

COLLEGE SPORT



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Big boys feature in top four rugby clash

RUGBY
 TWO bulky boys will be searching for the tryline again when Scots College meet Otago Boys' in their top four clash in Rotorua on Friday.

Big props Alex Fidow (Scots) and Sione Asi (Otago) have both been prolific try-scorers this winter.

Fidow scored the winning try when Scots beat St Pat's Town 23-19 in the Hurricanes final last weekend and Asi has scored five tries in his last two games.

Both players were recognised at a national level last year, with Fidow making the New Zealand schools team and Asi selected for the Barbarians school side.

Fidow played at No 8 against Gisborne Boys' and Town but might return to the front row for the Otago game. Otago have a big and experienced front row, with skipper Liam Sharples the other prop and in his third year in the team.

Asi, who was previously at Tu Toa and is returning to Manawatu at the end of the year, is 135kg.

He scored three tries when Otago beat Southland Boys' 32-20 in the Highlanders schools final and two more when Otago beat the Crusaders champions St Bede's 42-10, at home, in the South Island Schools final last weekend.

Following the weekend Boys' game, Otago coach Ryan Martin described Asi as "one in a million in terms of what is around in New Zealand".

Otago, who play their Saturday games at colts level in the Dunedin competition rather than in the top schools grade, have not lost an inter-school game this year.

They beat King's College, from Auckland, 30-16 in a pre-season game and defeated Christchurch Boys' 36-17 in their traditional clash.

King's were semifinalists in the Auckland premier one grade and Christchurch Boys' were the top qualifiers in the Crusaders competition, before losing their semifinal.

Otago Boys' were held to a 21-21 draw, in testing conditions, in their first clash with Southland Boys' this year but beat Christ's College 34-7, in a pre-season game and defeated Christchurch Boys' 36-17 in their traditional clash.

No 8 Slade McDowall is another highly rated member of the Otago pack and the threats in the backline include halfback Tim Hogan, second five-eighth Kabe Calder and big centre Hemaua Samasoni.



Scots College second five-eighth Thomas Umaga-Jensen scores in athletic fashion, against St Pat's Town, in the Hurricanes schools final at Porirua Park last Saturday.

Photo: MIKE LEWIS

Scots lose trophy in a 'farce'

RUGBY

SCOTS COLLEGE have lost the Moascar Cup in odd circumstances.

St Andrew's, from Christchurch, are the new cup holders, after beating Scots 20-10 in the opening round of the quad tournament in Hastings on Monday. However, neither school fielded their top teams, with both schools focusing on the national secondary schools finals in Rotorua this weekend.

Scots are in the top four playoffs at Rotorua and St Andrew's will contest the co-ed finals.

Both teams also played last Saturday and with two major games this weekend, neither school was prepared to burden their top players with two more games during the week.

As a result, the teams for Monday's game were largely made up of second XV and development players.

The Scots-St Andrew's match was a late addition to the Moascar Cup schedule.

When Scots first submitted the list of Moascar Cup games, which was initially accepted by the New Zealand Secondary Schools Rugby Council, the match against Lindisfarne College in June was included as the "out of region" challenge.

However, Scots were later informed that the outside challenge had to be against a school outside the Hurricanes region and the St Andrew's game was one of the few options left.

The loss of the cup this week is not a huge blow for Scots, as the first XV would have had to win the national final on Sunday to have retained the cup for the season anyway. In addition, the co-ed game between St Andrew's and Feilding High on Friday will now feature a Moascar challenge.

However, the circumstances of Monday's game were unsatisfactory for a national trophy with a long history. "It is what it is and I don't want to take anything away from St Andrew's, who won the trophy and were happy to do so," Scots headmaster Graeme Yule said. "But to be honest, the whole thing was a bit of a farce."

TOP FOUR

Friday, at Rotorua BHS
 11:00pm: Scots v Otago Boys'
 2:55pm: St Kentigern v Rotorua Boys'
 Live on Sky rugby channel

Scots have had a testing season, which began with the Sanix youth championships in Japan in April, and deserve great credit for being the only team from the 2014 top four to be back again this weekend.

They drew the national final with Hamilton Boys' last year, after beating Auckland Grammar with a sublime performance in the semifinal.

It would be a surprise if Scots went through the finals unbeaten again, though the team does have some genuine gamebreakers.

"We probably weren't expected to make the final last year," Scots assistant coach Geoff Hall said.

"It doesn't matter who you meet in the first game, they are all strong teams and you just have to be on your game.

"You hope that everything aligns and if you get a couple of lucky breaks, you never know.

"But the main difference this year is that the team is pretty battered and bruised. Alex [Fidow] has an ankle problem but he will soldier on."

"Thomas [Umaga-Jensen] is carrying a few niggles and Peter [Umaga-Jensen] just plays sore

most weeks.

"But that is just the nature of the beast and I think this will be their 21st match [of the season] on Saturday.

"We don't have big playing numbers and the spine of the team, the likes of the twins, Alex, Henry Mexted, Joe Boswell and Nu'u Haeia have to play virtually every match."

Lock Jarimar Schuster fractured a leg in the Wellington final and has been a significant loss, while fullback Connor Garden-Bachop missed last weekend and is in doubt for this week, after suffering a head knock against Gisborne.

Harry Sakore, normally a loose forward, has replaced Schuster at lock and did well against Town.

"Harry had a really good game," Hall said. "He carried well and defended well, against some big boys."

Scots had to come from behind against Gisborne Boys' the week before and did the same against Town.

Town were up 16-3 after 30 minutes and it was inside the last 10 minutes before Scots led for the first time.

"It was a great game of rugby and both sides played well," Hall said. "Had the bounce of the ball gone Town's way, they could have won. They had a couple of really good chances.

"But we felt it was the same for us in the Wellington final [won by Town]."

The loss marked the end of an

excellent season for Town, who reached the Hurricanes final on top of their first Wellington premiership for 20 years.

"We set a goal to win the Wellington competition and we did that and the players should be pretty proud of their achievements," Town coach Glenn Donaldson said.

Town also have the nucleus of a good squad for 2016.

Halfback Luke Georgeson will be back, Grayson Whitman is the likely first five-eighth and outside backs Billy Proctor, Siosaia Paese and Connor Fitzsimons will be real assets.

The returning forwards will include props Sefo Numia and Meirad Fitiseanu and possibly talented flanker Kevin Fauatea.

Jordan on the hunt for US options

BASKETBALL

JORDAN HUNT towers above his schoolmates - but height is always relative on a basketball court.

The Hutt Valley High School centre is 2.03m (6ft 8) and still growing but knows that he will meet plenty of taller rivals in the United States next year.

Hunt is keen to gain a college basketball scholarship in the US and players of his height would not be out of the ordinary on a college roster.

"I think I'm the tallest in the Wellington competition this year but in the States I would probably be a small forward or a power forward," he said.

Hunt will also be giving away a couple of inches to fellow schoolboys and rising basketball stars Tai Wynyard and Sam Timmins if he plays at the national secondary schools championships this year.

However, Hunt, who made a couple of appearances for the Wellington Saints this year, is unlikely to be ever described as short, no matter what the company. "I started growing around year 10 and haven't stopped since. I think I've still got a little bit to grow, probably another half inch."

He was the third-highest scorer in the Wellington premier one competition this year, with 212 points, and his team-mates Dion Yee and Lucien Beck were also among the top 10.

Hutt Valley were also the top qualifiers, winning nine of their 10 regular season games, with their one round robin loss coming against Wellington College, when Hutt Valley were below full strength.

However, Hutt Valley's hopes of successfully defending their premier one title disappeared in the semifinals, when they were beaten by one point, in overtime, by Newlands College.

Hutt Valley will now attempt to make amends at the lower North Island zone tournament in Palmerston North, which begins today.

"It was disappointing [to lose against Newlands] but we will use that as motivation for this week," Hunt said.

"We were up by about 20 points twice in the game but Newlands just fought back hard and made some crazy clutch shots to get the win."

Hunt is also nursing an ankle injury this week but hopes to be fit for the later rounds in Palmerston North. He turns 18 this month and represents a basketball family. His

twin sister, Madison, is in the Hutt Valley High senior girls team and their father, Brett, played in the NBL.

Jordan, who went to Las Vegas with a New Zealand Basketball Academy team this year, has been a regular Wellington age group rep and trialled for the New Zealand under-18 team last year.

"I think I've improved heaps in the last two years. I've got faster feet and know the game better.

"Training with the Saints has made a big difference. It has been another whole level of intensity and has made me tougher."

Hutt Valley coach Shawn Beck said he believed Hunt, Yee, Lucien Beck and their year 12 team-mate Cambell Stephen all had the potential to play college basketball in the US, if they wanted to follow that path.

Beck was also confident that his squad can bounce back from their semifinal defeat. "It meant we missed our first objective but you always learn something from a loss and the more important the loss, the more you learn.

"They are a strong team and there is no reason why they can't do well at the regionals and the nationals," Beck said.

"But there has been a really high level of competition in Wel-

lington this year and I wouldn't be surprised if four Wellington teams qualified for the nationals."

Wellington Girls' and Onslow, as had been expected, won the premier one finals last weekend, though not by wide margins.

Wellington Girls' were made to work before beating St Mary's 65-58 while Onslow defeated Newlands 78-65 in the boys final.

Onslow coach Craig Freear praised his team's defensive efforts against the key Newlands players, though Corey Le'aupepe still scored 27 points for Newlands.

"Matt Hawke, Luke Kelman and Thomas Peoples all did an outstanding job defensively," Freear said.

Shay Graham and Hayden Robertson led the scoring for Onslow, with Robertson sinking five three-pointers.

The St Mary's squad does not have anyone above year 11 and should be a real force over the next two seasons.

However, they will not be at full strength for the regional tournament. Key player Terrelle Onesemo suffered a knee injury in the final and will miss the tournament, while Renee Savaiinaea and Ana Puleiata are also playing at the netball regionals and will miss the early basketball rounds.



Onslow College's Hayden Robertson rises above Newlands defender Zyrus Grace in the boys' premier one basketball final last weekend, at the ASB centre. Photo: MASANORI UDAGAWA

IN BRIEF

FOOTBALL

Strong start

Wellington College have made an excellent start to the football national championships. They headed their top 16 pool after two wins and a draw from their three games. Wellington beat Napier Boys' and Mt Albert Grammar and drew with Hamilton Boys. Hutt International, the Wellington titleholders, had a tough opening day, going down 6-0 against national champions Sacred Heart, from Auckland, and losing to Nelson College, before claiming third place in the pool by beating New Plymouth Boys' yesterday morning. Hutt Valley, who were seeded in the second 16, had two wins and a loss from their pool games. Wellington Girls' and Hutt Valley both finished second in their pools in the girls' premier grade. The Wellington champions, St Mary's, who are playing in the lower division Jarvis tournament, began with two big wins.

CROSS-COUNTRY

James Preston champs

James Preston (Scots) finished a creditable 23rd, in a field of 62, in the under-20 division at the Australian cross-country championships last Saturday. Preston, who has now joined up with the Scots team at the Rankin Cup hockey tournament, was the third New Zealander to finish. Kelsey Forman (Wellington East) was 24th, in a field of 96, and the third New Zealander home, in the women's under-18.

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