

# COLLEGE SPORT



with **Liam Hyslop**  
 email: [liam.hyslop@fairfaxmedia.co.nz](mailto:liam.hyslop@fairfaxmedia.co.nz)  
 (04) 474-0279

## Talented trio head to the Bay

RUGBY

THREE key players in St Pat's Town's Premier 1 winning first XV will be playing in the black and white of Hawke's Bay for the foreseeable future.

Captain Jack Nelson-Murray, halfback/first-five Zac Donaldson and No 8 Hannon Brighouse will make the move north in January after receiving little interest from their home union Wellington.

Such is the strength across Wellington first XV rugby that not every player leaving school could hope to sign with Wellington, but having three from the same school move to the same union is rare.

However, the move made sense for the trio, as they will be able to support each other as they look to make the next step in their rugby careers, staying in Donaldson's family's bach when they make the big move.

"My family is originally from Hawke's Bay. My grandparents and cousins and stuff still live up there and we have a hang up there, so that's where we're going to be staying - Jack, Hannon and myself," Donaldson said.

All three were approached individually by the union, with Donaldson saying he thought he would be making the move by himself.

"I thought it was just going to be, then my mum and dad came up to me and said Jack was being looked at and I thought that would be pretty sweet having him there. Then recently Hannon signed on and I was like 'far out, that'll be great'. That's where you build relationships and lifelong friends."

Donaldson has been behind Kemara Hauti-Parapara in the age-group halfback stakes in Wellington for some time, but said the challenge of moving to a new region was more of a draw for him.

"It's always a good idea to get out of your parents' house and where you grew up. I think a different scenery, different culture, different people could be good and, obviously, I'm looked behind as a second halfback to another person - that's why I was keen to look elsewhere."

When Nelson-Murray lifted the Wellington college premierships title in August, having beaten top qualifiers Scots College 19-8, it was the first win for the school in 20 years.

Nelson-Murray said that was the highlight of the year and was great to do with friends he had played with for his entire five years at college.

"All of the team, barring about seven of them, had all played



St Pat's Town rugby players Hannon Brighouse, left, Zac Donaldson and Jack Nelson-Murray have signed on for the Hawke's Bay Rugby Union.

Photo: PAT MURRAY

under-15s together, so we knew each other pretty well and it was special to win it with them."

While he would have liked to continue his career in Hawke's Bay made an offer he couldn't refuse.

"You always want to play from where you're from but, in this day and age, I guess being a top sportsman starts younger and younger and I felt there was more of an opportunity in Hawke's Bay."

"I hadn't really been approached by Wellington and wouldn't be getting that sort of role I'll be getting in Hawke's Bay, so I felt I would be able to develop myself as a player a bit more in the Bay."

**"You always want to play from where you're from, but in this day and age I guess being a top sportsman starts younger and younger and I felt there was more of an opportunity in Hawke's Bay."**

Jack Nelson-Murray

Both he and Donaldson already had an eye to their futures after rugby and would be studying a pre-apprenticeship in dairy at Eastern Institute of Technology.

Will all that time together test their friendship?  
 "We'll be going to class together

and it's only five minutes from our house, and we'll be training together a lot, but we're pretty close so it should be all right," Nelson-Murray said.

Brighouse was looking forward to developing his game with the likes of Blues loose forward

Brendon O'Connor at the Bay. There, he could play blindside flanker as well as No 8.

"I had a lot of interest from different regions and I wanted to stay in Wellington, but Hawke's Bay gave me a good offer and they gave me the opportunity to develop as a player and that hooked me in."

Donaldson, who hopes to learn off All Black Brad Weber and Chris Eaton, summed up the trio's sentiment that the move would be good for their rugby development.

"We're still young, we might not be playing in our final positions yet, but I know I could get massive and play centre, obviously that's not going to happen but you get what I'm saying."



The Hutt International Boys' School first XI celebrate their win against St Pat's Town in the Gillette Cup regional final.

## HIBs attempt to end Wellington's Gillette Cup curse

CRICKET

TROY JOHNSON will be hoping it's third time lucky at the Gillette Cup.

The Hutt International Boys' School first XI captain has been to New Zealand's premier college cricket tournament twice, but both times came away with only shattered dreams.

Last year was particularly tough, when HIBS went within a whisker of making the final before finishing third.

"I think we came away from last year's tournament thinking we probably left the trophy down there," Johnson said.

"We had a good go at it and were one run off beating Christchurch Boys', who ended up winning it, and a freak innings from one of the King's College boys got them across the line in that game."

The tournament sees the best team from each of New Zealand's six cricketing regions converge on Lincoln, near Christchurch, which Johnson said meant you needed a bit of luck to win the title.

"Even the team that comes sixth could probably beat the top side on their day."

"We know we're a good enough team to do it on our day. We know if we play as well as we can I don't think there are many teams who can beat us."

"We're going down to win it and the belief is certainly there - the boys are all working really hard and we've set our goals quite high this year and we believe we have the team to do it."

HIBS made it to the national finals by beating St Pat's Town by 84 runs in the regional final at Endeavour Park's artificial pitch on Labour Day.

The scheduling of the match was mildly contentious, after it was originally set down for the Basin Reserve earlier in the year but was postponed when a Hibs player was away watching the Cricket World Cup final in Australia.

Town captain Zac Donaldson did not want to make a big deal of the situation but said it wasn't ideal to play the final on a sand-based artificial.

"The outfield wasn't great either, but it's the same for both teams so you can't cry too much about it."

Donaldson said the better team won on the day.

"It didn't go our way, we just didn't bring it on the day. I just think we were quite intimidated by one of their gun players."

A couple of those top guns was opening bowler Ben Sears, whom Johnson said had his deliveries clocked at more than 130kmh during the pre-season.

Sears snared four wickets in the final, including the prized scalp of Donaldson for 52 when

### AT A GLANCE

**HIBS Gillette Cup squad:** Troy Johnson (captain), Rachin Ravindra, Ben Sears, Matt McComb, Tyler Simpson, Brad Johns, Jesse Tashkoff, Akshar Pater, Joseph Footch, Akshar Kanuparthi, Caleb Hewson, Nathan Watt, Adam Webster.

Town were 80-3 after 18 overs in reply to HIBS' 198.

"We're lucky to have a weapon like him and he managed to get a few wickets and the key wicket of Zac, which was a major turning point in the game because he was looking really class and even hitting Ben back over his head for fours and sixes, which I've never seen anyone do," Johnson said.

The two teams may meet in the Wellington premier 1 final on November 28.

Town have already qualified, but HIBS need to beat Onslow College on November 21 to book their place.

Donaldson said his side would be keen to get revenge for the regional final loss if HIBS made it, while Johnson said the next few weeks of pressure games would be ideal preparation for the Gillette Cup, which starts on December 7.

"We've got a big game against Onslow, which is effectively a semifinal - that will be a really good chance to get another high-pressure game and will be really good for us heading towards the Gillette Cup."

"That's, obviously, the main goal for us, but we've put a lot of emphasis on winning prem one again, which would be three years in a row and a pretty amazing achievement for the group of guys who have been here the last few years."

The last Wellington team to win the Gillette Cup was Wellington College in 2001 - the only triumph by a capital school since the competition was introduced in 1990.

Once safely through that, Johnson will set his eye on the regional under-19 tournament, with the New Zealand under-19 squad for the Under-19 Cricket World Cup in Bangladesh this January being selected at the end of the competition.

"The big goal for myself this year is to make the New Zealand under-19 side."

"I know I need to go down there and put those performances on the board and by no means am I expecting to make it, but I feel I've prepared well to do that."

As well as Johnson, his HIBS team-mates Sears and Rachin Ravindra have a good chance of making the New Zealand under-19 team.

**"We know if we play as well as we can I don't think there are many teams who can beat us."**

Troy Johnson

## Reuelu-Buchanan eyes under-21 selection

NETBALL

MILA REUELU-BUCHANAN would love a trip to Rarotonga this summer.

But the Wellington East Girls' College year 13 student wouldn't be there for a holiday - she'll be donning black as part of the New Zealand under-21 netball team.

The midcourter is the only player from Netball Central in the 20-strong squad to attend a training camp in mid-December, from which under-21s coach Kiri Willis will pick 12 players to tour the Cook Islands.

It's part of the buildup to the Under-21 Netball World Cup in 2017, which Reuelu-Buchanan said she wanted to be a part of, though she admitted to being surprised at her initial selection last month.

"I found out a week after [the secondary school] nationals. It was really random, it was so unexpected and when she rung I was just buzzing out because it didn't really cross my mind that I would get selected."

"It was a goal for me, but I didn't know how I was going to be selected and it was a massive shock to me."

Headed third at nationals, with Reuelu-Buchanan being named in the tournament team,



Wellington East Girls' College netballer Mila Reuelu-Buchanan has a good chance of making the New Zealand under-21 team.

Photo: MAARTEN HOLL/FAIRFAX NZ

capping what had been a tumultuous season for the team in which they lost two major finals.

"First, we lost to Wellington

Girls' in the College Sport final and a lot of the girls were really upset and disappointed, but it boosted us going into regionals, as

it challenged us and made us more determined to win.

"At the Lower North Islands [regionals] we were awesome but, in the final, unfortunately we cracked and didn't play very well [against St Mary's]. It showed us that under pressure we tend to crack."

"Unfortunately, it took us until nationals to play our best, but we came away with third and managed to get back at Wellington Girls' and St Mary's."

A loss to a strong Mt Albert Grammar School side meant East missed the final, but Reuelu-Buchanan said she was proud of her team's effort.

After hopefully playing for the under-21s in Rarotonga, she will move into club netball.

She's likely to play for PIC, with the draw of outgoing Silver Ferns coach Wai Taumaunu being around the club one of the factors in her choice.

"A lot of my friends are going there as well and I know a lot of the people, so it just makes sense, and my great-grandmother was one of the founding members of PIC. I'm pretty sure that's where I'm going."

In preparation for the step into senior netball, she's doing fitness work with High Performance

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