

VODAFONE



Sir Peter Leitch Club

AT MT SMART STADIUM, HOME OF THE MIGHTY VODAFONE WARRIORS

20 April 2016

Newsletter #118

Vodafone Warriors Victorious over Bulldogs in Wellington

... but at a cost.



Bodene Thompson is tackled.



Thomas Leuluai looks to pass.



Bulldogs' Sam Perrett runs the ball.



Issac Luke puts a step on.



Ryan Hoffman looks to offload.



Tuimoala Lolohea celebrates Blake Ayshford second try.



Bulldogs' Sam Kasiano is tackled by Warriors' Ben Matulino & Jacob Lillyman.



Tuimoala Lolohea scores a try as he is tackled by Bulldogs' Josh Jackson.



Photos courtesy of www.photosport.nz

Some Optimise for Warriors Fans

By David Kemeys



DEPENDING ON who you listen to, the Vodafone Warriors are a shambles, the coaching staff clueless, Shaun Johnson has never recovered his pre-injury form, we are stuffed with Roger Tuivasa-Sheck out for the season....

In fairness, most of the people who stick their hands in their pockets and pay for membership feel differently, and I find myself agreeing, and remaining strangely optimistic.

Sure things have not been great, and the Tigers loss to start the year was hard to swallow, let alone the abject performance against Manly.

But we have won three of our last four, and while we may not have been convincing doing it, most sides would take that.

And the statistics paint a different picture.

Before the Dogs game Johnson was in fourth for total points with 50. Tuivasa-Sheck was leading in run metres at 1184, Solomon Kata was second in the try-scoring stakes with seven - and I will go to my grave believing it should have been eight after the Dogs game but for a crazy forward pass call - and able Simon Mannering was third in the tackle count.

Even the team statistics indicate things are not as bad as they are being painted, the boys in third for points scored with 140, fourth in tries with 25, and fourth in line-breaks.

We all throw up our hands about our handling errors, but even there, the Warriors are in the top six for least errors.

So how did it come to pass, according to the media, that we are so awful?

There is no doubt the Warriors, being a one club country, have the spotlight on them more than any other side. Our mistakes are magnified, our wins derided - who knows why.

After the win against the Doggies, one writer was generally full of praise for a gutsy outcome, but then switched into default mode for press coverage of the Warriors, writing: it would be foolish to take much from Saturday's outcome.

I don't dispute that, because one game is not the be all and end all. But then this writer went on, and I am paraphrasing, to say the Bulldogs were crap, coming off a five-day turnaround, and the decision around the starting props was madness. Who knows where the Warriors are at? Who's ever known? he wrote.

That's the point isn't it? You never know, nor do the fans of the Roosters, Panthers, Raiders or anyone else. Sometimes you win, sometimes you don't.

We have the Storm, Dragons, Panthers and Raiders up next, games coach Andrew McFadden will have targeted.

That will take us to the bye, and that is when we will have a real gauge of how good - or bad - we are.

The constant mantra of Keep the Faith, can get a bit annoying, when you get little reward for that perseverance.

But I'm hanging in there for another four games, regardless of the RTS disaster, so ask me to give a rating of our chances then!

The Worst Possible News

THE VODAFONE Warriors fullback curse has struck again, first Sam Tomkins was ruled out with injury, now star signing Roger Tuivasa-Sheck faces more than six months out after he ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee against the Dogs.

The major difference here is that Tuivasa-Sheck is good, whereas Tomkins never lived up to the hype.

It is a cruel blow for the former Rooster, who copped plenty of criticism, particularly about his defence, but who looked one of our more potent strike weapons on attack.

It was only his seventh appearance for us, and the 22-year-old must be going through hell, especially when you consider he has barely missed a minute in his career until now.

“Roger is absolutely shattered,” head coach Andrew McFadden said. “We had huge expectations about what he would bring to us, he was excited about his role, and had settled in well, but now this. It’s the cruel side of football – we’ve certainly had more than our share of bad luck.”

Tuivasa-Sheck will have surgery in about three weeks and faces a long recovery.

History Made At Last

We won one.

In five previous attempts at beating the Doggies in Wellington we have lost four and drawn once.

I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn’t dreaming, and let’s face it, not too many gave us any show of winning in the capital.

The 24-20 win was even more special when you consider we shot out to an 8-0 lead, then gave all the hard work away to trail 14-8 at halftime.

Two points is two points, a win is a win.

Second Half Heroics Set Us Up

We have been taking plenty of stick so it was terrific to see us come out after the break and pile on the pressure, really stepping up our game.

Three unanswered tries in 23 minutes, and you can not ask for much more than that.

Sure we had to hold on at the death, but that is exactly what we did, again defying the critics, who all said this team was just not capable of grinding out a win.

Are you going to the game this week Brad Fittler – better entertainment than the Roosters, surely?

Three In Four

Consider this for a second. We have copped it big style, and rightly so after the dismal showing that against Manly.

But that is three wins in our last four.

Far from being a pitiful side bereft of talent, guts and smarts, most sides in the NRL would be very happy with that kind of form.

The trick now must be to consolidate, to make sure that fired-up Warriors side is the one that takes the field, and not the rabble that served up 80 minutes of dross against the Sea Eagles.

Johnson Answers Critics

When you are the big name, you just have to live with the fact that you are going to get more criticism than most, but some of what has been directed at Shaun Johnson has been, in my view, over the top.

There are still people droning on, on talkback, about how he should be dropped, one genius advancing the idea that Tuimoala Lolohea should go to full-back with RTS out – I am with you so far – and that Thomas Leuluai should come into the halves for him.

Still with you.

But then this armchair coach said Johnson should be dropped and Jeff Robson should be brought back in.

If brains were dynamite the bloke could not blow his nose.

Johnson’s form has been a bit up and down and he’d probably admit that, but his stats tell a different story. He is right up there – top five in the NRL actually – for try assists, line-breaks, and kicking metres.

Add to the fact he looked good against the Dogs.

His last tackle play just after half-time, floating a kick to Jonathan Wright, was magic.

His combination with Lolohea, even if it lasted only 15 minutes or so, was excellent, and he was not bad with Leuluai alongside either.

Twisting Tui Makes Me Smile

The try that Tuimoala Lolohea scored was a thing of beauty, and rich reward for a player who must have been under a heap of pressure. Moved into the halves after the Robson-Johnson pairing got the axe, then forced to fullback to cover for RTS, it's hard to imagine how you could have heaped more pressure on him.

But he stood up and when he twisted away from dummy half and shot over for his try, it was wonderful.

His performance earned him man of the match and it is hard to argue he did not deserve that.

Best Try Of The Year?

There were doubters when we brought Blake Ayshford to the club, but have gone a bit quiet now. His double on Saturday was reward for another good game, and one of his tries must be the best the Warriors have scored this year.

The lead-up work was sensational, as Leuluai teased the line before going out the back to Johnson, who sent it on to Issac Luke, who fed Lolohea, who sent Ayshford across.

It was a wonderfully constructed try, so more like that please and less bombing to the corner.

What It Means

The Vodafone Warriors beat the Bulldogs in Wellington for the first time in six attempts after a 24-24 draw in 2001 and losses in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2013, and snapped a run of five consecutive losses to the Dogs since 2012

It moves us up to 10th on the table

Same Old Story Though

Could we just once not give away a penalty in our first defensive set please. Maybe the refs are targeting us there, who knows, but it is frustrating.

Not as frustrating as watching another bad call though.

Solomone is a bit of an excitement machine at the moment, and he streaked over for what should have been his eighth try of the year.

Somehow it got called back for a forward pass.

In fairness it was a call from the touchy, and not the Bunker, for a change.

But it was still wrong, and you have to ask how come the touchy even made a call, when they virtually never contribute to the game.

Winged Wonders

Take a bow David Fusitu'a, in for the injured Manu Vatuvei on the right wing. He had a fine game, solid under the high ball, pinged for one loose carry that was yet another bad call, when Stevie Wonder could have seen it was raked, and capped off his game with a try.

On the other wing Jonathan Wright got a try too. Fair play, he is not exactly a crowd favourite, but a try is a try, so credit where it is due.

Locke A Dragon?

Could former Warrior Kevin Locke return to the NRL with St George Illawarra?

Locke played 88 games for us between 2009-2014, and is believed to have attracted interest from the Dragons, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

Locke had unsuccessful spells in England with Salford and Wakefield, where injuries limited his playing time, before Wakefield released him from his contract after an investigation following a minor car accident.

It is understood the Dragons are considering him as a fullback, giving them cover should Josh Dugan suffer injury.

Locke, 27, revealed recently he battled severe depression and attempted suicide three times while at the Warriors.

Intrust Super Prens Win

Doubles from wings Tomas Aoake and Ken Maumalo helped the Vodafone Warriors to a 26-6 win over the Newcastle Knights in at Mt Smart.

The win lifted us to eight points with a 4-3 win-loss record – and fourth on the ladder – and also provided a boost to the points for and against (now 36).

It is some forward pack to turn out in the Intrust comp, Albert Vete, James Gavet, Shaun Lane, John Palavi and Toafofoa Siplely working off Jazz Tevaga, and they laid the platform for the win.

The Knights, to their credit, dug in and the score remained 22-6 until the final seconds when Maumalo got his second.

NYC Juniors Beaten

The Vodafone Junior Warriors went down to the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs, losing 30-26 in Sydney. With the Bulldogs at "home" in Wellington, the NYC was still scheduled as a Dogs home match in Sydney.

The Bulldogs went into the contest 15th on two points with the Vodafone Junior Warriors just ahead on four.

As it played out, we had to play catch-up for much of the day and nearly came through, only to be undone by the clock.

Next up is another Trans-Tasman trip (Sunday, April 24) when the Vodafone Junior Warriors face Melbourne at Sunshine Coast Stadium (Melbourne's NYC side is now based on Queensland's Sunshine Coast).

Back in Wellington

Well it's always great going back to Wellington - my old home town - but it's even better when your beloved Vodafone Warriors also get the win. But it's horrible when it comes at the cost of losing one of our best player Roger Tuivasa-Sheck gone for the year. A big thank you to all our loyal fans who turned up for the game, or watched it on TV, and a special mention to our members (fans who have paid a fee to join the club). They are the back bone of the Vodafone Warriors. I speak for both myself, the club and the players when I say we appreciate your everlasting support. I had a busy time in Wellington and even went to Parliament for the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of Rugby League, which you can read about later in the newsletter.

This week I'm off to Melbourne for our game against the Storm on Monday night. I love going to Melbourne; it's a great sporting city and will be fantastic to catch up with our fans over there. The wife also loves the shopping so it's a win-win! If you're a Victoria-based member, stay tuned too. I'm hearing the boys will be hosting a meet-the-team event with members at the hotel after their game. Expect an update later in the week. on twitter and Facebook

- Sir Peter Leitch

NZ Warriors 26 def
Newcastle Knights 6
Illawarra 28 def Newtown 14
Mounties 36 def Manly 32
Wyong 28 def Penrith 6

NSW Intrust Super Premiership Round 7 Results



Kid's Go for Free to Next Vodafone Warriors Home Game*



Gates open: 9:30am
NYC kick off: 9:45am
ISP kick off: 11:45am
NRL kick off: 2:00pm
Match Day Sponsor: Flava

**Up to two kids able to get in free with every full-paying adult*, there's no excuse not to be in the stands come 2pm on May 1. Don't delay. Get your tickets today. From ticketek.co.nz * Terms and conditions apply.*

At the Vodafone Warriors v Bulldogs Game



Bulldogs assistant Jimmy Dymock.



Bulldogs legends Steve Mortimer and Terry Lamb.



Me and Sam Kasiano after the game.



Me and Sam Lisone after the game.



One of ours and one of theirs - Former Warrior and dog Steve Price.



I meet these two young kids who came from Dannevirke to watch the Warriors. Jodi and Kadin Boustead.



Noah from Levin is a massive Vodafone Warriors fan and even came to Wellington for the game.



Great to have our owner Eric Watson at the game. He flew in from the UK the day before



Eric with Simon Mannering.



Eric with Shaun Johnson.



Eric with assistant coach Justin Morgan.

The Vodafone Warriors in Wellington

Photos by Ra Pomare



The boys cool down in the pool.

These two young boys loved the signing session at the Rydges hotel.

Tuimoala Lolohea and the boys celebrate their win.

Match Day Sponsor

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VODAFONE WARRIORS



KIDS go for FREE*

DEFEND OUR HOME. SUNDAY MAY 1

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ST GEORGE ILLAWARRA DRAGONS



Parliamentary Friends of Rugby League

Launched last Thursday in Parliament



Co-chair of Parliamentary Friends of Rugby League co-chair Louisa Wall with Des Hasler (coach of the Bulldogs).



Des Hasler coach of the Bulldogs with Jim Doyle our boss.



John Grant Chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission opens the night.



Some of the MPS who attended the launch.



Our MC had to have a photo with Hon. Dr Jonathan Coleman Minister of Sport who spoke very well on the night.



The MC for the night Jerry Sueseu in action.



The three musketeers.



Me and Bulldogs captain James Graham.



My old mate Greg Eastwood Bulldogs player and former Kiwi.

WHILE IN Wellington I attended the Parliamentary Friends of Rugby League launch. The MC for the night was Jerry Seuseu who did a great job. I've been asked to be the patron of the organisation while Louisa Wall will co-chair alongside Alfred Ngaro. The idea is to get as many MPs as possible to join and really throw their support behind the great game of Rugby League. The evening was well attended by the NRL, Bulldogs, Vodafone Warriors, the Minister of Sport Hon. Jonathan Coleman, MPs from all parties and local Rugby League people. It was great to be part of Rugby League at Parliament. - Sir Peter Leitch



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The Garden City, New Zealand



Auckland Not a Contender

By John Coffey QSM



AUCKLAND HAS been touted as a venue for the NRL Grand Final for the four years (2019 to 2022) while Sydney's ANZ Stadium is being transformed from an Olympic leftover into the finest football showpiece in the southern hemisphere. For the two decades after that (2023 until 2042) the reconfigured, rectangular, 70,000-plus seat stadium has been guaranteed hosting rights for the Grand Final.

But Auckland's chances of bringing the Grand Final across the Tasman and dumping it at the embarrassing Eden Park are nil. Why would the NRL lower its standards to play its most prestigious game at an overseas ground that is unsuitable for spectators and players because of its curious shape. It is neither one thing nor the other -- not a football-friendly rectangular field or an oval large enough for Test cricket.

The Sydney Cricket Ground (capacity 46,000), home of rugby league Grand Finals until 1987, has been mentioned as a possibility because it is still the second largest facility in Sydney. The 83,000 seat ANZ Stadium originally held 108,000 fans for the 2000 Olympic Games, after which the temporary "wings" at each end were removed. It has been reported the four-year revamp will ensure the capacity is never reduced below 50,000.

That means ANZ could continue to host the Grand Finals with a capacity greater than the SCG or the 44,000 seat Allianz Stadium, which – as the Sydney Football Stadium – hosted the Grand Finals from 1988 until 1998. A decision will need to be made whether it would be a good look for the international television audience, and the comfort of the fans, to play the Grand Final (and State of Origin games) at a virtual building site.

If the Grand Final was to be moved from Sydney there are two obvious candidates, Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane and the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Suncorp is currently the best rectangular stadium in the southern hemisphere, holds 52,000 spectators, and is perfectly positioned in central Brisbane with an impressive free public transport system running from as far away as the Gold Coast.

The MCG attracted 90,000 fans to its most recent State of Origin match, an event which has nothing to do with Melbourne or Victoria. But like the SCG it is an oval, ideal for cricket and Australian Rules and a strain on the eyes and ears of rugby league folk who want to feel and hear the big hits. On the credit side, it, too, is an easy walk from central Melbourne and the city's two huge railway stations.

It did not take long for the debate to start. While everyone acknowledged Suncorp would have been ideal for the 2015 Grand Final, the first all-Queensland affair between Brisbane and North Queensland, there was still a full house down in Sydney to revel in the Cowboys' dramatic golden-point field goal victory. Coaching guru Wayne Bennett might bleed maroon but he is adamant the Grand Finals must stay in Sydney, its historical home.

In contrast, Sydney media commentator and former coach Phil Gould recommended Suncorp as the transitional venue. He pointed to the prominence of Queensland clubs in recent seasons and the big crowds attracted to club, state and international games in Brisbane. Gould argued that Queensland's capital city deserved to be anointed as Australian rugby league's capital city for the four "homeless" Grand Finals.

Conjecture about the 2019-2022 Grand Finals erupted in the wake of NSW premier Mike Baird announcing that his government's \$1.6 billion stadiums investment would be spent on reinventing ANZ Stadium, building a new 30,000 seat facility to replace Parramatta Stadium and an updating of Allianz Stadium in Moore Park, near the central city.

By over-calling his dithering Minister of Sport, Baird ended a debate in which the NRL, its Sydney clubs, rugby union's Waratahs and soccer officials all presented self-interested arguments. He also found \$40 million to assist Sydney clubs set up centres of excellence. But Baird refused their requests for \$20 million each to smarten up their creaking suburban venues (Brookvale, Leichhardt etc), none of which are owned by his government.

Continued on next page...

Auckland will not get to host an NRL Grand Final while it has nothing more to offer than Eden Park, with all of its well-documented problems. Surely, though, Aucklanders can take a lesson from Mike Baird's leadership and at the next local government elections find someone who can actually make decisions and turn the city into an attractive proposition for sports events that require a rectangular stadium.

Footnote: It would not be unique to move a major rugby league fixture during construction. The British Challenge Cup final, held at London's Wembley Stadium from 1929 to 1999, was played at Murrayfield in Edinburgh twice, Twickenham in London twice and at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium three times between 2000 and 2006 while the old Wembley was demolished and the new Wembley built.

The RLEF Round Up

BURUNDI RUGBY LEAGUE JOINS RLEF

Burundi has become the sixth African nation to join the international rugby league community after it was accepted as an Observer of the RLEF. Burundi Rugby League president Jean Du Christ Rusiga said: "We believe that rugby league can be a promoter of peace and development in Burundi and even within Africa itself, there will be more and more opportunities for the sport."

IMMORTALS RETAIN LEBANON RUGBY LEAGUE TITLE WITH GRAND FINAL WIN

A hat-trick of tries from veteran back-rower Rudy Hachache saw Immortals from West Beirut retain the LRL title, with a 56-10 win over Jounieh Predators at the Université Libanaise Hadath. In the student Mount Lebanon GMEA Grand Final curtain-raiser, Antonie International School Titans came from behind to beat Saint Joseph School Kornet Chewan Saints 18-14.

RLEF SUSPEND HELLENIC FEDERATION OF RUGBY LEAGUE

Following a year-long investigation, which culminated in an extraordinary general meeting of the RLEF membership, Greek rugby league's governing body has been suspended indefinitely for wilfully acting in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the RLEF and international rugby league.

More details on www.rlef.eu.com



**Vodafone Warriors
Themed Pictures by
Joyce Putohe**

Scott Electrical Premiership

By Ben Francis



THE NEW look Scott Electrical Premiership in Northland is well underway in 2016. This year only features seven teams after several far North Rugby League teams formed a breakaway competition called Te Taitokerau League. The competitions CEO is Hone Harawera, "We chose the name "Taitokerau" because it reflects the overwhelming number of Maori players and administrators (including Pakeha and Pacific whanau) in our region, and also because it acknowledges the great support we've had from the New Zealand Maori Rugby League."

Three teams who featured in the Premiership last season have joined Te Taitokerau including last year's Minor Premiers and Champions Hikurangi Stags, Muriwhenua Falcons, and the Kerikeri Makos. The Hokianga Pioneers, and Moerewa Tigers originally were going to also break away but both clubs changed their minds and re-elected to stay with Northland Rugby League. The Pioneers said the main reason why they elected to stay with Northland Rugby League was based on the future of the

club's younger players. The Te Taitokerau League is not associated with New Zealand Rugby League, and players from the teams apart of this league are not eligible for representative teams.

Last year's finalists Takahiwai Warriors appear to be the early favourites this season after an unbeaten start in 2016. Dominant wins over the Northern Wairoa Bulls (54-18), Horahora Broncos (90-0) and Portland Panthers (42-14) see the Warriors atop the Premiership ladder. Also unbeaten so far in 2016 are the Moerewa Tigers and the Hokianga Pioneers. The Tigers have had wins over the Northern Wairoa Bulls (72-8) and the Otangarei Knights (34-20) whilst the Pioneers had wins over Horahora (54-22) and Portland (by default).

Round 4 of the Scott Electrical Premiership will see the Horahora Broncos host the Moerewa Tigers, Hokianga Pioneers host Otangarei Knights and the Northern Wairoa Bulls will host the Portland Panthers.

Let's Celebrate

By Shontayne Hape



SATURDAY'S WIN over the Bulldogs in Wellington was cause for real celebration.

But at the same time, our joy at such a gutsy win has been tempered by the sobering news that star recruit Roger Tuivasa-Sheck is out for the season after suffering a serious knee injury.

I've been in his shoes before and let me tell you that it's always a long, hard road back as a player after a knee reconstruction.

Thankfully, Roger's an absolute pro both on and off the field and with such a positive attitude, I have no doubt he'll bounce back fitter and stronger than ever for the Warriors next year.

Once he's had surgery and is starting his recovery, he'll also have the chance to spend a bit of time with our fans doing visits in the community.

He's a true ambassador for the club and we wish him all the best for a speedy recovery.

With the Bulldogs done and dusted, we now turn our

attention to the Melbourne Storm who we play on Anzac Day.

It was a real arm wrestle of a match when the two sides locked horns here at Mt Smart Stadium in round three earlier this year.

Contests between these two sides are always good and we are expecting nothing less this Monday.

From a membership point of view, we've got a huge fan base of diehard Vodafone Warriors supporters in Victoria and they'll be turning up in their droves to cheer the boys on.

We are also hosting a small meet the team event for them back at the Vodafone Warriors' hotel after the game. It's our way of saying thanks for getting behind the boys.

I don't know about you but that win over the Bulldogs has left me feeling excited about the rest of the season.

Go the mighty Vodafone Warriors.



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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 X

		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							
22/04 - Suncorp	Broncos v Rabbitohs	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos	Broncos
23/04 - ANZ	Bulldogs v Titans	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs	Bulldogs
23/04 - GIO	Raiders v Tigers	Tigers	Raiders	Raiders	Raiders	Tigers	Raiders	Raiders
23/04 - 1300Smiles	Cowboys v Eels	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Eels	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys
24/04 - Shark Pack	Sharks v Panthers	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Sharks	Panthers	Sharks	Sharks
25/04 - Hunter	Knights v Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles	Sea Eagles
25/04 - ALLIANZ	Dragon v Roosters	Roosters	Dragons	Roosters	Roosters	Roosters	Dragons	Dragons
25/04 - AAMI	Storm v Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors	Warriors

How they're traveling....

Picks last week	5/8	4/8	6/8	6/8	6/8	7/8	7/8
Total picks	29/56	25/56	32/56	36/56	35/56	34/56	33/56W

HIGH-TACKLE WAS sitting pretty as the only one alive on 3 from 3 when the Dragons got up and then 6 from 6 when the Warriors, Broncos and Sharks did the business. My longish solo shot on the Tigers went to the wire at 18 all full time but firstly Moses missed a golden pointer pot out front then bloody Cooper Cronk pooped my party...oh so close at 7 from 8 but them's the breaks. Generally solid selecting this week with Wily Willy Hayward also cracking a 7 and others 6s, punting the Sea Eagles and the Roosters proved a problem for Maloneys SuperSnipper Sue and Big Joe Vagana. The Devo Dutchman not giving an inch and still sitting pretty in the #1 Spot.

I know its early days but the 4 teams atop the points table look very settled to me...Broncos/Cowboys/ Sharks/Eels. The last named of course is under a points deduction threat which would be a huge shame given that it's a management error not down to the players. For the rest it's a battle for the next 4 spots. The mighty Warriors finally produced a more steely showing and even the early loss of RTSheck (for the Season, bugger!!!) was nicely covered off by the man of the moment Lolohero. Bo Thompson makes a major difference to the pack go forward and Lisone and Lillyman joined in the charge. I have been anticipating that young David Fusitua would recover and get another chance and he was worth the wait. Old school Tommygun Leuluai was an excellent organiser and allowed Johnson to shine and straightened the line. I will admit to past reservations over Jono Wright and Blake Ayshford but have to say they are growing on me. In the coming weeks the task for coach Cappy and the team is to get over the loss of the star custodian. The rearranged spine of Luke/ Johnson/Leuluai and Lolohea at the back looked pretty good to me. Time will tell for the faithful. Big Manu not far away will also be a boost. I'm still liking us in Melbourne on Monday night.

Continued on next page...

Some big (and little) bashings handed out this week as the majors flexed the muscle...Parra 22/10 over the Manly sea siders, JTs Rustlers lassoed the Rabbits 44/18, The bristling Broncos stamped past the Knights 53 zippo and the Sharks mauled Sticky Rickys Raiders 40/16. The Dragons burnt the Titans 19/14 and the Storm got mighty lucky getting a Cronk pot decision over the gutsy Tigers 19/18. Cranky Cronk has potted 19 droppies to date which is probably an NRL record?

The Monday niter was a downpour downer for the Roosters but they ran the plucky Panthers close at 16/20. The heavy rain made for plenty of errors but both sides still tossed the pill about as if it was a sunny arvo. The Roosters not far from getting some of their heavy hitters back which will improve. The Panthers are nobodys mug and also have key components Segyaro and Whare close to casualty comebacks.

Warriors Should Follow Bradford City F.C in Upgrade

By Ben Francis



IT WAS fantastic news in mid February to hear the Warriors will be staying at Mount Smart Stadium until 2028. The thought of them moving their games to Eden Park or North Harbour Stadium was awful, even the Warriors were against the move, they threatened to move out of Auckland all together. Apart of this deal through till 2028 will see Mount Smart Stadium get an upgrade. This will include replacement seating, refurbishment of the dressing room facilities and a community classroom while the agreement also allows for replacement floodlights, a new big screen and a facelift for various areas of the stadium.

With many fans including myself delighted with the news of the Warriors staying on, I believe many of the fans would be willing to help out upgrading Mount Smart Stadium. I have no idea is this idea is possible but it does not hurt to put it out to the public to get their thoughts on this.

My favourite football club, Bradford City currently play in England's League One (Third Division) and over the last few years have enjoyed great success which has included promotion into League One and wins over Premier League teams Arsenal, & Aston Villa in the League Cup and most famously Beating Chelsea 4-2 in the FA Cup last year. Things were not so bright 15 years ago where the club entered administration twice with debts over \$26million NZD. Advance to today and the club is financially stable but their home ground Valley Parade is in need of some upgrades which would help give fans a better match day experience.

So Bradford City set up a campaign called Upgrade The Parade. What this campaign is it gives the fans the opportunity to help contribute money to upgrade the stadium and in return get rewards. Rewards include the chance to purchase one of twenty game worn shirts for \$300 NZD , the chance to win season tickets, chances to play a round of golf with players and many other great ways to contribute. As of Monday afternoon this campaign has raised 126,421 pounds (\$258,986 NZD) with nearly 1900 people contributing including myself and former One Direction singer Zayn Malik whose grandfather took him to games as a child.

It would be interesting to know if this was possible to do for the Warriors here in New Zealand. Imagine getting the chance to win Shaun Johnson's match worn top or play golf with Issac Luke, Simon Mannering and Ryan Hoffman. The Warriors are community based team, so why not let the fans help the Warriors upgrade Mount Smart to make it a better game day experience for us fans. I'm sure 100's of fans would happily contribute to this campaign if it was made available.

If you want to see Bradford City's campaign click on the link below:

<https://www.tifosy.com/en/campaigns/upgrade-valley-parade-for-the-players-and-fans#reward/199>

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

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RTS Injury the Only Downer in Wellington Victory

By Barry Ross



IT IS tragic about Roger Tuivasa-Sheck. Everyone connected with the Warriors in particular and Rugby League fans in general, will be devastated after learning of his Anterior Cruciate Ligament injury.

But unfortunately injuries are part of our great game and the club must move on and I am sure they will. Roger left the field in the 16th minute of the Bulldogs game, so that means the team played without him for 64 minutes and won the game. The players and the coaching staff will know they can do it again and they will.

Wasn't there some great things to come from Saturday's win at Wellington? The forwards again did the hard yakka and the backs gave us plenty of spectacular moves and excitement.

How good is Simon Mannering? What a hard worker! Against the Bulldogs he made 51 tackles, 116 running metres and 11 hit ups. At the moment he is third on the total tackles list with 313 from his seven matches, plus he has run for 596 metres. Now 29, Simon has given plenty to both New Zealand and the Warriors. He has played 243 first grade matches for the Warriors and has scored 54 tries. For New Zealand he has made 41 Test match appearances.

Another big stat for Simon is his time on the field in 2016. In their seven games, the Warriors have been on the field for 561 minutes and Simon has been there for 555 minutes. That means he has missed just six minutes. Another bloke who deserves a wrap is centre, Blake Ayshford. He turned 28 the day before the win over Canterbury and celebrated with his two tries.

During his last couple of seasons, with the Tigers and the Sharks, he didn't score too many four pointers but he already has four this season. In his seven games in 2016, Blake has run for 502 metres and made 107 tackles.

He has played 131 first grade games with Wests Tigers, Cronulla and now the Warriors and has crossed for a total of 38 tries. Against the Bulldogs he ran for 95 metres and made 17 tackles.

The table after round seven shows the Warriors are 11th but in reality they are equal eighth with five oth-

er sides. These other five teams are the Rabbitohs, the Titans, the Panthers, the Sea Eagles and the Dragons. In Monday night's game, the Panthers deserved their win against the Roosters. He might miss a few tackles, but Jamie Soward was invaluable on this wet and miserable night in Sydney. His kicking game was spot on and according to Fox TV statistics, it was more than 500 metres. And it was a clever mix of long kicks, chips and bombs. In the final 10 minutes, with the Panthers clinging to their 20-16 lead, his tactical kicks resulted in the Roosters having to make four successive line drop outs as the clock ran down.]

I see the NRL have banned the coaches from making any comments about the Bunker. That won't stop the media and the fans from giving their opinion. It is a pity the NRL's first reaction is one of trying to cover things up rather than encourage truthful and intelligent opinions. No-one seems to know what constitutes a penalty try nowadays. I believe Wests Tigers second rower, Chris Lawrence should have been awarded a penalty try against the Storm on Sunday. There was no doubt he would have got to the ball first and well and truly before it went dead, if he had not been pulled back by a Melbourne defender. I suppose the argument is that the Bunker could not be certain he would have correctly grounded the ball but in NRL football in recent times, if a player gets to the ball in similar situations, they score more than 90 percent of the time. That should be enough for the Bunker. And while I am on poor decisions, what about the disallowed try by Solomone Kata early in the Bulldogs game. A forward pass was ruled, but I replayed it about 10 times and it did not look forward to me. There will be some good games this weekend. The Cowboys-Eels game in Townsville on Saturday night should be a tremendous clash. The Sharks-Panthers game, which is the only Sunday fixture, should be an even money struggle, while the third and last game on Monday (Anzac Day) between the Warriors and the Storm in Melbourne could be the most entertaining of the round.

There is talk that the NRL will soon bring down its decision on the Eels Salary Cap drama. Plenty of good judges are saying it will involve a loss of competition points.

John 'Doc' Mayhew is Much More than a Doctor for the Warriors

By John Deaker



THE NEW Zealand Warriors' doctor John 'Doc' Mayhew has been working for the country's top sports teams for decades. He's all too aware that injuries can be the difference between teams having great years and poor years. The times when players are injured is when Mayhew's experience can be even more valuable helping them through the mental challenges that injuries present than the physical hurdles they have to navigate; their body is their tool for success in their profession and when it breaks down they ask themselves all kinds of things.

"If you're in a team and it's your career and you get injured many questions go through your mind about how it might put your occupation in doubt," says Mayhew.

"When a player gets injured there's all sorts of things they're dealing with other than the physical injury: are they going to get back to playing as well as they did before? Is their position in the team in jeopardy? And will they be contracted again? These are the things that go through a player's mind."

Mayhew has been with the New Zealand Warriors since 2005 though he is best known throughout the country for the 131 All Black tests he was sideline for. With teams like the Warriors (and when he was with the All Blacks) he's often been in a privileged position where he can get close to players; whereas in some coaching positions it's not ideal to get too friendly with players, it's definitely not viewed as a bad thing for him to form strong bonds. It could even be argued that Mayhew's people skills and ability to build tight relationships with men like John Kirwan, Michael Jones and Jonah Lomu over the years has had more to do with him surviving at the top of his chosen field than his medical skills.

Mayhew has no choice but to be a jack-of-all-trades. Liaising between different members of the club's medical team and giving players the confidence to make smart decisions is an important part of his job.

"If you have a major injury my job in the initial part of the diagnosis is assessing what the best treatment is. For surgery we'll get appropriate surgeons and we're lucky at the Warriors we have a group of surgeons that we work closely with and are very interested in the sport," says Mayhew.

"When a player's injured they can think the world's fallen down, especially a young player. You can help them. Quoting another player or getting another player to talk to them is sometimes a good way to deal with it. We do it all the time. It's good for players to discuss what went on and the ups and downs they can relate to.

Mayhew says the grueling rehab of long-term injuries is something that individuals deal with very differently. For all of them it's a period that has its challenges though.

"Some players really struggle with the burden of rehabilitation. It's a hard grind. When they are playing they have the reward each week of the game and the satisfaction that provides. When you're rehabbing you've [only] got the reward of being a bit stronger in the area or improving the range of motion slightly."

Speaking the day before the Warriors 24-20 win over the Bulldogs, Mayhew was upbeat about how the team were tracking and said they were "In pretty good shape compared to last year". 2015 was an exceptionally bad year for the club highlighted by key players like Shaun Johnson, Thomas Leuluai and Manu Vatuvei all spending extended periods on the sideline. Even Stacey Jones' NSW Cup team was hit hard. Mayhew says it was important for them to make sure there were no common links between many of the injuries. The reality is that all NRL clubs know that with the brutal nature of the modern game it's just a matter of time before they all have nightmare years of their own.

After Saturday night that 'good shape' isn't looking nearly as good. As the song says: 'In a New York minute, everything can change'; Roger Tuivasa-Sheck's season-ending knee injury is a massive blow for the club. The only saving grace has been that a strong performance from the team without him against the Bulldogs has prevented the alarm bells going off to the same degree that they would have done if the injury had occurred a week earlier.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

Constructing the best plan ahead for Tuivasa-Sheck and keeping him and his family informed right through the process before and after his operation is something Mayhew is all too familiar with. Every person is treated as an individual especially taking in to account their different body shapes, age and previous injuries. Mayhew says many ACL operations on professional sportspeople are done within days of the injury and actually are conducted quicker than is ideal for getting the very best results. So it's been no surprise to hear the club clarifying that it will be at least a few weeks before their star fullback goes under the knife. Before then he'll be able to do some work that they call 'pre-rehab' and then post-op the long rehabilitation process will commence.

Now that everyone's moved on from the initial shock, Mayhew is very confident that by not rushing the process and with Tuivasa-Sheck being only 22 years old he'll be able to get back to his dynamic best form. "Roger has a great work ethic and with this being his first major injury I'm sure he'll attack his rehab with the same enthusiasm we've seen from him as a player. He's lucky to have the best surgeons possible operating on him and the club and medical staff will be there supporting him closely the whole way to make sure he gets back to the same form Warriors fans have witnessed this season," he says.

Even before the injury to their star fullback, this was a busy couple of weeks for Mayhew. Three days down in Wellington last weekend will be followed up by three in Melbourne next weekend. If you talked purely hours dedicated to the team his role with the Warriors could be deemed a fulltime job. However, he still manages to juggle other roles such as Chief Medical officer for Sovereign Insurance and running his private practice at the North Shore's Millenium Institute for up to 15 hours a week. He says sometimes he thinks he might have one role too many but all them are uniquely interesting for him. While the interest remains, expect the juggling to continue.



Dr John Mayhew during a pre-season game in Whangarei.
Photo www.photosport.nz

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Blake Ayshford Is Happy On and Off the Field in NZ

By John Deaker



EVEN BEFORE his two try effort at the weekend in a significant victory for the Warriors, Blake Ayshford was loving life in New Zealand. He only played four games for Cronulla last year so it's been a huge boost to his spirits to be a regular member of the Warriors' starting lineup in 2016. It's been a lot more than the opportunities as a player that have made his move to New Zealand so successful though.

"It's not so crowded and there's a lot more space to do things," he says.

"I'm just loving my time here. The club's taken a punt on me and I'm grateful for that so I want to pay them back as best I can."

Ayshford modestly puts the two tries he scored at the weekend down to the great work people like Shaun Johnson and Bodine Thompson did inside him. He can't hide the fact that it was special to get on the scoreboard twice though.

"I'd scored plenty of tries with the Tigers but the last two years I'd been on a bit of a drought. I only crossed the line once in twenty games with the [Cronulla] Sharks. I scored a try earlier this year - and it felt great to get across the line and finish off those moves at the weekend."

One of the many significant changes for the Warriors on Saturday night was the return from injury of Bodene Thompson. He's been someone that has surprised many NZ Warriors fans with how well he's played for the club. His performances haven't surprised Ayshford though.

"I know what he's capable of. I played with him at the Tigers and also against him in some schoolboy finals... we certainly needed him at the weekend. He's playing some good footy and he'll get better," Ayshford said.

The culture at the Warriors is a specific aspect of the club that has been criticized by some people in the media this year. Interestingly, without even being pressed on the subject, Ayshford emphasizes that the environment around the club has one of the key factors that has made him and his family's move to New Zealand so enjoyable.

"You get mocked for everything, which is fun," he says.

"You get clique groups in a lot of other teams and people that don't get along. But at this club it's very hard not to get along with everyone. We have our team outings and make sure we get together at least once a month to go and do something fun. All the partners get together too and go train or hang out so it's made my life easier; they say 'happy wife, happy life,'" jokes Ayshford.

Ayshford is engaged to his New Zealand partner Maria Hahipene who he met through his good mate Benji Marshall while they were both playing for the Wests Tigers. They've based themselves in Pakuranga with their two young children, Mason, aged 4 and Marley, aged 2. There's a strong possibility that Blake and Maria will settle in New Zealand when he hangs up his playing boots. However, a news story a few days ago about a snake turning up in a car in New Zealand did concern him.

"The thing I like about New Zealand is that there's no snakes or poisonous spiders. I would never go in the bush in Australia but I've managed a couple of treks into the bush here already. So I wasn't happy to see the snake popping up in a car over here a few days ago. I hope they fix that quick.



Blake Ayshford scores a try during the NRL Warriors vs Bulldogs Rugby League match at the Westpac Stadium in Wellington on Saturday the 16th of April 2016.

Photo www.photosport.nz

Papakura upset Pt Chevalier in Rd#2 of the Auckland SAS Fox Memorial Premiership

PAPAKURA HAVE upset Pt Chevalier in the Game of the Round last weekend, winning in front of their home crowd at Prince Edward Park.

The Pirates were first to put points on the board, but the Sea Eagles soon toppled over to lead at half-time 12-6.

The second half was evenly contested.

Papakura landed on top and secured their 24-18 win over Pt Chevalier with a runaway try to James Dowie in the last minute of the game.

In other results, Mt Albert successfully defended the Konica Minolta Roope Rooster trophy in the first challenge of 2016 with a hard fought 24-22 win over Howick.

The Roope Roster will be on the line again in this week's SAS Fox Memorial Game of the Round between Mt Albert and Papakura.

After taking down the reigning Premiership winners in Rd 2, Papakura coach Richie Blackmore will be focused, aiming to beat last year's grand finalists Mt Albert at Fowlds Park who they sit one point and spot ahead of on the table.

Mangere East will be chasing their first win for the season, after going down 26-20 to Northcote.

Richmond will host Howick at Grey Lynn Park while Otahuhu travel to Harold Moody Park to tame Glenora who currently sit at the top of the table.

With one draw and one loss, the Pirates will be searching for their first win in their clash against Northcote.

SAS Fox Memorial Rd 3 Fixtures

Pt Chevalier v Northcote @ Walker Park 2:30pm

Mangere East v Marist @ Walter Massey Park 2:30pm

Glenora v Otahuhu @ Harold Moody Park 2.30pm

Richmond v Howick @ Grey Lynn Park 2.30pm

Mt Albert v Papakura @ Fowlds Park 2.30pm

Crown Lift Trucks Sharman Cup Rd 3 Fixtures

Waitemata v Manurewa @ Ranui Domain 2.30pm

East Coast Bays v Papatoetoe @ Freyberg Park 2.30pm

Manukau v Mt Wellington @ Moyle Park 2.30pm

New Lynn v Pakuranga @ Lawson Park 2.30pm

Bay Roskill v Hibiscus Coast @ Blockhouse Bay 2.30pm

Ponsonby v Te Atatu @ Victoria Park 2.30pm

Otara v Ellerslie @ Ngati Otara Park 2.30pm

Glenfield BYE



Valencian Warriors Rugby League - Spain

AS I told you the last time I wrote, rugby league is something relatively new here in Spain, and the club I play and coach with, Valencian Warriors, was actually the first created here about 3 years ago. I've been involved a little under 2 years and we are trying to set ourselves out as a model club both on and off the field.

The Warrior identity is something we are really proud of and work hard to foster at all times. We use a municipal facility, but take the time to decorate the locker room with things like our core values and other motivational things. Following every match we also have a short presentation in which we make three special awards: the best defensive player (in the opinion of the coaching staff) receives a shield, the best attacking player gets a sword, and the Warrior gets a helmet. The Warrior of the match isn't necessarily the player of the game, but rather the player who best reflects our values and executes his role.

In terms of achievements, we won the Spanish cup last summer and then lost out in the final this season. The national league was tough this year and we lost in the play-offs a month or so ago. We are now into the regional league which is an opportunity to give guys experience and develop our systems. We also have about 8 guys who have international caps with Spain.

More and more the guys are getting into the sport, as many come from little or no rugby background. Other than myself, the most experienced players have a couple of years of league behind them. There are a handful of union converts, and then a majority who come from sports like soccer or basketball, or with no sporting experience at all. Watching professional matches is key to our development and we are fortunate to have free streaming here in Spain which means we can access NRL regularly. I typically watch the NZ Warrior games every week, either live or on delay if it's too early for me with the time difference.

We love to spread the word of our sport and club, so if anyone is interested, the facebook page is www.facebook.com/ValencianWarriors We do have a Twitter account as well which is @vlcWarriors although we are in the process of trying to update it. For that reason, I use my personal account to keep updates going @ AndrewPilks. We typically have everything in both Spanish and English so as to reach the largest audience possible.

Best Regards, Andrew Pilkington



Awesome Reader Emails...



Hi Butch

Max had a blinder today with the Northcote Tigers and got a hat trick today against the Ellerslie Sea Eagles and was named player of the day.. the second time in 3 weeks!

He wanted me to let you know.

Ps. He won't take off his Vodafone Warriors jersey you gave him last week in the lounge either!

Cheers Brad

Sir Peter,

LAST YEAR I won a prize in the Stacey Jones lounge and I decided to pick the Sea-Link voucher. I am so pleased that I did as last weekend we spend 3 days on Waiheke and had a real blast. The highlight was the simplicity of driving onto the ferry at Haf Moon bay and then driving off once we were in paradise. Waiheke is such a beautiful island and I can see why the Butcher loves it so much!

Over the 3 days, we visited many sights around the island and stayed in a nice compact unit in Surfdale that was perfect as it was so central.

We also had a wonderful meal at Te Motu vineyard. The steak and sides, is to die for.

Thank you Sea-link for donating the vouchers to the

Sir Peter Letch's club. I am so pleased that I won and that I picked the Sea-link vouchers.

Pictured is Tricia and I having a nice wine before dinner at Te Motu Vinyard in Onetangi. It was a great weekend.

Cheers, Don & Tricia Graham

SEALINK
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Hi Sir Butch

A MASSIVE THANKS for your signed jersey. When you called I could not believe it, but your voice is unique. Part of the reason I have not sent a photo wearing the jersey before is that we are having our home renovated and we have just become grandparents again.

Then listed in your latest newsletter I discovered I won a 2011 Grant Final Hat, which arrived on Friday with Big League magazines. Wow again!

Thanks so much mate. You have made my weeks .

In closing, as you are a patron of Diabetes Auckland, I have now become a member of Diabetes NZ [have had Diabetes 2 for the last 19 months] in part due to the awesome community work you do for so many charities.

Cheers again, Mark Callaghan



Bill Whitehead Lucky He Had a Carer

WHILE TODAY'S Press records the fate of a man who fell to his death while in the company of his carer, I was very thankful my carer was with me when I collapsed in the shower last Monday morning.

She told me I was unconscious for a time, while she lowered me into the empty bath, then rang an ambulance.

I was one of 306 admissions that morning, a record, before being transferred to the cardiac ward for five days.

I rang my mate, the Mad Butcher and wished the Warriors "all the best", and told Simon Mannering to get all to go own job, wish Tui (Lolohea) all the best in his start in halves. Many have commented about meals in Dunedin but I can assure everyone there is no complaints with the ones at CDHB. They are very tasty. I collected about eight different pills, but the Warriors result on Saturday was the only tonic I needed for a "speedy recovery".

Like Sonny Bill, Tui is a former Auckland Marist Rugby League club junior, and is destined for higher honours soon.

The service in Ward 12 was superb, all the nurses need is a supply of skates to speed up their service, as they are on the go all the time.

Bill Whitehead - QSM (Queen Supports Marist), Secretary-Manager South Is Rugby League Kiwis Association, Life Member of ten bodies (nine RL, one Bowls).

Bill is a legend in the Rugby League Community and we wish him a speedy recovery.

More Photos From Wellington



Made these 2 young guys night I went out after the game a got them out of the crowd and took them into the teams changing room.



Took these Bulldogs out for lunch last Friday in Wellington (sharing the love).



David Fusitu'A, Roger Tuivasa Sheck and Shaun Johnson.



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THIS WEEK IN BIG LEAGUE'S HUGE ROUND 8 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

- The traditional Anzac Day clash looms and for **Jack de Belin**, it's a time to reflect on the life of his grandfather Fred, who fought in World War II and had a successful rugby league career with Balmain and the Cootamundra Bulldogs. Roosters forward **Sam Moa** said the game unites Kiwi and Aussie players and *Big League* also reflects on the lives of five notable rugby league players who also served in the army.

- Bulldogs and Kiwi winger **Sam Perrett** has had a long and healthy career – but he's always been planning for his retirement. The 30-year-old worked hard set up his own building business and encourages all rugby league players to think about their futures early.

- Numbers don't always reveal everything but when you break down the **Broncos** and **Cowboys**' style of play, there is no doubt they are far-and-away the two best teams in the comp. They claim first and second spot in most attack and defence areas but Queensland legends **Brent Tate** and **Steve Renouf** believe it's the clubs' cultures that drive success.

- Also, Parramatta enforcers **Manu Ma'u** (Tonga/NZ) and **Junior Paulo** (Samoa/NZ and Australia) have decisions to make on their rep futures; we sit down with **Storm CEO Dave Donaghy** to talk the game's future; **Tate** picks his top six young players in the NRL and **Kane Evans** can't wait for the return of **Boyd Cordner** and **Jared Waerea-Hargreaves**.

PLUS... **Luke Douglas** becomes the 21st player to reach 100 games for two clubs; **The Analyst** sees where Ben Barba is compared to his 2012 form and we sing along to the best (and worst) Top 8 rugby league music.

AND: Little League, lower grade previews and a Paul Gallen poster.



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The Beast is Back for ANZAC Day Match

by Richard Becht



MANU VATUVEI returns on the left wing with Tuimoala Lolohea confirmed to start at fullback and Thomas Leuluai in the halves for the Vodafone Warriors' eighth-round Anzac Day encounter with Melbourne at AAMI Park on Monday (7.00pm kick-off local time; 9.00pm NZT).

Vatuvei, just two short of 150 career tries, will make his fifth appearance of the season after missing the last two games with a hamstring injury.

The 30-year-old 214-game veteran's last outing was the 32-28 golden point win over the Sydney Roosters on April 3.

Lolohea takes over at fullback for Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, who has had his first season with the club cruelly ended after rupturing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee early in Saturday night's memorable 24-20 win over the Bulldogs in Wellington.

Leuluai starts his first game in almost a year after coming on to play 64 minutes at halfback following Tuivasa-Sheck's 16th-minute exit at Westpac Stadium.

With Vatuvei back, utility Jonathan Wright moves to the bench alongside forwards Jacob Lillyman, Charlie Gubb and Ligi Sao.

Vodafone Warriors V Melbourne Storm

*Aami Park, Melbourne
7.00pm, Monday, April 25*

- 1 Tuimoala Lolohea
 - 2 David Fusitu'a
 - 3 Blake Ayshford
 - 4 Solomon Kata
 - 5 Manu Vatuvei
 - 6 Thomas Leuluai
 - 7 Shaun Johnson
 - 8 Sam Lisone
 - 9 Issac Luke
 - 10 Ben Matulino
 - 11 Bodene Thompson
 - 12 Ryan Hoffman (c)
 - 13 Simon Mannering
- Interchange
- 14 Jonathan Wright
 - 15 Jacob Lillyman
 - 16 Charlie Gubb
 - 17 Ligi Sao

Match Officials:

Referee: Matt Cecchin
Assistant Referee: Gavin Reynolds
Touch Judges: Brett Suttor & Dave Munro
Standby: Dave Basham
Review Officials: Ashley Klein & Ben Galea
Senior Ro: Luke Patten





Charlie Gubb's Dad took a few of the Sky TV guys out fishing in Wellington.

Left Photo: Daryl Halligan (played 166 games for the Bulldogs) showing of the catch.

Right Photo: left to right. Daryl Halligan, Stephen McIvor, Paul Grubb(Charlie's Dad) and Simon Loma. This the reaction after catch 6 Kahawai

Sweet Georgia - Charlie Gubb's Dad's Boat

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The Newsletter Team

Here is the team that help me put together the newsletter each week. We have a number of fantastic contributors who send in content each week that along with my editorial gets wrapped up by our graphic designer and sent out by our distribution man to your inbox.

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