

# College Sport

in association with the Massey University Journalism School

## Scots maintain pace with Silverstream

LIAM HYSLOP

Scots College are undefeated in the WelTec Premiership and could be about to get even better.

They trail St Patrick's College, Silverstream by one bonus point after six games, having rolled powerhouses St Patrick's College, Town (48-34), Wellington College (14-13) and Rongotai College (29-7) over the last three weeks.

They have a potential banana skin match against Kapiti College this weekend in their last match before the school holidays. Kapiti lost heavily to Stream, Town and Wellington this year, but they did upset Rongotai 19-15 on June 10.

Still, given Scots' form they should have no issues getting past them, with coach Sam Rasch expecting his side to continue to improve as players return from injury after the break.

"This season has been quite horrific in terms of injuries, we've had probably four or five of our frontline forwards out. We've closed the gap in between our firsts and seconds, with our seconds playing up a grade in Premier 3, which they've never done before, but even they have had a few injuries as well.

"I know a lot of schools are in the same boat as us, but this year for me has been really bad. Geoff Hall, who has been involved in college rugby a long time, he's never seen so many injuries in one



Scots College's Jaylen Tuapola, No 15, is congratulated by Jack Gray after scoring against Rongotai College.

season. Hopefully we get those players back, some will be back by next term and that would be a good bonus for us."

The past two wins have been aided by the return of midfield back Tai Neli, who was one of three Scots players alongside captain Moala Katoa and Jaylen Tuapola named in the 58-strong Hurricanes under-18 camp that will take place in the first week of the holidays.

There were 10 others invited to the camp from Wellington schools, with Stream best represented with four.

Rasch took over as Scots head coach from current Sunwolves Super Rugby coach Filo Tiatia last season, but it was a tough intro-

duction to the top job as he watched his side get upset 7-3 by Wairarapa College at the quarterfinal stage of the premiership.

It was a mighty fall for a team which made back-to-back national top four finals in 2014-15, winning the title in 2014.

"Obviously losing to Wairarapa last year was a sore point and not a great part of our season, so we used that as part of our motivation for this year," Rasch said.

"We reflected on some of the issues and problems from last season and fixed those and have been progressively improving."

Given all the injuries, that improvement has come via a wide range of players. Rasch said it would be too hard to pick the best performers in the team as so many players had stepped up through the year, but pointed to captain Katoa and his leadership group as a strong influence on the squad.

"The leadership group have really taken control of the team this year and built a good culture."

Their season is building to an exciting conclusion, with a final round match against Stream scheduled for August 5. Stream are in a similar position to Scots, having struggled last season with a young squad, losing to Rongotai at the quarterfinal stage.

"Our boys won't need too much motivation to play them in the last round and that will be a great game for both teams."



Scots College's Isaiah Peachey takes on the Rongotai College defence on Saturday.

PHOTOS: MASANORI UDAGAWA

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