



Sir Peter Leitch's
Mad Butcher Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

20th November 2015

Newsletter

#99

**Rest
in
Peace**

**Jonah
Lomu**

1975 - 2015



TO SAY I was shocked to get home to New Zealand to the news that we had lost a good man with the passing of Jonah Lomu is an understatement.

I simply could not believe it.

Only last week we were tweeting each other about meeting up for lunch.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Jonah for many years, and I can not claim to be his best friend, but there was certainly a mutual respect between us.

I agree with all of those who have been saying that many Kiwis really did not understand just how big Jonah was.

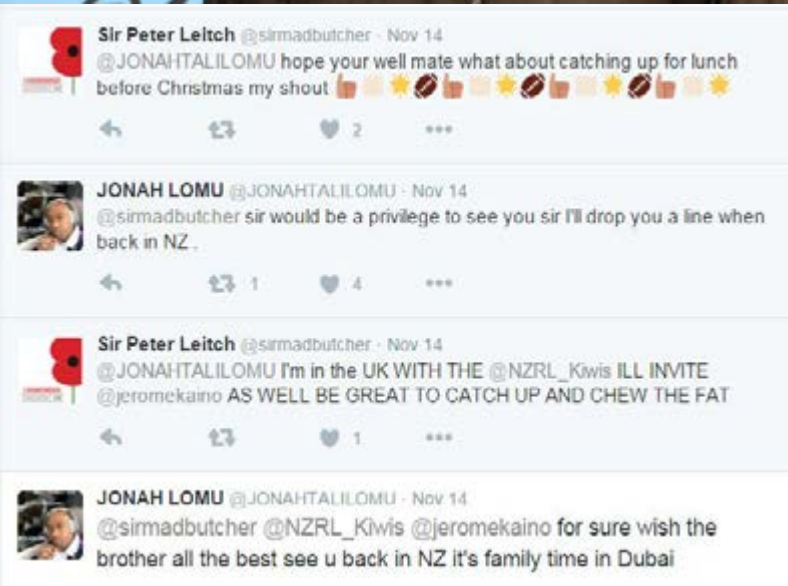
I remember going with the Kiwis to the UK in 2005, and to be frank, wearing black jerseys everywhere, people often mistook us for rugby players and wanted to talk about Jonah.

There were huge billboards with his image on it and you have to remember that big sports companies like adidas like their pound of flesh, so when their playing days are over, many players are quickly discarded.

It was never like that for Jonah, the opposite in fact, with adidas using him as a global ambassador for the brand, and for rugby.

It has all been said, the gentle giant, the amazing athlete, the humble man – and all of it is true.

He will be sadly missed and I know you will all join me in sending our condolences to his family.



Ali's Coming Home

Fan favourite Ali Lauitiiti is coming home to finish his playing career.

Tony Iro has confirmed the back rower has signed a one-year second-tier contract opening the way for him to return to where his top-level career started 17 years ago.

Lauitiiti is bringing his family back to Auckland after eight seasons with the Leeds Rhinos and another four with the Wakefield Wildcats in England.

“For Ali this is a chance to come back to where it all began,” said Iro. “With his depth of experience he has so much to offer us as a leader and mentor both on and off the field.

“In realigning our squad our goal was to retain and recruit quality players while also ensuring we had a strong blend of experience throughout the wider group. While Ali is 36 now, we saw he still has his range of skills when he played for Leeds against the Kiwis.”

The man once dubbed the Michael Jordan of league was thrilled about the prospect of returning to Mt Smart.

The Auckland-born Mangere East Hawks junior wound up his playing time in England with a testimonial season at Wakefield before making his guest appearance against the Kiwis last month.

“As a family we’re excited about heading home after being away so long,” he said. “For me it couldn’t be better being given this chance to come back to the Warriors. I left a long time ago but the club has always been really special to me.”

Ali and his Lovely family after the 3rd test at the team hotel



Kiwis coach Stephen Kearney, ALI and one of the assistant coaches Kelvin Wright. Not in the picture is the other assistant coach David Kidwell.



To celebrate the great news that Ali is coming home in 2016 we have 10 copies of his testimonial to be won! Just send a stamped addressed envelope or post card to me in the mail with your name, address and phone number on the back to:

Ali Testimonial
P.O Box 54295
The Marina 2144,
Manukau, Auckland

Name:
Address:
Phone Number:

**Drawn on:
30th November 2015**

It Is Great To Be Home.

I had a good time on tour with the Kiwis, and I can't thank coach Stephen Kearney enough for letting it happen, with the added blessing of NZRL CEO Phil Holden.

I met many terrific people on my travels – too many to single people out, but I do have to give a special mention to Hull's former Vodafone Warrior and Kiwis player Motu Tony. He could not do enough for us.

He even got me to see an ear, nose and throat specialist who wouldn't let me pay a cent. So if you are ever in Hull with ear, nose or throat problems go to Mr English!

I've asked 100 people if they have ever heard of a specialist refusing payment, and apparently it's a first.

But the simple truth is that as much fun as it is, you miss your own home comforts and your family. On night one my wife Janice made me a beautiful Mad Butcher T-bone steak and it was cooked to perfection, the way only Jan knows how.

Not What We Wanted

It wasn't what the Kiwis wanted, losing 20-14 to England in the final league test, a result that meant England won the series 2-1.

It was disappointing that after defending so well a week earlier when we squared the series, we lost our way in the second half and never looked like getting back into it.

I try to stay away from talking about political things, but does it matter, when we have all witnessed the events in Paris? The senseless murders leave me lost for words.

Professionalism Impresses

We might have lost the series, but off-field the tour was a success.

The professionalism from everyone was outstanding. Sure we had many of our top players out, but never once was that used as any excuse, and of the six rookies on tour, three made their debuts, with Kearney and his team backing their talent at every step.

If being away from home for so long has taught me anything it is that the players sacrifice a lot when they tour, and we all got home proud of our efforts, but with the desire to return and pull on that black jersey again to get the winning result.

For me the trip was a fantastic journey, getting to know the young players and seeing at first-hand how good our coach is.

I have been around the game a long time and I was impressed with his work-rate, ethics and dedication.

Rare Treats For An Old Butcher

My school history is well-known, but I can now say I have been to one of the poshest schools in the world, Harrow, where they opened their arms to us.

And my highlight of the tour, training at Liverpool Football Club's training ground Melwood, where I had lunch with captain Jordan Henderson – who I gave a signed Kiwis shirt to auction for his charity - vice-captain James Milner, and where I met coach Jurgen Klopp. Going to the Cavern Club, where The Beatles got started, was not bad either.

And last but not least, the Wigan Warriors where I caught up with former Vodafone Warrior and injured England fullback Sam

Tomkins, and had a great chat to the coach Shaun Wane, a top man.

Along the way I have met some wonderful people, but like I say, there is just no place like home.

Three Special Men

I want to wish Dan Carter all the best as he prepares to leave for his new career in French rugby. What a servant he has been to our game, and I have to say I have always had enormous respect for him. He leaves a winner in every sense. I hope his book is a smash hit.

And what can you say about Richie McCaw? He has been a credit to rugby, a credit to the All Blacks and a credit to his country. If the mighty All Blacks have ever had a better leader I do not know who. 148 games for the All Blacks in a career that stretches back almost to when I was in short trousers. Richie has ended his international career to become a helicopter pilot. Even I would fly in a chopper with Richie at the controls. There's nothing he can't do.

And the third man is Ali Lauiti'iti, who is returning to the Vodafone Warriors. I could not be more pleased. A good Mangere East Hawks man, I am certainly in the camp that says he can make a valuable contribution to the Warriors.

State Of Origin On Sale

State of Origin tickets have gone on sale, and like I always say, the early bird gets the worm. If you get in early you can sort out flights well in advance – Air New Zealand is the only option – and accommodation.

You can go for as little as \$35 at ANZ Stadium – Aussie dollars of course.

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Tickets are on sale for the two Sydney games - Origin 1 and 3 - ANZ Stadium on June 1 and July 13.

For the first time, a special two game pass is on sale, and there are a limited number of \$35 single-game tickets for both Club Ticketed Members and the general public.

Club Ticketed Members can purchase individual bronze category tickets for \$45 and family packages for \$145.

Bronze category general public tickets will be available for \$50 for both ANZ Stadium games, with family packages at \$155. A family of four could attend both Sydney matches for \$260.

"In other words, State of Origin will be affordable for all fans," NRL chief commercial officer Michael Brown said.

"State of Origin is one of the biggest sporting events of the year and we want to ensure fans can attend," he said.

These prices are "early bird specials" and the cost will go up closer to the dates.

A new Origin series attendance was set in 2015, and as a Blues fan I'm with coach Laurie Daley, who said he would love nothing more than to play in front of a full house in 2016.

"I urge Blues supporters to get in early and get on board. We want there to be no doubt that this is the home of the Blues and to make the most of the home ground advantage."

Tickets are be available from nrl.com/tickets

Tickets for State of Origin II, at Suncorp on June 22, don't go on sale until early next year.

New Home For NSW Rugby League

NSW Rugby League will have a new home at Sydney Olympic Park by the end of 2017 after plans for a new \$20-million NSWRL Centre of Excellence, were announced.

The Centre of Excellence will include a full-size training field and a new building for specialised support facilities and the offices of the NSW Rugby League.

The facility will also adjoin a tunnel providing direct access to ANZ Stadium – originally built to transfer track and field athletes during the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

NSWRL Chairman Dr George Peponis said: "The Centre of Excellence places NSWRL at the forefront of sporting organisations in Australia. Most importantly, it is the obvious home for NSWRL, just across from ANZ Stadium, the home of the Blues."

NSW State of Origin coach Laurie Daley said: "We finally have a place that we can call home. And there is no doubt it will improve our preparation. The access to state-of-the-art facilities, as well as the other facilities in the precinct, creates a wonderful opportunity."

Kangaroos Want Top Spot Back

The NRL has outlined a new programme aimed at returning the Kangaroos to the top of the international league ladder.

Commission chairman John Grant said Australia was in danger of slipping to number three in the rankings after the series between England and New Zealand. "I am sure that does not sit well with any

Australian fan."

Key elements of the package include appointing a dedicated coach with no ties to a club or state, implementing a player succession plan to ensure there are strong replacements for retiring players, appointing additional medical and other support staff, setting up a clear pathway for players to become Kangaroos.

NRL football head Todd Greenberg said given the Commission's decision to support the high performance programme, the NRL was officially in the market for a new Kangaroos coach.

He said talks had been held with several potential candidates and further discussions would be held before a final selection was made. "This is a huge boost for the Kangaroos," he said.

"It means they will have a dedicated coach to help them become the best team in the world."

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WELL IT'S been an amazing experience to be on tour with the NZ Kiwi Team and being part of the Management staff for the last 31 days in my role as High Performance Manger for the NZRL.

Whilst we clearly didn't achieve our goal of a series win the benefits of this tour have been numerous. We have introduced seven debutants into the Kiwi Team environment / culture, increased and strengthened the depth in the crucial halves position, seen new players step up into the leadership group and really grow with this added responsibility whilst taking on board the challenges of touring the UK.

These experiences and insights will serve us well in preparation for the 2016 Four Nations and as we build towards the 2017 Rugby League World Cup being co-hosted by New Zealand, Australia & PNG.

The four games on tour were all played to capacity crowds and have really served to strengthen Rugby League in England post the Rugby World Cup. The Leeds game provided a perfect hit out for 19 of the Kiwis to get some much needed game fitness but at the same time served as a marvellous farewell to four of Leeds favourites sons, being: Kevin Sinfield, Jamie Peacock and the kiwi duo of Kylie Leuluai & Ali Lauitiiti.

The opportunity to prepare for the 1st test via the Catalans Dragons Rugby League club in the South of France was superb. The facilities were excellent, the hospitality shown by the Club Owner Bernard Guasch towards the team was first class.

The team ran a number of opening training sessions throughout the tour, but none were as well attended as the one in Hull prior to the first test. The crowd was superb and once again the Kiwi team was well looked after by former Kiwi but now Hull FC Director of Football, Motu Tony.

1st Test: Whilst commencing the game well, the team fell away in the second half off the back of an extremely well executed game plan from the English to lose the first test by 26-12. Despite the loss there were definite signs that this team was more than capable of winning the series.

We moved to London to prepare for the second test, and once again we had superb facilities available to us via the Harrow School and the Director of Sport, ex pat Kiwi Jesse Coulson.

Despite the odd traffic issue travelling by bus around London the time spent here was enjoyable for the touring party, with sightseeing tours and High Commission visits being part of the down time activities.

Amongst this and the trainings the team were given some very clear instructions around the areas requiring improvement to level the series, which obviously hit home.

The 2nd test victory over the English at Olympic Stadium, London was one for the League purists. A game played by two teams determined to win which ultimately cancelled each other out. All it took was one mistake near their own goal line which allowed the Kiwis to pounce and score the only try in the game and win the game 9-2.

The 3rd test preparation saw the team relocate to Liverpool for the week. This time training was organised via the Wigan Warriors training facilities and then Liverpool FC. Both clubs treated us superbly but there is just no comparing the wealth that sits inside professional football.

The stage was set for the series decider at the DW Stadium which was sold to capacity before the series had even been levelled up by the Kiwis. There was no denying the Kiwis willingness to work hard for each other and their desire to win, but it would be fair to say we had room for improvement in our game which ultimately let us down, enabling the English to secure the series win with a 20-14 victory in the third.

As mentioned earlier, whilst the series was lost the gains have been significant and the benefits of these we will see in the not too distant future. The bond built between players and management on tours of this size are often a highlight, which was no different this time around.

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the Patron of New Zealand Rugby League Sir Peter Leitch who has joined the tour at his own expense and has delivered fantastic value to the touring party. His one on one interviews with players and staff plus his constant social media work has helped drive awareness of the tour, not to forget his weekly newsletter! His guest speaking at a number of key hospitality events, saw the crowds in attendance thoroughly enjoy his unique delivery style, whilst re-newing many old friendships and making new ones.

So Far To Get So Near

By John Coffey QSM



STEPHEN KEARNEY'S 2015 Kiwis will be consigned to history as yet another New Zealand team which failed to join the 1907-08 All Golds and the 1971 and 1998 tourists as the only winners of a three-match Test series on British soil. They were unable to overcome a 107-year hoodoo in last weekend's deciding third Test at Wigan as they succumbed to a 20-14 defeat.

In the final accounting, the Kiwis fell short in a series they could, maybe should, have won, succumbing to a lack of match fitness, an inability to adjust their handling and passing to the cold and wet conditions, some questionable refereeing rulings, the absence of vital players and combinations, and an outstanding English attitude and defensive formation.

There was very little in their rivalry. England belatedly skipped away to a 26-12 victory at Hull before the Kiwis fought back to win 9-2 in the first rugby league fixture at London's Olympic Stadium. Overall, England scored seven tries (incredibly, all were by forwards) to New Zealand's six, with kicking, both for goal and tactically, one of the marked advantages held by the home side.

New Zealand held the upper hand for long periods of the third Test as England led 8-6 from the 36th minute, when Jason Nightingale leapt high to score the most spectacular try of a defence-dominated series, until English forward Elliott Whitehead crossed for his second try in the 63rd minute. England captain Sean O'Loughlin then repeated his first Test feat by clinching victory with a try through the middle, and the Kiwis could only reduce the deficit with late tries to Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Jordan Kahu.

A capacity crowd celebrated along with the English players as if they had not only won a World Cup but salvaged their nation's wounded rugby (both codes) pride. There is nothing more that the northerners enjoy than poking fun at their pompous rugby union counterparts down south, but it is doubtful if the Twickenham mob took any notice.

Fears expressed before the tour were realised. Tuimoala Lolohea had been spirited across to Sydney to work with Peta Hiku as Kearney put together his makeshift halfback pairing. But that experiment lasted only for one Test before Lolohea was supplanted by Brisbane Broncos interchange dummy-half Kodi Nikorima, who had not played a full game all year. Hiku and Nikorima could not be faulted for individual effort but their inexperience showed. England coach Steve McNamara belatedly called up Wigan's Matty Smith for the third Test, the only specialist scrum-half used by either side, and he had much to do with the outcome.

The Kiwis missed captain and loose forward Simon Mannering as much as regular halves Kieran Foran and Shaun Johnson. Mannering has led the Kiwis to all of their recent successes and, as mentioned, England scored all seven tries through the forwards. O'Loughlin, in particular, found too much room in the middle when clinching the first and third Test results and also earn himself the George Smith Medal as Man of the Series.

Both countries harmed the credibility of international rugby league by agreeing for Englishman Ben Thaler to referee the deciding Test ahead of Australian Gerard Sutton. There should have been two Australian officials (one on the field, the other in the video box) throughout the series. Instead, Thaler had charge of the two Tests won by England and Sutton the New Zealand victory in London. At a time when neutral officials are the norm for all sports, it was not a good look.

Sutton awarded New Zealand seven penalties to England's six in his one appearance; the penalty count against the Kiwis ballooned out to 9-3 after 72 minutes last weekend, with Whitehead and O'Loughlin scoring tries in the sets immediately after Thaler had made very debatable decisions. He then gave the Kiwis a couple of late penalties for a final 9-5 count. At least we were spared the parochial video decisions of the first Test when two Englishmen overturned Thaler's on-field rulings in favour of the home side to turn a possible 18-6 Kiwis lead into a 12-12 halftime deadlock.

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Unfortunately, the NZRL was very much the poor relation in negotiating this tour, which replaced England's cancelled trip to Australia. The golden rule prevailed – that means whoever has the gold (in this case England) makes the rules. Thaler was preferred over Sutton by a committee comprising an Englishman, a New Zealander and a Frenchman. But the Frenchman spent his professional refereeing career in England's Super League. Finance must be found by the international federation to provide neutral referees for major Test series.

The ERL should be thrilled with the aggregate attendance of 92,660 fans over the three games, though the record 44,393 crowd in London was treated with the most dour of the three Tests and, from a promotional viewpoint, the most disappointing result. In this country the tour suffered from being overshadowed by the rugby union World Cup at one end and the Black Caps cricket tour to Australia at the other. Most media outlets seemed to have blown their budgets. Neither radio nor television sent any staff, but there was excellent print and internet coverage from Michael Burgess of the New Zealand Herald.

Looking ahead, Kearney has achieved his objective of increasing his talent depth, though new internationals Manaia Cherrington (Kiwi number 794), Isaac Liu (795) and Curtis Rona (796) and outside back Gerard Beale did not get to play. That is one of the inevitable problems with such short tours. Kahu, who developed into a convincing Test centre and secured the second Test victory with his field goal, and Nikorima were the best of the Test debutants.

My Man of the Tour was Nightingale, who does considerably more toil than most wings, even in this era when workloads are evenly distributed across the park. His soaring try at Wigan was his seventeenth, promoting him to third equal in New Zealand's Test try-scoring records. Manu Vatuvei leads with 22 and Nigel Vagana scored 19. Nightingale has joined Sean Hoppe on 17, surpassing Stacey Jones, Kevin Iro and Hugh McGahan (16 each).

The penultimate Anzac Test lies ahead next season, again in Australia, before the Kiwis and Kangaroos travel to Britain at season's end for the Four Nations tournament also involving England and Scotland. Kearney will hopefully be able to field a team nearer to full strength, while England expects to welcome back Sam and George Burgess. The Kangaroos, of course, will be hell bent on regaining their top international ranking under a new coach.



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ON TOUR IN THE UK



My granddaughter had the have a photo with the Kiwis head coach.



My granddaughter Kristin on the bus.



The highlight of my time in the UK was catching you with my granddaughter Kristin.



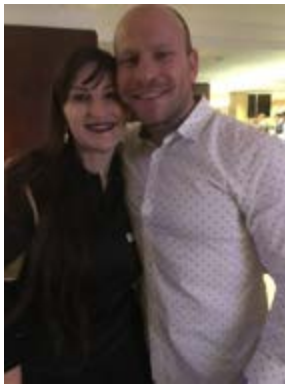
Our last team management dinner of the tour a very pleasant night had by all.



Some of the Kiwis popped into a Irish wedding that was being held in our hotel in Liverpool and even had a photo with the bride.



The boys on the red carpet.



Was nice to catch up with Dan Burton (former Warriors employee) in London seen with Nadene the Kiwis manager.



Great to come off the plane and have these two rugby league fans waiting to welcome us home. Well done!

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Making a Young Fans Day - An email from Connor

I'M SENDING you this message with all my heart. I started watching rugby when I was 11. I know that is quite late but I was not brought up in the best family background, so I didn't get a lot of privileges like other people. But the minute I watched the game I fell in love with it and I started watching every game as soon as possible. It even got to a stage where I had to make a choice on which team to support. It was either Hull Kingston Rovers or Hull. I obviously chose the black and amber army (Hull) and now I go to every game at home. I am a season pass holder and I even go to some away games. I even went to the Hull FC training ground to meet the kiwis, where I got photos with all the players, my favourites are Isaac Luke, who used to play for my favourite Australian team – Souths; and Roger Tuivasa Sheck, who I believe is coming to New Zealand soon, with Isaac Luke.

So it looks like the Vodafone Warriors will be my favourite team, even though some of my family live in Melbourne. I think I'm going there next year.

I was so pleased I bumped into you, you are such a good man and your love for league astonishes me. I love your name, the Mad Butcher, and if it wasn't for people like you I don't know where this world would be.

League is the best sport in the world and I wish you and the New Zealand team stayed longer. I was very honoured to get the pictures and I know I was very lucky that you were able to get me a picture with them.

Yours sincerely

Connor



Check this out!

IF YOU have 10 minutes to spare click on this, it's worth a look. I really enjoyed my time with the Hull FC people. Real rugby league fans.

Hey mate,

This is what I was running around doing last week with the camera man.

It's come together really well, a good story of the week!

<http://www.kcsport.co.uk/rugby-league/insideChe-the-kc-england-v-new-zealand/>

James Clark

Marketing & Communications Director

Hull FC

Rugby League in Spain

Sir Peter

FIRST OF all, I am glad to see you are all safely back in NZ, and I sincerely hope you enjoyed your time in Europe, despite the series result.

Secondly, it was great to meet you and your grand-daughter at the match in London and spend a brief moment chatting with you.

As promised, I am contacting you with a little bit of information about the game in Spain. As a basic overview, the game has only really been in existence here for a little under three years. In that time we have set up a league and cup structure as well as a full national team. The national team has won through to the final stage of qualifying for the RLWC 2017 which will see us travel to Russia and host Ireland next autumn. This is an incredible feat considering the fact we've only had a national team for less than 2 years.

On the club front, I am involved with the Valencian Warriors who are the current cup-holders and are on our way back to the cup final in January. As I showed you, we are proud to wear the colours of the NZ Warriors.

I'll leave it at that for now - there is so much more that I could tell you, but those are the basics. I'll add some links to our Facebook pages etc if you want to see a little more about us.

Any help, support, exposure you could give would be fantastic as we aim to continue the game's growth here.

Let me know if I can forward you any more information.

Kind regards and best wishes, in rugby.

Andrew Pilkington

Asociación Española de Rugby League (AERL)



Club Facebook - [Click here](#)

National Facebook - [Click here](#)

Personal page - [Click here](#)

National website - <http://www.spainrugbyleague.com/>



New Zealand's 'Perfect Partners'

By John Deaker



DURING THE 2nd test match against Australia this week Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor became New Zealand's most productive partnership in the history of our test cricket. As individuals Williamson and Taylor already have records that are on track to see them remembered as New Zealand's 2 most successful batsman of all time, so probably the only surprise for cricket fans was that this record had been notched up so quickly.

What the record highlights is that when New Zealand has had a great player like Martin Crowe in the team in the past he'd often had to rely on many other players like Andrew Jones, Ken Rutherford and Jeremy Coney and brother Jeff to support him. Having your partner constantly changing at the crease is a bit like life – it's not ideal for your focus and obtaining consistency as you go about your work. It's therefore more than a coincidence that the majority of Crowe's greatest knock (299) was played when he was at the crease with one man: when Andrew Jones was at the other end during their 467 run partnership against Sri Lanka in 1991.

Williamson and Taylor's partnership at the WACA was a prime example of the value that batting with one person can provide for you over a long period. Off the back of what David Warner and Usman Khawaja had achieved for Australia (during their first innings 2nd wicket partnership of 302) Williamson and Taylor knew they needed to adopt a similar attitude by taking responsibility for the job and not thinking someone else in the team would get the job done. This attitude would have been enhanced by the fact that New Zealand fielded one of the longest tails (once allrounder Jimmy Neesham had been replaced by Matt Henry) that New Zealand has carried in to a test in a long time.

Batting for such long periods in the heat at the WACA shouldn't be under-estimated as being a physical achievement in itself – particularly for Taylor. He is only a few months recovered from a very serious injury to his 'private parts' that he suffered when batting in the nets in Zimbabwe. The surgery from that injury left him having to rest for around 2 months – a period where he naturally lost a lot of his fitness and conditioning.

One thing New Zealanders have learnt about Ross Taylor in recent years is that he has great mental strength – in stark contrast to some people's percep-

tion of Polynesian (his mother is Samoan) cricketers. Aged 31, it's very possible that he could hang around for another 5 years playing test cricket if his motivation remains. The fact that he didn't beat his mentor and close friend Martin Crowe's highest score when scoring 290 (as well as failing to knock off New Zealand's best ever test score of 302 by Brendon McCullum) might be good for keeping the hunger in his veins.

Taylor has now had many opportunities when he could have hung up his Black Cap if he'd been less motivated to stamp his mark in New Zealand cricket's history books.

It was doubtful whether he'd continue to play for New Zealand after Brendon McCullum replaced him as captain of the Black Caps in 2012. Yet Taylor bounced back boldly and performed even better with the bat than he'd done before.

It would have also been a knock to Taylor's system not securing an IPL contract earlier this year. Players are aware that there's a very fickle nature to the overseas signings – performances during the month leading up to the auction (particularly when against India) often holding a lot more weight than they should when team's sign up players. Even so, for Taylor to go from being New Zealand's first million-dollar (US) signing in 2011 to getting no contract this year must have been a shock to his system – especially taking in to account how revered is by the Indian fans.

Taylor wouldn't have to look much further than Martin Crowe for inspiration to battle on through tough times. Crowe's lymphoma was supposed to have taken his life earlier this year but currently is still hanging in there. Crowe's career was cut short near it's peak due to a debilitating knee injury that constantly hampered him throughout his career. Maybe Taylor's latest injury combined with Crowe's huge impact on him can provide enough inspiration for Taylor to fight on for another five years and break many of the record that Crowe would like to have set much higher if his body had allowed?

There is a catch though; any record's Taylor does set Kane Williamson is very likely to break in the coming years.

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He is still only and 25 and not even at the peak of his powers. It's been fascinating to hear the Australian commentators wax lyrical over Williamson in the test series so far. Even much-loved and respected Kiwis like Dan Vettori, Shane Bond and even the great Sir Richard Hadlee haven't had as much praise heaped on them as Kane Williamson has.

Why have they loved him so much? Possibly because the Aussies don't have one of him at the moment. He has got everything – technically, mentally and physically. Most Kiwi fans have known this for years – but as is often the case, the Aussies don't rate you till you perform against them on their own turf.

The Aussies have got David Warner and Steve Smith - but both these men have technical flaws (not to mention notable mental flaws in Warner's case) that mean you would never say to a young cricketer : 'Model everything you do on that man'.

New Zealand cricket is very lucky to have Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor batting in the same team at the same time – and they're both fortunate to have the support of each other too. Hopefully their classy 265 run partnership at the WACA this week was just a teaser to many more great partnerships we'll see from them this summer.

Jersey Winners

What a great surprise to receive this jersey this morning. Thank you.

Diane Bell



Bonjour Sir,

As promised i send you a photo with the Kiwi jersey that you send me. Proud to have it in my collection. At the background you can see a Tiki maori sculpture bought long time ago in the antique shop in Auckland.

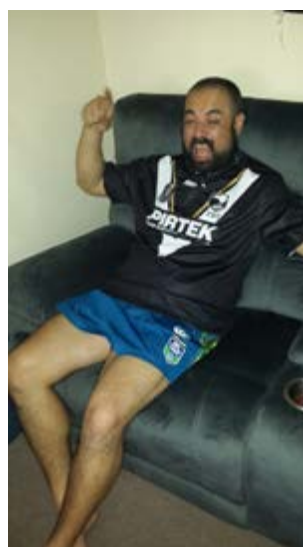
All the best from France

Sincerely, Pascal
RODRIGUEZ

Hi Sir Peter,

Many thanks for organising the jersey for me, that I won it arrived in time for the 3rd test so I was really happy with that!

Ross from Christchurch



This photo was taken before game 3. I scored with 5 hours until kick off. Thanks to the Big Mad Butcher. I love my jersey mate.

Tony Kimi

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Vodafone Warriors Head North and South in 2016

THE VODAFONE Warriors are taking NRL football to regional New Zealand after confirming North Island and South Island venues for their 2016 trials.

They'll head north to Whangarei to face the Gold Coast Titans at Toll Stadium on Saturday, February 13 (5.30pm kick-off) followed by a trip to Nelson when they'll take on the St George Illawarra Dragons in a Mike Pero-sponsored trial at Trafalgar Park on Saturday, February 20 (5.00pm kick-off).

The Gold Coast match will be the Vodafone Warriors' first full NRL trial in Whangarei after previous pre-season hit-outs against Queensland Cup sides the Burleigh Bears in 2011 and the Sunshine Coast Sea Eagles in 2012.

The trip south creates history with Motueka-raised Nelson College old boy Simon Mannering in line to lead the Vodafone Warriors in the club's first appearance in one of New Zealand's oldest cities.

Head coach Andrew McFadden welcomed the opportunity to stage two fully-fledged trials in the provincial cities.

"It's great for the club, the players, members and fans to have the Vodafone Warriors playing in centres around the country like Whangarei and Nelson," he said.

"We love visiting communities many of us haven't been to, especially Nelson which will see the Vodafone Warriors for the first time.

"With the Whangarei trip, fans will be able to witness a real NRL trial for the first time.

"Coming straight after the NRL Nines at Eden Park, these two matches will be absolutely vital for us as we look to prepare for the 2016 season.

"We've got a lot of new players coming into the squad this season so these trials will give us a chance to look at them all and to build combinations."

As well as Mannering, the Vodafone Warriors have high-profile signings Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Issac Luke in a 2016 NRL squad which also includes Kiwis Manu Vatuvei, Shaun Johnson, Ben Matulino, Thomas Leuluai, Tuimoala Lolohea, Ben Henry and Bodene Thompson, Origin forwards Jacob Lillyman (Queensland) and Ryan Hoffman (New South Wales) plus other new NRL signings Jeff Robson, Blake Ayshford and Ligi Sao.

Toll Stadium manager John Lynch said fans in the Northland region have a huge appetite for the Vodafone Warriors and rugby league generally.

"They loved it when the club was here in 2011 and 2012 and turned out in force," he said.

"We also had a superb crowd when the Kiwis played Samoa here in the Four Nations last year. "With this being our first fully-fledged NRL trial, we know Northland fans will turn out in bigger numbers again and we also anticipate a lot of people from Auckland will make a day of it."

Trafalgar Events director Aldo Miccio said he and co-director Barry Galbraith were delighted the Mike Pero-sponsored Nelson trial had been made possible after plans for a match before the 2015 season had been shelved due to the Dragons' commitments in the World Club Challenge.

"It's fantastic to see this game finally coming to Nelson," said Miccio.

"So many people from not only the Nelson region but also Blenheim and West Coast have been looking forward to this for a long time.

"To have the Vodafone Warriors at Trafalgar Park for the first time and playing another NRL side of the Dragons' quality is going to be the premium sporting event on the Nelson calendar in 2016.

Continued on next page...

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“Having a homecoming for Simon Mannering adds a special dynamic. It’s an opportunity not to be missed, the first chance for sports fans from the region to celebrate and honour him for his achievements in rugby league for both the Vodafone Warriors and the Kiwis.

“It will be a huge day for Nelson and the top of the South Island.”

Mannering isn’t one for fanfare but he’s looking forward to the possibility of being able to play in his home region in front of family and friends.

“I don’t get home too often these days so it’ll be special heading back there with the Vodafone Warriors for the first time,” he said.

“Having family and friends there will add to it and I’m certainly looking forward to it.

“There’s a long way to go yet but the biggest focus for us when it comes around is going to be our performance and how we use it to help us with our preparation for next season.”

Mannering was playing rugby union at Nelson College when coach Paul Bergman encouraged him to try rugby league in 2003. It led to Mannering playing at the national secondary schools rugby league nationals and ultimately being signed by the Vodafone Warriors in 2004 before making his NRL debut as an 18-year-old against Brisbane in 2005.

He has since gone on to make 236 NRL appearances, leaving him behind only Stacey Jones (261) on the club’s all-time list while he has also played 41 Tests for the Kiwis (only Ruben Wiki, Gary Freeman, Stacey Jones and Stephen Kearney are ahead of him).

2016 NRL TRIALS

Vodafone Warriors V Gold Coast

Toll Stadium, Whangarei

5.30pm, Saturday, February 13

Tickets on sale from November 23 www.eventfinda.co.nz

Vodafone Warriors V St George Illawarra

Trafalgar Park, Nelson

5.00pm, Saturday, February 20

Tickets now on sale www.ticketek.co.nz/warriorsnelson



Week in Northland Sport

By Ben Francis



IT HAS been the last two weeks in Northland Rugby and Rugby League with many positives coming out of both codes, but also some disappointing news in Northland League.

Rugby League

NORTHLAND SWORDS Prop, Kawana Marsden has been invited to join the Vodafone Warriors Under-20 pre-season train-on squad. After playing with the Muriwhenua Falcons in the Scott Electrical Premiership, Marsden was selected for the Northern Swords in the New Zealand Rugby League Premiership following that he was selected for the New Zealand University side which played two tests against Australia. Marsden turned down offers from several Australian franchises as he hopes to pursue an NRL career through the Warriors. The train-on squad started training this week, and will be training for another five with the team to contest the 2016 Holden Cup championship to be named at the completion of the camp.

Some disappointing news out of Northland Rugby League last week after some Far North rugby league clubs announced they will break away from the Northland Rugby league governing body and go alone in 2016. The clubs involved, met in Kaikohe last week with the recently formed Far North Districts Rugby League Organisation (FNDRL) and confirmed the decision. Clubs involved include Hokianga, Moerewa, Muriwhenua, Kerikeri, Kaikohe, Otatau Valley and Pawarenga. Northland Rugby League General Manager Alex Smits was very disappointed saying the formation of a "Pirate League" is not the best for the future of Northland and New Zealand Rugby League. Smits also went on to say Northland League will fight with the new FNDRL competition from undermining the greater good achieved over the past decade. The Northland Rugby League body will issue a statement on the issue this week.

Rugby

THE NORTHLAND Under 19 Sevens team finished second overall at the inaugural Provincial Union Age Group Sevens tournament held in Mount Maunganui. Northland lost 31-5 to Auckland in the final. This was a great result for Northland who also had wins over Waikato and Bay of Plenty. One of the players involved in the Northland Under 19 Sevens team is Hamish Pomare. Pomare has been shortlisted as one of fifty players to take part in a camp with the New Zealand Under 20's squad for next year's World Cup. Pomare can play on the centres or on the wing. Northland Halfback Sam Nock was not considered due to Super Rugby Commitments. The Camp starts on November 22nd and runs till December 2nd with more camps scheduled in March and April next year. The World Cup will be held in June with Manchester being the host city.

Both Dan and Kara Pryor have re-signed with the Northland Rugby Union for another year, with both brothers saying their heart lies in the North and would find it hard playing for another ITM Cup Franchise. Dan Pryor has played all his ITM Cup rugby with the Taniwha, while Kara spend one season with Auckland before making the move up North. Dan spend 2015 with the Highlanders and will play for them in the 2016 Super Rugby Season and Kara has been given a shot with the Blues. Both hope to bring the skills they learn from their respective Super Rugby teams and help the young Northland talent coming through the ranks.

Ultimate Kiwis Pack Winners

Grady Coolis - Warkworth

BLK Consolation Prize: **Leanne Carter** **BLK**
- Leeds UK

Thank you to all those who entered. We received hundreds of entries.

Baseball New Zealand to Hold Open Trials

A SERIES OF open trials will be held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch when New Zealand Diamondblacks Manager Chris Woodward travels to New Zealand in early December to look at prospective talent ahead of February's World Baseball Classic Qualifying tournament in Sydney.

The tournament is scheduled to take place in Sydney from the 11th to the 14th February where the New Zealand Diamondblacks will match up against regional powerhouse Australia, currently ranked 13th in the world, top 30 baseball nation South Africa, and the national team from the Philippines, a Diamondblacks opponent from the 2012 tournament in Taiwan.

"I'm excited to get back to New Zealand," said Woodward, who this past year was the first base and infield coach for the Seattle Mariners and who guided New Zealand's 21U Diamondblacks to wins over Mexico and the Czech Republic in Taichung last November at the IBAF 21U World Championship. "It will be good to see the talent that is stepping up and begin this process on the road to Sydney and hopefully beyond. I have a lot of faith that New Zealand is taking the necessary steps to become a significant baseball nation, and this is why I continue to be involved."

It is likely Woodward will visit Wellington and Christchurch first, and invite those players who catch his eye to a final trial in Auckland on Sunday, 6 December. Woodward will also be joined at the trial venues by his pitching coach, former Japan and Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) pitcher Naoyuki Shimizu, who is now living with his family in Auckland.

Baseball New Zealand CEO Ryan Flynn said the trials are open and that he expects a number of talented players from the ages of 17 and up to participate, including a number of domestic-based players who represented New Zealand in the last WBC tournament in 2012. A final schedule will be published on Baseball New Zealand's website and social media pages once the national body consults with the regional associations in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The early notification is to ensure players are prepared for this important weekend.



Chris Woodward

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Katie Glynn Retires from International Hockey

WELL RESPECTED Black Sticks striker Katie Glynn has announced her retirement from the international game.

Glynn, aged 26 from Auckland, says it's the hardest decision she has ever had to make, but knows it's the right call as the Black Sticks schedule intensifies ahead of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Debuting in 2009, Glynn scored a remarkable 77 goals throughout her career making her New Zealand's second highest female goal scorer of all time.

Having struggled with both knee and back injuries in the last two years, Glynn and coach Mark Hager were hopeful she would be back playing internationals next year.

"As much as I've been trying to push through and hope things would improve, I'm still really restricted and it has become incredibly hard for me to keep training as I would like. It's been a really hard couple of years, I've found it both mentally and physically exhausting," said Glynn.

Named in the National Squad following the 2015 Ford National Hockey League, Glynn was hoping to make the 2016 Rio Olympics National Squad which is set to be named at the end of this year.

"I was really grateful for the opportunity to be selected in the National Squad, but I have had to be realistic, and as much as I don't want to stop, I know deep down that it's the right thing to do," said Glynn.

Hager says Glynn was an outstanding player who will be well missed both on and off the field.

"She is one of the players that helped create the team that it is now – she drove the culture, was a top goal scorer, was match hardened, always won the 50/50 contest and loved playing the tough games," said Hager.

Glynn had a stellar career competing at all the major global hockey events including the 2014 World Cup, 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, 2012 London Olympics, 2010 World Cup and 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games.

"It's hard to pick out a highlight, I guess the Olympics – it's always a dream to go to an Olympics and to get that close to a medal made it special.

"The thing I will miss the most will be the team envi-

ronment, it isn't a professional sport and we do it because we love it and I think that creates a special kind of culture, you are all sharing the journey together.

"I have a lot to be thankful for and a lot of great moments and friendships that I will cherish for a lifetime," said Glynn.

Glynn believes the key driver to the team's success over recent years has been the "faultless commitment and passion" shown by Hager.

"He pushes players and keeps challenging us to the best we can be. Women's hockey in New Zealand is the strongest it has ever been and this is credit to Mark and the work he has put in over the last six years," said Glynn.

Although no longer in the black shirt, Glynn is hoping she will be back playing for her Roskill-Eden Hockey Club and at the 2016 Ford National Hockey League.

A full-time sports manager at Auckland's Diocesan School and coach of its First Eleven, Glynn has signalled her interest in coaching at both a regional and national level in the future.

"I'm really passionate about coaching and now that I'm not playing, I have the time to put towards it," said Glynn.

She believes the Black Sticks have every opportunity to return with a medal from Rio and she will be closely following their progress in the upcoming months.



Katie Glynn



Black Sticks Women's Team Named for World League Final

BLACK STICKS head coach Mark Hager has announced a strong side ahead of the FIH World League Final and believes the depth of players to select from is better than it's ever been.

Gemma Flynn, Emily Naylor and Georgia Barnett will join the Black Sticks line-up taking on the world's best teams in Rosario in early December.

Flynn brings speed up front and the ability to score goals, while New Zealand's most capped player Emily Naylor brings a hard-nosed approach to the defensive line.

Goalkeeper Georgia Barnett has also received the call-up and will be looking to stamp her mark ahead of Rio Olympic selection at the end of this year.

"We are very pleased with the team named, you only have to look at those unlucky players that have missed out to get a sense of the depth and high calibre of players in our wider group at the moment," said Hager.

Hager says the team are targeting to play in the final in Rosario but it's anyone's guess as to who they will face following pool play.

The Black Sticks take on Korea, Netherlands and then Germany while on the other side of the draw Argentina, Great Britain, Australia and China face each other before a must-win quarter-final clash.

Hager says it's fantastic to have close to the full team based in Auckland and training together between now and when the team depart for Rosario on the 27th November.

"Having the team here has allowed us to work on our set pieces and structures, rather than having to work on those critical aspects of the game when we are away. Goal scoring is the key focus for us at the moment, we know we get the chances throughout a game and it's just practicing how we convert those."

With the Olympics only nine months away, the national selectors will use both the World League and intra-squad games as a chance to determine which 25 players will be announced in the 2016 Olympic Squad being named at the end of this year.

"There is real competition between players – not just in our National Squad, but across the Development Squad also. The results from our Junior and Future Black Sticks Programme which started back in 2011 is starting to show and that's really pleasing," said Hager.

Goalkeeper Amelia Gibson has been ruled out with injury while former captain Kayla Whitelock and striker Katie Glynn are building up their fitness and are on track to return to the turf next year.

Team Facts

- Gemma Flynn is the fourth highest goal scorer of all time (62 goals), and the second highest goal scorer in the team. Anita Punt is the highest goal scorer on 86 goals.
- Naylor has only played eight minutes of hockey since the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, incurring a hamstring injury in the first game against Argentina in October.
- The World League Final is being held in Rosario from 5-13 December.
- It is the second time the FIH have held a World League Final. The first one was held in Tucuman, Argentina, and New Zealand placed fifth.
- There are eight countries that compete in the FIH World League Final
- The Black Sticks Women have already qualified for the 2016 Rio Olympics. They qualified due to their performance at the World League Semi-Final which was held in June/July in Belgium.
- The Black Sticks Women will play 34 international tests in 2015
- Goalkeeper Sally Rutherford is likely to play her 100th test
- Sam Charlton is likely to play her 150th test
- Rose Keddell is likely to play her 100th test

DRAW SETS UP THRILLING POOL CLASHES IN DICK SMITH NRL AUCKLAND NINES 2016

IT DIDN'T take long for the pool of death to emerge for the 2016 Dick Smith NRL Auckland Nines. The Canterbury Bulldogs, Manly Sea Eagles, New Zealand Warriors and Brisbane Broncos were the first four teams drawn out of a barrel by Kiwi supermodel Kylie Bax in Auckland this morning. They'll make up pool Hunua – a pool appropriately named after a mountain range - given what heights the clubs will need to scale to emerge and qualify for the knockout phase.

“Obviously it looks like a strong pool but you just don't know in this competition,” was Warriors coach Andrew McFadden's first impression.

Superstar signings Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Issac Luke had already indicated they were determined to take part in the pre-season spectacular, he said.

“Both have certainly made their thoughts felt – they want to play. I would say the likelihood would be positive. It would be a great introduction for them to be pulling on a Warriors jersey for the first time.”

Queensland State of Origin coach Mal Meninga, who also attended the draw, pointed out that the last two NRL Nines champions – The South Sydney Rabbitohs and North Queensland Cowboys – had also claimed an NRL premiership over the last two years.

“Early success is important in the NRL and because the Nines is such a team-orientated event it can build confidence in the players and a culture of success for the season ahead.

“The beauty of our competition is that most teams can win on their day and the Nines is no different.”

NRL general manager of football Nathan McGuirk believed the 2016 event would prove to be the most successful to date. The return of the club community programme and teams warming up in front of fans on the main field would deliver even greater fan engagement with the superstar players.

McGuirk also hailed the retention of the three test women's series between the Kiwi Ferns and Jillaroos.

“That was one of the biggest hits of last year. We are really confident this is going to be the biggest and best Nines tournament yet.”

Supermodel Bax, who produced a draw that also include the potential for a traditional season-opening clash between the Roosters and Rabbitohs, said she was a huge fan of the event.

“The Nines is exciting, exhilarating and so fast, which is exactly what people want these days. While it is sport, it is also one big festival and this year falls on a fantastic weekend with Waitangi Day being New Zealand's day.”

Dick Smith general manager of operations Sasa Loncar said the company was proud to continue its association with the event heading into its third year as naming rights sponsor.

“This event continues to grow each year in terms of fan following media exposure. Over the last two years we have seen over 160,000 fans attend, making it the Greatest Weekend.”

With Billy Slater declaring himself available and all 16 clubs contracted to bring a host of big names, the tournament's third edition promises to be the most star-studded yet.





DICK SMITH NRL AUCKLAND NINES
OFFICIAL POOL DRAW
SATURDAY 6 & SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2016



Waiheke	Rangitoto	Hunua	Piha
Roosters	Knights	Warriors	Dragons
Rabbitohs	Cowboys	Bulldogs	Raiders
Eels	Panthers	Sea Eagles	Sharks
Storm	Tigers	Broncos	Titans

Day 1	TIME	MATCHES	
Game 1	12:30 PM	Roosters	Rabbitohs
Game 2	12:55 PM	Eels	Storm
Game 3	1:20 PM	Knights	Cowboys
Game 4	1:45 PM	Panthers	Tigers
Game 5	2:20 PM	Warriors	Bulldogs
Game 6	2:45 PM	Sea Eagles	Broncos
Game 7	3:10 PM	Dragons	Raiders
Game 8	3:35 PM	Sharks	Titans
W1		NZ	Australia
Game 9	4:25 PM	Roosters	Eels
Game 10	4:50 PM	Rabbitohs	Storm
Game 11	5:15 PM	Knights	Panthers
Game 12	5:40 PM	Cowboys	Tigers
Game 13	6:15 PM	Warriors	Sea Eagles
Game 14	6:40 PM	Bulldogs	Broncos
Game 15	7:05 PM	Dragons	Sharks
Game 16	7:30 PM	Raiders	Titans

Day 2	TIME	MATCHES	
Game 17	10:35 AM	Roosters	Storm
Game 18	11:00 AM	Rabbitohs	Eels
Game 19	11:25 AM	Knights	Tigers
Game 20	11:50 AM	Cowboys	Panthers
Game 21	12:15 PM	Bulldogs	Sea Eagles
Game 22	12:40 PM	Warriors	Broncos
Game 23	1:05 PM	Dragons	Titans
Game 24	1:30 PM	Raiders	Sharks
Game 25	1:55 PM	Quarter Final 1	
Game 26	2:20 PM	Quarter Final 2	
Game 27	3:05 PM	Quarter Final 3	
Game 28	3:30 PM	Quarter Final 4	
W2		NZ	Australia
Game 29	4:40 PM	Winner QF1 v Winner QF2	
Game 30	5:05 PM	Winner QF3 v Winner QF4	
W3		NZ	Australia
Game 31	6:40 PM	Tournament Final	

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