



**October 2024 TVRFU newsletter.**

**Report from our Chairman Gordon,**

The Vixens as well as the Heartland team have been showing the way forward. Of course so have all our representative teams across the board without exception. Whether the teams are young or old the players all wear our colours with great pride, dignity and are humble ambassadors for those that have played before as well as those that support us. For example the Thames Valley U19 Boys emerged victorious in a closely contested match against Waikato Harlequins in the Northern Regions U18 Tama Ora competition, with Max Baker securing the win with a penalty



conversion in the final minutes, ending the match 27-24 crowning Thames Valley as winners. We are very proud of this wonderful team and believe many could go on to be Swamp Foxes or play for other unions later in their rugby journeys. One thing for certain is that they play very well and show case their impressive skills. Congratulations to all their management group and players.

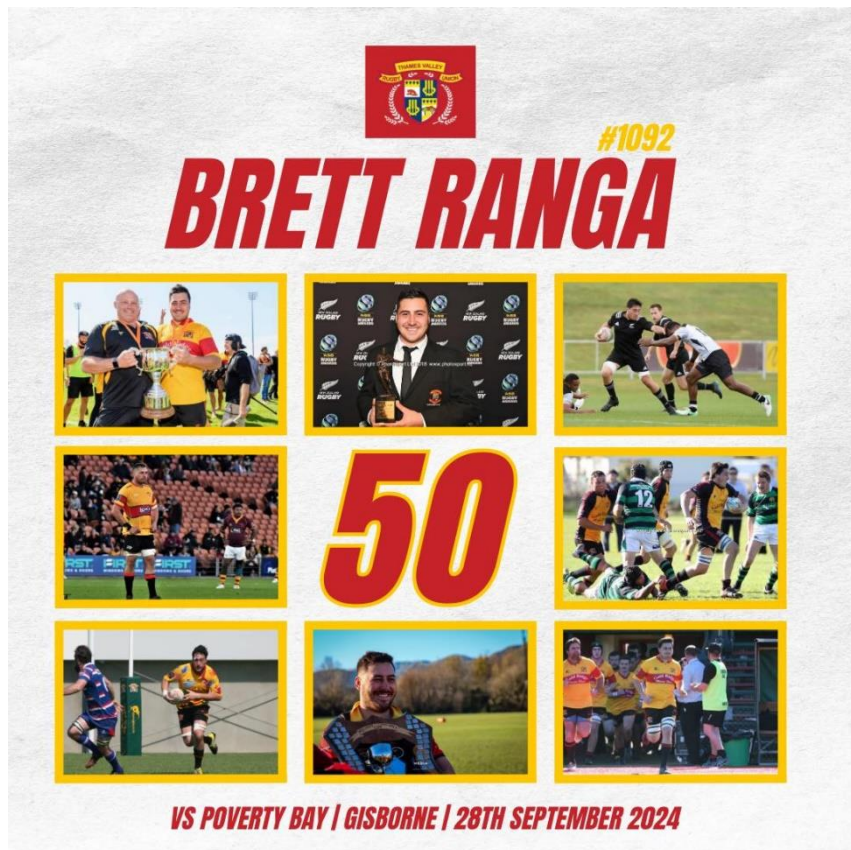
**The TVRFU Under 19's after their victory over Waikato Harlequins. Another victory for our young players going right through their competition unbeaten**

Of course all our representative teams across the board and without exception have been doing well. Whether the teams are young or old the players all wear our colours with great pride, dignity and are humble ambassadors for those that have played before as well as those that support us. The fact is simply they reflect the values that are obvious to all as I have already stated. I must add that our staff are very hard working, well organised and methodical. One of the great things that we as a board reflect on is what is needed to improve the possible areas that could concern going forward such as improving and gathering finances, support for clubs, looking after our staff, bringing coaches through, supporting our referees and providing rewarding experiences for all our players so they can all enjoy their rugby journey with the union. If we do address the important areas and ensure we provide sound governance, then I believe we will continue to provide for all our stakeholders and continue to succeed. One thing I know is that we cannot ever rest on the success of previous teams as we must always look ahead. In my mind we must always review, analyse and take the learnings and strive always to be better. I think this applies to all Unions so we must always continue to strive to be the very best.

Sometimes we hear from our clubs that some of their teams competed in a tournament somewhere and do particularly well. I was informed that the Waihi Junior Rugby Club sent 3 teams to the New Zealand Junior Rugby Festival in Taupo on the weekend of 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> September and returned home with the Ultimate Prize and even more! 134 teams competed from 67 clubs including from Australia from Thursday 19th September to Sunday 22nd. Waihi sent an Under 10s 49kg grade, Under 11s 49kg, and Under 12s 57kg. Judah Matautia, from the Waihi Rugby Club, volunteered as a referee for the entire weekend as well. They won - **Overall Best Team Award 2024 for all teams - Waihi Under 12s** Whichever team has the most points across all the grades wins the ultimate prize. Sportsmanship, sideline behaviour, contributing to keeping the festival clean and litter free, along with fantastic results wins this award. NZJRF said Waihi Under 12s team won this award “head and shoulders above the rest.” While the Waihi **Under 10s 49kg team of the Festival Award 2024** - For on and off field results. The team that has the most points overall in their grade. Finally **Judah Matautia** won the Tournament Referee Award for his devotion, working incredibly hard throughout the entire weekend as the youngest referee at Taupo Tournament. I acknowledge this amazing achievement for our Union and the Waihi Junior rugby club and overall the Waihi club. I therefore extend my congratulations to all the players, coaches, supporters and the Waihi club. This made for a great weekend with the Heartland team scoring such a convincing win against Buller in Whangamata as well as our Thames Valley Legends scoring a win over their opponents the Waikato Presidents team.

The game against Poverty Bay three weeks ago was against another team that has caused us some difficulties in the past. They can be difficult opponents and sometimes have created problems for some of our past teams. One thing that I now know is that our coaches have gathered a top side together, and their players are now operating incredibly effectively and very efficiently. The record against Poverty Bay is that we have played 55 games, won 22 and lost 33. The points for Swamp Foxes are 1066 and against 1253. When reflecting on this game I looked back to the 1995 Swamp Fox season when Thames Valley won their third National Championship title in the final against Poverty Bay. Thames Valley outclassed Poverty Bay 47 points against Poverty Bays’ 8 points. Gavin McLiver was the captain, and he scored 12 tries during the ‘95 season. It is also worth noting that two players from this team – were David (Buck) McCallum and Richie Taylor who won their third title. Willie Heteraka and Warren Gatland were the coaches. Carl Hoefft also played – (Carl went on to become an All Black) in the team as did Roger Wilton who became one of our centurions. Of course we know that Gats has become one of the world’s best coaches. The game against the 2024 Poverty Bay side was not an easy one for Poverty Bay. It

would be fair to state that the Poverty Bay Union and team are really struggling big time. It would also be fair to state that the Thames Valley side of 2024 continued on their merry way with a sumptuous scoreline of 71 – 17 to the Swampies. It was though not a game that was without simple handling errors and missed tackles. It would also be fair to state that the team for a large part of the game continued to put on another master class. The goal kicking was fantastic with seven pointers making a huge difference to the scoring rate. I must say that Brett



Runga also joined the goal kicking statistics at the end of the day being also game number fifty for the Thames Valley legend! He put in a big shift for the team on his special day. These games indicate the difference between the teams – one presents as a professional side with exemplary



standards, skills and support play while the other is really struggling in front of a very small home crowd. It was one result that we perhaps did not expect because we have struggled against Poverty Bay in the past. I am also thrilled that two of our younger players from Thames Valley were chosen in the New Zealand Heartland U20 has been named for their October matches. Therefore I send the union's congratulations to **Korbin Chwesik** and **Zeke Collier** on their selection. It is simply awesome to see our younger players getting recognised and doing so well. I believe Zeke went to school in the Gisborne area. I am sure they will play extremely well and enjoy a different more intense level of rugby.

**Brett Runga securing the ball off Poverty Bay - lifters Matty Axtens and Will Martin in a prominent display in Gisborne.**



The final round robin game in Whitianga for the mighty Swamp Foxes was another difficult assignment for the Thames valley side. I believe the work completed by the clubs who get to host these fixtures energise not only the club but also the whole community. The team have completed a great season so far and were determined to finish well but they failed to finish over the top of Horowhenua – Kapiti as they ran out of time after making

a stirring effort to fight back and secure the win. The sad part for the team who they realised that Whanganui were also beaten away by King Country and that meant that if the Valley boys had achieved a win in this game they would have moved ahead of Whanganui and gained a home semi-final. So Thames Valley will have to do it the hard way now with a semi-final away against Whanganui. I thought the local club did a superb job in hosting the game and the weather also stayed fine throughout.



**The great example of what is important for all of us here in Swamp Fox country was showcased by this superb young man – you are an absolute star Harper along with the other students, their teachers and helpers and the parents of Goldfields school in Paeroa.**

Never – the - less it has again been a great season so far for the Swamp Foxes and we head into the finals phase of our season in the Meads cup section which is again another superb effort. We must ensure that the planning is well under way for the next season. It seems to be a busy time for the staff and the Board as we review performances and where things need attention going

forward. This is an important phase for all our stakeholders as well. Once we finish the season then a lot of hard work needs to be completed with the results carefully considered by the Board and the staff.

I found the wait for the game against Whanganui last week difficult after losing to Horowhenua - Kapiti. Obviously, it will require a good preparation and another massive effort. As we saw in the last game Whanganui played against King Country they can be beaten. King Country taking the Bill Osborne Taonga off Whanganui. It is interesting to see the trophy move around between so



many unions this season. The game against Whanganui was one for the ages. The team fronted big time in front of the many fans that made the trek down for the game away in Cooks gardens in Whanganui. I must state the team were quickly into their work and they sustained their performance throughout the game. It was a superb effort by all the players but during the after match function there was even better news for the Thames Valley side because South Canterbury were upset by their close

neighbours Mid-Canterbury. This created a **HOME FINAL** for Thames Valley against Mid – Canterbury in Te Aroha. This was indeed a stunning result and one that will be a thrilling climax for the 2024 season on Saturday. Of course it will require another huge effort from the boys but one that the team will look forward this Saturday.

**Charlie Marsh delivers the quality ball he received from his forwards to the attacking Thames Valley backs.**



### **The Heartland Final was another great event for both Mid Canterbury and Thames Valley.**

I am not going to add too much to the mass of coverage the union received when the Heartland team secured the win in their final suffice to state that we are extremely proud of winning the Meads cup. The day was simply magnificent across several areas – the ground looked incredible and was prepared with great enthusiasm by a myriad of helpers under the superb direction from our staff. The team delivered the winning display with calmness and authority when required in the tighter moments during a pulsating final. Te opposition Mid -Canterbury played their part by fighting right to the end and deserve huge praise as well. Of course we will also need to maximise

our new found status as the holders of the Meads Cup throughout the year. One thing is to say thank you to everyone who supported us during 2024 and throughout the preceding 102 years. We are now starting next years journey as defending Meads cup champions – there will be a target on our backs so we will look forward with enthusiasm to the enormous challenge that faces us next year. Congratulations to all those who contributed and ensued we enjoyed another very special day on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

Kind regards

Gordon.



**Of course one cannot go past the memories of the final without saluting Cam Dromgool on reaching his fifty games for Thames Valley in the game against Mid - Canterbury.**

Cam's first season was the 2018 season when Thames Valley won the Heartland title under former coach Matt Bartlett. Cam epitomises a Thames Valley man, quiet, hardworking and loyal. He has been a regular for the Swamp Foxes since 2018 equally adept at lock or in the back row and he was also a member of the 2018 Meads Cup winning side. In 2023 Cam led the Swamp Foxes to third in the Bunnings Heartland competition. Cam was presented with his tankard and photograph after the game at the Waihou Clubrooms.

**Six players chosen for the New Zealand Heartland team – Plus the addition of David Harrison as an observer coach.**



**CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!! And the temporary stand was packed.**



**Former All Black Captain Sam Cane plays 100 tests for the All Blacks.**



Sam Whitelock 153 games.

Richie McCaw 148 games

Keven Mealamu 132 Games.

Beauden Barrett 131\* games.

Kieran Read 127 games.

Aaron Smith 125 games.

Tony Woodcock 118 games.

Dan Carter 112. Games.

Brodie Retallick 109 games.

Owen Franks 108 games.

Ma'a Nonu 103 games.

Mils Muliaina 100 games.

Sam Cane 100\* games. **(\*Still playing for the All Blacks.)**



**Sam Whitelock has played the most games.**



### **Coach Bob comments.**

It would be fair to say I am impressed with the results of all our teams across the whole spectrum of ages and abilities. Obviously, we are all enjoying these fabulous results. After the brilliant display in Whangamata against Buller we saw the Heartland boys run amok with a poor Poverty Bay team. I could not get down to see the game – “too far” stated my son but from all accounts it was another display to be proud of. Tries scored with ease and some incredible goal Kicking from numerous skilful exponents of this art including our fifty game legend Brett Ranga. From all accounts the big Waihi man played a blinder and lasted the whole game in sunny conditions at a very poorly attended game away in Gisborne. Reports state there were numerous Thames Valley supporters present but the local crowd was very low in numbers. One thing I understand is how professional all our teams are – well-resourced and very well coached and managed. I know from talking to my friends – many of whom played for Thames Valley how well organised the Thames Valley sides are. This ability to continue to produce sides that play well above their level seems to indicate several things. Our coaches are all doing a great job across all teams. That our players are enjoying their rugby and growing in stature – look at the young Paeroa United team that play in the Waikato Competition. We do have some fantastic players choosing to come into the Thames Valley to experience our club rugby. This also lifts the standard of our club rugby – one needs to look at the Waihi club side this year. There are still gaps to be aware of but if I was looking to spend some sponsorship dollars I know where to put it – right into the Thames Valley rugby Union.

I reflected on the All Blacks’ progress this year especially the last two tests against the Australia side. I can see progress being made and players starting to enjoy their test rugby again. Let’s not kid ourselves that Australia is anywhere near the top level when one considers South Africa, Ireland, France or England but we can see some development occurring under Scott Robertson’s leadership. There are some young talent emerging this year – young Wallace Sititi is an excellent example as well as the props showing growth in power and strength. Ethan De Groot (26 years), Tyrel Lomax (28) Fletcher Newell (24 ),Pasilio Tosi\* (25) and Tamaiti Williams (23) and Tamaiti



Williams (23) - Ofa Tu’ungafasi (32) is the elder statesman in this area. Just think about this group and carefully reflect where this base will lead the way to future success. The other aspect is the incredible half back depth coming through along with the form of a rejuvenated Caleb Clarke. The midfield has plenty to choose from and once D-Mac settles into his role we will have two options at ten with perhaps another player.

**Pasilio Tosi.** (See article later in the newsletter.)

There are numerous players starting to emerge, but it will be a difficult tour north. Of course we all know that to be the best you must beat the best, accept being put under huge pressure and embrace the challenges these games create away from New Zealand. It will be an interesting trip away for the successful players who are chosen and another challenging time for the coaches. Of course history tells us that the All Blacks embrace these challenges whole heartedly. They will need to be at their very best in the middle stages of this tour when they face five opponents Japan, England, Ireland, France and Italy.

The Thames Valley side played well against Horowhenua – Kapiti in Whitianga in the second half in their final round robin game but came up short in a tense game. Horowhenua used their size effectively to get in behind the defensive line and some careless mistakes ultimately caused the loss. The crowd did enjoy the fight back from Thames Valley in the last twenty – five minutes of the second half, but it was not to be. So we again travel down to Whanganui to play them in an away semi- final in the Meads cup. It will be a very interesting game and one that will require the team to play well to secure a final’s berth. I thought the ground looked amazing and the large crowd that attended enjoyed a beautiful day despite the threat of rain throughout. Thankfully it did not arrive, and the sun shone throughout. I am sure the boys will take their opportunity in their semi – final away against Whanganui next weekend. They will be stating only two games to go!!!

Obviously, I could get down to Whanganui, but the game was televised so I was glued to the television. I am sure the team will enjoy their game and will need to play well to achieve the victory required to progress to a final. Well what a shock – they played superbly and won convincingly. It was a game that was stunning for us Thames Valley supporters. I thought that the whole team played well and took all the moments to score that were available to them – but that was not the shock!! **Mid – Canterbury beat South-Canterbury** – This created a home final for our boys in Te Aroha this weekend. Of course I was simply thrilled for the team who, along with their management group, have all worked so hard throughout the season. It will be a fantastic game on Saturday. I will be able to attend because many of my team mates from the past have rung to offer to take me if my son is busy.

I am also thrilled to see that Thames Valley has been rewarded with six players being selected for this year’s two match campaign by the New Zealand Heartland team. The games are in Whanganui .This reflects that the team has completed an outstanding season. **David Harrison (below)** has also been selected as an observer coach as well. This is a wonderful accolade for him as well as the team he help coaching.



## **Pasilio Tosi**

Pasilio Tosi's transformation from a loose forward to a prop has been a sensational success story. In 2018 Tosi spent two years playing for the Southland Stags, mostly as a No.8 before heading north to Bay of Plenty for the 2021 Bunnings Warehouse NPC season. He caught the eye of the Hurricanes who offered him his first Super Rugby contract in 2022. Born and raised in Levin, north of Wellington, Tosi attended Horowhenua College before spending three years in the Rotorua Boys' High School first XV.



Jordan Barret, Pasilio Tosi and Sam Cane.

- **Position** – Prop.
- **AGE** – 26.
- **WEIGHT** – 140 KG.
- **HEIGHT** – 193 CM.
- **GAMES** – 3

## **Northern Regions under 16's boys and girls.**

Our Under 16 Girls and Boys travelled to Te Awamutu over the weekend to play in the Northern Regions Rugby U16 Tournament! Here's how they went during the tournament

### Hine Ora

#### **Day 1:**

- TV vs Northland 0-22
- TV vs Harlequins 0-54

#### **Day 2:**

- TV vs Taranaki 0-67
- 3rd 4th play-off

#### **TV vs Northland 17-12 (3 vs 4 play-off)**

What an inspiring performance from the U16 girls! They really showcased their grit and determination, pushing through a tough tournament to secure that 3rd place in the Hine Ora grade. Overcoming a challenging Northland team is no small feat! Their hard work and resilience truly paid off. Congratulations to the entire team and coaching/management .

### Tama Ora

#### **Day 1:**

- TV vs King Country 21-0
- TV vs Northland 0-38

#### **Day 2:**

- TV vs Waikato Yellow 0-41
- TV vs King Country 17-19 (3 vs 4 play-off)