

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

Newsletter #114

23 March 2016

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Armchair Coaching is a Breeze

By David Kemeys



LOSING AGAIN was only ever going to ramp up the pressure on Andrew McFadden. I feel for the bloke, we all know armchair coaching is easy.

What I do not know, is why I suffer the ordeal of talkback.

The latest attacks centred on the loss – obviously. But everyone became a target.

Apparently, and this is just from a 15-minute slot driving up the motorway, we have no ticker, no game-plan, too many players with no impact, too many impact players, too many journeymen, not enough journeymen, no kicking game, no strategy and generally no idea.

My favourite was the caller who said there was only room for one of Manu Vatuvei, Solomon Kata or Konrad Hurrell, because they were “too attacking”.

Opinions – everyone has one.

The concern is that the criticism forces the coaching staff to respond, instead of doing what they need to, fix our difficulties.

McFadden was in the papers defending our style of play against the “lack of spark and creativity” brigade, a charge led by Andrew and Matthew Johns, who know a bit about footy.

Andrew blamed Jeff Robson for stifling Shaun Johnson, while Matthew said we should just play ad-lib off the back of our forwards. So which brother is right?

McFadden did the only thing he could, defend his corner, although he admitted we are suffering from a lack of confidence with ball in hand.

“When we get a bit of confidence in the type of footy we want to play it will all start to click.”

Now McFadden has a hell of a job to pick a side to face the Knights, because all of this led me to review the side based on talkback, and it turns out those in radio land want massive changes.

RTS is, apparently, “doing nothing”. We can’t have Lolohea on the wing because he’s “too small for the modern game”, or Wright, because he “offers little and delivers less” (though that is a good insult). In the centres Kata has to go because he’s apparently “not a finisher”, and Ayshford is out too because he’s a “journeyman”. Johnson will have to have a week out to “give him a wake-up call” and his halves partner Robson is dropped because he “can’t defend”.

So the bad news is we need an entire backline before Easter Monday.

The good news is a couple of forwards survive. The ever dependable Simon Mannering escaped criticism though “carrying the forwards is taking its toll”, apparently we can do without Thompson because of his “brain explosions”, and Hoffman, because the “captaincy curse” has hit him. “Too soft” Lilyman and “can’t bend the line and never offloads” Matulino are goneburgers, but newbie Jazz Tevaga is “worth another go”, especially because Isaac Luke “only came for the money”.

People do like Charlie Gubb, but the rest of the bench got slammed.

So Cappy, so just seven new backs, four new forwards, and a new bench please.

I think I’ll switch to The Breeze.

You Can't Always Get What You Want...

WE DID not get what we wanted did we? The Vodafone Warriors Juniors and the Intrust Cup team both won, but when it came to the big game, the NRL good luck fairy deserted us and we fell to a 21-14 loss to the Melbourne Storm.

It was much improved, and we were in the arm wrestle to the end, when it was suddenly like watching the first round loss to the Tigers again.

With seconds to go that night, and trying everything to get the final try that would snatch the win, we spilled the ball and James Tedesco scooted for the try that sealed the game.

This time it was Storm winger Marika Koroibete who scooped it up and went in near the posts, silencing the large crowd at Mt Smart.

It was cruel. Sure we still would have lost without that try, after Cooper Cronk snapped a wobbly old field goal to give the Storm a 15-14 lead, but it was heart-breaking to see the dejection on the player's faces.

You could see the disappointment on every face in the ground. It was chilling.

Bellamy Stands Up For McFadden

The pressure is sure to rise on under-fire coach Andrew McFadden, but at least he got a vote of support from the unlikeliest place, his Storm opposite Craig Bellamy.

"You don't like to see any coach go through what Andrew's going through at the moment, to lose 11 in a row," he said. "I know Cappy, I coached him at Canberra when I was an assistant coach there. We're all feeling for him, but it's all been overblown. They played well, they defended well, they aimed up. So I

think it's all a bit out of proportion and it might give the media something to write about, but I don't like seeing anyone go through it."

After finishing last year with eight losses, we have now had three defeats in the 2016 season. All we can do is pick ourselves up for next weekend at Mt Smart on Easter Monday at 4pm when the Newcastle Knights hit town.

They had a draw against a Canberra side that has impressed many so far this year, so will come to town trying to heap more misery on us.

Maybe the Easter Bunny will bring us a change of luck, because we need one.

What The Writers Said...

It's interesting to jump online and get the immediate reaction from the football writers.

David Long, writing for Stuff, predictably started with a reference to our losing streak, but singled out some positives, especially Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, saying it was the first time since joining the club he had looked like the world class fullback he is.

Meanwhile the Herald's Michael Burgess called it another tale of woe and a heartbreaking defeat.

He talked of the empty feeling around Mt Smart but also said there were signs of progress, although adding the pressure on coach Andrew McFadden could only increase.



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Melbourne Storm v Vodafone Warriors

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz



Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Issac Luke during the game.



Tuimoala Lolohea celebrates his try.



Solomone Kata celebrates his try.



The boys take down Storm fullback Cameron Munster.



Tuimoala Lolohea steps.



Simon Mannering looks to pass.

What Was That All About?

There are always complaints about the officiating, and mostly they are wrong. But the performance of Henry Perenara and Dave Munro, especially in the first half, left me – and many others – scratching our heads. You do not expect refs to get every call right, but some of those were just utterly mystifying.

The series of penalties whistled Melbourne's way didn't seem to be for anything I could see, and it was telling that the crowd was letting the refs know their frustration was building.

We all know giving up cheap penalties will cost you big time at this level, and we give more than our fair share away. It has to improve, and fast.

No Charge For Gavet

Hands up anyone who was surprised by the news prop James Gavet escaped charge for his tackle on Storm fullback Cameron Munster.

So that is no one then!

Gavet was put on report by referee Henry Perenara after he made a tackle around Munster's legs, and coach Andrew McFadden called it ridiculous.

"Since when can't you tackle one on one low? I know it was an awkward tackle at the end, but that happens

in a contact game. But there was nothing illegal. It was ridiculous he got put on report."

Role For Laurie Daley?

Chief executive Jim Doyle has confirmed he has held discussions with Laurie Daley, the New South Wales coach.

"I talked to Wayne Smith a few times but unfortunately Wayne, because of his character, is very loyal to rugby and that was the biggest stumbling block. We've got a lot of belief in Cappy but who does he talk to, who are the types of people we can get around him? Laurie loves it over here, we've had some discussions. Getting him into a role like football director is definitely a possibility."

Confidence Must Be Down

Coach Andrew McFadden has admitted a lack of confidence with the ball in hand. "We got criticised in the Tigers game for playing too one out and then we got criticised for playing too lateral (against the Broncos)," he told the Herald.

"We know what our game is and we know we haven't really found it yet. When we get a bit of confidence in the type of footy we want to play it will all start to click."

Continued on next page...

I don't think it is any secret the fans are puzzled, and frustrated that Jeff Robson's combinations with Shaun Johnson, and new hooker Issac Luke and fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, have not been great.

"It's going to take a little bit of time," Robson said. "With Roger as well, being new to the club, we're working out what he likes. We can just keep learning and improving."

Welcome To The Club Jazz

Hooker Jazz Tevaga was called up to make his debut in the Vodafone Warriors' third-round NRL clash against Melbourne, and what a good fist he made of it. The 20-year-old came in for Issac Luke, who was ruled out with a leg injury.

A Papakura Sea Eagles junior, Tevaga finished his NYC career last year in a season in which he also appeared for the club's New South Wales Cup side. He started this year in the Intrust Super Premiership team. Tevaga becomes Vodafone Warrior No 209.

RTS Hits 200 Again

In his first three games for us fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck has hit the 200-metre mark each time to average 217 a game.

Tuivasa-Sheck had 200 from 14 runs in his debut against the Tigers, followed by 205 from 25 against the Broncos.

Against the Storm he went 247 from 25 on Sunday and made seven tackle breaks and had a clean defensive sheet.

Topping the tackle count was Bodene Thompson with 52 and Simon Mannering on 40, both with no misses.

They finished ahead in line breaks for the first time this season (4-1) and also headed their opponents in the missed tackles department for the first time, coming up with just 17 misses to Melbourne's 27 (they missed 20 against Brisbane and 32 against Wests Tigers). In other numbers they made slightly more metres than Melbourne and had more total runs as well as off loads.

Jnr. Melbourne Storm v Jnr. Vodafone Warriors

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz



Kane Telea scores.



Keany Dawson celebrates his try.



Keany Dawson heads towards the try line.



Ofahiki Ogden in action.



Warrior Christopher Sio takes the ball up.



Warrior Keany Dawson looks to pass as he gets tackled.

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

Huntly Hurricane Speaks Out

Anyone who did not see Lance Hohaia speaking out about his injuries in the Herald on Sunday needs to. It was a great piece, and Lance didn't hold anything back. Check it out here: [Click here.](#)

Stadium Back On The Agenda

Vodafone is backing a new waterfront stadium, joining Vodafone Warriors owner Eric Watson.

Big boss Russell Stanners said Vodafone would consider sponsoring a new downtown stadium.

"We think a new stadium is an absolutely fantastic idea, and we would love it to become a reality."

Vodafone has been our naming rights sponsor since 1999 – the longest professional naming rights sports team sponsor in New Zealand history.

"We've already been in talks with other individuals and organisations who are backing this stadium, pledging our support," said Stanners.

"We believe this project would enhance the vibrancy of central Auckland and New Zealand sport."

Ali Bags A Double

Ali Lauiti'itigot two tries to seal a 20-18 comeback win for the Vodafone Warriors in the Intrust Super Premiership game against the Newtown Jets. It was his first appearance for the club at Mt Smart in 12 years. Our second half effort was in complete contrast to the first half, when, frankly, we were not great, trailing 18-4 at the break. But early into the second spell we got over and it seemed to lift the boys. We settled into the grind and Ali got his first try to get us within four. Playing patiently we kept coming at the Jets and Ali got his second, with Ata Hingano nailing the conversion for a two-point lead and ultimately victory.

Vodafone Warriors 20 (Ali Lauiti'iti2, Ken Maumalo, Marata Niukore tries; Ata Hingano 2 conversions).

Newtown Jets 18 (Jason Schirnack, Jaline Graham, Mitch Brown tries; Mitch Brown 2 conversions, penalty).

Juniors Storm Back

After spotting Melbourne a 10-0 lead, the Vodafone Junior Warriors claimed a six-try 30-16 win – their first victory of the season – in their third-round NYC clash.

Having lost competitive encounters with the Tigers and Broncos, the Kelvin Wright-coached side found its groove.

The initial catalyst was first-year fullback Kane Telea, getting a slick try in the 11th minute to check Melbourne's momentum, and a second in the 28th minute to lock it up 10-10.

Right on halftime big interchange front rower Keanu Dawson thundered over to give us a 16-10 lead at the break.

Picking up where they left off at the end of the first half, they came out in the second spell and put on tries in the 50th and 57th and 71st minutes.

Vodafone Junior Warriors 30 (Kane Telea 2, Keanu Dawson 2, Eiden Ackland, Tualima Tualima tries; Kane Telea 3 conversions). Melbourne Storm 16 (Josh Kerr, Jesse Arthars, Nat McGavin tries; Jesse Arthars 2 conversions).

Geoff Thomas Signs Off

Before Monday's game I will have tuned in to see the end of an era. My mate and all-round good guy Geoff Thomas will host his final Rheem Outdoors with Geoff show on TV3 on Saturday at 5pm.

I have known Geoff for a long time, so when he throws his last cast, I'll be watching. Land a big one Geoff, and thanks for the laughs.



Manly 26 def Canterbury 24
Mounties 42 def Newcastle 18
North Sydney 24 def Illawarra 12
Wentworthville def Penrith 14
Wests Tigers 44 def Wyong 16
NZ Warriors 20 def Newtown 18

NSW Intrust Super Premiership Round 3 Results



Intrust Super Cup - Vodafone Warriors v Newton Jets

Photos courtesy of www.photosport.co.nz



Ali Lauiti'iti goes for a high five



Ali Lauiti'iti helps tackle a Jets player



Ali Lauiti'iti in action



Pat Siple in action



Raymond Fa'ala Mariner gets tackled



Upu Poching in action

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Double lung transplant recipient Alana Taylor with Sam Lisone, Thomas Leuluai and Sione Lousi.



Alana Taylor receives a present presented by Pete the Pom.



Amanda and Bryan with Sam Lisone, Thomas Leuluai and Sione Lousi.



Andrew Mulligan from Radio Sport was our guest.



Ben, who writes for the newsletter, was with his sister Samantha. Her favourite player is Shaun Johnson.



Brendon Popplewell from the TAB with Sir Peter.



Caleb, Richard (Dad) and Jack Matson.



Warriors board member Cameron George.



Dave Curran (finance and operations manager) and Aaron Lawton (fan engagement manager).



Glen Dwyer and Jeffrey Gabriel, Newtown officials.



Jesse and Kurt are members who fly in from Sydney for the games. Both are diehard supporters.



Kenny Bromwich of the Melbourne Storm talks with Sir Peter.



Kurt Timihou from Sydney.



Lance Hohaia with Sir Peter.



Pick and Caroline Pickering from Perth x Taranaki and Turangi.



Sam Lisone, Sir Peter, Thomas Leuluai and Sione Lousi.



The Pommy Squad that come to the Sir Peter Leitch Club in the Stacey Jones Lounge every home game are back again. From left Adam Worth, Neal Saxon, Peter Taylor, Lee Whitehead and Stephen Whitehead.



Tony, Cooper and Gary Feasey, a renowned Auckland rugby league family.

New Stadium Branding



CEO Jim Doyle and his team have wasted no time in branding Mt Smart since it was confirmed it would be our home for the next few years. I personally love it and there is more to come.



Finally Home to 'Our House' At Mt Smart

By John Deaker



ROUND THE GROUND WITH DEXTER

ON SUNDAY THE Butcher's mate Dexter Trail took more than 30 lucky fans (including myself) from the Sir Peter Leitch Club in the Stacey Jones Lounge on one of his legendary guided tours of the ground. Dexter managed to fluke a few bits of timing around the ground which added some nice touches to the tour – though of course he claimed it was all part of his master plan. Yeh right Dexter!

It's always nice to get down close to the play – and as we did so the Warriors Under 20's touched down right next us to tie up their match at 10-all. Not long after, when Shaun Johnson got out of his car just as we rounded the south end of the stadium a few people nearly became believers that the 'Dexter Show' was planned down to the last second!

The south end of the stadium presented the golden opportunity for the fans (and my first chance too) to check out Sir Peter's memorabilia on display. To those who haven't yet seen this you're missing out on something quite stunning. The quantity and quality of the objects on display blows you away. It's therefore important you take your time working your way round it all to truly appreciate it.

Unique rugby league items like Darren Lockyer's boots packaged up beautifully (with mud and dirt included + a pic of Sir Peter with the Queensland legend) are complemented by great pieces from other international sports stars like Tiger Woods and Rafael Nadal.

Back on the road , Dexter pointed to the stadium and explained the emphasis on the 'Our House' concept – while coincidentally 2 random supporters unraveled a huge sign behind us also emphasizing this concept and the 'Fortress of Faith' line. How much cash Dexter slipped them to make his timing look good is still under investigation...

Many of the group then grabbed the chance to get a pic with Ali Lautiiti (who just happened to be walking our way!) fresh from his 2 try effort in the Warriors' Intrust Super Premiership (formerly NSW Cup) team's victory.

Inside the members area at the west end of the ground more people were lucky enough to get up-close-and-personal with the Sky TV crew and particularly Stephen McIvor was more than happy to chat with some of the group.

The final leg of the tour ended with a walk up at least 40 steps of the stadium. Just when it seemed Dexter was going to take on another 30 steps , he stepped off his right foot and headed for the elevator. Clearly out-of-breath and lacking the conditioning he might have acquired later in the season, he gave the group the 2 options (steps or elevator) of getting back up the Sir Peter Leitch Club. Clearly, Dexter would be taking the elevator. To be fair, he'd earned the rest – he'd been able to add a nice touch to many loyal Warriors fans' afternoon at the footy.



Dexter laying down the law on the tour. One must not forget he's a Senior Sergeant in the Police.

THOMAS LEULUAI IN THE LOUNGE – AND NOT FAR AWAY FROM THE PLAYING FIELD...

IT'S ONE thing to have exciting individuals in the 2016 Warriors team but that doesn't necessarily help their combinations to click and their continuity across the park. If there is one man in the Warriors squad of 2016 who hasn't played yet but could eventually provide the glue to help direct the team round the park it's Thomas Leuluai.

Continued on next page...

Leuluai is only weeks away from a return to the park after rupturing his ACL against Parramatta in round 10 last year. He'd previously been on track to return for round 1 but he's struggled a bit with Patella Tendinitis through his rehab and also suffered a knock to the leg when training during the off-season. This pushed back his expected return to the field.

Leuluai caught up with Sir Peter in the lounge at the weekend and was able to confirm to those present that "I'm back into full training this week" and "Should be right to go in a few weeks."

He also mentioned that he had a little girl on Christmas Day and one of the few positives to come out of such a serious and frustrating injury has been the opportunity to spend more time with the family.

It is worth also noting that while Leuluai seems to have been around for decades he is actually only 30. Fingers crossed he can return in the type of shape he was in when he got injured and he can become a key ingredient towards the team turning the corner in the next month.

HURRELL'S X-FACTOR AND ENERGY IS SOMETHING STATISTICS CAN'T MEASURE

With players like Manu and Billy Slater sidelined, both teams lacked a bit of X-factor going into Sunday's game and it showed the way the game played out. Everybody knows that the coaching staff have reservations about Konrad Hurrell's mental and physical capabilities at NRL level. Plenty of this is apparently based on what they see off the field as well as on it.

This overlooks the fact that even when he has NOT been well-prepared, Hurrell has proven to be a match-winner in the past for the Warriors. The team needed a match-winner on Sunday.

If teams were picked on statistics and player's performances at training Jonah Lomu might have never played for the New Zealand Sevens team or the All Blacks. But smart coaches knew that if you could get Jonah up to anywhere near other players' general fitness and work at some of his micro-skills then his phenomenal strengths would make him one of the team's most valuable players. Hurrell's strengths aren't as strong as Jonah's were, but his weaknesses aren't as weak as the All Black legend's were either.

Could wing be the best position for Konrad to fit into the current team's mix? Ask yourself one simple question: If I'm playing on the opposition wing do I want to go head-to-head with Jonathon Wright, Tuimoala Lotohea - or Konrad Hurrell. It's a no-brainer.

The other thing Konrad brings to the Warriors is that ENERGY that no statistics can measure. There was elements of it present on Sunday when crowd-favourite Charlie Gubb took the field. A few of his dynamic plays brought the mainly quiet crowd into the game for brief moments. Konrad can produce that same sort of energy in spades – so here's hoping we can get to see (and feel!) some of it in the coming weeks.



*Konrad Hurrell training.
Photo courtesy of www.photosport.nz*

CONTRASTING WARM-UPS ON SUNDAY

The Melbourne Storm are the benchmark in many areas of rugby league. It was 'interesting' to see the contrasting efficiency and cohesiveness of their warm up when compared to the Warriors on Sunday. Admittedly, the Warriors have their indoor facility they might have used for bits and pieces - and this was just one observation on one given day. But it was the Storm's military precision as a unit that stood out to me – plus the fact that they were fully warmed up and off the ground well before the Warriors.

Also – what was with the Warriors' coaching staff wearing white dress shirts and black pants for as they threw some passes and kicked some balls around to the players? It just looked strange! Meanwhile, Bellamy and his assistants wore polo shirts and some of his assistants even wore shorts... and they are the benchmark.

2ND HALF WHO'S THAT KID?

Nathan Cleary

Penrith Panthers

Date of Birth: November 14, 1997

Birthplace: Sydney

Position: Halfback/Five-eighth

Height: 182cm

Weight: 92kg

Contracted until: 2017

Studying/Occupation: Secondary Education/Teacher's Aide

The Rap

Just 18 years old, Nathan Cleary is already leading Penrith's under-20s side around the park and has captained the Australian Schoolboys.

The young leader has the full support of Panthers NYC coach Cameron Ciraldo, who says his halfback has a big impact on the team on and off the field.

"Nathan has a great work ethic. He loves to ask questions and is always keen to play. He's a popular member among the boys, and he's improving on bossing the other guys around," says Ciraldo.

Cleary is a product of renowned rugby league nursery St. Dominic's College in Penrith and is also the son of former Panthers coach Ivan Cleary. He admits it wasn't an easy time when his dad was sensationally sacked from the club in the off-season, but says he can also see positives from it.

"It was definitely hard at the start when he left, but I've got to adapt. It's an opportunity for me to experience new things, to get out of his limelight and create my own," Cleary tells *Big League*.

The Australian Schoolboys rep says he still goes to his dad for advice when needed.

"He helps me when I want it but he's not too pushy.

"He lets me do my own thing."

The Style

Cleary says he loves to direct his team-mates around the park and believes he succeeds because of the simple things he does on the field.

"I like to be directive, get myself in good kicking positions and run every now and then," he says.

The halfback bases his game on Test players Johnathan Thurston and Cooper Cronk.

"I like how they conduct themselves and the way they play the game."

Ciraldo says Cleary is great at controlling the game but admits

the youngster still needs to be more vocal with his players.

Cleary isn't looking too far into the future, but he has already had a taste of first grade after lining up for the Panthers in a pre-season trial match against PNG Hunters. He hopes to play NSW Cup this season and Ciraldo believes it would be good for Cleary to have a run with some of the older players.

His coach sees Cleary as a future NRL player, but is cautious about the timing of his NRL debut.

"I think he should be aiming for first grade in 18 months to two years. There's no need to rush him," says Ciraldo.

The Man Himself

Last season Cleary was selected

to captain the Schoolboys, forcing him to choose between playing in the NYC finals for Penrith or representing his country.

The halfback went with the decision to tour with the Schoolboys, but he admits it wasn't an easy call.

"It was my choice - but it was a tough one to make at the time."

Cleary says playing for the Australian Schoolboys has helped him develop as a player, describing it as a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.

"Putting on the Australian jersey is like no other feeling. The chance to play Australian Schoolboys only comes once," he says.

Cleary missed the finals, but the Panthers still went on to win the

title. They'll hope to continue that success with one of their leaders at the helm this year.

What do you do away from footy?

I like to spend time with mates or have family time. I try to get out to the beach as much as possible, get away from Penrith for a while.

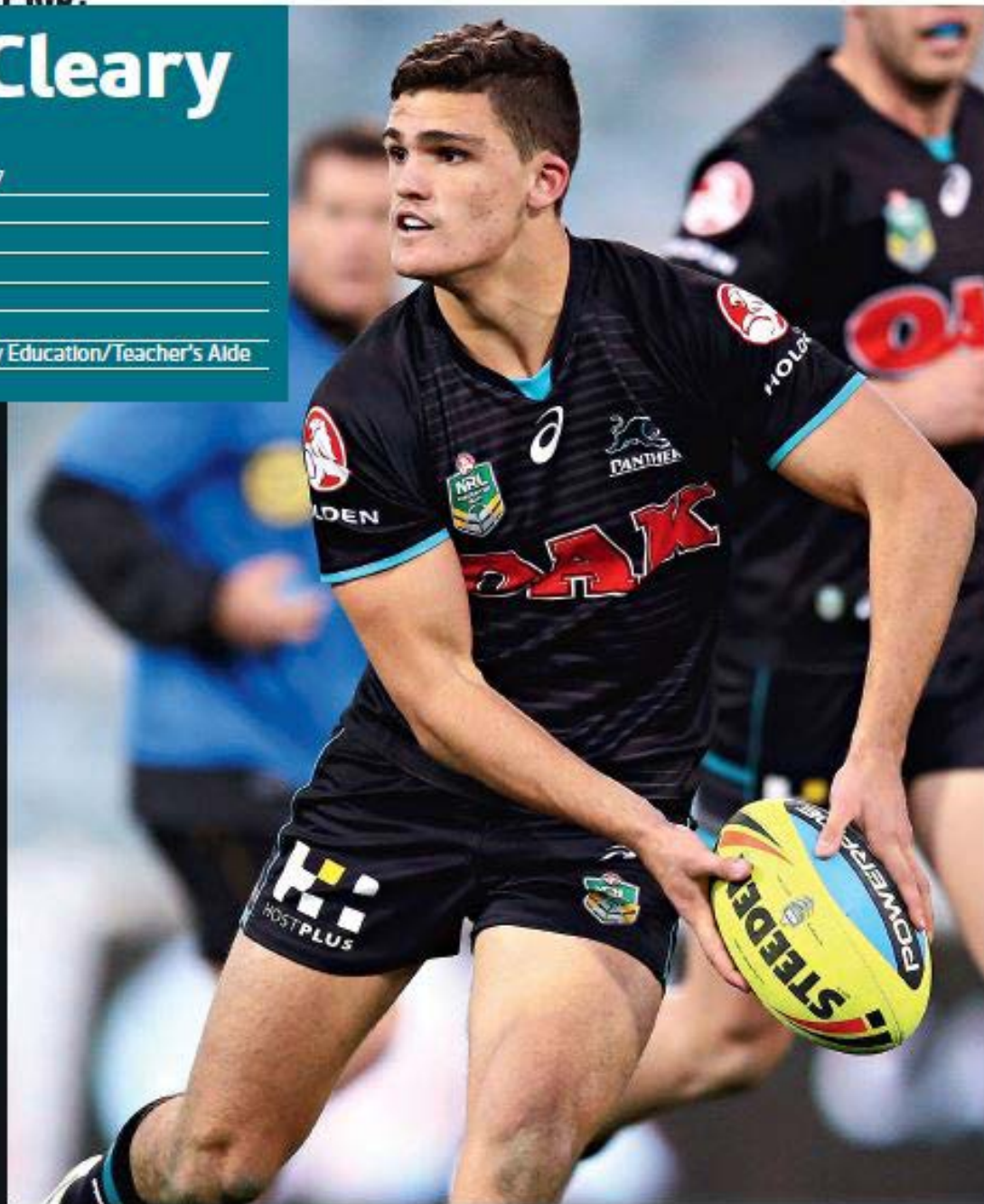
If you didn't play rugby league, what would you want to do?

I'd be a teacher. I'm currently a teacher's aide at Colyton High School and I'm studying secondary teaching at Western Sydney University.

What are your goals for 2016?

I want to play the best footy I can in the under-20s and hopefully play a bit of NSW Cup as well.

- Michael Blok





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THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 4 ISSUE...

Jam-packed with FEATURES and NEWS, plus columnist **BRENT TATE** and game analysis by **BEN IKIN**; plus NRL, HOLDEN CUP, NSW CUP, QLD CUP and RON MASSEY CUP team lists and a FULL NRL DRAW.

FEATURES

- South Sydney coach **Michael Maguire** opens up on his recruitment moves over the past couple of years, including instilling so much faith local juniors **Alex Johnston**, **Aaron Gray** and **Cameron McInnes**. He says he knew he had to let go of **Issac Luke** to keep McInnes, a player he describes as "completely selfless".

- It's been a long hard road for **Ben Barba** to get back to his best, but his coach and team-mates have praised him for becoming a leader in the Sharks' side. This has included mentoring **Valentine Holmes**, who went through a difficult period following the Emerging Maroons camp.

- **Brian Canavan** has praised the appointment of **Todd Greenberg** as NRL CEO, saying he will be a key figure in ensuring the increase of the salary cap and Collective Bargaining Agreement at the end of the year will be beneficial for every player in the game.

Also **Arana Taumata** is back for what he swears is his final shot at the NRL; 29-year-old **Jason Nightingale** wants to remain a one-club player after hitting 200 at the Dragons; **Cameron Munster** is taking lessons from **Billy Slater** as he tries to make the fullback position his own; and after one first-grade game **Te Maire Martin** is on New Zealand's radar.

PLUS... **Brent Tate** comes on board as a columnist and can't pick a side in the Broncos v Cowboys clash this Friday; we attend a **Men of League** function with an unlikely key speaker and **Shaun Kenny-Dowall** gets ready for his 200th game in Rooster colours.

AND: Little League, lower grade previews, Top 8 miracle comebacks, news, The Analyst runs an eye over all four Good Friday fullbacks and an Anthony Milford poster.



THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

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Wee Geordie Was the Best

By John Coffey QSM



GEORGE (GEORDIE) Menzies wore the Kiwis jersey 69 times and played 29 Test matches from 1951 to 1961 during a golden era in New Zealand rugby league's history. Such were his all-round qualities that he was named the best five-eighth in the international game after the 1960 World Cup. He was an inaugural NZRL Legends of League inductee in 1995 and was included in the NZRL Team of the Century in 2007. One of our greatest players of all time.

The slightly-built but resilient Geordie died in Greymouth last week, aged 85. He had recently returned to his beloved West Coast after surgery at Christchurch Hospital. Geordie lived only a short punt from O'Brien Park, where he learned his rugby league with the renowned Runanga club. I always found him to be modest in the extreme, downplaying his own achievements and lavishly praising his old team-mates.

As a youngster Geordie balanced himself on the running rail around Greymouth's Victoria Park trotting track and watched his West Coast heroes beat Great Britain 17-8 in 1946, the heaviest defeat suffered by the Lions on their entire tour of Australasia. He dreamed of one day wearing the Coast's red and white jersey. Just three years later, at 18, he was lining up alongside some of those Lion tamers against the 1949 Kangaroos.

Geordie made an immediate impact. At 19 he was a Test reserve against the next Great Britain team and a year later debuted against the brilliant and brutal 1951 Frenchmen at Carlaw Park. That famous Test was won 16-15 when Kiwis fullback Des White kicked a penalty goal after the final bell. By then, Geordie, who had scored a thrilling try from a scissors move with Tommy Baxter, was on his way to Middlemore Hospital to have surgery on a broken cheekbone after being smashed in a high tackle.

That was the first of several injuries which marred his early career. In England later that year he suffered a badly torn groin muscle and finished the first Test on the wing; he missed the 1953 home series against Australia while recovering from surgery to his abdomen; a pulled leg muscle limited the first of his three World Cups appearances in France in 1954. He was also released midway through the 1955-56 tour of Britain and France because his mother was terminally ill back in Runanga.

He overcame all of those setbacks, and the challenges for his prized No.6 jersey from outstanding Aucklanders Cyril Eastlake and Bill Sorensen, to share in New Zealand's dazzling 1952 series victory in Australia and in significant wins by the amateur Kiwis over their professional Australian, British and French rivals. His last 19 Tests were consecutive. He was vice-captain on several tours and led the 1956 Kiwis in the second Test at Brisbane. Geordie was New Zealand's most travelled sportsman of his time, making eight tours.

In one of my old Test programmes Geordie's weight is given as 11st 5lb (or 71kg) and his height as 5ft 9in (1.75m). It was standard practice to exaggerate the size of smaller players in those days. But he was a coal miner and a tough little bugger to go with the dazzling footwork and alert eye for a gap. In later life he burrowed his way out from under an avalanche of coal, passing off the life-threatening incident as an occupational hazard.

At the 1957 World Cup the Kiwis beat Great Britain at Sydney by 29-21 in a major upset. Australian journalist Ernie Christensen reported: "From a scrum outside the British 25-yard line and near touch, Menzies went the blind side then sent a perfectly dummied flick pass to Hadfield on the wing. Hadfield, probably just as sure as everyone but Menzies that he had the ball, swung infield with the defence going with him. Menzies dodged past British winger Sullivan, who was intent on going after Hadfield, and raced on to score the try of the year."

Geordie played for the Rest of the World against the World Cup winners in 1957 (Australia) at Sydney and 1960 (Great Britain) at Bradford. He starred in the latter game, scoring three tries, and it was no surprise he was rated the world's best in his position ahead of Englishman David Bolton, Frenchman Gilbert Benausse and Australia's Barry Muir.

Continued on next page...

So good was Geordie even in his later years that the national selectors attempted to con him into another tour of Britain and France in 1961. Having helped the Kiwis draw a two-match home series against the Kangaroos, the typically humble Geordie quietly told the selectors he was retiring for personal and family reasons. But they named him for the tour anyway, and he had to go through the embarrassment of withdrawing from the team.

Not that he was entirely finished. In 1962 he was pivotal to South Island's 10-0 victory over North Island at Christchurch before taking up a player-coach role in country NSW. Rugby league was in the Menzies blood, and he coached Runanga, West Coast, New Zealand Colts and the 1974 and 1975 Kiwis. Geordie's long service was fittingly recognised by a Halberg Lifetime Achievement Award. His son, Chris, was to be a fine representative player too, also proudly wearing the West Coast No.6 jersey.



Sir Peter Leitch presenting Geordie Menzies with his Halberg Lifetime Achievement Award.



The pallbearers at Geordie's funeral were Maurice Bowes, left, Ray Baxendale, Don Monk, Tony Coll, John Griffin (obscured) and John Hibbs.

Photo: Greymouth Star

All the pallbearers were coached by George.

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Proud Members

By Ben Francis



IF YOU'RE a Warriors member there's a good chance you'll know Georgina Temm and all the hard yards she puts in off the field.

Described by her colleagues as "passionate and hard working", Georgina's is a membership co-ordinator.

"We are the customer service of memberships. We answer questions about memberships, we also call members asking how they are enjoying their experience, and asking what we can do to make them enjoy it more."

Georgina has been in her role for a year now, and has loved every minute of it. "Seeing people enjoying their memberships is awesome. We do our best to ensure members get the best game-day experience possible."

Georgina also helped form the Warriors Membership Council. Members volunteer on game day and are the link between members and the club, helping to make the membership programme be the best it can be.

At the Warriors game against the Storm the new Warriors Members Clubroom was in action at the Northern end of the ground for the first time.

The area is especially for members to visit and meet other members and talk footy. "It was great to see lots of members have a good time. The clubrooms are one of the many ways we are trying to improve the experience for members."

Players will come to the clubroom and interact with fans, along with Sky Sports game day coverage being filmed there too.

Georgina said there was lots of positive feedback and things can only get better. "There was a brilliant atmosphere. Members enjoyed themselves, some even stayed and watched the game from the clubrooms."

If you didn't get the chance to visit, make sure you head down at the next home game against the Newcastle Knights on Easter Monday - and say hi to Georgina and the team!



Georgina Temm and her nephew.



Georgina Temm with TK's daughter.



Keep up with Sir Peter Leitch! Click the icons to follow him on:



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High-Tackle Holloway... I'll give ya the tip mate!

The Mad Butchers Weekly NRL Tipping Comp.

By John Holloway

NRL Round 3

		Sue Phelan	Joe Vagana	John Coffey	Fast Eddie	Monty Betham	Bill Hayward	High-Tackle Holloway
		<i>Maloney's Barber Shop</i>	<i>League Legend</i>	<i>Newsletter Columnist</i>	<i>Devonport Dutchman</i>	<i>The Warrior Boxer</i>	<i>Link Business</i>	<i>Richmond Bulldog</i>
Date/ Venue	Game							
25/03 - ANZ	Rabbitohs v Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Rabbitohs	Rabbitohs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Rabbitohs
25/03 - Suncorp	Broncos v Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos
26/03 - GIO	Raiders v Titans	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Titans	Raiders
26/03 - Allianz	Roosters v Sea Eagles	Roosters	Roosters	Sea Eagles	Se Eagles	Roosters	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles
27/03 - WIN	Dragons v Panther	Dragons	Dragons	Panthers	Panthers	Dragons	Panthers	Panthers
28/03 - Mt Smart	Warriors v Knights	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors
28/03 - ANZ	Tigers v Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels	Eels
28/03 - Shark	Sharks v Storm	Storm	Storm	Storm	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks

How they're traveling....

Picks last week	1/8	3/8	1/8	1/8	3/8	1/8	2/8
Total picks	10/24	12/24	12/24	13/24	12/24	10/24	10/24

MATE WHO'D be a Tipster, no one covered in glory this week, although Monty went solo picking the Titans and Big Joe was the only clever fella on the Panthers, the legendary league duo then ticked the Sea Eagles in the Monday niter to lead the week on 3 tips correct!! You might note that High-Tackle was alone on tapping the upsetting Eels for a second week running for a princely two points. Super Sue, the Dutchman, Billy H and Mr Coffey 1 from 8 read it and weep. Could do better the teacher said..... A blow-out week for the TAB as well.

The 3rd Round was all over the shop result-wise with several notable issues and contentious moments ala another Warriors loss, our home-grown ref Perenara's ridiculous "spear tackle" call, The Dragons wet-fest upset at the SCG with Rabbitoh Greg Inglis last play brainfade, the Sam Burgess injury scare etc. These items have no doubt been covered off ad nauseum by the footy media and talkback banter not to mention my fellow scribes in this newsletter so I'll let that be and just look at the footy.

The Cowboys opened the Round with a clear-cut 40/6 bashing of the rudderless Roosters, he might be a bit dodgy on the firewater but there is no doubt Mitchell Pierce can steer a team around the paddock and the Bondi boys can't wait to get him back on deck.

The Far North lads continue to field their settled title winning lineup each week and its telling. At ANZ the Bulldogs lacked bite and were run down 20/6 by Fiesty Foran's ever improving Eels. Back to the drawing board for disappointed Dessy. You could do worse than consider the Parra Rd gang going all the way to the Big Dance. Rickys Raiders were a clear fave to dominate the Knights and at 16 zip up it looked sweet then shite happened. 24 all at the whistle go figure.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

The Broncos were galloping along with Milford on full noise but fell at the last fence 21/20 to the persistent Panthers. The young Maori prince Te Maire Martin opened his try tally and slotted the winning one pointer to cap a very cool Panther debut.

You can bet your footy boots that the Blue Mountain boys will beat a few more too. The high revving Tigers had their bubble well and truly popped by the topsy turvy Titans 30/18, the smile fades from Jason Taylors dial. The Monday niter produced yet another upset with the Manly mob breaking the duck to sink the shonky Sharks 22/10.

To Close off the Storm beat our guys... I guess Cappy, Richard Becht and co have explained what happened there. I did think that youngster Jazz Tevanga was a debut brightspot in jumper 24. What the heck...slip a lazy buck or two on the mighty Warriors to post their first win this weekend. Slip the gears on and let's get to Mt Smart to witness the turnaround. You heard it here first.

Everyone Hard at Work at Vodafone Warriors HQ

By Shontayne Hape



IT'S BEEN a busy couple of weeks here at Vodafone Warriors HQ.

Last Sunday, we had our first home game of the season at Mt Smart Stadium, with the boys narrowly falling to the Melbourne Storm in a thriller.

Obviously it was a disappointing result but you can't fault the boys for their effort and we have to remember the Storm are a champion side.

It was also fantastic to have a bumper crowd of more than 16,000 in the stands cheering the Vodafone Warriors on.

We've had plenty of good feedback from our members about our first home game, in particular the shiny new members' clubrooms we've installed in front of the north bank.

And with the Newcastle Knights heading across the ditch this weekend for a rare Easter Monday clash, it will be good to have that area pumping again.

It's all go at the moment and it's great to see more members are joining the club every day.

In fact, as I write this, we've just sold our 1,000th membership for the month and our official tally has gone past 17,000!

How good is that?

I'll be back on deck at Mt Smart Stadium this Monday for our home clash with the Knights.

I'm setting up a black membership marquee in front of gate B and will be there to distribute membership cards to people who have just signed up.

If you're around, swing by and say hello.

I can't wait for our next game. I've got a good feeling that "W" is just around the corner.

Thanks, as always, for your support and go the Mighty Vodafone Warriors!

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



Warriors v Knights Game Info



Venue: Mt Smart

Date: **THIS Monday March 28 it's Easter Monday**

Gates Open: 1:30 pm

NYC Kick Off: 1:40pm

NRL Kick Off: 4:05pm

Match Day Sponsor: SKYCITY

Theme: Arabian Nights



SKYCITY has a competition with the prize being a \$2,000 travel package. Head down to the D-Zone to enter. Prize is drawn at half time.

Club Legend Stacey Jones will be in the Stacey Jones lounge this Monday!

NRL Match Officials:

Referee: Adam Devcich

Review Officials: Ben Galea & Ashley Klein

Assist Referee: Chris James

Senior Ro: Bernard Sutton

Touch Judges: Shane Rehm & Anthony Eliott

NYC Match Officials:

Referee: Jon Stone

Assist Referee: Drew Oultram

Touch Judges: Chris Mcmillan & Rochelle Tamarua

Standby Tj: Kena Waikai

Mt Smart Stadium Tour for Out of Towners

Are you or anyone you know coming from out of town to the watch the Vodafone Warriors v Knights game this Monday? Would you or them like a tour? Well my good mate Dexter Trail will be doing a tour of Mt Smart Stadium. This tour will leave from the Stacey Jones Lounge at 2pm. To get there go to the back of the west stand and take the lift to the top floor. Tell security your doing the tour and ask for me or Dexter. - Sir Peter Leitch

My mate
Dexter, the
tour leader.



Intrust Super Premiership NSW Round 4

NZ Warriors vs Wyong Roos

Date: THIS Sunday 27th March

Kick Off: 1:00pm

Mt Smart #1

Gates Open: 12:45pm

Entry is Free

Public entrance through Gate B for Seating on West Stand only.



Coached by the Legend Stacey Jones.



Hurrell and Lisone to Face Knights

By Richard Becht



Sam Lisone returns from injury and Konrad Hurrell joins him on the bench for the Vodafone Warriors' fourth-round NRL encounter with the Newcastle Knights at Mount Smart Stadium on Monday (4.00pm kick-off; match day sponsor: SKYCITY).

After missing last Sunday's loss to Melbourne with a minor shoulder injury, Lisone will make his 22nd career appearance while Hurrell is set to play his first NRL match this year and the 69th of his career.

With veterans Manu Vatuvei and Issac Luke still on the injured list, Jonathan Wright is again on the left wing and Jazz Tevaga starts at hooker, the latter backing up after his impressive debut in the 14-21 loss to Melbourne on Sunday.

Becoming Vodafone Warrior #209 after his late call-up the day before the game, the Papakura Sea Eagles junior played 59 minutes, ran seven times for 43 metres and made 33 tackles with just one miss.

Hurrell, named on an extended bench last week, comes onto the interchange for the injured Nathaniel Roache (ankle) after appearing for the club's Intrust Super Premiership side in the first three weeks of the season.

"Sam was very good for us off the bench in the first two rounds only to miss last week's match with injury," said Vodafone Warriors assistant coach Justin Morgan.

"Konrad has been playing for our second team working on making some improvements in his game and now earns his chance.

"With Manu out, Jono slotted straight back in for us last week while Jazz did a terrific job coming in for Issac. It was a massive effort from him playing 60 minutes on debut."

Morgan said there were again encouraging signs despite the loss to Storm.

"To come back and take the lead against a tough side like Melbourne was a real positive although we couldn't close it out," he said.

"There were good aspects in the way our defence is improving and we're slowly getting there with combinations but there are errors in our game that we need to eliminate."

The Vodafone Warriors face a Newcastle side which has found some confidence after a grim start to the season which saw it lose 12-30 to Gold Coast and 6-48 to South Sydney.

The Knights rebounded with a 24-24 extra-time draw with unbeaten Canberra on Saturday, coming desperately close to a shock victory in regulation time.

There's not much between the Vodafone Warriors and Newcastle historically, the record showing 16 wins for the Vodafone Warriors and 17 for the Knights – with one draw – since they first met in 1995.

At home the Vodafone Warriors have a 10-8 winning edge while they have won nine of the last 10 clashes at Mount Smart Stadium since 2006.

VODAFONE WARRIORS V NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS

MOUNT SMART STADIUM, AUCKLAND

4.00PM, MONDAY, MARCH 28

VODAFONE WARRIORS

- 1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck
- 2 Tuimoala Lolohea
- 3 Blake Ayshford
- 4 Solomone Kata
- 5 Jonathan Wright
- 6 Shaun Johnson
- 7 Jeff Robson
- 8 Jacob Lillyman
- 9 Jazz Tevaga
- 10 Ben Matulino
- 11 Bodene Thompson
- 12 Ryan Hoffman (C)
- 13 Simon Mannering

Interchange:

- 14 Charlie Gubb
- 15 Sam Lisone
- 16 Konrad Hurrell
- 17 Albert Vete

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VODAFONE WARRIORS



NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS



DEFEND OUR HOME. MONDAY MARCH 28

Kick off 4pm Mt Smart Stadium. Adults from \$15; Children from \$10

Buy now at Ticketek.co.nz/vodafonewarriors. Ticket terms and conditions, purchase conditions and transactions fees apply.





Paul Henderson a former All Black popped into Cathy Dawson's home to watch the Warriors game.



Nadia and her son Taylor (Dales Budge's wife) speaking to Sir Peter before the game.

Dexter's Tour

(Top) Dexter's tour group in the Eastern Stand checking out Sir Peter's memorabilia. Check out how you can join a tour earlier in the newsletter!



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