



# Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

12<sup>th</sup> April 2017

## Newsletter #165

### Vodafone Warriors Win Back to Back At Home!



Kieran Foran on the run



Roger Tuivasa-Sheck breaks away up field



Ryan Hoffman embraces his daughter at the end of the match



Simon Mannering breaks away to score a try

Photos courtesy of [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)





**We had many emergency services represented at the game!**









# Ayshford Plays His 150th

*by Richard Becht*

**VODAFONE WARRIORS v CANBERRA RAIDERS**  
GIO Stadium, Canberra  
5.30pm, Saturday, April 15

**B**LAKE AYSHFORD will mark his 29th birthday with his 150th career appearance while prop James Gavet has been named in the starting line-up for the Vodafone Warriors' seventh-round NRL encounter with the Raiders at GIO Stadium in Canberra on Saturday (5.30pm kick-off local time; 7.30pm NZT).

Ayshford and Gavet are set for their fourth consecutive outings since coming into the side for the first time in the club's fourth-round clash against St George Illawarra on March 26.

Ayshford was called up in dramatic circumstances, brought in at the last-minute when Kieran Foran was ruled out in the warm-up for the match against the Dragons. The ex-Wests Tigers and Cronulla centre has since featured in the back-to-back wins over Gold Coast and Parramatta to take his career tally to 149 games.

He was near ever-present last season scoring eight tries in 22 games in what was his busiest NRL campaign since 2012.

"Blake has done exceptionally well to reach 150 appearances," said Vodafone Warriors head coach Stephen Kearney.

"When you look at the rest of our outside backs he's not the same sort of athlete. Ken (Maumalo) and David (Fusitu'a) are big men, Sol (Kata) is really powerful and Roger (Tuivasa-Sheck) has so much speed. Aysh is a lot different but he's reliable and does a tremendous job for us.

"It's great to see him getting to this mark."

Ayshford contributed to an outstanding all-round display from the back five who all ran the ball more than 100 metres last Sunday. He made 110 metres from 12 carries as well as providing a try assist for the second of Bodene Thompson's two tries plus two line breaks.

Gavet (28), who made 10 appearances in his first NRL campaign with the club last year, earned his call-up after impressive form for the club's Intrust Super Premiership side in the first three weeks this season.

After being used off the interchange against the Dragons, he was initially named on the bench but started against both the Titans and the Eels. He topped 100 metres in each of the three games including 107 hard-earned metres from 11 powerful carries while adding 21 tackles in the win over Parramatta, a performance which resulted in him being named the team's player of the day.

Kearney has chosen an unchanged 21-man squad for the trip to GIO Stadium, one of the most difficult venues in the club's history.

The Vodafone Warriors had won just once in there in 11 attempts before having back-to-back successes in 2014 and 2015. In last year's GIO Stadium contest, they came back stunningly with a last-second David Fusitu'a try and Issac Luke's conversion from the touchline taking the match into golden point extra time only for the Raiders to win it 26-22 with a Jarrod Croker try.

In 36 matches between the two sides overall, the Raiders have a narrow 19-17 edge.

## Vodafone Warriors

1 Roger Tuivasa-Sheck (C)	12 Ryan Hoffman
2 Blake Ayshford	13 Simon Mannering
3 David Fusitu'a	Interchange:
4 Solomone Kata	14 Nathaniel Roache
5 Ken Maumalo	15 Charlie Gubb
6 Kieran Foran	16 Ligi Sao
7 Shaun Johnson	17 Sam Lisone
8 James Gavet	18 Albert Vete
9 Issac Luke	20 Bunty Afoa
10 Jacob Lillyman	21 Mafoa'aeata Hingano
11 Bodene Thompson	22 Mason Lino

# Foran Against

By David Kemeys

Former Sunday Star-Times Editor, Former Editor-in-Chief Suburban Newspapers, Long Suffering Warriors Fan



**B**EING A Vodafone Warriors supporter at the moment is like living in a giant soap opera with Kieran Foran as the star. It's kind of like a cross between My Kitchen Rules, where you stand about wondering if Kieran's two try assists against Parramatta will be enough to see him through this week, and Married at First Sight, where you wonder if it is really true love.

But ask yourself this?

You think Parramatta did leave Mt Smart wishing they still had him?

They looked a bit like, well frankly, us, before Foran came into our backline and started barking a million orders, and giving defensive lines something to think about.

The Eels were not great, he said charitably, and we weren't a hell of a lot better, but we won and that is all that counts, and for me, Foran made a difference.

He was hard, active in organising the line in attack and defence, ran straight, and set up some nice moves – two of which, as I said, led to tries.

Anyone out there think Isaac Luke's improved showing of late is not connected in some way to a new face in our No 6 jersey?

Anyone out there think Shaun Johnson's improved showing of late is not connected in some way to a new face in our No 6 jersey?

Anyone out there think Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's improved showing of late is not connected in some way to a new face in our No 6 jersey?

No, didn't think so.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, our wins have come against Newcastle (dead bottom), the Titans (almost dead bottom) and the Eels (not that far from dead bottom).

Canberra, the Dogs, Broncos, Manly, and the Bunnies are all 3-3, but the Warriors are the only club where the fans are the ones predicting complete disaster.

Is Foran like some kind of rugby league Messiah, and can he be as good against stiffer opposition – we are about to find out?

We are better with him than without, surely, so can the haters get off his back please. Sod off and get into SBW and his bloody BNZ logo instead.

On a wider note, I thought the weekend's round won't have done much for our tipsters. No one saw the Tigers beating North Queensland but with Ivan Cleary now at the helm that is exactly what the struggling side did.

In football sacking the coach is almost a weekly occurrence, and improvement is almost always the result. This is known as the dead cat bounce.

I don't expect that cat to bounce more than once. But the Cowboys will be wishing like hell they had not come up against the Orange and Black on match day one for our former coach.

The Tigers fans might be singing I Can See Cleary Now the Pain Has Gone...but the Cowboys will be sweating on how long halfback Johnathan Thurston is out injured.

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They win more often than not with the best player in the game in the line-up, but they also look a hell of a lot less convincing without him.

And the Sharks scored an 11-2 win over Melbourne on Sunday night in a repeat of last year's grand final. I don't give a toss. The drug cheats or the salary cap cheats.

The Roosters aren't so cock-a-hoop either, flogged 32-8 by the Broncos.

### **Illawarrior?**

Congratulations the Illawarra Steelers. The long-lost club, now part of the Dragons, are pretty much the only NRL side I have not heard Kieran Foran linked with yet.

I am part of the camp that says we will only keep the bugger this year, though I hope I am proved wrong. Adding to my case is that Foran has hired Sam Ayoub as his player agent.

There have been plenty of media reports that it is all about family – though what that actually means escapes me.

That is why so many say The Bulldogs is the best fit, because it is such a strong “family club” – though I consider that to be a pile of horseshit too.

The Doggies are known to be shopping Josh Reynolds about – good luck with that, but if there is one off-contract player I would snap your hand off to take it is James Graham.

### **Ivan Wants Shaun**

Disturbing to read in the Sydney Morning Herald that the Tigers want Shaun Johnson.

They need to replace Mitchell Moses, who wants to go now to the Eels (and let's face it, they could use him).

Apparently the number one target is Gareth Widdop, but Shaun is also on the radar.

This stuff is nonsense.

The Tigers are in all sorts of trouble, and there are reports interest coming in for James Tedesco and Aaron Woods.

You'd need to move both those to make room under the salary cap surely (unless you are Melbourne of course).

### **Hot Prop-erty**

Let's talk props, and James Gavet in particular.

He's been pretty bloody good having been overlooked for the first three rounds of the year.

The truth is, we need some good props.

He's off contract at the end of the year.

Sign him up.

Jacob Lillyman is off contract too, and wants to stay. I seem to be one of the few who rate the bloke. He is solid if unspectacular, but at least you get a good work-rate out of him, and a consistency that is missing from some of our other front rowers.

He's still good enough to earn Queensland State of Origin honours.

Sign him up.

I've already written about James Graham. If he is surplus to the Dogs requirements I have only this to say.

Sign him up.

If Shaun Johnson is going to end up at the Tigers – which is about as likely as my getting the call to travel to Canberra – we'll have Aaron Woods in part exchange please.





# In the Stacey Jones Lounge



Ben Matulino talks about his injury and getting back to fitness.



Lounge member Christine wins the Bendon Voucher.



Craig Guthrie a firefighter talks about his experience of the Kaikoura earthquake



Frank Endacott ex kiwi coach gave us his thoughts on the game. They were all positive.



Glen Harding wins the Panasonic ghetto blaster.



Jess Pearce receives TAB bet from Brendon Popplewell. \$50 on Sean Johnson as 1st try scorer.



Jonathan McLuski another firefighter wins a copy of the Mad Butcher's biography 'What a Ride Mate'.



Lounge member Joyce wins the ASICS shoes voucher.



JP wins the Panasonic hair cutting package.



Lounge member Kate wins the Vodafone Warriors membership package.



Lounge member Ken wins the Easter Egg.



Lounge member Lee Whitehead wins the Panasonic headphones.



# More From in the Stacey Jones Lounge



Nick from Panasonic draws the Trip for Two to a Warriors Home Game for the Fire fighters..



Kevin and Jen Rush winner of the trip for two to a Warriors home game courtesy of the lounge members.



Kevin Rush talks about his experiences as a firefighter in Kaikoura.



Max talks with Sir Peter.



Monty Betham gives his views on the Warriors v Parramatta game.



Nathaniel Roache and Charlie Gubb.



Nathaniel Roache talks to Sir Peter.



Lounge member Neil Saxton wins the Sealink voucher.



Lana Parker partner of a firefighter reveals how she's coping after the earthquake.



Nikora (Nick) Martin talks about his experiences as a bulldozer driver during the Port Hills fire in Christchurch.



Rhonda McNicol from Urban Search and Rescue.



Ross Ward talks about his experiences as a firefighter in Ward (south of Blenheim).



# Even More From in the Stacey Jones Lounge



Ruby Rima wins a spot prize.



Sir Peter talks to Charlie Gubb.



Steve Ellis wins a Selleys BBQ Tough Kit. Joelle Bunt looks on.



Tina Campbell wins the Selleys BBQ Tough Kit.



Trudie Patterson winner of the 49 inch Panasonic TV.



Voss tries to explain the Eels jersey.

VODAFONE



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**4PM SUNDAY APRIL 30**  
**MT SMART STADIUM**



# The Great Halfback Auction

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



**T**HE BLOKES in the numbers six and seven jerseys are usually among the smallest on the field but their influence, and their price tags, can be huge. Clubs pay big money to secure skilled playmakers and when one of the best makes a significant career shift there is a domino effect which has coaches and recruitment officers in a frenzy. Such was the case last week when Melbourne Storm legend Cooper Cronk announced he was transferring to Sydney in a lifestyle decision to be with his fiancée, Tara Rushton.

It was almost unprecedented that a player of Cronk's standing should signal a move that has nothing at all to do with his football career. But Cronk came across as honest and sincere when saying he had reached a time in his life when other matters deserved preference. The Brisbane-born Cronk, now 33, has lived in the southern city since he was a teenager, becoming one of the Storm's celebrated "big three" alongside fellow internationals Cameron Smith and Billy Slater.

But he is a teenager no more. After more than 300 NRL games, 31 Test matches and 19 State of Origin appearances Cronk was finding himself an outsider watching his team-mates settled with wives and families. In comparison, he was still going home from training to an otherwise empty apartment. When time permitted he would make fleeting visits to Sydney to be with Rushton, to whom he became engaged in January. Smith and Slater saw it coming, and, along with coach Craig Bellamy, have supported his decision.

Rushton works as a Fox Sports TV presenter and it would be a surprise if Cronk does not follow a similar path when he hangs up his boots. That could happen as soon as he relocates to Sydney after the World Cup tournament. Already he comes across as an outstanding analyst of a game he has graced through receiving such awards as Dally M Halfback of the Year (five times), Dally M Player of the Year (twice), Clive Churchill Medal (2012) and international Golden Boot winner (2016).

Cronk is still one of the finest rugby league players in the world and his continued presence in the Storm line-up is a major reason why they are again premierships favourites. But he turns 34 in December and said retirement was among his options when he leaves Melbourne. There is no doubt he was sincere in that, too, and was not fishing for the attention of

Sydney clubs. He was already guaranteed that. In fact, his manager was probably receiving "enquiries" even before Cronk completed his press conference.

There were already a significant number of quality inside backs off contract at the end of this season – Shaun Johnson and Kieran Foran (Warriors), Josh Reynolds (Bulldogs), Luke Brooks and Mitchell Moses (Tigers), Gareth Widdop (Dragons), Anthony Milford (Broncos) and Chad Townsend (Sharks). The media was soon moving them around like chess pieces as they speculated on halfback and five-eighth pairings for 2018. The Eels were also mentioned as contenders to find a partner for Corey Norman.

It did not take long for some of the aforementioned to make a move. New Tigers coach Ivan Cleary was no sooner heralding the two-year re-signing of Brooks than he was angrily reacting to Moses signing with the Eels for three seasons and refusing his request for an immediate release. It might be cynical but Brooks' new deal at the Tigers happens to end in 2019, at the same time that Cleary's highly talented son Nathan comes off contract at Penrith. Future negotiations could be conducted across the breakfast table.

The Storm must also find a replacement for Cronk. Promising youngster Brodie Croft, who turns 20 in June, played one first-grade match in 2016 and starred at the Auckland Nines this year. Like Cronk, he hails from Queensland and perhaps Bellamy will regard him as someone he can similarly mould into a champion. But, then, Smith and Slater are also nearing the ends of their illustrious careers and the temptation might be to sign an established half in quest of another title or two before the real rebuilding begins.

Already a serious suitor for Foran, the Bulldogs have now been installed as favourites to sign Cronk should he decide to play on. Both players have made it clear they will take time to sort out their futures, and have the standing in the game to do that. One wonders if chief executive Raelene Castle has enough money in the bank, and space under the salary cap, to chase them as a pair. If that is the case then the abrasive but effective Josh Reynolds had better begin studying the dummy half playbook or look for another club.



# Kidwell's Backline Riches

By John Coffey QSM

Author of ten rugby league books, Christchurch Press sports writer (44 years), NZ correspondent for Rugby League Week (Australia) and Open Rugby (England)



**A**FTER THE Kiwis completed their winning three-peat against the Kangaroos in the 2015 Anzac Test we were assured the sequence must continue because our forwards would steamroll their Aussie counterparts. A Test series loss in England later that year was written off because of the number of players who were unavailable but in 2016 the Kiwis, during the coaching transition from Stephen Kearney to David Kidwell, lost to the Kangaroos four times on Australian soil or at the Four Nations series in Britain.

On none of those occasions, or even in an embarrassing draw with Scotland at Workington, did the forwards overpower their rivals. Our pack in the Four Nations final comprised Jesse Bromwich, Issac Luke, Adam Blair, Kevin Proctor, Manu Ma'u and Jason Taumalolo, with Lewis Brown, Martin Taupau, Greg Eastwood and Joseph Tapine coming off the bench. The notable forward absentee on tour was Simon Mannering, although in the final Tohu Harris was unsuccessfully masquerading as a stand-off half. Australia won 34-8.

At least we will not be over-confident going into the first southern hemisphere World Cup since the 2008 Kiwis gave this country its biggest rugby league triumph. All of those above named forwards are still running around with at least reasonable effectiveness for their NRL clubs. Maybe in 2017 they will carry that form up to international level. The last-ever Anzac Test at Canberra on May 5 provides them with a chance to shake off any lingering hangovers from last year's disappointments.

What has been most pleasing, however, during the early stages of the NRL season is the number of Kiwis backs making their marks. Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Kieran Foran, Dean Whare, Peta Hiku and Kodi Nikorima missed the Four Nations because of long-term injuries. They all seem to have shaken off those problems. Nikorima might not be a first choice Test player but we need depth among the inside backs and he will get valuable match practice in the absence of injured Broncos half Ben Hunt.

Tuivasa-Sheck is everybody's first choice at fullback. Jordan Kahu filled in capably last year and is Kangaroo Darius Boyd's understudy at the Broncos. In the meantime, he bides his time on the wing. That comparative isolation has not prevented him from kicking two vital field goals, one with his right foot and the other with his left. Kahu is also a prolific goalkicker, can fill in at centre and is a handy man in any Kiwis squad. So, too, is Hiku, whose utility value has consigned him to an interchange role with the Panthers.

The international career of Warriors and Kiwis record try-scorer, Manu Vatuvei, is probably over because of recurring injuries. Mighty Manu can be proud of his 22 tries in 28 Tests and the roles he played in New Zealand's victories at the 2005 Tri-Series, 2008 World Cup and the 2014 Four Nations. In his last two Tests he scored two tries during the Four Nations final and two more in the 2015 Anzac Test. Those were fitting achievements with which to bow out. It is time to pass the baton.

Fellow veteran Jason Nightingale scored a first-half treble for the Dragons against the Tigers to take his NRL career total to 95. But Mr Reliability has also been overtaken by Canberra's Jordan Rapana and Penrith's Dallin Watene-Zelezniak. Rapana is the form Kiwi, form wing and top try-scorer in the NRL, while the ever-improving DWZ on Friday had the pleasure of playing centre when older brother Malakai debuted at wing. Warriors outside back David Fusitu'a made his Test debut last year and merits consideration.

Both Dean Whare and DWZ have signed contract extensions with the Panthers, Whare for five seasons and DWZ for two. Kidwell's toughest decision will be choosing Whare's centre partner. Club-mate Peta Hiku and Cronulla's consistent Gerard Beale are worthy contenders. Incumbents Shaun Kenny-Dowall (Roosters) and Solomone Kata (Warriors) have so far blighted their seasons with handling errors. However, SKD has a decade of experience to argue his case and Kata was much improved against the Eels on Sunday.

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Foran's reappearance has been the season's best news. It took him only a matter of minutes to unveil that old authority which the Kiwis have missed for two years. Foran's presence has lifted Shaun Johnson as they reprise the partnership from that three-peat over the Kangaroos. Coach Kidwell will have his fingers crossed they avoid injuries. But he at least knows young Te Maire Martin, who served his Kiwis apprenticeship last year, is making rapid strides at the Panthers and Nikorima has returned to first grade.

A Kiwis backline comprising fullback Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, wings Jordan Rapana and Dallin Wattene-Zelezniak, centres Dean Whare and Shaun Kenny-Dowall and halves Kieran Foran and Shaun Johnson will have Kangaroos coach Mal Meninga sleeping less soundly than usual. I would also include utilities Jordan Kahu and Peta Hiku in my training squad. That abundance of talent should also inspire the Kiwis forwards to justify the soaring reputations they have been given in recent years.







By Miles Davis

# Dennis Williams

*Dennis Williams, All-Star League 4 Life Lunch with Sir Peter Leitch.  
9 May 2014. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)*

**A**S A young lad Dennis Williams fostered his love of rugby league with local club Te Atatu Roosters and was to become arguably the greatest player to come out of the West Auckland club. Man and boy he played at the club for over 20 years before a late career switch to rivals Glenora Bears. It was with the Bears that he played his only club final, losing to Mt Albert in 1981 but at representative level he was to taste success on many occasions.

Dennis played for Auckland in an era when touring International sides were regular opposition and his record of success is unlikely to be bettered with those fixtures now rare. First representing his province as a 17 year old he wore the Auckland jersey for another 10 years and recorded 7 wins over touring teams. 1977 was to be the greatest season as he captained them to wins over Australia, Great Britain and France. Truly a golden age for Auckland rugby league.

Williams' precocious talent was recognised by the Kiwis and in 1971 he was picked to go on the 34 match tour of Britain and France, becoming the youngest player ever to be picked for the national side. He made his test debut on his 18th birthday (some say it was the day after his birthday but what's a day between friends) versus Great Britain as regular stand-off Gary Woollard was injured. Rumour has it that he was so nervous about his debut that he was sick in the dressing room and had to be helped out of the players tunnel by coach Lory Blanchard.

The game kicked off with the Poms in control and they had racked up 8 points before Williams had even touched the ball. His first touch was to be pivotal as he bamboozled the British defence to score and spark a Kiwi revival. They went on to win the series 2-1, their first series win in England for 64 years.

They then moved on to France winning that series 2-0 with one test drawn.

Williams went on to play 61 games for the Kiwis including 31 Internationals. He also represented New Zealand Maori and was part of the team that held the mighty Australians to a 10-10 draw in 1980.

In 1984 tragedy was to strike Williams. He was a passenger in a car coming back from a meeting on the North Shore when he was involved in a terrible accident. The crash left him with brain damage and he suffered a stroke to the right side of his body. Years of pain and rehabilitation followed as Dennis had to learn to walk and talk again. In those days there wasn't any support so Williams and his family went through some very tough years. (In 2010 then NZRL CEO Jim Doyle with the help of Sir Peter Leitch set up League 4 Life, a charity to help players who suffer severe injury). Even today Dennis still struggles but has shown his fighting qualities by never giving up on his fight to regain full fitness.

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In 1995 Williams was rightly inducted as one of the original New Zealand Rugby League - Legends of League and the Te Atatu Roosters have named their concrete bleaches the Dennis Williams Terraces in his honour.

There is no doubt that in the modern era he would have been a star in the NRL but international transfer bans prevented him from doing so. At a Kiwis reunion the ever humble Williams looked at his former team-mates and said he wouldn't change a thing – 'I wouldn't have had the chance to play with these guys'.

A few years ago Sir Peter Leitch organised for Dennis to be interviewed on my radio show.. It was a memorable and truly humbling experience and I had no doubt I was in the presence of not only a sporting legend but a truly great human being.

Team introductions and Haka 1st Test v Great Britain 1971 – Dennis' debut.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MagV4M4uUP0>

The great Dennis Williams in action <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yCFwKxm4PE>

Dennis Williams League 4 Life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYMXfKh6QsA>

## Not Long Until Poppy Day!

There's only a couple of weeks to go until New Zealand's oldest street appeal - the RSA Poppy Appeal!

You'll see poppies "popping" up anytime from early April onwards but Friday the 21st is our official Poppy Day. This is when collectors will be hitting the streets in support of the RSA. You can make a donation in exchange for an iconic red poppy through any of these wonderful volunteers, but we thought we would also let you know where else you can find us!

**Your local ANZ Branch:** We've partnered with ANZ Bank again this year. Poppy donation boxes will be in your local branch from Friday the 10th of April.

**NZ Post Outlets:** NZ Post have come on board! You can find poppies sitting on the counters of all NZ post stores.

**AMI Insurance:** This year, we're very grateful for the support of AMI Insurance, who have also offered to collect for local RSAs. Head to the AMI branch in your area!

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# Another Week, Another 2 Points...

By John Holloway



**I**S 2 wins in a row a streak well maybe not but I still like it...another little improve/upgrade by our boys knocking over the Electric Eels. I could go on but I am sure this outing is well documented and described by my fellow scribblers in the columns preceding my humble offering (way down in the Newsletter). I would like to mention instead our unsung heroes in the Intrust Super Cup Premiership NSW ...bit of a mouthful, it's the reserve grade so to speak and is counterpart to the Intrust Super Cup (Queensland division). This is the arena for first grade NRL players that don't make the number 1 team each week and can also contain promising U/20s that the club wants to expose to mature player opposition. Our team this week had the likes of Alby Vete, Tui Lolohea, Matt Aylwood, Mason Lino, Jazz Tevaga, Bunty Afoa etc. alongside the exciting Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad a winger fullback with pace and evasion and the promising prospects Samuel Cook, Ofahiki Ogden and James Bell to name a few. The difficulty for their Coach Ricky Henry (another ex Richmond homie) is the constant changes that occur through the switching of players in and out of the top grade, often very late in the week. For all this uncertainty and upheaval Ricky has fashioned a 6 out of 6 winning record to have the Warriors out front of this very tough Comp. This past week's victim was Newtown the Feeder Club to the Sharks and featured well known NRL players such as Tony Williams, Edrick Lee, Faamanu Brown, Sam Tagatese, Joseph Paulo et al in their listed lineup. So definitely not an easy-beat track this. Keep up the good work boys.

Looking around the round the Broncos got the biscuits up North with the Roosters getting pecked 32/8. I had picked Bennetts boys but expected a tight one, only because they are so hard to unseat at Suncorp. On the downside it looks like key Brisbane half Hunt is gone for several weeks. The Brittle Bulldogs started slight favourites against the unlucky Knights and backed the bookies with a clearcut 22/12 victory. Nate Brown just can't take a trick and the unlucky to lose tag not that comforting as it goes on. A bit of a turn-up with Souths nicking the Panthers 21/20, you would have to say a different result was expected before Penrith top liners Moylan, Blake and Hiku got dumped to the Reserve Grade team for being naughty. Talking turn-ups High-Tackle and most other armchair experts expected the high Flying Sea Eagles to prevail over the Red V Saints at Brookvale (ok Lottoland!)....not to be mate, 35/10 to the Dragons blew everyone away including confident Coach Barrett and the not amused Manly mob. Fire-breathers Wily Widdup, De Belin, Atom Ant Aitken, Lafai and the old head Knightingale just too good. The rampaging Raiders however stayed true to form bashing aside the tiring Titans 42/16 The rapacious all action Rapana crossing the stripe for a triple...how he didn't bag a few more is a mystery. Rickys Rockets look extremely ominous. Yet another turn-up in Townsville with the big Fave Cowboys capitulating to an under fire but fired up Tigers team. Hess and Taumalolo tried hard for the homeside but were denied by an all out attack and defence display by new coach Clearys Westie cohort 26/16. What a start for our old mate. To be fair (who is it always says that?) Thurston and the rest looked out of sorts and the cards fell even worse when JT was carried from the field on a bung leg injury which could sideline the chosen one for several weeks...alongside the season loss of top prop Scott and a month or two without livewire Granville we could be looking at a very lean run for the Far North faithful. Away to the Dragons next week is suddenly a very unpromising prospect. As I indicated last week the Sharkies could burst the Storms AAMI park bubble and so they did. Ultra-tight in the downpour and a 2/2 deadlock for a good part of the match but the Shireboys pressure told in the last quarter to get up 11/2. Cronulla with the old war-horse Gallen, the gallant Graham and monkey Maloney running the cutter will not give up their title easily. So that's another round in the ground, looking forward to 7. The bolshie Bulldogs at home to the Rabbitohs is anyone's guess, The Knocked down Knights look like roadkill when the Roosters visit. Broncos too much for the on tilt Titans at Suncorp. The Sea Eagles will be looking to draw the right marbles at Lottoland but the visiting Storm will be in the draw as well, probably a close affair. The Dragons at home, if they retain momentum will scorch the shell-shocked Cowboys. A full strength Panthers might surprise a possibly battle weary Sharks but it would be against the TAB odds. We sent the Eels home winless and they will be hoping for a resurgence against the clean-cut Ivan Clearys triumphant Tigers. Either way bet for mine.

Just one other matchup?? Oh yes the mighty Warriors on the road at the home of the Green Machine, it's a big ask and we will just have to see if our boys can oblige a good answer. Yeah we will be the under-dogs but surprises are aplenty in the entertaining NRL. Keep the Faith brothers and sisters and the little people. Kia Kaha





**T**HE AMERICAN soap opera, "Days of our Lives," has been on our television screens for more than fifty years and well over 12,000 episodes have been produced. But while this show has many complex characters and events, it has nothing on the intriguing lives of a NRL coach. The fortunes of our clipboard holders last weekend was a perfect example of the ups and downs of their working environments. Add to this Jason Taylor's sacking and it is obvious that job security is not a given. Let's have a look at how things went for each coach last weekend and then compare this with what happens over the coming Easter break.

**WAYNE BENNETT (Broncos)** - Around 10pm in Brisbane last Thursday night, things were very rosy for the 67 year old veteran. With the Broncos 32-8 thumping of the Roosters, Bennett celebrated his 460th win as an NRL coach from 767 games (winning percentage 60%). Earlier in the year, some media outlets reported that Bennett had lost his aura but this was not in question following the Bronco's brilliant display against the Roosters. Things should continue on a happy note after the Broncos meet the Titans on Friday.

**TRENT ROBINSON (Roosters)** - Now 40 years of age, Robinson has been the Roosters Head Coach since the beginning of 2013. His NRL coaching record is 67 wins from 111 games (60%). After winning their first four games this season, the Chooks have now lost two in succession. Robinson and his team should return to the winners circle at Newcastle on Friday. A methodical, intelligent and knowledgeable coach, Robinson is under no pressure from his club bosses.

**DES HASLER (Bulldogs)** - Dashing Des, 56, had more than his share of unkind publicity over the past few weeks, but things have settled down now and just last week he signed a new contract that will keep him with the Dogs until the end of the 2019 season. After a slow start to 2017, the Bulldogs have won their last two, including an impressive 10-7 result against the Broncos last week. Hasler is now in his sixth season with the Bulldogs and he has coached 343 NRL games for 203 wins (59%).

**NATHAN BROWN (KNIGHTS)** - Brown, 43, is in his second season as Knights Head Coach. In 30 games with the club he only has two wins. But the Knights have generally played well this year, suffering some agonising losses, such as the 19-18 loss to the Sharks in round five. The Knights club has had some problems over the past few years and Brown will be given time to turn things around. He coached St. George/Illawarra from 2003 to 2008, where he was involved in an incident with current Manly coach, Trent Barrett. Brown has 82 wins from his 181 NRL games (45%).

**MICHAEL MAGUIRE (Rabbitohs)** - Maguire, 43, had a lot of success with English club Wigan, before being appointed as Souths Head Coach for the 2012 season. After winning the 2014 Premiership, things haven't always been great for Maguire as his team finished seventh in 2015 and 12th last year. This season the Rabbitohs were dealt a blow when Greg Inglis was badly injured and they have been hot and cold in their six games in 2016. The last minute winning field goal against Penrith on Friday could not have come at a better time for Maguire and his team. He has 79 wins from his 132 NRL matches (60%). Friday's clash with the Bulldogs is a big game for both Maguire and his opposing coach, Des Hasler.

**ANTHONY GRIFFITH (Panthers)** - Griffith was snapped up by Penrith last year after the Broncos let him go to sign Wayne Bennett. The 50 year old Queenslander coached the Broncos for four seasons from 2011 and has 71 wins from his 133 NRL games (53 %). He showed some strength, although many called it an over-reaction, by dropping three topline players from first grade for Friday's loss to Souths, including Matt Moylan, after they broke curfew the week before in Melbourne. But the loss to Souths was the Panthers fourth from six games this year, after they were touted as a 2017 Premiership favourite. Griffith will feel the heat if they are beaten by the Sharks on Sunday.

*Continued on next page...*



**PAUL MCGREGOR (Dragons)** - McGregor, 49, was tipped to be one of the first coaches sacked this year, after the Dragons finished 11th in 2016. But his side have been impressive this season, especially their 35-10 drubbing of Manly on Saturday. They lead the competition and at the moment, McGregor is the flavour of the month with the Dragons fans and officials. Last year he was involved with many other things besides coaching, such as recruitment and player welfare. This year he is concentrating on coaching only. No doubt he will be signed to a new contract after the next board meeting in a week or so. Things should continue on a positive note for the Dragons coach on Saturday when they play the Cowboys, minus the injured Johnathan Thurston, at Wollongong. McGregor has 34 wins from his 69 NRL games ( 49%).

**TRENT BARRETT (SEA EAGLES)** - The new kid on the block, 39 year old Barrett became an NRL coach when appointed to the Manly job last season. He is the youngest of the 16 coaches but his record is poor, with just 11 wins from 31 games (35 %). Manly were 11th in 2016 and the club hierarchy and fans will want an improvement this year. Things were not helped by the team's efforts against the Dragons last Saturday.

**RICKY STUART (Raiders)** - The Raiders are the fourth club at which 50 year old Stuart has coached. As a player, he was a dual international after touring Argentina with the 1987 Wallabies and then playing nine-Tests with the Kangaroos. He began his first grade coaching career with the Roosters in 2002, winning the Premiership in his first season when they beat the Warriors in the Grand Final. He also coached at Cronulla and Parramatta, before joining the Raiders in 2014. He has 159 wins at NRL level from 321 games (49.5%).

**NEIL HENRY (Titans)** - With just one win from their six games this year, the Titans are already looking disjoined. They played poorly in their 42-16 belting by the Raiders on Saturday and coach Henry will have plenty of sleepless nights this week with the in-form Broncos awaiting on Friday. Henry, 56, began coaching the Titans in 2014, after beginning his first grade career with the Raiders in 2007 for two years. He then spent five seasons with the Cowboys. His record reads 102 wins from 212 games (48%).

**IVAN CLEARY (Wests Tigers)** - With just one match and three coaching sessions behind him with the Tigers, Cleary has had a dream start to his return to NRL coaching. Not too much was expected from the Tigers at Townsville on Saturday but their all round game was first class in their 26-16 win. Whatever Cleary did in his five days of preparation should be continued in the lead-up to the Easter Monday clash with Parramatta. Cleary, 46, began his first grade coaching career with the Warriors in 2008. After six seasons in Auckland, he spent four years with Penrith, finishing up at the end of 2015. He has 122 wins from his 250 games (49%).

**PAUL GREEN (Cowboys)** - Appointed as Cowboys Head Coach in 2013, Green won an NRL Premiership in his third season. Highly regarded in Townsville, Green could have some problems as this year progresses because of the possible long term loss to injury of Jonathan Thurston added to the loss for the season of prop Matt Scott. Green, 44, has 55 wins from his 87 games (63%).

**STEPHEN KEARNEY (Warriors)** - Stephen Kearney is a widely experienced Rugby League man. As a player, the 44 year old represented New Zealand in 45 Tests, while he also has 264 NRL games to his credit with Wests, Melbourne and the Warriors. As New Zealand coach, he guided the Kiwis in 42 Tests, while he also coached Parramatta in 2011 and 2012. He was appointed as Warriors coach this season and his current NRL coaching record is 13 wins from 48 games. This is a success rate of just 27%, but with two wins in succession, he now has the Warriors in equal sixth place on the ladder with five other teams. His team were impressive on Sunday in their 22-10 win over Parramatta but they face a daunting two weeks with away games in Canberra followed by Melbourne.

**BRAD ARTHUR (Eels)** - As a young coach, Arthur moved around quite a bit. He began his coaching career as captain/coach of the Batemans Bay Tigers on the far South Coast of NSW at 22 years of age. The team did not win a game in his first season but made the finals the next year. Next, he had eight years in North Queensland as captain/coach of the Cairns Brothers club before moving to Melbourne in 2007 as the Storm's NRL Development Coach. His first experience as an NRL first grade mentor was for the last six matches of 2012, when he was caretaker coach at the Eels following the departure of Steve Kearney. He then joined Manly as an assistant to Geoff Toovey in 2013 and was appointed to the Parramatta Head Coaching role in 2014. Arthur 42, has coached 84 NRL games for 38 wins (45%).

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**SHANE FLANAGAN (Sharks)** - After their great 11-2 win over Melbourne on Sunday, plus last year's Premiership, the Sharks are a ver happy camp. They have a well balanced team with a solid bench, while 52 year old coach Flanagan is popular with the players, fans and officials. He played a total of 78 first grade games with St. George, Wests and Parramatta, while his 20 year old son, Kyle, is a star with the Sharks 2017 NYC team, who have won four of their six games. Flanagan has 74 wins from his 139 NRL games ( 53%).

**CRAIG BELLAMY (Storm)** - Despite what you may think after watching some of Bellamy's antics in the coaching box after a Storm mistake, he is a well balanced, knowledgeable and calm coach. Now 58, he has been the Melbourne Head Coach from 2003 and is now in his 15th season with the club. His record is tremendous, with 251 wins in his 374 matches (67%). He has taken the Storm to six Grand Finals, winning three and has reached the final series in each of his years, except 2010, when they were not permitted to earn competition points because of previous salary cap breaches. He has signed with Melbourne until the end of 2018 and Melbourne would, no doubt, like to extend this further.

Congratulations to Immortal and Australian Team of the Century member, John Raper MBE, who turns 78 today, April 12. He will celebrate the occasion with friends and former team-mates at lunchtime, at a Kirrawee hotel, in Sydney's south.

The Toronto Wolfpack smashed Doncaster 82-6 on Sunday and lead the English Kingstone Press League One competition. Playing at prop, Fui Fui Moi Moi collected two tries. The Wolfpack meet the North Wales Crusaders at Wrexham this Fridaynight. All Rugby League fans are looking forward to their first home game, at Lamport Stadium in Toronto on 6 May against the Oxford RLFC.

The graphic features two rugby players in profile, facing each other. The player on the left is wearing a blue jersey with yellow and red accents, and the player on the right is wearing a yellow and blue striped jersey. In the center, the ARL Fox Memorial Shield logo is prominently displayed. Below the logo, the text reads: "GAME OF THE ROUND #2", "HOWICK V MT ALBERT", "2:30PM PAPAROA PARK", and "15 APRIL 2017". The background is a dramatic, fiery orange and yellow sky.





**T**HERE ARE many people that view golf in the same way as Mark Twain, that it is 'a good walk spoiled'. But for those of us who love the game there is nothing like the last day of a major. Today's final round of the Masters will live in my memory till I die. As contenders fell by the wayside, Justin Rose and Sergio Garcia kept their cool and battled neck and neck down to the 18th. Rose looking to become the first Englishman to win both the US Open and the Masters, Garcia understandably the crowd favourite with history that demanded he win. When he entered the scene as a 19 year old he was touted as the next Seve Ballesteros who was his mentor and idol. Over 20 tournament wins followed but he was always the bridesmaid in Majors. 4 runners-up spots including a play-off defeat in the Open in 2007 were the closest he got. In 2009 he had a form slump that saw him take time out of the game. As he started the final round he knew this was his best chance to get the Major monkey off his back. To add to the drama it would also have been the late Seve Ballesteros' 60th birthday. It was surely written in the stars. And so it proved but not until a play-off hole against Rose. When Garcia sunk the winning putt on the 73rd hole I don't think there was a dry eye in the sport-loving world. It couldn't have happened to a better guy in more appropriate and dramatic circumstances. A sporting moment for the ages.

### Make Your Mind Up SBW

Sonny Bill Williams is a world-class athlete and does a lot of good in the community but that does not exempt him from criticism. His latest media-grabbing act of covering up the BNZ logo on his Blues jersey lets him down in my eyes. Apparently done for conscientious reasons due to his religion it comes across as a gross act of hypocrisy. He converted to Islam in 2009 yet since that time has worn multiple jerseys containing logos from banks and financial institutions without comment or apparent concern. BNZ, ASB, Investec, AIG to name a few. He is quite happy to be paid from money contributed by those organisations yet does not want to reciprocate. Why the sudden change of heart? He compounds his act by telling everyone on twitter that "In regards to my jersey during the game I'll clarify the situation during the week" Another reality TV stunt designed to give himself more media attention and detract from his hard-working team-mates. If you knew the reason when you covered the logo why not tell us now?

If SBW feels so strongly about this matter he is welcome to do what the likes of the great Michael Jones used to do when his beliefs were compromised. Don't play. To keep taking the money whilst snubbing the sponsors is unseemly and reflects poorly on him.

### Back To Back Vodafone Warriors

The knockers had to take another week off as the Vodafone Warriors backed up their win last week with another top-notch performance against the Parramatta Eels at Mt Smart. The forwards stepped up another notch with Simon Mannering as usual leading from the front. The spine of the team also excelled with Kieran Foran, Isaac Luke and Roger Tuivasa-Sheck all having top games and Shaun Johnson looking more comfortable with the talent around him easing the immense pressure he is usually under. It may only be 2 consecutive wins but it sure was enjoyable and gives us reason to look forward to the next game. Oh and the Dragons are top of the table which doubles my pleasure.

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



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Rugby League Hawke's Bay chairman Dion Te Ahu had 60 minutes for his Bridge Pa club on Sunday. PHOTO/HAWKE'S BAY TODAY



By Shane Hurndell  
Hawke's Bay Today  
Sports Reporter

## Play Sundays or Get Thrashed... It's Simple

**H**AWKE'S BAY premier club rugby league champions Bridge Pa learnt some valuable on-field lessons at the weekend but more important was the message the province's officials got.

Bridge Pa was thrashed 80-14 by the Linton Cobras of Manawatu in their first game in the Coast to Coast competition which was played at the Hawke's Bay Regional Sports Park in Hastings. The hosts took the field with just 11 players but finished up with 17 midway through the second half as players turned up after club rugby commitments.

It was a surprise the match was played on a Saturday as the only time Saturday league works well in the Bay is when the Spring Competition is staged after the club rugby season ends. The best club league in the Bay during the past three decades has always been played on Sundays.

"We'll definitely push for Sundays from now on. We could have pushed for Sunday at the weekend but opted not to ... it was the first time for us at this level so I thought we should be willing to accommodate other teams," Rugby League Hawke's Bay chairman Dion Te Ahu said.

Bridge Pa coach Ihaka Waerea said several of his squad played half a game of rugby before turning up to play the second spell of the match against the Cobras. Some of his squad hadn't played for four years and lacked match fitness.

"We did it tough and it was the kick in the arse we needed. There were positives with the main one being we are under way at this level and hopefully other Bay teams will be keen to get involved," Waerea said.

Winger Wes Ama, hooker Patrick Bartlett and back-rower Raun Makirere-Haerewa scored Bridge Pa's

tries and scrumhalf Piripi Jessup kicked a conversion.

Centre David Noho was the hosts player of the match. Secondrower Taurus Taurima, who wasn't an original selection for the team, earned praise from Waerea for his gutsy 80-minute effort.

Former Central Vipers national league team head coach Te Ahu, 30, played 60 minutes. When quizzed if he knew of any other provincial league chairpersons around the country who were still active, Te Ahu replied: "Not to my knowledge."

The prop played for the Bridge Pa premiers and reserve grade team last year and turned out for the premiers at the national Maori tournament. It was his first season back after a four-season spell which followed knee surgery.

Like the Hawke's Bay women, who are playing in a Mid Central comp, the Bridge Pa men will have a rest during Easter and will resume playing the following weekend. Bridge Pa will play another unbeaten team Kia Ora in Palmy while the women will be in action at Kirkpatrick Park.

The feature attraction at the Hawke's Bay Regional Sports Park during the weekend was the final two days of the Hawke's Bay Cup Festival of Hockey which involved the Black Sticks women, Australia, Japan and Team USA.

The Black Sticks won the cup for the second consecutive year with a 3-0 win against Japan in the final. Just as the final got underway a short drive up the Expressway at Taradale's Pettigrew-Green Arena the Bay Hawks NBL basketball team was in celebration mode after beating the Nelson Giants 81-63. This win ended a 24-game losing streak for the Hawks. Their previous win was recorded on June 21 2015.





*By Ricahard Becht*

## ISP Grind Out Another Victory



*Albert Vete scores a try. Photo [www.photosport.nz](http://www.photosport.nz)*

**A**NOTHER GRINDING workout delivered the Vodafone Warriors their sixth consecutive win in the Intrust Super Premiership at Mount Smart Stadium today.

Ahead just 10-8 at halftime, the Vodafone Warriors scored three second half tries to earn a 24-20 victory over a Newtown side boasting significant NRL experience.

The Jets included Tony Williams, Sam Tagataese and Joseph Paulo in their starting pack with Manaia Cherrington on the bench and former Canberra Raider Edrick Lee at fullback.

This wouldn't be an easy passage for the Vodafone Warriors as they went about protecting their position on top of the points table.

Since blanking Wests Tigers 36-0 in round three, they've been extended to sustain their run of form beating Illawarra 21-14 and Blacktown Workers Sea Eagles 26-14 in the fourth and fifth rounds.

The Jets were on the board first today through centre Jordan Drew before Vodafone Warriors fullback Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad had the first leg of his first half double to level it up at 4-4 after 23 minutes.

Seven minutes later Drew had a brace but the 8-4 lead was short-lived as the Vodafone Warriors struck in the 37th minute with a well-worked try from near halfway.

From the left side of the field, the ball was swung right, Ata Hingano linking with Mason Lino. The halfback dummied, broke clear - as he so often does - with support on either side. He opted inside sending

Nicoll-Klokstad away for his second try and converting for a 10-8 halftime lead.

The Vodafone Warriors lifted their intensity and accuracy in the opening minutes of the second half, rolling through their sets effectively to earn good field position. The forwards were beginning to impose themselves.

They were rewarded in the 51st minute when hooker Jazz Tevaga jumped out of dummy half, feeding the human bulldozer Daniel Palavi who hit and spun out of tackles to get the ball down. With Lino's conversion, the Vodafone Warriors had a valuable 16-8 lead.

It was cut to 16-14 soon after when Jets second rower Jayden Walker was awarded a try after appearing to lose the ball in-goal.

Just as quickly the Vodafone Warriors reasserted themselves with prop Albert Vete thundering over off a short ball. Lino couldn't convert from a handy angle but the home side was 20-14 ahead.

The lead stretched to 10 points when a muscular Pat Siple charge created room, the ball shifted to the left for second rower Ofa Ogden to go over in the 72nd minute.

There was a late scare when Tagataese scored in the 78th minute but ultimately the clock was the Vodafone Warriors' friend.

The Vodafone Warriors travel to Aubrey Keech Reserve in Sydney this weekend to go up against the Mounties.

# Darryn Hopewell Back At It

## By Will Evans

Spectators at the Celebration-Papanui Canterbury Cup clash last Saturday may have recognised a familiar face with the whistle, as former World Cup referee Darryn Hopewell ended a 13-year hiatus to make his return to the Canterbury refereeing ranks.

But the comeback didn't exactly go off without a couple of hitches.

"I had two pairs of boots, one that I'd had a pre-season game with and the soles came off them in the first 10 minutes," Hopewell said.

"And I had another pair that I wore when I was at the (2000) World Cup, so they're about 17 years old, and they fell apart after five minutes!

"I had to tape the boot to my socks, so I was basically running around in my socks for three-quarters of the game last week."

The reserve-grade fixture was Hopewell's first club assignment since controlling the 2004 premiers grand final – so what inspired him to get back out in the middle?

"My partner told me she was sick of me babysitting the couch every Saturday afternoon," the 49-year-old laughed.

"Everyone at Canterbury Rugby League has been good, and (current referee) Jason Wilson has taken me under his wing.

"Most of it's still the same, but some of the way (referees) interpret things are a bit different from when I was refereeing. Jason's helped me put on a bit of polish, he came and watched my game the other day."

While he may understandably be a bit rusty, Hopewell will not be lacking fitness – he regularly does the running leg in team triathlons, and recently participated in the Queen Street Mile (posting the respectable time of just over five minutes).

Hopewell's association with rugby league refereeing goes back almost three decades. He played junior footy for Kaiapoi and Papanui, running around alongside future Kiwi Terry Hermansson for the latter, though he admits, "I was useless – I was just there to make up the names on the team card."

"As a youngster my father used to take me to the league at the Showgrounds on Wednesday nights, and I'd be at school on Thursday half asleep.

"My dad used to work at the Kaiapoi freezing works, and back then league was pretty tough. He'd rush home on a Wednesday and say we had to go to the league because so-and-so had a fight in the freezer and they're going to finish it on the football field. That's what it used to be like back then.

"But the referees back then used to be so precise with their signals, and I used to stand in the backyard and do the signals, believe it or not."

While he wasn't destined for league stardom as a player, Hopewell was a talented speedway rider, racing against Kiwi legend Barry Briggs (who was then 50) in a national final as a 16-year-old, and representing New Zealand in a Test against USA at 19.

Hopewell first picked up the whistle in 1989, and three years later he was refereeing premier grade matches.

He controlled the 1996 CRL grand final between Hornby and Halswell before taking a couple of years off, but a return to the field in '99 led to his career highlight – a place at the 2000 Rugby League World Cup.

*Continued on next page...*



"I went over with (the likes of) Bill Harrigan and Steve Clark; there were three Kiwis, three Aussies, three Englishmen and one from France, and I got referee the games in France," he recalled.

Hopewell refereed two pool matches – a Tonga side including Willie Mason and Duane Mann thrashing South Africa 66-18 in Paris, and the Adrian Lam- and Marcus Bai-inspired Papua New Guinea's 16-0 win over South Africa in Toulouse.

"(After that) I had about three NRL trials and the Aussies came and looked at me, and they said I was good, but there was 200 of me in Australia they reckoned.

"Now they don't really even look at us (Kiwi refs) but I was lucky to get a couple of trials, and I refereed the Warriors in a couple of pre-season games."

Following another break in 2003, Hopewell controlled the '04 premiers decider between Riccarton and Linwood – and he's determined to handle another grand final, more than 20 years after his first.

"My aim for 2017 and 2018 is to get another one, and I don't hide that fact," he said.

"I haven't come back to it half-throttle. I've got to get my feet on the ground, and I'm very grateful to Jason for giving me a hand, but I'll be fit, I'll be prepared and I feel I've still got something to offer."

Grassroots rugby league is crying out for more referees throughout New Zealand, and Hopewell has a simple message for anyone contemplating getting involved.

"Just get in and give it a go. Canterbury Rugby League are very supportive.

"What I'd like to do... if there's a young fella with a bit of promise that I can buddy up with, I would take a lot of pleasure from seeing them come up through the grades and get to international football like I did."

While it often seems a thankless job, Hopewell says refereeing is what you make it – and with the right attitude, respect will be reciprocated from players and the crowd.

"I made a couple of mistakes on Saturday, but the crowd didn't say anything. The players and coaches came up to me and said it was great to have me back.

"(It's about) being consistent. Someone said to me once, 'you must know the rules really well to be a referee at the World Cup'.

"But it was more about how I spoke to players, because you can then get the respect of the players.

"I made a mistake at the World Cup and I said to Adrian Lam, 'look, I'm sorry, I've missed that cold', and he was very good about it. Because we do miss things, and I always put my hand up."

With that sort of positive outlook, you wouldn't bet against the veteran fulfilling his ambition of refereeing another CRL grand final...boot malfunctions notwithstanding.

\*Anyone interested in becoming a rugby league referee should contact Canterbury Rugby League.



*Referee Darryn Hopewell. Australia and New Zealand Legends of League Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Match. 10 March 2011.  
Photo [www.photpsport.nz](http://www.photpsport.nz)*



# Pt Chevalier Win Stormont Shield and Roope Rooster in Season Opening Clash

*By Talei Anderson*

Pt Chevalier team photo with Stormont and Roope Rooster

**P**T CHEVALIER claimed the champion of champions' title on Saturday (April 8), winning both the Stormont Shield (champion of champions) and Roope Rooster (challenge trophy) in their SAS Fox Memorial season opening clash against defending champions of the Fox, Papakura.

This will mark the clubs fourth term to hold the Stormont and Roope Rooster trophies; their first being in 1951 before winning them back-to-back in 2014 and 2015.

There was no stopping the Pirates who scored two minutes into the match.

A strong forward pack saw them storm through the middle before standoff Dylan Moses crashed over from close range. Winger Francis Leger added the extras to get an early 6-0 lead.

It wasn't long before they crossed for another

Close on the left edge, winger Saula Solomona shuffled the ball to the right -only to find the ball back in his possession- to dummy and go through two defenders to score. Leger converted from out wide to get up 12-0.

On numerous occasions Papakura found themselves just metres from their line, but a combination of ball control and resilient defence from the Pirates kept them unsettled.

Pt Chevalier showcased pure class out wide, with centre Malo Solomona shutting down the left edge and winger Saula Solomona performing on attack.

Similarly, centre Dwayne Lisiua worked the right edge, chasing down field to collect a double and taking a 26-0 lead at the break.

It was a tough first half for the Sea Eagles but they kept grinding, scoring the next three to cut the deficit to 18-26.

But the Pirates hit back.

Mounting on attack in the middle of the park, the visitors scored another two with hooker Tevita Latu and Malo Solomona extending the margin to 38-18.

With Papakura captain Roman Hifo pulling the strings and some brilliant footwork displayed from standoff Willie Stowers, the Sea Eagles added another to narrow the gap 38-24.

But it wasn't enough in the end, with the Pirates claiming the champion of champions' title and taking home the Stormont and Roope Rooster trophies.

*Continued on next page...*



Siua Otunuku -who dons the captaincy role alongside Dylan Moses- said he was pleased with the result.

“It was a good but hard game,” said Otunuku.

“Papakura are a top-class team. Even though we had an early lead, we knew there was every chance that they would come back - and they did.”

“We got the win this time but it's early days. Ultimately, we're still chasing the big one – the Fox Memorial.”

Pt Chevalier will hold the Stormont Shield for the 2017 season, but the Konica Minolta Roope Rooster will be on the line again when the Pirates host Te Atatu next weekend.

Pt Chevalier 38 (Saula Solomoa x2, Malo Solomona, Dwayne Lisiua x2, Dylan Moses, Tevita Latu tries; Francis Leger x5 goals) Papakura 24 (Junior Tuipulotu, Francis Toetu, William Stowers, Ekueni Ropati tries; William Stowers x4 goals) HT: Pt Chevalier 26 Papakura 0.

In other games, Te Atatu -who played their first game back in the Fox- fell 38-26 to Richmond. Howick, Mt Albert and Glenora had a good start to their season with wins over Mangere East (56-18), Marist (44-20) and Northcote (34-20).

Meanwhile in Round 3 of the Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup, Otahuhu, Bay Roskill and Ponsonby remain unbeaten taking down Hibiscus Coast (30-12), Otara (22-12) and Manukau (74-18) on Saturday. Pakuranga are still chasing a win falling 38-22 to New Lynn.

This weekend the Hornets will play the Mt Albert Lions in the SAS Fox Memorial Game of the Round. Defending Fox champions –the Papakura Sea Eagles- will be looking to bounce back when they play Mangere East at Walter Massey Park. The Roope Rooster will be on the line again when Pt Chevalier host the Te Atatu Roosters, while Marist and Northcote play in front of a home crowd when they play Glenora and Richmond.

#### **ARL results for Saturday April 8, 2017**

##### **SAS Fox Memorial: Round 1**

Mt Albert 44 Marist 20  
Richmond 38 Te Atatu 26  
Glenora 34 Northcote 20  
Howick 56 Mangere East 18  
Papakura 24 Pt Chevalier 38

##### **Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup: Round 3**

Qualification Series Section 1  
Bay Roskill 30 Hibiscus Coast 12  
Otahuhu 22 Otara 12  
New Lynn 38 Pakuranga 22  
East Coast Bays bye

Qualification Series Section 2  
Papatoetoe 22 Waitemata 24  
Ponsonby 74 Manukau 18  
Ellerslie bye  
Manurewa bye

##### **SAS Fox Memorial fixtures for Saturday April 15 : Round 2**

Northcote v Richmond @ Birkenhead War Memorial 2.30pm  
Marist v Glenora @ Murray Halberg Park 2.30pm  
Howick v Mt Albert @ Paparoa Park 2.30pm  
Mangere East v Papakura @ Walter Massey Park 2.30pm  
Pt Chevalier v Te Atatu @ Walker Park 2.30pm

##### **Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup fixtures for Saturday April 15: Round 4**

Qualification Series: Section 1  
East Coast Bays v Otara @ Freyberg Park 2.30pm  
New Lynn v Hibiscus Coast @ Lawson Park 2.30pm  
Bay Roskill v Otahuhu @ Blockhouse Bay 2.30pm  
Pakuranga bye

Qualification Series: Section 2  
Manurewa v Ponsonby @ Mountfort Park 2.30pm  
Manukau v Ellerslie @ Moyle Park 2.30pm  
Papatoetoe bye  
Waitemata bye



**KICKS  
OFF 27  
OCTOBER**



## **200 Days to Go Until the Rugby League World Cup**

*By Harley Wall*

**M**ONDAY 10 April was an exciting milestone for the RLWC2017 – It marked 200 days to go until the tournament kicks off on Friday 27 October. Across the men's and women's tournaments 20 teams will play 40 games over six weeks across Australia, New Zealand and PNG, in what is to be Rugby League's pinnacle international event.

The RLWC has been strongly supported by government, host cities and commercial sponsors. Interest in the tournament is building, and over the next few months six more major partners will be named. As the tournament nears, the World Cup team will turn their attention to community and fan engagement. In the early rounds of the NRL Telstra Premiership, you may have seen RLWC2017 virtual signage on display. Make sure you stay tuned during the Rugby League International Test Weekend in May, when we launch our official RLWC2017 Television Commercial.

The weekend of the 5th and 6th of May will be the only International Rugby League played before the World Cup kicks off in October. The Kiwis and Kiwi Ferns will face Australia in Canberra on Friday 5 May in their annual Anzac Test. The Kiwis will be looking to avenge defeat against Australia, after going down in the annual test last year. Contrastingly, The Kiwi Ferns will be looking to protect their trophy after defeating the Jillaroos 26-16. They'll also be looking to make amends for their poor showing at the NRL Auckland Nines earlier this year.

On the 6th of May, a triple-header will be held at Campbelltown stadium: Papua New Guinea v Cook Islands; Tonga v Fiji and Samoa v England. This will be must see footy; expect each of these nations to present their best possible squads in preparation for

the World Cup. The changes in international eligibility rules makes it easier second tier nations such as Samoa and Tonga to put out not just a strong side, but one that can really challenge the top 3.

No longer does a player have to pledge allegiance for one country prior to being selected; if a player is not chosen by a Tier 1 nation (Australia, New Zealand or England) they are immediately able to play for a Tier 2 or 3 nation. This is set to make this Rugby League World Cup the most exciting and most competitive World Cup ever!

Samoa Head Coach Matt Parish believes he can put together a squad that can upset the Kiwis in the first match of the World Cup. They have a big challenge ahead of them firstly, when they face England on the 6th. Keep an eye out not only for big name players, but also to get a glimpse of what you can expect from the World Cup in October and November.

The Rugby League World Cup begins in New Zealand on Saturday 28 October at Mt Smart Stadium, with New Zealand taking on Samoa in their opening match. Tickets start from \$20 for Adults, \$10 for kids and \$45 for a family of four. For more information and to purchase tickets head to [www.RLWC2017.com](http://www.RLWC2017.com)





# ***GO BALLS OUT***

## ***TO TAKE ON TESTICULAR CANCER***



April is World Testicular Cancer Awareness Month. Did you know Testicular cancer is the most common cancer affecting men between the ages of 15 - 39?

It's proven that exercise helps prevent a number of cancers, so we've planned a very special challenge to raise awareness of the issue.

Visit [goballsout.org.nz](http://goballsout.org.nz) for details and help us take on Testicular cancer.



TESTICULAR  
CANCER NZ

#GO  
BALLS  
OUT

# Reader Mail

Hi Sir Peter,

**T**HE COUNTDOWN is on to the RLWC2017 the England boys are now progressing towards the RLWC 2017 with some impressive performances by some of the players in both Super League and the NRL.

The team are having regular meetings and on Monday evening at a hotel just outside of Manchester Paula and myself were invited to join up with the team and do promotional photo shoot on behalf of the appointed official tour operator Glory Days who we will be travelling with to Australia & New Zealand during November & December we can't wait to "Be part of it"

We arrived in good time met up with Garry from the RFL who explained how things were planned for the evening; he showed us the photo studio set up, meeting room and video room etc... Once all the boys had arrived and had a feed, Garry guided us to the photo room, a few of the lads were already in the room getting measured and weighed and so on....?

The next part was the highlight of the evening; I went in first and bumped into Ben Currie had a few moments to chat, the next thing Paula is following me in towards Sean O'Loughlin and Kallum Watkins waiting to take the photo soon joined by Michael Shenton

The funniest thing I didn't realise, most the lads were half naked, in boxers and shorts, Paula didn't know where to look!! That's what she said to me anyway, I'm sure she loved it really, Sean, Kallum & Mike were really warm and welcoming, great guys

This is what is so special about our game, firstly allowing the opportunity to do such a promotional photo, I don't know another sport where this would happen, secondly having another experience in the presence of England RL, Brilliant!

The only other person I know who can do this type of thing is "The Mad Butcher" that's the reason for my little letter; we certainly can't wait for RLWC2017 and BE PART OF IT! Bring it on!!

All the best

Gary & Paula Hankinson



---

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Big League digital edition is available on all iOS6 and greater compatible devices including iPhones and android devices including tablets and smartphones. 12 month subscription includes Rounds 1-26, Final Series including bumper Grand Final souvenir edition and the Season Review. Print magazine only available to purchase at Warriors home games in New Zealand.



## THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 7 ISSUE...

NRL, HOLDEN CUP, INTRUST SUPER PREMIERSHIP, INTRUST SUPER CUP AND RON MASSEY CUP TEAM LISTS, PREVIEWS AND STATS + SCORES AND RESULTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY!

### INSIDE

- **The Dragons** have shocked the competition with performances that have shot them to the top of the ladder – we talk to **Joel Thompson** and **Paul Vaughan** about how their unheralded forwards have put them on the right track.
- Building a culture has become an important part of rugby league clubs and we look at how the Raiders, led by **Ricky Stuart** and **Don Furner**, have done it better than most.
- **Kaysa Pritchard** was eight years old when he watched his brother Frank debut for Penrith and can't believe he's playing alongside him – let alone that at 22, he has become the first-choice hooker for Parramatta.
- South Sydney five-eighth **Cody Walker** is in scintillating form but he says he owes it all to **Adam Reynolds** – and he would back his halfback for NSW and Australia rep jerseys.
- Columnist **Brent Tate** says current stars who haven't proven themselves at the top level shouldn't be demanding huge price-tags in their negotiations.

**PLUS...** We celebrate the **Top 8 rugby league brothers**, The Analyst dissects how the **Bulldogs have changed their attack** and a **Tom Trbojevic** poster.



### ROUND 7

On sale at newsagents, supermarkets and at the ground from

**Thursday, April 13**

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V



P	T	G	PTS	#NRLRaidersWarriors					P	T	G	PTS
---	---	---	-----	---------------------	--	--	--	--	---	---	---	-----

5	4	0	16	Jack WIGHTON	1	Roger TUIVASA-SHECK (C)	5	1	0	4
6	3	0	12	Nick COTRIC	2	Blake AYSHFORD	3	0	0	0
4	2	14	36	Jarrold CROKER (C)	3	David FUSITU'A	6	4	0	16
6	4	0	16	Joey LEILUA	4	Solomone KATA	6	1	0	4
6	7	0	28	Jordan RAPANA	5	Ken MAUMALO	6	2	0	8
6	3	0	12	Blake AUSTIN	6	Kieran FORAN	2	1	0	4
6	0	9	18	Aidan SEZER	7	Shaun JOHNSON	6	3	14	40
5	0	0	0	Junior PAULO	8	James GAVET	3	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	Josh HODGSON	9	Issac LUKE	6	1	1	6
6	0	0	0	Shannon BOYD	10	Jacob LILLYMAN	6	0	0	0
6	2	0	8	Josh PAPALII	11	Bodene THOMPSON	6	3	0	12
5	2	0	8	Elliott WHITEHEAD	12	Ryan HOFFMAN	6	2	0	8
4	0	0	0	Joe TAPINE	13	Simon MANNERING	6	1	0	4

## INTERCHANGE

6	0	0	0	Adam CLYDSDALE	14	Nathaniel ROACHE	1	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	Luke BATEMAN	15	Charlie GUBB	6	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	Clay PRIEST	16	Ligi SAO	3	0	0	0
6	1	0	4	Sia SOLIOLA	17	Sam LISONE	6	0	0	0

## RESERVES

2	0	0	0	Dunamis LUI	18	Albert VETE	3	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	Jordan TURNER	19/20	Bunty AFOA	4	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	Makahesi MAKATO	20/21	Mafoa'aeata HINGANO	3	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	Lachlan CROKER	21/22	Mason LINO	0	0	0	0

## COACHES

Ricky STUART      Stephen KEARNEY

PENALTIES				SCRUMS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

PENALTIES				SCRUMS			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	13	14	15	16

46 BIG LEAGUE 2017 Round Seven

**DATE:** SATURDAY, APRIL 15  
**VENUE:** GIO STADIUM  
**KICK-OFF:** 5.30PM  
**REFEREE:** ADAM GEE  
**ASSISTANT REFEREE:** GAVIN REYNOLDS  
**TOUCH JUDGES:** JEFF YOUNIS & PHIL HENDERSON  
**SENIOR REVIEW OFFICIAL:** JARED MAXWELL  
**REVIEW OFFICIAL:** BEN GALEA  
**FOX LEAGUE:** 5PM  
**LIVE RADIO:** 2GB, ABC

	RAIDERS	WARRIORS
Position (Points)	6th (6)	10th (6)
Points For	162	110
Points Against	115	130

ATTACK		
Tries	29	20
Completions	75%	78%
Tries 0-20m	14	16
Tries 21-50m	9	2
Tries 51-100m	6	2

DEFENCE		
Tries	20	22
Tries 0-20m	14	9
Tries 21-50m	2	11
Tries 51-100m	4	2

MATCH AVERAGES		
Tries Scored	5	3
Tries Conceded	3	4
Points Scored	27	18
Points Conceded	19	22
Hit Ups/Runs	160	179
Tackles	292	307
Metres Gained	1541	1612
Handling Errors	4	5
Offloads	8	6
Line-breaks	4	5
Goalkicking	74%	71%

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**  
 Played 36, Canberra 19, Warriors 17

**AT GIO STADIUM**  
 Played 14, Canberra 11, Warriors 3

**WINNING FORM 2017**  
**CANBERRA:** LLWLWW Streak – 2 wins  
**WARRIORS:** WLLLLW Streak – 2 wins

**PAST 8 CLASHES**  
**2016 – CANBERRA D. WARRIORS 26-22** at GIO Stadium;  
**CANBERRA D. WARRIORS 38-12** at Yarrow Stadium, New Plymouth  
**2015 – WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 30-8** at Mt Smart Stadium;  
**WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 18-6** at GIO Stadium  
**2014 – WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 54-18** at GIO Stadium;  
**WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 54-12** at Eden Park  
**2013 – WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 50-16** at Mt Smart Stadium;  
**CANBERRA D. WARRIORS 20-16** at Canberra Stadium

**BIGGEST HEAD-TO-HEAD WINS**  
**CANBERRA D. AUCKLAND 56-12** at Bruce Stadium, 2000  
**WARRIORS D. CANBERRA 54-12** at Eden Park, 2014

**NEXT CLASH**  
**CANBERRA:** v Manly at GIO, 6pm Friday April 21  
**WARRIORS:** v Melbourne at AAMI, 7pm Tuesday April 25

**CASUALTY WARD**  
**CANBERRA:** Jeff Lima (hand) – Rd 9-10; Kato Ottio (ACL) – Rd 10-12; Kurt Baptiste (achilles) – indefinite  
**WARRIORS:** Manu Vatuvei (knee), Ben Matulino (knee) – indefinite

Courtesy of our friends at Big League Magazine

## NRL Preview

# Rampant Raiders rage on

**GIO Stadium  
Saturday, 5.30pm**

**Form:** The Raiders have lived up to their reputation as the most dangerous attacking team in the competition over the past fortnight with sizable wins over the Eels and the Titans. Already the Raiders' right side has leapt to the top of the rankings and winger Jordan Rapana has proven himself among the most elusive players in the NRL. The aspirations of Warriors' fans

have been raised to levels of 'cautious optimism' over the past fortnight, following successive wins over the same opposition. **History:** The Raiders managed to reverse a run of five straight losses to the Warriors with back-to-back wins in 2016, 38-12 in New Plymouth and 26-22 at GIO Stadium. Both teams had won 17 games in head-to-head clashes before last season, so the Raiders will be intent on increasing their lead this week. **Danger sign:** Centre Jarrod Croker

has been a scoring powerhouse against the Warriors, crossing 16 times in 14 games. If the Warriors expend too much energy trying to shut down Joey Leilua and Jordan Rapana on the right, then Croker and teenager Nick Cotric could cut loose on the left. **Best Bet?** Look for the Raiders to run up another big score and win by a 13+ margin. **Money-spinner:** Players to consider for First Tryscorer include Jordan Rapana, Jack Wighton and Nick Cotric.

by **DAVID MIDDLETON**  
@Middleton\_David



## HOLDEN CUP

**DATE:** SATURDAY, APRIL 15 **VENUE:** GIO STADIUM  
**KICK-OFF:** 3.15PM **REFEREE:** DAMIAN BRADY  
**TOUCH JUDGES:** MARTIN JONES & RICKY MCFARLANE

## RAIDERS V WARRIORS

Jayden CARROLL	1	Lee TURNER
Cody HODGE	2	Lewis SOOSEMEA
Sebastian KRIS	3	Melino FINEANGANOFU
Andre NIKO	4	Kane TELEA
Mikaele RAVALAWA	5	Mathew FAITOTOA
Logan SPAANDER	6	Paul TURNER
Lachlan COOPER	7	Chanel TAVITA-HARRIS
Emre GULER	8	Kenese KENESE (C)
Jarred TUIITE	9/20	Erin CLARK
Zac MASTERS	10	Chris SIO
Jack MURCHIE	11	Jerome MAMEA
Kalani GOING (C)	12	Preston RIKI
Hudson YOUNG	13	Isaiah PAPALI'I (C)
14 Zac PATCH, 15 Kye MADDEN 16 William SAMUEL 17 Fabien PALETUA-KIRI 18 Sato KETIA-OPO, 19 Ron LEAPAI, 20 Kitone VIKASH 21 Connor BREBNER, 22 Derek HAY, 23 Mitchell SMITH		9 Eiden ACKLAND, 14 Tyler SLADE, 15 Soane HUFANGA 16 Joe VUNA, 17 Gibson POPOALII, 18 Tayhler PAORA 21 Jordan PINNOCK 22 Dylan TAVITA, 23 Mafoa'aeata HINGANO, 24 Javvier PITOVAO
Brett WHITE		Grant POCKLINGTON



### HEAD-TO-HEAD LEADERS

AVERAGE METRES	AVERAGE TACKLES	LINE-BREAKS
Roger Tuivasa-Sheck 181	Simon Mannering 40	Jordan Rapana 9
Jordan Rapana 178	Buntty Afoa 34	Jack Wighton 5
Jack Wighton 176	Sia Soliola 32	David Fusitu'a 4
Jacob Lillyman 154	Josh Hodgson 30	Jarrod Croker 4
Josh Papalii 151	Issac Luke 29	Josh Papalii 3

### STATS



### FANTASY POINTS

Jordan Rapana	64.0
Shaun Johnson	59.3
Josh Papalii	56.8
Simon Mannering	53.0
Jack Wighton	42.8

**SLOW START PROVES COSTLY...** The Raiders fought back from a 28-0 half-time deficit against the Titans but couldn't rein in the score. Despite having plenty of possession, a 69 per cent completion rate saw them squander what chances they had and the Titans took advantage. The late revival was led by winger Mikaele Ravalawa, who bagged two tries, two line-breaks and a tackle-break in the second half.

**DEFENSIVE LAPSES...** The Warriors made a similar start against the Eels, with 26 missed tackles in the first half their undoing as Parramatta built a 20-6 half-time lead. The Warriors scored two tries in the final 10 minutes, but their failure to gain any real momentum was their downfall as Parramatta put the result beyond doubt.  
— **ANDREW JACKSON**

Courtesy of our friends at Big League Magazine



Two lovely ladies tucking into oysters in the Stacey Jones lounge during the game last weekend.





# Help Jim Doyle Fundraise for Leukaemia and Blood Cancer New Zealand

Hi Everyone

**O**N SATURDAY May 13th I'm participating in the 2017 Firefighter Sky Tower Stair Challenge. You can help support the 6 Kiwis diagnosed every day with a blood cancer or related condition by making a secure online donation using your credit card. Click on the link below:

<http://bit.ly/2ox116R>

For more information about the 2017 Firefighter Sky Tower Stair Challenge, please visit us at [www.firefightersclimb.org.nz](http://www.firefightersclimb.org.nz)

Thanks so much for your support!

Jim



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