

College Sport

Wellington College to meet SPT in premier rugby final

RUGBY

The Wellington Premier 1 first XV final will be contested by St Pat's Town and Wellington College at Jerry Collins Stadium in Porirua on Sunday afternoon.

First, **Matt Atkinson** reports from Town's commanding semi-final win over Rongotai College last Saturday, before **Chelsea McLaughlin** takes us through Wellington College's win over Wairarapa College.

St Pat's Town have given themselves the chance to defend their Wellington Premier 1 college rugby title.

Town shut down the Rongotai attack, playing smart tactical rugby in poor conditions to win 24-3 at Evans Bay Park.

St Pat's coach Glenn Donaldson said the gameplan was simple.

"It was about ball retention and using the elements, because the southerly wind was quite strong. So kick to the short side and be powerful up front in the first 20," Donaldson said.

The St Pat's players were listening as Rongotai spent the majority of the first half playing out of their end of the park.

St Pat's halfback Luke Georgeson was instrumental in the victory, controlling his forward pack and constantly putting Rongotai on the back foot through a strong kicking game.

Relentless pressure from St Pat's finally took its toll on Rongotai, with prop Xavier Numea scoring next to the posts to put St Pat's up 7-3.

Numea, a 2015 New Zealand schools representative, was destructive at scrum time, winning multiple penalties for his team and making his presence felt around the ruck on defence.

Leading 14-3 at halftime, St Pat's scored first after the break, which Rongotai coach Dave Meaclem said put his team on the back foot.

"It was an arm wrestle and you don't want to leak points just before and straight after halftime. From that point on you have to chase the game."

Rongotai did just that, as they looked to attack from anywhere on the pitch in search of points.

Centre Pena Va'a led his side with ball in hand, looking for more work as the game went on and trying to inspire his team to a comeback.

However, St Pat's were able to force turnovers constantly as the conditions deteriorated, stopping the Rongotai game breakers from getting into space.

Georgeson added another penalty before the game grinded to the final whistle.

In the end St Pat's wanted it more, Meaclem said.

"They had a need to win, we had a want to win. When you need to win it's a lot different."

St Pat's were now looking forward to playing Wellington College, Donaldson said.

"We came through it OK, no major injuries so should be at full strength for [Wellington College]. They're no slug team, they're a well-drilled side and they have won all their games."



A mud-covered Wellington College player tries to make a break during his side's win over Wairarapa College on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANDY MCARTHUR



St Pat's Town's Keelan Whitman wins a lineout during Town's over Rongotai College on Saturday.

PHOTO: DAVID BROWLIE

Meanwhile, Wellington College are full of confidence as they head into the final, after a comprehensive 29-0 semifinal win over Wairarapa.

Their dominance was apparent from the outset when winger Josh Morgan-Ranui dotted down in the corner in the opening minute.

They never let up, gaining another four five-pointers during the game.

Wellington had won the same

contest 22-0 earlier in the season, but Wairarapa were coming off a strong win against Scots and coach Greg Sharland said his team did not know what they would come up against.

He said they had since their final round robin game in early July to prepare for this game.

"It's been a long time and the boys get a little bit of itchy feet I suppose ... After a month to prepare for it, they were certainly

fired up and certainly ready to get out there."

His team's strong start was crucial in setting the tone for the game. In last week's quarterfinals, Wairarapa held out Scots for a long time and they had to make sure they didn't let them do that again, he said.

"So we needed to come out firing and take that away from them. The first five or 10 minutes were huge for us."

Wellington maintained their composure while down to 14 men during the first half, and again during a period in the second half when Wairarapa held all the possession.

They threw wave after wave of attack, but reaped no reward. It was very satisfying to see the hard work they were putting into their defence pay off, Sharland said.

"It's a big part of our game and they back themselves to be able to do that, whereas in previous years we'd leak tries at those points of time. To be dominant and hold the opposition to zero points, and to score 29 points in tough conditions, is very, very pleasing."

Hurricanes forwards coach John Plumtree had come to speak to the team during the week and he talked about the importance of taking it one training session at a time, and not getting ahead of themselves.

This was advice Sharland said they would take into their week of preparation.

Town have some dangerous backs and were great at moving the ball, he said.

Wellington will head into the knowing they have the ability to take out the title.

"We'll certainly go in with confidence that if we play well we can take the win ... It is going to be a huge challenge so who knows - finals rugby - it's the team that turns up on the day."

Sport

Hurricanes had the gritz to go with the glitz

MARK REASON COMMENT



"Expect the unexpected" was the Hurricanes' mantra and then would follow a year of mind-numbing predictability. There would be some dazzling tries, some dumb yellow cards, too much mouth, too much beer and an early exit at the pointy end of the season. So how joyous has been this turnaround. And what a different bunch of blokes finally brought the Super Rugby title to New Zealand's capital city.

The fans didn't want to be told to expect anything. They wanted to throw out expect and replace it with respect. These are the guys and girls who were paying good money, some of it they could ill-afford, to watch a bunch of good time charlies prancing about on the show boat until it sank. How about the players respecting the fans.

And now it has finally come to pass. Mark Hammett wasn't much of a coach, a bit of a control freak and not the best man-manager, but he started the turnaround. He didn't handle Ma'a Nonu well with a ridiculous finger-pointing rant but Nonu was well out of order.

Piri Weepu was overweight. Jason Eaton had gone rogue. Andrew Hore, "let's go shoot some ducks", once called Wellingtonians who pick against their own team, "some kind of third sex." OK, it was a bit tongue-in-cheek, but there was also an element of privilege about it.

Hammett decided that the culture had to change. And he started by changing the recruitment policy. The Hurricanes would no longer select young players on talent alone.

That way you could expect the unexpected, and the unexpected was unreliability. One week the ritz, the next week the sh**z.

Hammett and the Hurricanes executive hierarchy decided that recruitment would be done on "work ethic, attitude, talent, in that order." So although Hammett wasn't much of a gardener, he did at least plant the right seeds. Now the Hurricanes needed a bloke who could grow the team.

As Hammett's era was nearing extinction with low crowds, a succession of defeats and a team that lacked direction - does anyone remember Alama Ieremia lamenting, "We played silly football. When we needed kick the ball, we ran it and when we needed to hold the ball and build phases, we decided to kick. Our game management was all over the place" - I wondered why John Plumtree hadn't been persuaded back.

But if the Hurricanes couldn't get Plumtree away from Joe Schmidt and Ireland, then maybe a

team of Tana Umaga and Wayne Smith would be the perfect fit. But the Hurricanes did get Plumtree back thanks to the appointment of Chris Boyd. Steel and decency is usually a good combination and the team has grown in their image.

After victory at the weekend Boyd said, "They've developed a great attitude and a great character amongst themselves ... There was a group of players that came in who wanted to work hard and do the best they could."

"Michael (Fatialofa) and Vaea (Fifita) have been a revelation as the locks. We've really played five loose forwards and that suited the way we played the game. There's another generation of boys coming and that next group down they've all stood up and done a real good job for us."

It is worth noting that the Hurricanes weren't the only team in town with a great work ethic and a great team bond. The Lions have also come together after a troubled history. Doubtless there were those who sneered at the Christian ethic in this team but many of us were moved to see them praying together after the match.

We were equally moved by the sight of Michael Fatialofa smiling on the touchline as the long-suffering crowd chanted "defence" while the clock counted down. Fatialofa was a bit of a schoolboy star up at Mount Albert with Steven Luatua, but then he began to fall apart.

Fatialofa had back surgery, hip surgery, knee surgery. Every year he would go back under the knife. His pectoral muscle ripped. At one point he seriously doubted if he would play again. But the Hurricanes saw the qualities that they valued and brought him into the wider training squad. By the end of the season he was a vital part of the team.

Doubtless other teams will copy the Canes and now play with what Boyd calls "five back-row forwards." Certainly it makes for a mighty hard defence to break down. I can imagine Vern Cotter bringing it in for Scotland and Eddie Jones is already blessed with Maro Itoje in the England second row.

But I am straying from the point, just as this Hurricanes team strayed when some of the players missed the curfew against the Sharks. It is hard not to be swayed by sun and surf in mid-winter. But without that thumping defeat in South Africa, this Hurricanes team may not have come on so strong. One week the ritz, the next week the gritz.

Yes, you can't win Super Rugby without some very clever coaching. But you also need a group of players who are willing to listen. The Chiefs, the Highlanders and now the Hurricanes had guiding stars at 9 and 10 and a body of humble men who wanted to be shown the way.

Warriors retain lineup

DAVID LONG

Warriors coach Andrew McFadden has been able to name an unchanged side for Saturday's NRL game against the Rabbitohs in Auckland.

Coming off the back of a 24-14 win over the Titans on the Gold Coast on Sunday, McFadden felt no need to alter his team for a game against the lowly Rabbitohs.

The Rabbitohs have nothing left to play for this season, but still managed to play with enough passion to push the Storm last weekend, losing 15-14 in golden point time.

With four games to go and the Warriors in eighth place on the ladder, they can't afford to drop a game against a team like the Rabbitohs.

With Issac Luke out for a few more weeks with his knee injury, Jazz Tsevaga will again start at

At a glance

Warriors: Tuimoala Lolohea, Ken Maumalo, David Fusitu'a, Solomon Kata, Manu Vatavei, Thomas Leuluai, Shaun Johnson, Jacob Lillyman, Jazz Tsevaga, Albert Vete, Bodene Thompson, Ryan Hoffman (c), Simon Mannerling. Interchange (from): Nathaniel Roache, Sam Lisone, Ben Matulino, Bunty Afoa, Blake Ayshford.

hooker, but is expected to share the playing time equally with Nathaniel Roache.

"We defended really well as a team against the Titans and Jazz and Nate definitely contributed at a high level," McFadden said.

The only minor change to the team is Blake Ayshford named in the No 17 jersey and Bunty Afoa swapping to No 18.

HIBS back in title hunt after win over WC

BECKIE WILSON

Hutt International Boys' School's (HIBS) football team took out an unexpected 3-1 win against Wellington College on Saturday.

The weather conditions were less than obliging, but HIBS took to the field with all they had for the first round of the top-four phase of the Trevor Rigby Cup, the name of the Wellington first XI competition, against the top qualifiers.

HIBS won the title last year, beating Wellington College in the final, but snuck into the top four with a 5-1 win over Hutt Valley High School in the final game of the first round-robin phase.

HIBS coach Brendan McIntyre said the win against Wellington College over the weekend was "fortunate and a great result".

"[Wellington College] are a hard working team with a plan and great team spirit," he said.

"It was a great win, especially with the score and playing away [from home]."

HIBS were forced to bring in new players to their squad this season, with only three boys returning from last year's team.

Due to last year's success, McIntyre said there was an expectation to win.

But after Saturday's game the boys had a taste of a success. "We are like the underdogs this

"We are like the underdogs this season and have fallen under the radar a bit."

HIBS football coach Brendan McIntyre

season and have fallen under the radar a bit.

"However, there are no expectations and they just do the best they can," he said.

The team play Palmerston North Boys' High School away today in preparation for the rest of

this season and to get a taste of the strong competition they will face at nationals in Tauranga at the end of the month.

HIBS will face Tawa College this weekend, but McIntyre said they aren't expecting too much.

"We are punching above our weight. They both have a lot more than we have."

McIntyre said in spite of their new and young team, they have developed on everything he has trained them in.

"They have a good team spirit, if we get a result on Saturday, good. They've been great, and motivated."

Tawa lost 1-0 to new competition leaders Scots College on

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