



Sponsors' Newsletter Number one – 2024 March.

NOTE from the editor.

It is fabulous to be back after a much needed break for a season last year. I am happy to say that I have brushed off the computer again and started another season of compiling this Sponsors' newsletter for all our wonderful sponsors. It is fabulous to see the Thames Valley Union doing so well. I personally cannot wait for club rugby to start along with Heartland and Vixen rugby to get underway for another season. This newsletter is for all our sponsors no matter how big or small. **Please note that we do not include any sponsors' logos in this newsletter as we are very grateful for all our sponsors as we value all of them. We will see you on the sidelines!!!**

Editor.

Report from our Chairman Gordon Henderson:

I am thrilled and greatly honoured to be the new Chairman of the Thames Valley Rugby Union. I note that during the off season there have been numerous changes in the office and on the Board. There are also changes in our clubs, schools and with our junior rugby that will unfold over the



year. Club rugby looks to be stronger this year with many underway with their fitness and skill-based training which is always a great indicator. There have also been several changes in players coming to Thames Valley clubs to play their club rugby here. I believe this reflects the success of our Swamp Foxes and the continuing development and growth of our Vixens' programme.

The other factor at play has been the energetic staff and the very positive leadership of the staff. They seem to be incredibly well organised, hardworking, and dedicated. It is again awesome to see this enthusiastic approach come to prominence across all areas of their respective roles. To me our **CEO Scott Penny** (right) deserves huge accolades for his outstanding work.



As I stated he is very enthusiastic, and we are reaping the rewards of his hardworking approach. This obvious enthusiasm crosses over to all our staff. From an outsider looking in it is easy to see the delineation of each staff member’s tasks and see them grow as educators, organisers, and facilitators.

I must say that Scott Day is also flourishing in his role as well. From my observations and looking in from the outside I think it is great to see. All the staff deserve in my opinion great credit – **(see notice about our staff on a later page).**

As always changes bring new enthusiasm and ideas. On the Thames Valley Board we have seen changes as well. Both Board member Ivan Truong, and Chairman, Richard Foster have stepped down after years of service to the board, clubs, and schools that is Thames Valley rugby. On a personal level their service was recognised by our current Thames Valley President Ross Cooper, at the recent AGM (number 101) as both had contributed greatly - I also thank them both.

I am though greatly saddened by the demise of “**Grassroots rugby**” and “**Mainfreight rugby**”.



Both these superb programmes were wonderful viewing. In my mind they highlighted all the very best that is New Zealand Heartland rugby. They delved into the stories behind the games – about the volunteers with their many stories being highlighted by each programme. They were often about several

generations of the same family who worked tirelessly for their small sports hub. Of course, these stories highlighted the very best contributions or results. These programmes were universally respected and very well liked and it is indeed heartbreaking.

As we eagerly await the club rugby season ahead, we see lots of obvious evidence of club teams coming together to train. Training now is all about concentrating on fitness, skills, and game plans. As we know club rugby is the cornerstone of New Zealand rugby – this has never changed. Our clubs seem to be all in reasonable shape, but we will obviously see the reality of their situation once club rugby gets underway shortly. I know our staff have begun to present the

myriad of coaching courses they deliver so expertly across all grades, so everyone is set up for the season ahead with the information they require. At the provincial level our incredibly successful Heartland coaches have been planning for the 2024 season. They are very diligent, incredibly professional, and well organised in everything they do. I am looking forward to their season and it will be great to see the results of their hard work continue to unfold as the year progresses. Likewise, the Union is supporting further development of our women's and girls' rugby. This important area is developing well here in Thames Valley. I am sure these young ladies will continue to flourish as their year unfolds. **One thing for sure is I believe the NZRFU must support all our amateur unions more so that a recognised and sanctioned women's Heartland competition is established and fully funded for our women and girls.** I understand pressure is building across all Heartland unions to see increased support from NZRFU. The growth of our Women's and Girls' rugby is very important going forward. It will continue to flourish with more support, so I hope you all get along and catch a game or two. Both these areas are growing but this growth ahead needs continued support and encouragement from New Zealand Rugby. We have seen a huge growth within New Zealand with great success across all levels of the Women's game – sevens and fifteens. It is superb to see that there are now two women on the Thames Valley Board which is simply fabulous and well deserved.

As I/you know the **Scott (Razor) Robertson** era is beginning with the All Blacks. This change will cause players at our top level to adapt and change to a different coaching regime. The World Cup All Blacks completed a very successful World Cup programme under former coach Ian Foster by making it all the way to the final. Unfortunately, they lost but surprised many especially after playing so well. I am sure Razor will develop a team to challenge for the next World Cup as well. It is sad that many of our older stars have departed for overseas' stints but that is the journey of a player at the top. It does allow other players to have a chance to stake a claim for inclusion in the team we all love so much. Watch out for these new players to emerge throughout the 2024/2025 super rugby campaigns. Of course, the NZ rugby rules that prevent any overseas players plying their trade as a professional All Black player remain, although I believe Robertson is asking



questions to modify this rule.

The late Dennis Brown (Brownie).

It was also sad to hear President Ross Cooper read out the list of folk who had represented the Swamp Foxes, Vixens or were on the Board who have passed away in the last year. Their contribution to the Thames Valley Rugby Union will always be remembered. Dennis Brown (left) was the latest player and Former Thames Valley rugby coach to pass, and we all were devastated by his recent death. Brownie also played for Waikato and was

a very successful provincial coach and national coach at age grade level. He also assisted with the chiefs in the early 2000's.

Can I please welcome to the Thames Valley Rugby Union board our two new board members. I am sure they will bring new enthusiasm and ideas to the board. I am also pleased that Arlene has agreed to continue in the role of Deputy Chairperson. Of course, I am thrilled to take over the role of Chairman as I have stated. I must thank both Richard and Ivan who stepped down from the Board at this year's recent AGM after years of dedicated service. (Please see the Board in a later section of this newsletter.

Please come up and chat if you see me on the sidelines around the club grounds.

Cheers

Gordon.



Thames Valley Vixens on tour in 2023.

Coach Bob comments:

After the recent turmoil of Covid 19 and last year's cyclone it will be great to have a straight run with no interruptions with our club and representative rugby this year. I am really looking forward to the start of club rugby where those traditional games unfold. Of course I love the banter, to see the changing of the guard within our club teams, the continuation of some of the older players who just love the game and find it hard to stop, but the best part is the after match in the clubrooms. One thing I absolutely despise is any abuse of the referees from the sidelines. I hope I do not hear any because it is hideous to listen to or experience. They all do a wonderful job as referees, and we cannot do without them.

I hear via my old friends that some clubs are really getting underway with their training and preseason games. What I cannot fathom now is how they train in this heat and humidity. Some of these guys are getting so strong but are of course incredibly really fit. I think that to successfully compete at provincial level in Heartland rugby these three factors are pivotal for any team's success. It is important to also have high levels of fitness, great positional skills and awareness, and an understanding of different game plans and how to implement these successfully. Of course, as a supporter I just love following our club rugby as it has an ability to throw up new players for the Heartland coaches to consider for a place in the squad. They also need to closely monitor any new arrivals to club rugby here. As some of you know my son transports me around to watch club rugby so we both enjoy visiting clubrooms after games for a chat and a beer or two.

Can I reflect and comment on last year's riveting World Cup where the AB's were beaten by a wonderful South African team in the final. Despite the result the All Blacks had a very successful tournament but unfortunately for all of us they did not win. I loved that Irish game – one of the most outstanding games I have ever watched. It was one of those games that set the benchmark for all test rugby. This game did highlight the value of defence and superb team discipline.

I sincerely congratulate the mighty springboks for their deserved victory in the World Cup final.



Great Springbok's captain Siya Kolisi celebrates after his team were victorious in the final in Paris against the All Blacks.

Tournament test rugby is as different as it is relentless – week after week. There are multiple factors at play – fitness, injuries, referees, TMO's, weather etc. I know that the All Blacks set incredible standards as do all the officials. Thank goodness that the IRB has decided that the allocation of the groups which the teams will play will now be made much nearer the time the tournament begins. Of course, I will be looking forward to the next tournament in Australia. It will be interesting to see how the game changes over the next four-year cycle. Hopefully the IRB can be restructured, and all members get a vote.



At last, a sensible decision from the IRB which hopefully will bring fairer groups that reflect the seeding of all the competing teams. While we were devastated at the final loss, I believe some things became evident. These are the importance of goal kicking, first phase, maintaining the ball and defence along with adherence to the rules that have been set **that all must operate under**. These final games come with huge pressure and demand absolute clarity from all who participate in delivery and playing. It was certainly a stunning tournament for all of us fans despite the All Blacks just coming up short this time but that's rugby.

Finally, as I look forward to the Thames Valley Club season starting on the weekend – let's all get out and support our clubs while enjoying the banter together in the clubs afterwards. My pet hate is sideline abuse of our referees – this is simply not acceptable under any circumstances. Of course, I will be attending as many clubs games as I can possibly fit in. This section of our great game is always incredibly enjoyable and fun. There is nothing better for us oldies than catching up with my old team mates and cheering from the sidelines. This year will be no different – enjoy supporting your team!

Coach Bob.

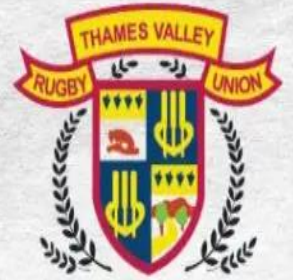


THAMES VALLEY RUGBY REFEREES
WE WANT YOU!
OUR REFEREE TEAM IS ON THE HUNT FOR NEW PEOPLE.



Warrily GROUP **DM** DIPROSE MILLER
ALL ABILITIES OR EXPERIENCE ARE ENCOURAGED TO SIGN UP. CONTACT **WAYNE BERRY** AT WAYNE.BERRY@FARMSIDE.CO.NZ OR 0272801444 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

MEET THE TEAM AT THAMES VALLEY RUGBY UNION



SCOTT PENNEY  0272006970  scott.penney@tvrfu.co.nz

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

COMMERCIAL | SPONSORSHIP | HEARTLAND TEAM | FINANCE | FUNDING | MARKETING



SCOTT DAY  0272815270  scott@tvrfu.co.nz

COMMUNITY RUGBY MANAGER

CLUB RUGBY | REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY | COACH DEVELOPMENT | MEDIA | PATHWAYS



TAINE WILSON  0273548210  taine@tvrfu.co.nz

GAME DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

JUNIOR RUGBY | PRIMARY SCHOOL RUGBY | GRAPHIC SUPPORT



JANINE SPICE  0272436289  janine@tvrfu.co.nz

GAME DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

WOMENS & GIRLS RUGBY | SECONDARY SCHOOLS



CHRISTINE GILFEDDER  078626352  admin@tvrfu.co.nz

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

GENERAL OFFICE ENQUIRIES | ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & RECEIVABLE | FUNDING APPLICATIONS



LEON HOLDEN  0212446792  leon@tvrfu.co.nz

GAME DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (PART TIME)

SENIOR COACH DEVELOPMENT | DRAW CONVEYNOR | SWAMP FOX ASSISTANT COACH



KAITLIN RUSSELL  0225172918  kaitlin@tvrfu.co.nz

SPORTY ADMINISTRATOR (PART TIME)

SPORTY ADMINISTRATION | SKED | MY RUGBY APP



WAYNE BERRY  0272801444  wayne.berry@farmside.co.nz

REFEREE EDUCATION OFFICER (VOLUNTEER)

APPOINTMENTS | ASSOCIATE REFEREE COURSES | REFEREE OPERATIONS

Robin Povey elected for a second term as Patron of the TVRFU at the recent AGM.



At the 101st AGM of the TVRFU Robin Povey was elected unopposed for a second term as the Union's Patron.

As such Robin is now in his fiftieth year of having a close association with the Thames Valley Rugby Union. From 1975 until 1982 he served as a Vice President before becoming the President in 1983 and 1984. He was made a Life Member in 1985.

Robin said he was very proud to have been the Patron at the time of the Centenary celebrations in 2022.

The 2022 photo shows Robin cutting the Centenary cake under the watchful eye of MC Jake O'Flaherty with Steve and Marion Lunjevich in the background. We are

indeed privileged to have such a long serving gentleman as our Patron.

Thames Valley President Ross Cooper also acknowledged and thanked Robin for accepting the role of Patron at the recent AGM for another two years. He stated,

“We are indeed privileged to have such a long serving gentleman as our Patron,”

Ross stated he was also happy to continue this year as President after completing his first year in the role in 2023.

The new 2024 Thames Valley Rugby Union Board is –

Chairman: Gordon Henderson,

Ms Arleen McLaren (Deputy Chair), Mr Andrew Gemmell, Mr Hayden Rakich, Ms Rosé Hodgetts, Mr Moe Williams, Mr Kirpal Singh, and Mr Wayne Berry.

CEO – Scott Penney and **President Ross Cooper** - (Ross attends in an advisory capacity and has no voting rights).

The Thames Valley Swamp Fox Mascot known as “Swampy” finishes first.

It turns out foxes are indeed the fastest on the field with the Thames Valley Rugby Union’s mascot – **“Swampy”** – dominating during the infamous Mascot Race held last year.



Held during the half-time final of the Bunnings NPC (National Provincial Championship) on October 21, at the end of last season Swampy led the 100-metre charge and made it to the goal line ahead of other iconic mascots like Northland’s Taniwha, Auckland’s Seagull, and Wellington’s Leo the Lion.

Not only did Swampy cross the finish line first – whose real identity is a secret – the Thames Valley mascot did some celebratory push ups while other racers touselled on-field.

Thames Valley Rugby Union’s Community Rugby Manager Scott Day said it was a massive achievement to win the mascot race, with Swampy receiving a lot of attention throughout Aotearoa following his sprint. We all know how important Swampy is in his role as team mascot. Swampy is indeed a great asset to our teams as he is widely recognised around the Country.

A blast from the past...



100 YEARS AGO – The 1924 Season

100% success for Thames Valley: Played one, Won 1 Lost 0. Points For 21, Against 6. Thames Valley defeated Waikato at Waihi by 21 to 6. The Valley scored 5 tries and converted 3 of them. Waikato scored a try and a penalty goal. This was Thames Valley's only appearance in 1924. The game was played at Waihi on 19/7/1924.

At the age of 41 Charlie Dillimore (pictured) was a key player for Thames Valley in this game and he kicked two conversions. He had played eight games for Auckland in 1907 and his last game for Thames Valley was in 1929 aged 46 years 353 days.

❖ Please note our historian Kelly Plummer supplies these stories and we thank him for his wonderful work.

Heartland Rugby Draw -2024

It is fabulous to see that our Heartland team are again playing a varied and interesting collection of games around many different venues in our union and interestingly this year all our away games are in the North Island. Therefore, we hope a gigantic number of our wonderful supporters will be able to travel to our home games as well as some of our away games. Of course, once the draw for the Vixens is made, we will publicize them as well.

Date	Opponent	Venue	Time
17 AUG	VS WAIRARAPA BUSH	MASTERTON	2.30PM
24 AUG	VS NORTH OTAGO	TE AROHA	2.30PM
31 AUG	VS KING COUNTRY	TE KUITI	5.30PM
7 SEP	VS WHANGANUI	THAMES	2.30PM
14 SEP	VS EAST COAST (BOT)	RUATORIA	2.00PM
21 SEP	VS BULLER	WHANGAMATA	2.30PM
28 SEP	VS POVERTY BAY	GISBORNE	2.30PM
5 OCT	VS HORO KAPITI	WHITANGA	2.30PM

*SEMI FINALS (12/10/24) AND FINALS (19/10/2024)