



Keeping Rugby in the Valley Stronger Together

Thames Valley Rugby Football Union Sponsors' newsletter - Early July 2024.

A message from our President,

We, as a very proud Heartland Rugby Union are putting the final pieces together for the Heartland campaign, our Vixen's campaign and all our age grade teams' programmes. Team logistics are really starting to firm up and be prioritised as our superb staff are putting the final arrangements into their rightful places for the impending 2024 representative season. The myriad of tasks



The poster features the Thames Valley Rugby Football Union crest at the top center. Below it, the text '2024 HEARTLAND CHAMPIONSHIP SCHEDULE' is prominently displayed in yellow and white. The schedule is presented as a list of matches on a dark background with yellow highlights for each row. Each row includes the date, the opponent's name and crest, the venue, and the start time. At the bottom, there is a note about semi-finals and finals dates, and logos for LEACH and another sponsor.

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 (12/19/24) AND FINALS (19/19/2024)

involved in sending multiple representative teams away are not only complex but incredibly varied. Often, we only see the major tasks like road transportation or flights but there are huge logistics involved in the complexities of team travel. I know how frustrating it is when one is booking flights for two let alone travel for whole teams of different rugby players and their management teams – all travelling during the same period. There are always issues that require extra care. These are of course the gear requirements for games, medical requirements and logistics like getting bags at airports to their buses and to the rooms. Other issues like meals,

team meeting rooms along with sorting out rooms for the players, management and strapping and massage rooms. The medical tape for strapping needs to be purchased and the right amounts sorted so that on game day this area is efficiently taken care of. We take all these things for granted but I know there are many hours spent ensuring every detail is covered, Obviously the players and coaching staff need to concentrate on their respective roles. We are lucky because our players are well used to assisting – that is the beauty of Heartland rugby. Being a Swamp Fox means that you always pitch in and assist others. The players are grateful and sincere, helpful and kind. They are respectful, thoughtful and always exhibit empathy. These qualities are what

sets the top teams apart from the others. The messaging is always the same – excellence is demanded and achieved by everyone working together. This recipe has never failed in my experience and has been a winning feature for all our teams.

I have also been travelling around some of our clubs during the season as they compete against each other in the traditional club fixtures. These games are always strongly supported by the respective supporters of each club that is playing. In the union the games are well controlled by our referees who do a superb job. I know it is difficult sometimes for supporters when their club team is on the wrong side of a decision.



When this occurs occasionally supporters can overstep the mark by making derogatory comments towards the referee. These comments are disappointing to hear and often the comments are not correct because the perpetrator does not understand or know the complexities of the laws of our game. I feel ashamed when this occurs because to hurl abuse at such hardworking volunteers does not reflect well on the individual supporter at all or the team he is supporting. It does and should annoy all members of the respective clubs as well as rugby loving folk who just go to games to support their teams. Thankfully we do not have many folk like these angry supporters. I therefore ask that all supporters respect the referee, and players. This occurs 99% of the time at our games where usually everyone is incredibly supportive of the standards expected.



Scott Penney CEO. Thames Valley Rugby Union.

One area that our staff excel in is organising and running tournaments and events for our younger players whether it is a tackle day, Rippa rugby day, or a festival day. Most folk like me just turn up and the day is not only organised expertly with draws available before the day starts, but the grounds are also all roped off, music and sound systems are set up,

referees are attending and organised - often younger secondary school students, and the day's programme is adhered to with excellent timekeeping. As supporters/parents we have come to expect this from our staff. I must say that the children who participate in these events are incredibly supportive and seem to me to enjoy their games and experiences greatly. One thing I have noticed is they usually come over to the Thames Valley tent and all express sincere thanks to our staff. Most of the players seem to know our hard working staff by name and appreciate them greatly. This is one of the strengths of our union in my opinion and, hopefully it continues. Therefore we are very grateful for all the members of our staff as they are the vital part when it comes to organising events that create the many opportunities for all our players to not only enjoy

playing but also reaching the goals they each set as their reason for playing the game we all enjoy. The work they do behind the scenes is certainly spectacular. I believe they are some of the very best operators in New Zealand and our results reflect this opinion.

Often in my section I do not mention the Board as a group. Our Board like most folk involved in rugby are all volunteers. They have been involved in rugby at all levels through their rugby careers or administration involvement with their clubs or in their jobs. We are very fortunate that our board are all aware of the complexities of the game. Like the clubs they have an ability to solve most problems as they arise along with the staff. Finding a solution is important and ensuring our staff



are resourced with the support they need to run their respective areas is also pivotal to achieving positive success. It is important that being on the board one must take a global view across all clubs, teams and competitions.

The inaugural Thames Valley Women's Club of Origin has started.

The Board and our hard working staff also have stringent commitments to meet as far as meeting the demands set in place by the NZRFU that require deadlines and goals to be achieved. I am thrilled that we are one of the best performing unions per head of population in New Zealand. This reflects highly on the board but also the staff and all our stake holders like our clubs, schools, referees and junior clubs, supporters and sponsors. Rest assured we strive hard to deliver our game to the highest possible standards so that all our stakeholders enjoy their rugby involvement and experiences with the union. It is appropriate for me to acknowledge all our sponsors as being crucial for us to reach the standards, results and performances we expect from year to year. We are therefore extremely grateful for the ongoing support from our loyal sponsors, and we sincerely thank you all. We know what a difference your support makes to all our teams and events that we participate in.

Finally can I take time to thank all those people who are the silent volunteers in our game – the coaches and managers across all teams from the smallest players right through to the top levels. These hard working group of people attend trainings, games, provide transport and complete the documentation so that their players experience rugby in a positive manner. Many just have fun and enjoy the game experiences they create for their teams. Being a coach/manager can be difficult, but we all know that the environment created by the team's "management group" is vital so that all our players experience success individually and as a group. I know how hard this can be when facing stronger opposition or lacking numbers. Our youngest players just love running around with their friends and having fun. Most love just being in the mud on a wet day. The results for many of our youngest players do not matter at all as it is just having fun with your friends that they celebrate, and of getting to enjoy the aftermatch feed at the end of the game! One part that sometimes is forgotten by the supporters is that the referee in these games is sometimes the coach. I again urge all to thank the referees/coaches who carry out these roles for the kids who enjoy their games no matter what happens or which team wins. Team sport is a learning experience that is incredibly valuable for our youngsters growing up. Learning about timekeeping,

respect, hard work, assisting others and developing skills etc are all part of the journey for many but above all providing an opportunity to have fun with their mates is crucial.



I must state that the Blues played a superb brand of dynamic, physical attacking rugby at Eden Park against the Chiefs in the Super Rugby Pacific final when they won a lopsided final 41 - 10. It was a very decisive victory and in my opinion the Blues totally deserved their convincing victory. Patrick Tuipolutu led his ruthless forward pack with huge physicality throughout his magnificent 70 minute stint on the field. The Blues

forwards set the platform and allowed their backs to reap the rewards. It was a great outcome for their team in extremely difficult weather conditions which utterly suited their approach. They controlled possession. The Chiefs, despite this loss, can stand tall after failing again in a final. I am sure they will come back stronger and be in contention again in the 2025 season.

As I stated earlier, we are all looking forward to our representative season ahead - to the Heartland programme, our Vixens programme and our age grade teams' involvement in their programmes and we trust they all enjoy their experiences. For many to travel away with their team mates is an experience they will enjoy irrespectively whether they win games or not – mind you it is always better to win but sometimes opposition teams are just better on the day. Congratulations and thanks to all the volunteers who make rugby in New Zealand achieve such staggering success. I know that all of us who are able do really enjoy watching our teams perform anywhere in New Zealand.

Finally can I please acknowledge the passing of Neil McFetridge TVRFU # 471. It is always very sad to hear one of our players has passed. On behalf of the Union I send our love to his family and of course to Robin and Jeanette Povey as well as Jason and Terry McFetridge – **(See note following.)**

As always if you see any of us on the sidelines please come up and have a chat.

Regards Gordon.

Obituary:

Neil William Leon McFetridge. Thames Valley Representative #471

Neil (Fetch) passed away at Waikato Hospital on June 21, 2024

He was a halfback who had the honour of being one of the New Zealand Rugby Almanack's Five Promising Players for the 1960 season. Altogether he played 27 games for Thames Valley ending his career with a match against King Country in 1968. Neil played for the Plains South, Ngatea and Kerepehi clubs.

He is the brother and brother in law of Jeanette and Robin Povey (TVRFU Patron) and his two sons, Jason #765 and Terry # 798 also played for Thames Valley.

Superb news as the NZRU RELEASES REGISTRATIONS REPORT FOR 2024

Gordon Henderson the Chairman of the Thames Valley Rugby Union is delighted to report on the recent report into how Provincial Unions in New Zealand are progressing for 2024. The report reflects on the trends in the game from 2023 to 2024 and supplies data from all 26 Provincial unions throughout New Zealand to Unions. This is done by comparing the percentage increases from 2023 to 2024.

Henderson says “it is very helpful for us as a Union to see how we compare to other Unions and specifically other Heartland Provincial Unions, of which there is 12. It is always difficult to gauge how we are doing as a Union, which includes our community, board and staff and gives us valuable information to see if we are on the right track”. “As you can see from the summary below, we have done outstandingly well. This is a real credit to the clubs, schools, communities and our hard-working staff for their incredible efforts in making Thames Valley do so well in New Zealand. Sure, we have loads to review and continue to refine in our community game but for now I would like all of you to pat yourselves on the back and carry on the great work” Henderson continues.

PLAYERS BASED ON THEIR AGE AND GENDER

MALE – Shows a 21% increase in teenage boys playing rugby. This is the 2nd highest in New Zealand behind Tasman and a National increase of 4%.

FEMALE – Shows a 56% increase in teenage girls playing rugby. This is the 2nd highest in New Zealand behind Northland and a National increase of 13%.

GENDER ALL AGES (5 YEAR OLDS PLUS)

MALE – a 7% increase playing the game compared to a National average of 2%. Thames Valley has the 7th highest growth in this area out of all 26 Provincial Unions in New Zealand.

FEMALE – 41% increase playing the game compared to a 14% average increase across all New Zealand Union and specifically a 13% for Heartland Provincial Unions. This is the 2nd highest improvement out of all 26 Provincial Unions in New Zealand, just behind Auckland.

AGE 13-18 Year Olds

Note: Thames Valley has the best increase in New Zealand for numbers of teenagers playing the game. Thames Valley has shown a 29% increase which is an outstanding figure given the figure for all Heartland Provinces, on average is -1%, and a national increase for all Provincial Unions in New Zealand is only 6%.

AGE 19 YEARS OLD +

MALE – Shows an increase of 13% playing in the Province. This is the 4th highest in the country, which has 3% increase and the 2nd highest of the Heartland Provincial Unions, which only have a 1% increase.

FEMALE – Shows an increase of 316% which is by far the best in New Zealand. The national average is 13%.

Combined, Thames Valley leads the country with a 32% increase, the most over the entire country. This compared to a 4% increase on average for Heartland Provincial Unions in New Zealand and only a 2% increase across all Unions in New Zealand.

COACHES.

FEMALE

Thames Valley had an increase in Female coaches of 20%. This was the 6th highest increase across all 26 Provincial Unions in New Zealand and the 2nd highest for Heartland Provincial Unions in New Zealand.

MALE

2024 also saw an increase in Male coaches of 23%. This was the 4th highest increase in New Zealand's 26 Provincial Unions and the also the 2nd highest for Heartland Provinces in New Zealand

Combined this saw Thames Valley come in 3rd (23% increase) for the entire country for increasing its coaching stocks at the community level. This is an outstanding effort as the trend in Heartland Provinces is -6% and across the entire country there is only a 3% increase.

REFEREES

We had an increase of Male referees of 15% compared to a National increase of 2% and Heartland Provinces showing a decline in referees by -5%.

Coach Bob reports,

Rugby is a game of many facets and there are many areas that we need to constantly, change, refine, amend and upgrade. Some of the areas are



Unfortunately, the constantly changing rules, the interpretations of the rules, the presentation of our game packages so they become a spectacular must see event and

the safety of all players young and old. These changes are evolving and implemented quickly here in our part of the world. I believe the final game Super rugby game between the Blues and Chiefs demonstrated these qualities perfectly. The game although dominated by Auckland was a wonderful event despite the weather. It was well controlled by the referee and his team. It was packaged fantastically well with great half time fireworks etc. and the game plan set in place by Vern Cotter and his coaching team was perfectly suited. I thought many of the players played superbly but none more so than Patrick Tuipolutu the Auckland captain. The Blues' forwards were completely dominant up front and set a platform that created enormous opportunities for the Auckland backs to exploit. With their brand of physicality and power the forwards created the perfect platform and their backs took control. It was a stunning performance and one that was perfectly executed. Several players stood out including Calib Clarke (three



tries) and half back Christie in the backs - But as I have stated before up front is where the platform is set. This was a perfect example of a game plan being perfectly executed and it also suited to the weather. It was a great event for all to enjoy – even all us die-hard Chiefs fans!

I managed to get along recently to watch a bit of teenage rugby – the Thames Valley deserve praise for the combining of the Secondary school programmes with students who have left high School in an under 18 grade. This has allowed these youngsters to stay involved with their rugby careers. and continue playing. Of course as we most probably know the Paeroa and Waihi clubs have developed a combined under 21 team that competes in the strong Waikato competition. This



group (left) are doing both clubs proud as their management group have establish a fine team where the standards are extremely high with a strong work ethic. The whole group seem to appreciate the support wherever they play, and their behaviour seems exemplary. It is obvious to me that there is a need for further clubs to buy into this area as it allows the clubs to future proof their club's longevity. Hopefully these young players will continue to develop and eventually filter through to

their senior sides. I also know that the style I've seen they play is perfectly suited to their age grade as they play with an attacking mindset and excellent game plans.

The other area that has been very impressive is the junior rugby area of the Thames Valley Union. It is vital that these youngsters first and foremost have fun with their mates every time they take the field. With this year's approach to each grade the field days have been a great idea. Not only do the players get to play one to three games at the same venue they really enjoy seeing and playing with their friends in front of their family and supporters. They bring each age group to one venue where they can simply play the game as no points are kept. The junior area continues to grow impressively, and I think all supporters who go along to these days can see the results for themselves.

Finally, the Scott Robertson era has started. He has announced a very interesting squad with a couple of "surprises". What impresses me as a totally addicted All Black fan is the process that is undertaken when selecting these All Black squads. It seems to me that it is a long process but incredibly detailed and fiercely debated amongst all the selectors. The squad is for the first three games against England and Japan (away). Of course the first two games against England will be challenging. The English are coming off their robust season of club rugby in England and will be battle hardened but refreshed whilst the All Blacks are freshly selected and will be looking

forward to their first game against the English after a season of super rugby. All the AB supporters will be eagerly watching what style the All Blacks will play under Scott Robertson's tenure. I think



Scott Barret is an excellent choice as Captain as he has had a long player/Captain connection with Scott Robertson while he coached the crusaders. Of course they always have a senior leadership group which also contributes to the team's organisation. I do not think the side will lack for coaching resources (see separate list).

Go the mighty All Blacks under Razor and Scott.

Of course while we are all interested to see the mighty All Blacks but what is important to me as an ardent long

standing Thames Valley ex-player and supporter are of course the **superb Swamp Foxes and Vixens**. Both will have strong sides again this year as they embark on their season of Heartland rugby and Vixen rugby. I will be following them again from the sidelines – I may even get away to a game outside Thames Valley as all games are in the North Island this year so I will be twisting my son's arm further up his back to make a weekend roadie to either Masterton or the East Coast. One thing that has happened that is fabulous is the return of the Grassroots rugby show that has been reinstated. This show is a crucial part of our amateur rugby and tells the stories about the folk behind the scenes and delves into the history of our amateur rugby and our clubs. This is a great decision in my mind, and I am thankful for this decision to keep grassroots rugby prospering and growing. The clubs and the history, people and stories that emerge from these small sporting hubs are fascinating. People really enjoy watching this programme and the Thames Valley will be part of the programme early on in its reinstatement.

It has been a difficult few years with the effects of Covid 19 along the cyclones damaging many clubs, communities and rural areas throughout New Zealand. Of course we know new Zealanders are a resilient group and seem to bounce back by all working together in the face of adversity. By the results achieved in Thames Valley we can see our badly affected communities bounce back. We are not there yet but with the roading well on the way to be completely fixed all our small communities are enjoying life slowly returning to normal. We all know our sporting clubs play such an important role in each of these small towns and surrounding rural areas. Two of the best this year have been the Paeroa and Waihi clubs who finished in the top two heading to the final two rounds after their 2nd round final match that was played in Waihi. Of course we are all waiting to watch the mighty Thames Valley take on their opposition this year.

Go the Mighty Thames Valley (and AB's.)

Cheers,

Coach Bob.

For your interest!!!see below the All Blacks Coaching, medical and support staff.

2024 All Blacks Management

Scott Robertson (Head Coach)

Jason Ryan (Assistant Coach - Forwards)

Leon MacDonald (Assistant Coach - Attack)

Scott Hansen (Assistant Coach - Defence)

Jason Holland (Assistant Coach - Backs)

Tamati Ellison (Contact Skills Coach)

Wayne Smith (Performance Coach)

Corey Flynn – (Throwing Coach)

David Hill – (Kicking Coach)

Jamie Hamilton (Head Performance Analyst)

Al Beeton (Assistant Performance Analyst)

Jon Gardner (Assistant Performance Analyst)

Ceri Evans (Head of Leadership + Mental Performance)

Nic Gill (Head of Performance)

Adam Hay (Performance Scientist)

Martin Swan (Doctor)

Karl McDonald (Lead Physiotherapist)

Teresa Te Tamaki (Assistant Physiotherapist)

Kat Darry (Dietician)

Paul McLaughlan (Team Manager)

Megan Compain (Commercial Manager)

James Iversen (Logistics Manager)

Matt Manukia (Communications Manager)

Paula Powlesland (Business Manager)

Bianca Thiel (Operations Manager)



Thames Valley Representative Rugby Draw (all teams) – 2024.

- **Monday 15th, Tuesday 16th and Wednesday 17th July:**

Under 14 Boys vs Heartland Tournament. Owen Delany Park, Taupo.

- **Saturday 27th July:**

Swamp Foxes vs NZ Harlequins. Bedford Park, Matamata @2.30pm.

- **Saturday 3rd August:**

Swamp Foxes vs North Harbour B. TBC.

- **Saturday 10th August:**

Swamp Foxes vs TBC.

Vixens vs East Coast. Boyd Park, Te Aroha @1.00pm.



- **Saturday 17th August: (First Game of the Heartland Championship 2024)**

Swamp Foxes vs Wairarapa-Bush. Memorial Park, Masterton @ 2.30pm.

Vixens vs King Country . Waitakaruru @ 1.00pm.

Swamp Jackals vs Waikato Colts. Hamilton Marist @ 2.30pm

- **Saturday 24th August:**

Swamp Foxes vs North Otago. Boyd Park, Te Aroha @2.30pm.

Vixens vs Wairarapa-Bush. Boyd Park, Te Aroha @11.30am.

Swamp Jackals vs Waikato Divisional XV. Boyd Park, Te Aroha @1.00pm.

Under 19 Girls vs King Country. Rugby Park, Te Kuiti @11.00am

- **Saturday 31st August:**

Swamp Foxes vs King Country. Rugby Park, Te Kuiti @5.30pm.

Vixens. vs Whanganui. Cooks Garden, Whanganui.

Swamp Jackals vs King Country. Rugby Park, Te Kuiti @3.00pm.

Under 19 Boys vs King Country. Rugby Park, Te Kuiti @1.00pm.

Under 19 Girls vs Whanganui. Cooks Garden, Whanganui.

Under 16 Boys vs King Country. Rugby Park, Te Kuiti @1.00pm.

Under 16 Girls vs Whanganui. Cooks Garden, Whanganui.

- **Saturday 7th September:**

Swamp Foxes vs Whanganui. Rhodes Park, Thames @2.30pm

Vixens vs Finals Day. Memorial Park, Masterton
Under 19 Boys vs North Harbour . Rhodes Park, Thames @12.30pm
Under 19 Girls vs Poverty Bay. Rhodes Park, Thames @11.00am
Under 16 Boys vs Heartland U16 Quad, Turangi.
Under 16 Girls vs Harlequins. Rhodes Park, Thames.
Chiefs Heartland U20s vs Counties Manukau U19s. Rhodes Park, Thames

- **Saturday 14th September:**

Swamp Foxes vs East Coast. Whakarua Park, Ruatoria @2.30pm
Vixens vs
Under 19 Boys vs East Coast. Whakarua Park, Ruatoria
Under 19 Girls vs
Under 16 Boys vs
Under 16 Girls vs

- **Saturday 21st September:**

Swamp Foxes vs Buller. Whangamata @2.30pm
Vixens vs
Legends XV vs Waikato. Whangamata @ 12.30pm
Under 19 Boys vs Northland Vikings AWAY
Under 19 Girls vs
Under 16 Boys vs Chiefs U16 Tournament. Te Awamutu.
Under 16 Girls vs Wairarapa Bush. Turangi.

- **Saturday 28th September:**

Swamp Foxes vs Poverty Bay. More FM Park, Gisborne @2.30pm.
U19 Boys vs Harlequins. Whangamata @12.00pm.
U16 Boys vs Northern Regions. Te Awamutu.
U16 Girls vs Northern Regions. Te Awamutu.

- **Saturday 5th October:**

Swamp Foxes vs Horowhenua Kapiti. Lyon Park, Whitianga @2.30pm

- **Saturday 12th October: (Possible)**

Swamp Foxes vs Semi-Final.

Saturday 19th October:

Swamp Foxes vs Final.

NB:

- All times subject to change.
- Finals are yet to be confirmed.
- Some possible future fixtures and venues are still to be confirmed.
- **SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VERY HARD WORKING STAFF FOR ORGANISING THESE FIXTURES for our Swamp Foxes, Vixens, and age grade teams.**



Waihi celebrate winning the Tom Jordon cup for their hard fought win 31 – 24 over Paeroa in the last game of round two.