



Kiwis UK Tour Special

Newsletter

29th October 2015

#96

No advertisements are paid for in this newsletter.

WHAT A fantastic week I had in Leeds, thanks to the unbelievable hospitality of our hosts.

The Leeds Rhinos are huge in the city but it was as if we were rock stars. They just could not do enough for us.

I was lucky enough to go along with Rhinos co-owner Gary Hetherington to a civic reception black tie do at the Leeds Town Hall, being organised by the Leeds Rhinos Foundation, which does all sorts of great work in the community, rather like the old Mad Butcher and Suburban Newspapers Community Trust used to.

Brian McClennan, who coached at Leeds, and led the Kiwi when we beat Australia 24-0 to win the Gillette Tri-Nations in 2005, when I was football manager, was a special guest.

I even got to do auctions for signed Kiwis and Warriors jerseys. I confess to letting the F-bomb slip, but it was quite flattering because the crowd seemed to enjoy my humour.

Foundation director of operations Bob Bowman and former player Jamie Jones-Buchanan, who is a trustee and a big name in Leeds league, were our hosts, and they were sensational company.

But before all that I was a guest at a local pub for a buffet meal with a supporters club, and it was a huge pleasure to be surrounded by such passionate fans. The MC was local lad and I tell you what, the Vodafone Warriors could learn a thing or two that is for sure.

Massive numbers of fans turned out to see the boys train, and one even brought along a copy of *The Year the Kiwis Flew*, the book we did on that 2005 success, for me to sign.

There is no question though that the game itself was the highlight of the week. Rhinos co-owner Paul Cadock, who is the ultimate gentleman, came up to me and said: "How the F are you? It was very touching coming from him, because it was a bit of an endorsement of my performance at the Foundation do.

The Kiwis started slowly certainly, but this will always be memorable for me because of the atmosphere.

Celebrating 125 years of the club, more than 20,000 packed the ground and they sang and chanted all night. It was something I have never experienced except in the North-East of England, and it is utterly magical.

It was tremendous to see former Vodafone Warrior and Kiwi Ali Lauitiiti back in Leeds colours, alongside Adrian Morley, the former Great Britain star, and of course to see Kylie Leuluai in his final game for the club.

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We Are On The Shelves In Leeds

At the Leeds Rhinos Foundation dinner I was introduced to the vice-chairman and head of heritage of the LRF, Phil Caplan, and his father. Phil invited me up to his bookshop in the north of the city, Philip Howard Books – run with his wife Ros - and I was blown away to see a copy of my book *When the Kiwis Flew*. It turns out that the store is a league treasure trove.

It is also the headquarters of Scratching Shed Publishing, which Phil runs with Tony Hannan – www.scratchingshedpublishing.com – which has published a number of league titles along with a variety of books with a north of England flavour.

Not only that, but for the last four years, Phil and Tony have been producing the monthly league magazine *Forty20*, which is also available in a digital format for overseas readers.

A side Trip To France

There is no rest for the wicked though, and we were soon on a flight all the way to Barcelona in Spain, and a bus to Perpignan in France.

This lovely spot is the home of the Catalan Dragons, and we moved to train and be out of the media spotlight as we prepare for this weekend's first test against England in Hull.

Of course league legend Stacey Jones played at the Dragons, so it is not my first visit to the area, which is stunning.

Alex Chan also played for the Dragons, and they hold him in great regard, but they love Stacey. Several local fans told me he is the best player the club has ever had out from New Zealand.

They have strong links with us, with Louis Anderson on the books at the moment.

I even tried out a new barbecue technique – well, an old one really. It was good old-fashioned logs in the fire-pit, but give me gas any day – much more convenient.

There was never going to be a shortage of quality meat for the boys because the part-owner of the Dragons is my favourite sort of person – a butcher!

Jet Lag A factor

We all get used to flying these days, but I tell you what, jet lag has been a factor for me this time around. It is a huge flight to the UK and I have been really tired and out of sorts ever since, and I am not the only one. Some of the players struggled to make the adjustment too, but everyone should be fine come test time.

No Holiday

Just to show you how hard the boys work I have included one day (Tuesday) in our itinerary. This is no holiday I can assure you, and the entire squad is utterly focused on getting that test series win.

Tuesday started at 7am with breakfast, with the boys expected to be in the strapping room at 8.30am to hydrate and prepare for training.

There was a preview in the team room at 9am, and it was all aboard the bus to head for the Dragons training ground at 9.30am.

The boys were hard into skills training, weights and a recovery session from 10am until 12.30pm, when they got a lunch break and rest until 2pm, when they were due for a community session with local children.

I chose Tuesday because they got a free afternoon after that! They were all required back at the hotel restaurant for 6.30pm dinner and an early night, because it was check out and board the bus for the trip back to Barcelona and a 5.45am flight back to the UK.

Go The All Blacks

With the Kiwis winning their tour opener my attention turned to the Rugby World Cup, like most New Zealanders, and I could not have been more pleased that we booked our place in the final.

What a send-off it will be for players like Conrad Smith, Ma'a Nonu, Keven Mealamu, Dan Carter and of course Richie McCaw, if they can win over our old foes the Wallabies.

It was a pretty good weekend all round, The Phoenix winning, though they are now in a big squabble about their future in the Aussie league, and the netballers getting a win too.

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But spare a thought for my beloved Kiwis and tune in to the live coverage of the game on Sky. I know there is a big rugby match on, and all eyes will be on it. Our little nation is going to be absolutely gripped, but leaguies get two bites of the cherry. So go the Kiwis, and go the All Blacks.

Manly Swoops On Youngster

Marvin Curry, a 17-year-old Nelson College student, has signed a two-year development contract with Manly.

Curry, likes to play wing and will be involved with the club's under-18 team.

If Curry can go on to make his first grade debut he would become just the second Nelson College student to do so, following in the footsteps of Simon Mannerling.

Tasman Rugby League regional development officer Ryan Charles said Curry was a "raw talent" and his best attributes were his athleticism and ability under the high ball.

Storm Utility Signs

Melbourne Storm utility Charnze Nicoll-Klokstad has signed for the Vodafone Warriors' 2016 NRL squad on a two-year contract.

In the last two seasons he has scored 16 tries in 37 appearances for the Storm's NYC side.

The Auckland-born Nicoll-Klokstad will bring back-line versatility to the squad because he can play in the halves, centres and fullback, as well as the wing.

"Charnze is a player we've been interested in for a while," said our recruitment and development manager Tony Iro. "He consistently impressed as an NYC player and now takes the next step up."

Nicoll-Klokstad's surname provides an interesting back story. His mother is of Cook Islands-Norwegian extraction, while his father is Maori.

He is the sixth player signed for 2016 season behind Roger Tuivasa-Sheck and Issac Luke, Ligi Sao, Blake Ayshford, Henare Wells and Jeff Robson.

Doyle Staying To Get The Job Done

I was pleased when our boss Jim Doyle put paid to rumours he was heading to Australia to take charge of the NRL.

Jim is the man to continue leading us, so I confess to a few flutters when I heard the story he was to return to Australia, and a wry smile when he said it was all nonsense.

NRL chief executive Dave Smith is leaving, so the NRL is casting around for a new boss, and to be fair, Doyle was once his right hand man and has the qualifications needed.

Send The Kiwis Your Support

IF YOU WANT TO SEND THE KIWIS A MESSAGE SEND IT TO:

nadene@nzrl.co.nz

the KIWIS Football Manager.

The Kiwis play their first test on Monday morning (5am NZ time). We are playing at the KC Stadium in Hull, the home of the Hull FC Rugby League Club. Then on Thursday night we attend their 150 year dinner. They will have former Kiwi and Hull FC player James Leulual (father of Thomas who plays for the Vodafone Warriors) as their special guest. Another former Kiwi, Motu Tony, will also be in attendance as he is the general manager at the club.

Go Kiwis & All Blacks



NEW ZEALAND RUGBY LEAGUE™

Good luck from the entire Newsletter Team and all the readers.

England vs Kiwis Series Launch



English Captain Sean O'Loughlin pictured with Co-captains Issac Luke & Adam Blair and the Albert Baskerville Shield at media launch for the upcoming test series.



Coaches Steve McNamara (English) & Stephen Kearney (Kiwis).



Sean O'Loughlin and Issac Luke.



Sean O'Loughlin and Adam Blair.

Training in Leeds



LEEDS RHINOS FOUNDATION DINNER



The A Team heading off to Leeds Foundation dinner. Left to right: Kiwis manager Craig Walker, media manager Grant Chapman, coach Stephen Kearney, patron Sir Peter Leitch, assistant coach David Kidwell, high performance manager Brent Gemmell, assistant coach/analyst Kelvin Wright



They sure did make us Kiwis feel welcome.



Me and the co MC FOR THE NIGHT LEEDS PLAYER Jamie Jones-Buchanan who is a very funny man.



Me and Jamie Jones-Buchanan a very popular Leeds Rhino player.



Me and Leeds Rhinos Head Coach Barry McDermott with the table ball which I bought for my mate Gary Clarke's museum in Christchurch.



Leeds Rhinos retiring player and former captain Kevin Sinfield MBE SIGNED THE BALL FOR ME and what a top bloke he is.



The Victoria hall room was a sell out over 400 guests.



A packed house - over 400 people.



The Kiwis team on stage.



Jamie questioning Adam and Issac.

AT CATALANS DRAGONS IN PERPIGNAN FRANCE

Photos courtesy of Pascal RODRIGUEZ



Great to see this French fan with his BLK Kiwis Jersey in the stand at training at the Catalans Dragons home ground.

The Catalans Dragons Under 16 team had great fun running around with the Kiwis.

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LUNCH AT THE CATALANS DRAGONS CLUB



French black pudding going on the BBQ.



All the lovely volunteers who cooked our lunch with the boys.



The thing I love about France this is a lunch appetiser we had served each day.



We enjoyed our lunch at the Catalan Dragons.



Lunch at the Catalan Dragons on the second day was a traditional Perpignan dish of pork meat bald very tasty.



The coach and the owner of the Catalans Dragons Bernard a fellow butcher and nice guy.

Lots of Fans Came to See the Kiwis



The fans turned up in large numbers on both days to watch the Kiwis train at the Catalans Dragons ground in France.



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The Greatest Test Debut Ever?

By John Coffey QSM



WITH EVERY new tour there are new Kiwis and, on most occasions, new Test caps. Stephen Kearney's team in Britain is without many key players and some of their replacements will be dipping their toes into the torrid world of Test football for the first time at Hull this weekend.

That brings me to the question of which of our nearly 800 international players made the most significant debut at the highest level of the game? My personal choice – unashamedly biased because I was fortunate enough to be sitting in the press box at The Willows ground in Salford on September 25, 1971 – is Dennis Williams.

Coached by Lory Blanchard and captained by Roy Christian, the Kiwis were struggling to recapture the form which had propelled them to a stunning 24-3 one-off Test victory over the Kangaroos at Carlaw Park earlier in the year. Two days later Auckland also beat Australia, 15-14, to further boost expectations of a successful tour.

But the Kiwis won only two of their six club matches leading up to the first Test against Great Britain. The Lions had decisively won Test series in Australia and New Zealand the previous year, and local pundits wrote off the Kiwis, barely stopping short of saying the home team had only to turn up to win, and win convincingly.

However, the crafty Blanchard had not played his Test line-up in any of those six games. He then shocked even some within his own camp when he plumped for John Whittaker (who had scored two tries on the right wing against the Kangaroos) at fullback, bringing in Phillip Orchard to partner Mocky Brereton in their specialist wing positions.

Meanwhile, Williams had shared in Auckland's narrow win over Australia as a centre and made his Kiwis debut in the opening tour match against Rochdale Hornets at 17 years and 145 days. When first-choice stand-off half Gary Woollard suffered a thigh muscle injury at training, Blanchard called up Williams to make his Test debut a day after his 18th birthday. He was, and still is, the youngest Test player from any nation.

Williams roomed with Whittaker, who shelved any self-doubts on the eve of his first-ever game at fullback to offer encouragement and support to the youngster. Williams knew he would be marking none other than Roger Millward, the British captain and one of the most elusive inside backs of all time, in the Test next day. Sleep must have been difficult.

A nervous Williams clung to Blanchard's blazer sleeve as they moved down the players' tunnel. The Kiwis made a poor start, conceding two tries and falling eight points behind in the first 12 minutes. Williams had yet to handle the ball. Then a scrum packed down, hooker Jim Fisher raked the ball, scrum-half Ken Stirling swiftly passed it to Williams – and a star was born!

Dazzling Dennis stepped off one foot to leave Millward grasping and cursing. He pivoted off his other boot to evade centre Chris Hesketh, and then ducked under a desperate swinging arm from a covering forward. Fullback Derek Whitehead had no chance as this will o' the wisp eluded him and dashed 30 metres to turn not just the Test but the entire tour around.

Tries were worth three points and the Kiwis still had much hard work to do before walking off victorious at 18-13, by which time Williams was nursing a sprained ankle on the sideline but assured of a place in his sport's folklore. Whittaker also contributed a try and was so good that some British media accused Blanchard of telling fibs that Whittaker had never played fullback before.

Continued on next page...

Incredibly, the Kiwis performed another Houdini act in the second Test at Castleford. They overcame an even greater 11-point deficit to triumph 17-14 and become the first Kiwis side to win a series on British soil. The only previous New Zealand success had been by Albert Baskerville's privately-organised All Golds away back in 1907-08. It was to be 27 more years before another Kiwis team tasted similar success.

France was still a formidable rugby league nation in those days, and had beaten Australia at the 1970 World Cup. But Blanchard and Christian steered their side through to a 2-0 series triumph (the third Test was drawn) in that country, completing a unique Grand Slam over our three traditional international rivals.

It was my privilege to spend 100 days on tour with the 1971 Kiwis, to admire the power and pace of Brereton and Phillip Orchard, the silky skills of Whittaker, Christian, Williams and Bernie Lowther, the courage and commitment of Woollard, Stirling and loose forward Tony Kriletich, the staunchness of forwards Fisher, Henry Tatana, Robert Orchard, Doug Gailey, Gary Smith and John Greengrass. It might well have been the greatest tour of all time.

Footnote: This weekend is the 40th anniversary of one of rugby league's most shameful acts, the stomping by Welsh prop Jim Mills onto the head of John Greengrass after the Kiwis forward scored a late try at Swansea. Although Mills was sent off and subsequently banned by the NZRL from touring here again, there was no provision for the Kiwis to receive an additional penalty which would have won them the match. Mills' act led to the introduction of the "eight-point try" rule. Years later Greengrass and Mills met up again in England to share a friendly drink and heal old wounds.



The 1971 Grand Slam Kiwis stayed in modest hotels, travelled on old buses, and shared communal baths on their memorable British tour. Here, Tony Kriletich and Dennis Williams get rid of some post-match mud.

Meeting a Fellow League Publication Producer

AT THE Leeds Rhinos Foundation tenth anniversary dinner at the opulent Leeds Town Hall, I was introduced to the vice-chairman and head of heritage of the LRF, Phil Caplan and his father.

Phil invited me up to his independent bookshop in the north of the city, Philip Howard Books – run with his lovely wife Ros - and I was blown away to see a copy of my book 'When the Kiwis Flew'. It turns out that the store is a rugby league treasure trove.

It is also the headquarters of [Scratching Shed Publishing](#) which Phil runs with Tony Hannan which has published a number of league titles along with a variety of books with a north of England flavour.

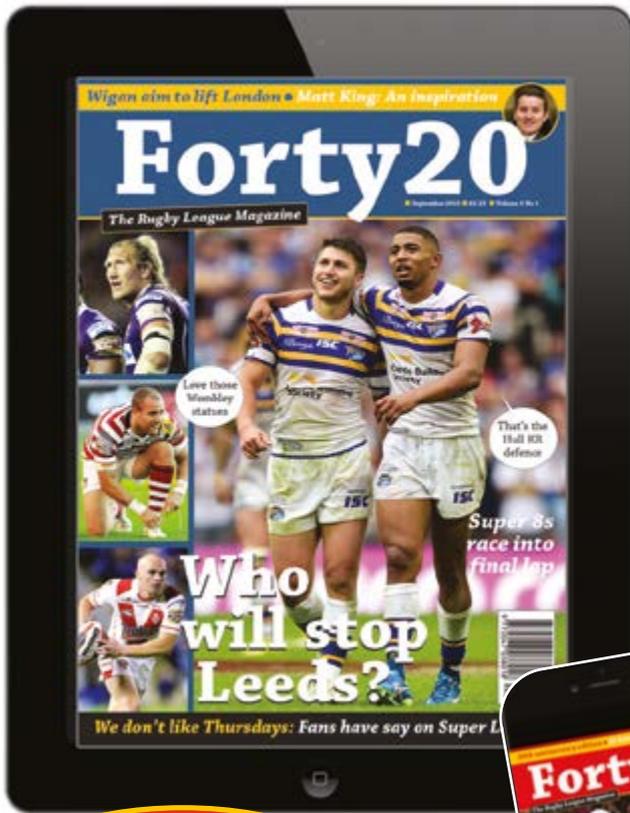
Not only that, but for the last four years, Phil and Tony have been producing the monthly league magazine Forty20 which is also available in a digital format for overseas readers.

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The End of a Very Successful Era In Northland Rugby League

By Ben Francis



AFTER FOUR very successful years as General Manager of Rugby League in Northland, Alex Smits is hanging up his boots and is taking a break from Rugby League to focus on new horizons and spend more time with his family.

Smits has worked extremely hard at growing the great game in the Northland region, during his tenure we have seen an increase in player participation, worked hard with clubs to grow them in their respective communities and helped grow the game experience locally. Along with that, Smits also gained a number of high profile sponsors and convinced Northland Kiwis to give their names to local competitions (ex Adam Blair Trophy)

Alex also started up the Don't Be an Egg campaign which has gained national recognition on television and is in association with It's Not Ok Program. The Don't Be an Egg Campaign is all about improving sideline behaviour and making the game more enjoyable for whoever is taking part in sports.

But on top of all that, there are three things which Alex Smits is most proud of, the first one being Making the Rugby League Northland Premiership finals a major event on the Northland Sporting calendar. Secondly the growth of Rugby League in Northland Primary and Secondary schools making competitions for the kids to take part in. But the biggest achievement of all was getting the Kiwi's to take their Four Nations game V Samoa to Toll Stadium, it was a very successful day and Alex hopes from that game it will grow a pathway for NRL teams to take games up North.

Along with Alex, Northland Rugby League are losing their Club Development Officer Toni Haldane, Toni is a well respected figure in Northland Rugby League and people only have positive words to say about her work in the Northland Region.

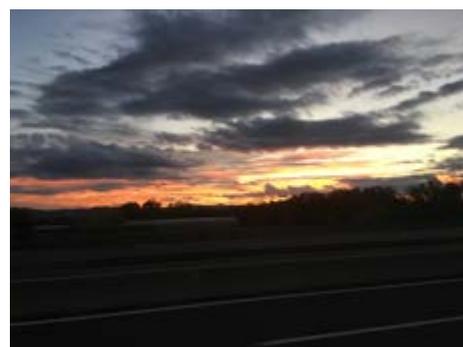
Recruitment for these roles is underway, with the aim that they are filled by the New Year. Both Toni and Alex will remain in their respective rolls until December 18th.



Alex Smits

The Vodafone Warriors have announced they will take their Preseason match against the Gold Coast Titans to Toll Stadium. The match will be played on February 13th and will be a 5:30pm Kickoff. Tickets will be available for sale on Monday 23 November from Eventfinda and Forum North Box Office. You can also head along to www.facebook.com/TollStadiumWhangarei for more information

On the Bus to Barcelona airport. It was a early start at 5.30am!



Sunrise from our bus heading to the airport.

World Cup Final: Let's Not Forget There Are Two Teams Playing!

By John Deaker



HAVING RUGBY as our National sport can be a good and bad thing for New Zealanders. At it's best it's given the New Zealand Rugby Union the ability to sustain a system where we retain our best players in New Zealand under the NZRU's umbrella. At it's worst the nation's obsession with the All Blacks and our arrogance regarding how good the team is compared to other nations often prevents rugby fans from being more appreciative when the team performs well or understanding why their team doesn't always run away with matches like they expect.

On Sunday morning the All Blacks will go into the World Cup final against the Wallabies as warm favourites. One of the key reasons for this is the tremendous experience that so many key players in the current All Blacks' squad have that helps the current team to retain composure under extreme pressure. Another reason is the lack of injuries throughout their squad ; many people believe the only significant injury they've suffered at the World Cup, to Tony Woodcock, may have actually been a good thing.

On the flipside, Australia possesses some great threats that shouldn't be under-estimated by the New Zealand players and their fans. You can't over-state how important dominating the breakdown is to winning the forward battle in modern rugby and David Pocock and Michael Hooper are masters at operating effectively there. The tactical approach the All Blacks take to dealing with the Pocock / Hooper combination at the weekend will be fascinating, especially because of the way Michael Cheika elected not to play them both at Eden Park and in-doing-so prevented the All Blacks from quickly addressing the areas where they'd got the upper-hand on the Kiwis in Sydney the previous week.

Israel Folau's fitness is a crucial element this week. When Pocock and Folau were missing from the Wallabies against Scotland it was almost like taking Richie McCaw and Dan Carter out of the All Blacks team at the peak of their playing powers back in 2005. Folau possesses the type of game-breaking X Factor that South Africa lacked against the All Blacks at the weekend.

It was obvious that Folau's ankle was well below 100% when he took the field against Argentina. It's very likely Cheika will start him again even if he's nowhere near 100% because his presence brings confidence to the Wallabies lineup and also gives the All Blacks a few additional headaches knowing they may be confronted with Folau somewhere near his best. If he's even near to the top of his game he'll potentially look to isolate Nehe Milner-Skuda in the air in a similar way to how Bryan Habana exposed him in the semi-final.

The weather conditions are likely to prove vital again this week. New Zealand showed a poor ability to execute their game-plan at the weekend when they attempted to persist with grubber kicks throughout the match that led to very little except a turnover of possession. It's likely to be a tight match and that is always a concern in modern rugby - - not because the All Blacks might 'choke' or anything dramatic like that, but more because the product of rugby has proven time and time again in recent years how crucial one or two 50/50 calls from a referee can make to the outcome of big matches. The last two Super Rugby finals have been prime examples of that.

New Zealand might be the favoured team this week, but their magnificent winning record since the last World Cup will mean nothing on Sunday morning. They are playing against a re-energised Wallabies team that is constantly improving. The All Blacks have plateaued a bit more in recent times as they've looked to consolidate a formula that has proven so successful for them under the current coaching regime.

One thing you can guarantee is that both coaches Steve Hansen and Michael Cheika who've been known to hold things back at times will leave nothing in the tank at the weekend. Neither will the 23 players in each team. Let's hope for the type of game we know these two teams can serve up and importantly a refereeing performance that doesn't swing the result of the match. May the best team win. And may the best team be wearing BLACK!



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Richie McCaw chooses his ball to train with.



Sonny Bill Williams.



Nehe Milner-Skudder passes the ball.

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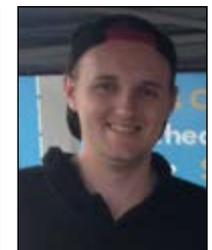
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