they are never easy. He was repeating the same movement that he's executed 100's of times on the practice field - but just as importantly he's done it in numerous matches under pressure for the Cowboys, the Maroons and the Kangaroos. For JT's fans it was the moment they'd started to wonder if they'd ever get to experience and after all the heartbreak they've endured they deserved that magical moment nearly as much as the great man did himself.

i a Rāpare/Thursdays 8:30pm on

MĀORI
TELEVISION



TONIGHTS GUESTS - EP.24

SIR PETER LEITCH

The Mad Butcher

JORDAN NGATAI

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TONY MARSH

Former French Rugby Player

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NZ MMA Fighter

BLINGLING BROTHERS

Juggling Demo

... and Liam catches up with netballer Courtney Tairi from Cardiff during the Rugby World Cup!



This is the Mangakino Junior Hawks who will be on Code tonight. They are a Rugby League Team who play under the Bay of Plenty.



NAU MAI HAERE MAI

Join the crew this week and enjoy the top class guests on the CODE couch.

Scintillating conversation. . . laughs. . . irreverent reporting. . . giggles. . . and dangerous demos. . .yeah right!

**Lock it in 8:30pm Thursdays
MEAN MAORI MEAN!**



Kali Meehan and Myself



Kali Meehan and his son.

LOOK WHO was sitting in my seat on the Air NZ flight coming home. Yes Joseph Parker's next fight opponent Kali Meehan a Kiwis Boxer who calls Sydney home these days he has had 47 fights and only lost 5 of them and his son Willis Pele Meehan is fighting on the under card on the night 3 pro fights and won all 3 plus he had 20 amateur fights and only lost one of them. He even played rugby league for the Australian Junior Kangaroos and had a game for the NRL roosters team for details re Tickets ect for fight night go to www.duco.co.nz

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

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