



**MANAWATŪ
RUGBY**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



ALTRAD

ALL BLACKS

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WHO MADE IT HAPPEN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

GARY NESDALE
President

TIM MYERS
Chair

BERTUS MULDER
Director

DANIEL IOSE
Director

DAN LEWIS
Director

BEXX BROWN
Director

NEERAJ LALA
Director

RICHARD GREAVES
Non-Director, Director (from November)

CARLA NA NAGARA
Director (until October)

MRU STAFF

ANDREA JACKSON
Chief Executive (until December)

SHAUN EADE
MRU Advisor (until April)
Game Development and Operations Manager (from April)
Interim CEO (from December)

BRETT DAVIS
Partnerships Manager

PAM HISLOP
Executive Assistant

JOE BAYLISS
Finance Manager

ANDREW MCCREEDY
Finance and Admin Support

CARA DEE
Accounts Administrator

KAHURANGI STURMEY
Game Development - Women & Inclusion Lead

MATT BOOTH
Game Development - Club Lead/Referee Education Officer

CAMPBELL MACNEILL
Game Development - Schools Lead (until March)

RYAN EVANS
Game Development - Schools Lead (from April)

IRENE WALKER
Game Development - Activator (from July)

ABBY KING
Game Development - Administration and Delivery Support

AILSA RINAKAMA
Marketing Advisor (until July)

JEREMY BRYSON
Digital Communications and Events Advisor (from September)

ALICE BRADNOCK
Professional Development Manager

LIFEIMI MAFI
Academy Manager

HENRY GILBERT
Head Strength and Conditioning Coach

LUKE VASU
Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach (until July)

GEOFF POUND
Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach (from July)





MIKE ROGERS
Head Coach

HAYDEN TRIGGS
Assistant Coach

KENT HARRIS
Assistant Coach

NEHE MILNER-SKUDDER
Assistant Coach

DUNCAN CAMERON
Manager

MURRAY SIGNAL
Assistant Manager

HENRY GILBERT
Strength and Conditioning Coach

RICCI PERSICO
Assistant Trainer

COLTON BENNETT
Video Analyst

CHRIS WILSON
Physiotherapist

TAYLAH DARRAH
Team Doctor



CHRIS WILTON
Head Coach

BRYCE GRANT
Assistant Coach

CHRIS DAY
Manager

SALLY BOYT
Assistant Manager

LUKE VASU & GEOFF POUND
Strength and Conditioning Coaches

ANNALISE EARLY
Performance Analyst

CLAIRE MAXWELL
Physiotherapist

RA DURIE
Team Doctor

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES

MANAWATŪ CLUB RUGBY EXECUTIVE

SEAN O'CONNOR *Chair*

BRITTANY ANDREW

DUNCAN MITCHELL

HENK SHOLTE

CHRIS LONG

MATT KIDBY

BEXX BROWN

MANAWATŪ SECONDARY SCHOOL RUGBY BOARD

NICK REID *Chair*

DAMON DURIE

JUSTIN LOCK

ROB JONES

SASKIA BEVERIDGE

MANAWATŪ JUNIOR RUGBY BOARD

KENT HIGSON *Chair*

HAYDEN HAZLETT

NATHAN GILLARD

PATRICK BAKER

JEFF LANE

TOMMY WANOA

HAMISH MCCALLUM

MANAWATŪ JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

ALASTAIR HALL *Chair*

BELINDA BIDOIS

SHAYNE HARRIS

RUSSELL WILSON

DAN LESTER

MARTIN BRADY

MANAWATŪ JUDICIAL APPEALS COMMITTEE

GRAHAM ROSSITER *Chair*

PAUL O'BRIEN

DAVE PARATA

KIM DURHAM

DOUG BREW

TE TINI A MAUI – MANAWATŪ REPRESENTATIVES

DAMIAN PEETI

TAHAU WILLIAMS

CHAIR'S REPORT

2023 can be characterised as another tough year, but with some encouraging signs that should give us all some reassurance of further progress in 2024 and beyond.

The union continued to advance the development and implementation of the strategic framework which has provided direction to the management teams. Most notably, the recently approved Pathways Strategy is being rolled out and will form the basis of the high performance direction in 2024. The strategy focuses on securing and retaining local talent, but also on ensuring that the Manawatū high performance programme is an environment that attracts high calibre rugby players that aspire to play Super Rugby.

Towards the end of 2023 the MRU bade farewell to CEO Andrea Jackson, the first female CEO of an NPC-level provincial union. The Board would once again like to extend both thanks and kind wishes as AJ embarks on the next stage of her career. AJ's resignation gave the Board the opportunity to revisit the union's priorities, which unsurprisingly remain consistent. We must continue to make rugby the game that anyone can play by ensuring access regardless of personal circumstance. We must continue to ensure the entire organisation is focused on driving participation in rugby at every level. It is encouraging to see a resurgence in club numbers and registrations for the upcoming 2024 season. Equally we must acknowledge that our commercial partners require a closer connection to both the union itself, and the many community stakeholders that identify as supporters of the MRU. I know that the management team will be focused on this outcome as we approach the 2024 season. In that regard it has been extremely encouraging to observe the support that the union is getting from local business leaders. Such support will be an important cornerstone if we are to deliver on the aspirations we have.

Early in the New Year we announced the appointment of Doug Tietjens into the vacant CEO role. The Board is excited at the prospect of Doug joining the team and the collaborative leadership style that he will bring to the organisation. The MRU Board also wishes to acknowledge the role of Shaun Eade who very ably stepped into an interim role pending Doug's full-time appointment. Doug has strong depth in his team, and the Board are looking forward to a strong collaborative team effort in 2024 and beyond.

Financially the MRU will post a small profit (before depreciation) for the 2023 financial period. The Board considers this to be a very good outcome considering the ongoing head wind that continues to impact on provincial rugby generally. Certainly, the initial forecasts were significantly more negative. Credit must go to the management team for their excellent cost control, and their considered spend throughout the period.

There are very obvious 'green shoots' that represent real opportunity for the MRU, our clubs and players, and of course our representative teams. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MRU Board for their diligence and professionalism displayed throughout the year. As this will be my last annual report in my capacity as Chair and Director of our proud union, may I also offer my personal thanks to the many people I have worked with over the last decade. It has been both a pleasure and a privilege.

Tim Myers
Manawatū Rugby Union Board Chair



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The 2023 season may have not had all the success we were after on and off the field, but it saw us lay critical foundations for the union to flourish in the future.

There was much to be proud of in 2023. From the adoption of the union's Strategic Framework to a series of programme reviews, a focus on retaining Game Development staff for continuity, and the new high performance plan, the union has been well positioned for the new Chief Executive and Chair of the Board to steer into the future.

The union performed well in the community funding space after a slow start to the year looked to have that critical income stream at risk. The commercial landscape remained challenging, particularly with attracting the top-end jersey property sponsors. But it was pleasing to see our teams back with front of jersey sponsors in 2023 after those spaces were blank in 2022. It was with pride that our teams wore Go Media for the Turbos and New Zealand Pharmaceuticals for the Cyclones. Thanks to both of those businesses along with all the other businesses and community partners who contributed towards keeping our programmes running and our teams on the field.

Overall there was a slight decline in playing numbers. While early indications are for the decrease in senior players being offset in 2024, the teenaged boys space remains an area of focus for the union. A 41 percent increase in junior girls' rugby in 2023 highlights the impact of the increased resources and programmes in this space. With this continued growth it opens the door for girls only junior grades. We also saw our first significant growth in referee numbers for the first time in seven years and a mild increase in coaches.

The Community (Game Development) team were busy throughout the year with a focus on creating positive experiences with rugby. While much of this work is hard to quantify at the moment, it should be reflected in registration numbers in future years. A couple of the highlights were the launching of the Club of Origin competition for schoolboys, the intermediate development programme, the launch of the Josef Schmidt Under 85kg Cup, the start of the You Make the



Call referee initiative, and the highly successful Rippa World Cup for primary schools.

I would like to make a special acknowledgement of Aaron Smith's contribution to the game. Aaron retired from the All Blacks at the Rugby World Cup with 124 caps for the All Blacks. That makes him the most capped Manawatū All Black and serves as a continued reminder of the heights that can be achieved by young players who choose to stay loyal to the green and white hoops. Aaron has been a fantastic ambassador to the game of rugby, and while his opportunities to come home in recent years were limited, each time he did he was an absolute professional who was selfless with his time to not only work with other men and women in our high performance programmes, but to inspire the youth in our region. While Aaron may have headed overseas, we hope he may return to Manawatū to finish off the three games required to bring up 50 appearances in green and white.

Nothing makes us more proud than seeing our players promoted to the top level of the game, so on that note we would like to acknowledge Sarah Hirini for her continued contribution to the Black Ferns Sevens team, Layla Sae for her Black Ferns debut, Brett Cameron for making the All Blacks XV, Rangimarie Sturmey and Sam Taylor for their selection in the Black Ferns XV, Jayden Keelan for his call up to the All Blacks Sevens, Jordi Viljeon, Vernon Bason, Malakai Hala-Ngatai and

Raymond Tuputupu for making the New Zealand Under 20s and all our other national and regional age grade representatives.

The Turbos season provided some highly promising nuggets. It was a special occasion to see Brayden lose score in referee's time to record our first win of the season against Northland. The deafening noise from the grandstand was a reassuring reminder of how passionate and loyal our fans are. It was equally as satisfying to see them back up that performance with a drought-breaking first win at Eden Park against Auckland for the first time in 43 years. The season did not finish the way we would have liked but it was promising to see a large number of our academy players making the leap to provincial rugby.

The Cyclones season was packed with promise and we are extremely proud of how the side performed. From the top of the season, the Cyclones set the tone with their attacking brand of rugby and showed great fight to come from behind to beat Northland and Otago to record an unbeaten regular season. It was fantastic to have finals rugby back in Palmerston North. The final was a tough result, not helped by an early red card and the lights at Central Energy Trust Arena going out due to a blown generator with five minutes to play. But the season should not be defined on one game and we know the Cyclones will be back in the championship equation again in 2024.

Another special acknowledgment goes to Selica Winiata for being the first women's player to record 100 games for Manawatū. Selica's record is simply remarkable. Since debuting for the Cyclones in 2001 as a 14-year-old, she has scored 78 tries for Manawatū. The magnitude of the achievement of becoming the first woman to play 100 games for the province cannot be understated. Between 2001 and 2023 there were just two seasons she did not play for Manawatū – 2010 when there were no women's first-class games nationwide and 2015 when she was unavailable. Despite being consistently one of the smallest players on the field, she was always one of the first names on the teamsheet and will be regarded as one of the most lethal attacking fullbacks in rugby.



As our women's high performance programme grows, we are continuing to take steps to ensure our wāhine have the best opportunities to follow in Selica's footsteps. In 2023, we launched the Manawatū Wāhine Development XV as we look to build the long term sustainability of our women's high performance programme. The value of the team was quickly locked in with a number of players identified to become inaugural members of the Women's Academy in 2024.

The long-awaited return of the representative sevens programme came in November with the Central Region Sevens hosted in Palmerston North. The sevens programme had not run since 2019 with COVID ruling it out in 2020 and it not being revived since. The Manawatū Women's Sevens team picked up where they left off with a dominating display throughout the tournament to lift the cup. Our men's side fought hard before falling in the final to a strong Hawke's Bay side.

Our other representative teams, Evergreens, Under 19s, Under 18 girls, Under 16 girls, Under 16 boys, and Manawatū Māori all represented the province with pride and we thank all the volunteers who made those teams possible.



On behalf of the MRU, we'd like to thank Andrea Jackson (AJ) for her passion and energy she brought to the MRU. During her time she drove significant change within the union and her enthusiasm will be missed.

Finally, we'd also like to acknowledge the service of outgoing Chair Tim Myers. Tim took on the position in 2016 and sat at the helm through some challenging times, including the COVID-impacted seasons. His experience, knowledge, and level head will be missed. Thanks also goes to fellow outgoing board members Carla na Nagara and Neeraj Lala.

We hope you join us by looking ahead with optimism for what this union can achieve and you put your support behind new Chief Executive Doug Tietjens. MRU may be a small union but when we unite as a province, we can achieve great things.

Shaun Eade
Manawatū Rugby Union Interim Chief Executive

INCOMING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

I would like to thank the Manawatū rugby community for your kind words of support after my appointment to CEO was announced. Manawatū has a legacy I want to respect and continue to build with the support of the Manawatū team and community. It's been very motivating to know there is a desire from the community to be part of the next chapter for Manawatū.

I'm incredibly proud to take the reigns of this union that means a lot not only to the Manawatū community, but to me personally. Having been involved with the union as player, staff member, and volunteer, I've experienced the passion that people have for Manawatū rugby and seen the potential for the sport in this province.

I'm excited by the number of people and range of stakeholders who want to be part of the change to reimagine rugby – to look at every aspect of the game and ensure it is enjoyable, sustainable and well-positioned for any future challenges. I'm looking forward to listening and learning from our community on how Manawatū Rugby can position itself for future success.

I look forward to working with the MRU Board to build on the strategic framework and put a strategy in place to ensure that rugby is thriving across our province. From junior rugby all the way up to our performance and pathway programmes, we want the Manawatū rugby experience to be one that excites, inspires, and brings people together.

Coming into this role, I will focus on three areas: people, process and outcomes. We need to have the right people, with the right skills, in the right spaces. Our processes need to be sound, and our desired outcomes clear and achievable.

The opportunity to lead, support, and enable the Manawatū rugby community to grow really excites me. I can't wait to get out there to engage with clubs, sponsors, fans, and other stakeholders.

Doug Tietjens



OBITUARIES

JAMES GRAEME 'JAMIE' FRANCIS



University

Jamie was a fullback and record-breaking points-scorer for Manawatū. He scored 478 points in his 55 games between 1969 and 1973.

Died in Hastings, 26 May 2023, aged 74.

GORDON RALPH GRAY



College Old Boys

Gordon made one appearance for Manawatū at lock against Wanganui in a Bruce Steel Cup defence in 1974.

Died in Palmerston North, 5 March 2023, aged 82.

CLIFFORD SIMPSON



Feilding Old Boys

Clifford played at fullback in three games for Manawatū from 1955 to 1956. Prior to arriving in Manawatū, he played for Otago B and was a prominent athlete. He was the national 880 yards champion in 1950 and finished sixth in the 880 yards final at the 1950 Empire Games in Auckland.

Died in Feilding, 10 December 2023, aged 95.

KENNETH HUGH MACMILLAN



University

Kenneth was a goalkicking number 8/lock who scored 51 points in eight games for Manawatu in 1963 while studying a Massey Agricultural College. He moved to Counties in 1964, from where he represented New Zealand Colts in 1964 and New Zealand Juniors in 1965.

Died in Auckland, 10 July 10 2023, aged 79.

PHILIP FRANCIS MURPHY



Marist

Philip played 27 games at hooker for Manawatū from 1969 to 1971.

Died in Mount Maunganui, 2 January 2024, aged 83.

NOEL CHARLES KITCHEN



Feilding Old Boys

Noel played at prop in five games in 1961, with a further three appearances in 1963.

Died in Feilding, 17 April 2023, aged 83.

MICHAEL GERALD CROSS

REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER - 946

CLUB - High School Old Boys

Died in Palmerston North, 5 January 2024, aged 87.

Hailing from Papakura and educated at Kings College, Mike played 11 games for Manawatū between 1960 and 1961.

A first five-eighth on the field, Mike's contribution to the game off the field as an administrator spanned decades. He served on the MRU Management Committee from 1973 to 1995, and then on the Board of Directors from 1996 to 1999. Mike was made an MRU Life Member in 1995 in recognition of his service to the union.

He was the NZRU Vice President in 1995 and 1996 before taking on the President role in 1997.

Outside of rugby, Mike worked as a pharmacist, running his own pharmacy in Palmerston North for many years.



JOHN KELMAN LOVEDAY

REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER - 1044

CLUB - High School Old Boys

Died in Taupo, 20 May 2023, aged 74.

Born in Palmerston North, John attended Hokowhitu School and Palmerston North Boys' High School, where he was in the first XV from 1964 to 1966.

John made his debut for Manawatū in 1969, playing two games before heading off to study at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa. He played rugby for Palmer College, captaining them to the 1972 National Inter-Collegiate Championship. After gaining his Doctorate of Chiropractic degree in 1973, he returned to Palmerston North and set up his own practice.



John rejoined the Manawatū team in 1974 and was a mainstay until 1979. He was a key figure during the Manawatu team's Ranfurly Shield era, forming a formidable locking pair with John Callesen. His hard-working efforts in the scrum, lineout, and general play led to his selection for the 1978 All Blacks tour to Britain. He played seven games on the tour.

John was only one of three Manawatū players, along with Gary Knight and Denis Clare, to play in all 15 of the team's Ranfurly Shield games between 1976 and 1978.

After 65 games in green and white, John retired from representative rugby to focus on his work.

DUNCAN ALISTER HALES

REPRESENTATIVE NUMBER - 1102

CLUB - High School Old Boys

Died in London, 8 January 2024, aged 76.

Duncan was born and bred in Dannevirke. After finishing his schooling at Dannevirke High School, he played for Dannevirke Old Boys before heading to Lincoln College to study valuation.

Duncan joined Manawātū in 1974 after three seasons with Canterbury and one game for Hawke's Bay. When he arrived in the province, the midfielder/wing had played 27 matches for the All Blacks, including 4 tests. We went on to play 37 games for Manawātū from 1974 to 1976. He will forever be remembered for captaining Manawātū to its 12-10 Ranfurly Shield victory over Auckland in 1976 - still the province's only Ranfurly Shield win.

Duncan played a total of 105 first class games before moving to the United States in 1976 to study to become a chiropractor. He set up a clinic in Glendale, California, which he operated for 12 years. He later moved to England where he ran another chiropractic clinic.



RONALD WILFRED EGLINTON

CLUB - High School Old Boys

Died in Palmerston North, 21 November 2023, aged 85.

Ron played his club rugby for High School Old Boys from 1958 to 1962 and made the Manawatu B team.

It was in his post playing days that Ron made his greatest contribution to the union, serving as the union's auditor in a volunteer capacity from 1963 to 2011. This saw Ron work with the union through the highs of the Ranfurly Shield era and NPC First Division title, as well as challenging times like the Central Vikings years.

Ron was known for his eye for detail and community-minded attitude – he served on the board of the Central Energy Trust and spent large amounts of his time working for the betterment of the Manawātū community.

Ron was made a MRU Life Member at the union's 2023 awards dinner.





HONOURS BOARD

NATIONAL TEAMS

All Blacks

Aaron Smith

Black Ferns

Layla Sae

All Blacks Sevens

Jayden Keelan

Black Ferns Sevens

Sarah Hirini

All Blacks XV

Brett Cameron

Black Ferns XV

Rangimarie Sturme
y Sam Taylor

Manusina (Samoa)

Rebeka Cordero-Tufuga
Sosoli Talawadua

New Zealand Under 20

Vernon Bason
Malakai Hala-Ngatai
Raymond Tuputupu
Jordi Viljoen

Fiji Under 20

Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula
Waqa Nalaga

Samoa Under 20

John Samuelu

New Zealand Barbarians Under 21

Kyle Brown
Feleti Sae-Ta'Ufo'Ou

New Zealand Secondary Schools

Mosese Bason
Tayne Harvey
Logan Wallace

New Zealand Māori Under 18 Boys

Quinn Sturme
y

New Zealand Under 18 Sevens Boys

Mosese Bason
Ben Fakava
Dan Maisiri

New Zealand Under 18 Sevens Girls

Maia Davis
Jayda Maniapoto

New Zealand Barbarians Under 18 Boys

Liam O'Connor
Eli Oudenryan

New Zealand Barbarians Under 18 Girls

Taufa Bason
Traest Mafile'o
Jayda Maniapoto
Nia Sutherland
Danica Talitonu

New Zealand Universities

Julian Goerke

SUPER RUGBY PACIFIC

Hurricanes

Brett Cameron
Brayden lose
TK Howden
Tyler Laubscher

Highlanders

Aaron Smith

Moana Pasifika

Tima Fainga'anuku

SUPER RUGBY AUIPIKI

Hurricanes Poua

Carys Dallinger
Rhiarna Ferris
Kaipo Olsen-Baker
Rachel Rakatau
Layla Sae
Kahurangi Sturme
y

FIRST CLASS REFEREE

Stu Curran – NPC, Super Rugby Pacific (Assistant Referee)

AWARDS

ASB Rugby Awards

Tom French Memorial Māori Player of the Year: Aaron Smith

Manawatū Turbos

Rookie of the Year:

Johan Momsen

Back of the Year:

Beaudein Waaka

Forward of the Year:

TK Howden

Players' Player of the Year:

Brayden lose

Manawatū Rugby Supporters Club Player of the Year:

Brayden lose

Manawatū Cyclones

Rookie of the Year:

Sam Taylor

Back of the Year:

Rangimarie Sturme
y

Forward of the Year:

Layla Sae

Players' Player of the Year:

Rangimarie Sturme
y

Cyclones Player of the Year:

Rangimarie Sturme
y

Hurricanes

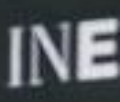
Hurricanes Poua Player of the Year: Layla Sae

Hunters Award: TK Howden

Sport Manawatū Secondary School Sports Awards

Female Official of the Year:

Hannah Russell



TURBOS REPORT

Firstly I would like to thank our sponsors, supporters, Manawatū Rugby Union staff, the Manawatū Rugby Union board, and most importantly the Turbos players for their support and contribution in what was a challenging 2023 season.

Taking on a team that had lost 14 consecutive games was a challenge that I was really motivated about. Manawatū is a proud rugby province and there is no doubt that the community expects a lot and justifiably so.

If I was to describe our campaign in one sentence it would be: promised a lot, got the speed wobbles, and finished poorly.

2023 Campaign

We started our campaign with a spirited performance against defending champions Wellington. We were ahead in the game through to the 67th minute and only fell away in the last 10 minutes to lose 6-22. The group took a lot of confidence out of this performance and definitely came away with a sense of missed opportunity.

Our second game was against Taranaki at the end of their storm week. We anticipated that they would be tired and would fall away in the second half, which proved to be the case. Our first half performance was poor but we came home with a wet sail to go down 17-26 against the eventual 2023 NPC winners. Again, there was a sense of missed opportunity but at this point we felt we were

adding to our game and confident that the tide would turn.

Game three and we were on the road to Canterbury in what is just about the toughest assignment in New Zealand rugby. Canterbury fielded a team including 20 Super Rugby players, five of whom were former All Blacks. Whilst we tried hard and performed well in patches of the game, we were taught a lesson in attacking rugby and fell well short 26-68.

Game four had us back at home to Northland in what we had targeted as a must win game. What was definitely our best first half performance of the season saw us head into the sheds with a 26-17 lead. The second half by contrast was a struggle with the weight of 17 consecutive losses proving to have an impact on our cohesion as a team. Northland eked away at our lead to edge ahead 26-27 at the 69 minute mark before adding a penalty with five minutes to go to go ahead 26-30. It took an 80th minute turnover and a long range try to finally break the drought with a 31-30 victory.

Game five and we were up against Auckland on a Wednesday night at Eden Park. After the win against Northland, the team felt confident and we added a heap of excitement by giving several young players an opportunity. It had been 41 years since Manawatū had beaten Auckland at Eden Park, and for periods of the game it looked like that record would remain intact as Auckland pulled away to a strong lead three times during the game. But it was our night and, like the previous game, we scored after the hooter to take a historic win 33-31.

Game six and we were down to Tasman after only a couple of days at home. This game proved the old adage right that you are only as good as your next game, and this ultimately was a poor performance totally outclassed by an understrength Tasman team 19-58.



At this point in the season we had won two and lost four games, having played a string of strong teams and we were feeling pretty good about the growth of our group.

Unfortunately that was really all she wrote for our 2023 campaign. We went on to perform poorly in our remaining four games of the season, consistently having periods where we would concede three quick tries and never really be able to recover. We learnt a lot about each other over this period but ultimately the results and performances were not good enough. We simply have to improve as individuals, as a team, as a coaching group, and as an organisation as a whole. I certainly went into this campaign with optimism, had a few rude awakenings, but have come away equally optimistic that with the right strategy we can compete and become a force at NPC level.

The Future

The only good thing about an under-performing campaign is it really puts the microscope on all aspects of our programme. We simply need to get better and stop making excuses for poor outcomes.

Our Performance and Pathways Vision

New Zealand's leading player development programme.

Our Goals

- To develop New Zealand representative rugby players at schools, Under 20, and All Blacks/Black Ferns levels;
- To develop professional rugby players at Super Rugby and professional level overseas;
- To strengthen the club game through investment at academy and Turbos contender levels;
- To develop local coaches to become the next coaching team of the Turbos and progress to higher honours;
- To develop a homegrown team where 95 percent of the players on the Turbos roster are local or have been through our academy or club system.

I would like to thank the MRU Board for backing this vision and resourcing our programmes appropriately. We are doing a lot of creative stuff in terms of our player development and coach development

programmes which are already starting to reap rewards. Our 2024 academy cohort is extremely strong and we have seen an influx of quality players coming into the Manawatū region to play club rugby to have a real crack at making the Turbos. This all bodes well for rugby in the Manawatū.



In terms of our 2024 roster we have a high level of continuity with 26 players returning from 2023. A number of our returning players have gone on to other professional contracts after our 2023 campaign:

Brayden Iose - Hurricanes, Super Rugby
Te Kamaka (TK) Howden - Hurricanes, Super Rugby
Brett Camerson - Hurricanes, Super Rugby
Raymond Tuputupu - Hurricanes, Super Rugby
Josh Taula, Hurricanes - Super Rugby
Jordi Viljoen - Hurricanes ITC, Super Rugby
Vernon Bason - Hurricanes NDC, Super Rugby
Sam Coles, Hurricanes NDC, Super Rugby
Logan Wallace - Hurricanes NDC, Super Rugby
Ofa Tauatevalu - Moana Pasifika, Super Rugby
Waqas Nalaga - Fijian Drua, Super Rugby
Isaiah Ravula-Armstrong - Fijian Drua, Super Rugby
Jason Emery - Rugby FCLA, MLR (USA)
Malakai Ngatai-Hala - New England Free Jacks, MLR
Johan Momsen - Houston SaberCats, MLR
Drew Wild - Houston SaberCats, MLR
Taniela Filimone - NOLA Gold, MLR
Luke Campbell - NOLA Gold, MLR
Flyn Yates - Kamaishi Seawaves, Japan League 1
Beaudin Waaka - Skyactivs Hiroshima, Japan League 1

Finally I just want to thank all of our stakeholders for their continued support. I want to reiterate that our recent results haven't been good enough but that we are optimistic that we have well and truly turned the corner.

Mike Rogers, Manawatū Turbos Coach



		Wellington	Taranaki	Canterbury	Northland	Auckland	Tasman	Nth Harbour	Hawke's Bay	Counties	Southland	TOTAL
Beaudein Waaka	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	15	-	15	15	s	15	15	15	15	15	9
Nehe Milner-Skudder	<i>Varsity</i>	14	s	-	-	15	-	11	s	s	-	6
Drew Wild	<i>Feilding</i>	s	15	14	14	-	14	14	11	14	14	9
Tima Fainga'anuku	<i>Kia Toa</i>	11	11	11	11	-	-	-	14	-	-	5
Taniela Filimone	<i>Kia Toa</i>	s	14	-	-	11	-	-	-	13	13	5
Waqā Nalaga	<i>College Old Boys</i>	-	-	-	-	14	11	13	-	-	-	3
Pena Va'a	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	-	-	-	s	-	-	-	11	11	3
Te Rangatira Waitokia	<i>Varsity</i>	13	-	s	13	-	13	-	-	-	-	4
Kyle Brown	<i>Feilding</i>	12	13	13	12	-	s	-	-	-	-	5
Keegan Christian-Goss	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	13	-	-	2
Jason Emery	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	12	12	s	-	12	-	s	s	s	7
James Tofa	<i>College Old Boys</i>	-	-	-	-	12	-	12	12	12	12	5
Brett Cameron	<i>Te Kawau</i>	10	10	10	10	-	10	10	-	-	10	7
Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula	<i>College Old Boys</i>	-	s	s	s	10	s	s	10	10	s	9
Luke Campbell	<i>Kia Toa</i>	9	9	-	-	-	-	-	s	-	s	4
Jordi Viljoen	<i>College Old Boys</i>	s	s	9	9	s	9	s	9	s	-	9
John Poland	<i>Freyberg</i>	-	-	s	s	9	s	9	-	9	9	7
Brayden Iose (c)	<i>Kia Toa</i>	8	8	8	8	-	8	8	8	8	8	9
Slade McDowall	<i>Te Kawau</i>	7	7	7	7	-	7	7	7	7	7	9
Elyjah Crosswell	<i>College Old Boys</i>	s	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Johnny Galloway	<i>Varsity</i>	-	-	-	-	7	s	s	s	s	s	6
Te Kamaka Howden	<i>Feilding</i>	6	-	-	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	8
Terrell Peita	<i>Ponsonby (Akl)</i>	-	s	6	s	8	s	s	s	s	-	8
Julian Goerke	<i>Varsity</i>	-	s	s	-	s	-	-	-	-	-	3
Johan Momsen	<i>Te Kawau</i>	5	6	5	5	s	5	5	-	5	5	9
Josh Taula	<i>Varsity</i>	s	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	2
Ofa Tauatevalu	<i>Kia Toa</i>	4	4	4	s	4	4	s	5	-	s	9
Stan van den Hoven	<i>Varsity</i>	-	5	s	4	-	-	4	4	4	4	7
Feleti Sae-Ta'ufo'ou	<i>Freyberg</i>	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	s	-	3
Sean Paranihi	<i>College Old Boys</i>	s	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	s	4
Flyn Yates	<i>Varsity</i>	s	s	3	3	-	3	3	3	3	3	9
Joe Gavigan	<i>Freyberg</i>	1	1	1	s	1	s	1	s	-	-	8
Darius Mafile'o	<i>Freyberg</i>	-	s	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Malakai Hala-Ngatai	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	-	s	1	s	1	s	-	1	1	7
Cole Keith	<i>Feilding</i>	-	-	s	s	s	s	s	1	s	s	8
Raymond Tuputupu	<i>Freyberg</i>	2	-	s	s	s	s	-	-	-	-	5
Vernon Bason	<i>College Old Boys</i>	s	2	-	-	-	-	-	s	s	s	5
Leif Schwenke	<i>College Old Boys</i>	-	s	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	4
Andrew Quattrin	<i>New England (USA)</i>	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	2	2	2	5
Chris Cairns	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	s	-	-	-	1



RESULTS

Manawatū 6-22 Wellington

4 August in Palmerston North
B. Cameron (2) pens.

Manawatū 17-26 Taranaki

13 August in Palmerston North
F. Yates, B. Iose tries; B. Cameron,
I. Armstrong-Ravula cons.; B. Cameron pen.

Manawatū 26-68 Canterbury

19 August in Christchurch
J. Viljoen, J. Momsen, K. Brown, R. Tuputupu
tries; B. Cameron (2), I. Armstrong-Ravula
cons.

Manawatū 31-30 Northland

25 August in Palmerston North
L. Schwenke (2), T. Howden, penalty try,
B. Iose tries; B. Cameron (2) cons.

Manawatū 33-31 Auckland

30 August in Auckland
T. Peita, W. Nalaga, J. Gavigan, T. Howden, J.
Goerke tries; I. Armstrong-Ravula (4) cons.

Manawatū 19-58 Tasman

3 September in Nelson
S. McDowall, J. Gavigan, J. Poland tries;
I. Armstrong-Ravula (2) cons.

Manawatū 29-48 North Harbour

10 September in Palmerston North
N. Milner-Skudder, S. McDowall, A. Quattrin,
D. Wild, T. Howden tries; B. Cameron,
I. Armstrong-Ravula cons.

Manawatū 7-57 Hawke's Bay

15 September in Napier
B. Waaka try; I. Armstrong-Ravula con.

Manawatū 19-46 Counties Manukau

23 September in Pukekohe
B. Iose (2), J. Tofa tries; I. Armstrong-Ravula
(2) cons.

Manawatū 12-37 Southland

1 October in Palmerston North
J. Poland, B. Iose tries; B. Waaka con.

CYCLONES REPORT

It is always such a bittersweet moment to come so close to a title, but to fall short. The Cyclones can be so immensely proud of what they achieved in 2023 and it was pleasing to see so many players rewarded with higher honours.

There were 11 players signed to the Hurricanes Poua in Super Rugby Aupiki and one to Matatū. Seeing Layla Sae make her Black Ferns debut was a fitting reward for another dominant season from the loose forward, while Rangimarie Sturmey and Sam Taylor being called into the Black Ferns XV was another highlight.

Season

The Cyclones could not have started the season in more dominant fashion, dealing to Taranaki 84-0 in Taranaki, the second largest winning margin in the team's history.

They would continue with solid wins over Northland, North Harbour, and Tasman. In the final round robin game, which doubled as Selica Winiata's 100th for Manawatū, the Cyclones pulled off one of the great comebacks of the season. At the 77-minute mark, the Cyclones were behind 27-19, but a try to Maia Davis was backed by a length of the field team effort finished by Hollyrae Mete in referee's time to clinch the victory.

The semifinal performance was another display of complete dominance as Manawatū crushed Tasman 73-10 to set up a home final.



The Farah Palmer Cup Championship final against Northland was a great occasion with a large crowd in attendance. The Cyclones got off to a slow start and were not helped when captain Selica Winiata was red carded in the ninth minute for a high tackle. Late in the first half the Cyclones trailed 26-7, but two quick tries reduced the deficit to 26-19 at the break. The Cyclones looked to have the fitness as they continued to fire in the second half. A try in the 74th minute saw the Cyclones carrying the momentum and behind by just three points, but as players ran back to halfway one of the stadium generators blew descending the Arena into darkness. After a 15 minute delay, the lights were restored for the final five minutes of the game, but the Cyclones could not add to the scoreboard.



Community

Getting out in the Community continues to be a priority for the Cyclones. Amongst their community connections in 2023 were school visits, training days, open captain's run, Cyclone for the day, and a series of special jersey presentations.

Staff

The Cyclones had a big change in management team including new Head Coach Chris Wilton. Chris, known by players as Matua, came to the team from Heartland Rugby where he had coached Horowhenua-Kāpiti. He was joined by Assistant Coach Bryce Grant. Chris Day returned as Manager with Sally Boyt as his Assistant Manager. Annalise Early returned as the Performance Analyst having spent the offseason with the Stars netball team in the ANZ Premiership. Luke Vasu started the year as Strength and Conditioning Coach, but was replaced by Geoff Pound when he departed for Japan. Claire Maxwell was also added to the team as physio.

The Squad

Traest Mafile'o was one of the finds of the season up front. The 18-year-old held her own starting every game but one when she was injured. Marilyn Live was reliable as ever and the team were well resourced at prop with Ngano Tavake and Caitlin Burt-Poloai impressing off the bench. Sosoli Talawadua continued to provide great leadership from hooker and was a great mentor for Te Uarangi Olsen-Baker who was strong in her first season in the front row.

Another great find was eventual Rookie of the Year Sam Taylor who starred at lock. In her first year in rugby after transferring from netball, Taylor showed great athleticism and work-rate. Rachael Rakatau and Kahurangi Sturmey were reliable as always and Brianna Wallace fought hard to earn her debut.

The strength of the Cyclones was built from their loose forward trio. Layla Sae, Kaipō Olsen-Baker and Rhiarna Ferris all had strong seasons and Elinor-Plum King's performances from the bench were of such quality she demanded a start come playoffs. With such a strong quartet, Sam Tipene, who played her 50th game, and exciting 16-year-old Taufā Bason had limited opportunities.

Paige Lush had a strong season in the number nine jersey and she had to keep it from 16-year-old Maia Davis. Davis, also had opportunities at fullback with her showing all the signs of a future star.

Mia Maraku and Corrineke Windle shared the number 10 jersey, but the midfield was more settled with Rangimarie Sturmey and Hollyrae Mete forming a strong partnership and Rebekah Tufuga bringing impact from the bench. Sturmey's rise in her new position should see her lock up the number 12 jersey for the foreseeable future. She was crowned Back of Year, Players' Player of the Year and Cyclones Player of the Year, and capped it off with a call up to the Black Ferns XV.

Te Whetumarama Nuku announced her arrival to the Cyclones by dotting down for four tries, equalling the most in a game for a Cyclones player with Catherine Doyle and Selica Winiata (twice). Jashana Te Uawiri and Ruci Malanicagi were also strong on the wing.

At fullback, Selica Winiata started every game, racking up her 100th for Manawatū in the final pool match against Otago. It was a momentous occasion for women's rugby in Manawatū and there was not a more fitting player to become the province's first female centurion. Selica has battled the odds her entire career being one of the smallest players on the field, but setting the tone as one of the greatest attacking weapons in rugby. Selica's impact on women's rugby in Manawatū cannot be understated on and off the field. The Cyclones programme owes a significant amount to the level she has set for the group in terms of their professionalism. Selica has also been a key driver in setting the culture within the Cyclones.





		Taranaki	Northland	Nth Harbour	Tasman	Otago	Tasman	Northland	TOTAL
Selica Winiata (c)	<i>Kia Toa</i>	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	7
Te Whetumarama Nuku	<i>Freyberg</i>	14	14	14	-	-	14	14	5
Ruci Malanicagi	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	-	-	14	14	s	s	4
Jashana Te Uawiri	<i>Freyberg</i>	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	7
Leiana Marshall-Barton	<i>Freyberg</i>	s	s	s	-	-	s	-	4
Hollyrae Mete	<i>Kia Toa</i>	13	13	s	13	13	13	13	7
Jayda Maniapoto	<i>Freyberg</i>	s	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rebekah Cordero-Tufuga	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	s	13	s	s	s	s	6
Rangimarie Sturme	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	7
Mia Maraku	<i>FOB-Ōroua</i>	10	10	10	s	10	-	-	5
Corrineke Windle	<i>Bush</i>	s	-	-	10	-	10	10	4
Maia Davis	<i>FOB-Ōroua</i>	9	s	s	s	s	-	s	6
Paige Lush	<i>Freyberg</i>	-	9	9	9	9	9	9	6
Kaipo Olsen-Baker	<i>Freyberg</i>	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	7
Rhiarna Ferris	<i>FOB-Ōroua</i>	7	7	7	7	7	-	-	5
Elinor-Plum King	<i>FOB-Ōroua</i>	s	s	s	-	s	7	7	6
Layla Sae	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7
Sam Tipene	<i>Bush</i>	-	s	-	-	-	-	-	1
Taufa Bason	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	-	-	s	-	s	-	2
Rachael Rakatau	<i>FOB-Ōroua</i>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	7
Kahurangi Sturme	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	4	4	4	4	4	s	s	7
Sam Taylor	<i>Freyberg</i>	s	s	s	-	s	4	4	6
Brianna Wallace	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	-	-	-	s	-	-	-	1
Ruby-May Ngaruhe	<i>Bush</i>	s	3	s	-	-	s	s	5
Caitlin Burt-Poloai	<i>Kia Toa</i>	s	s	3	s	s	s	s	7
Marilyn Live	<i>Kia Toa</i>	-	-	s	3	3	3	3	5
Traest Mafile'o	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	3	1	1	1	1	-	1	6
Ngano Tavake	<i>Old Boys-Marist</i>	1	2	-	s	s	s	-	5
Sosoli Talawadua	<i>Whanganui Marist</i>	2	-	s	2	2	1	2	6
Te Uurangi Olsen-Baker	<i>Freyberg</i>	s	s	2	s	s	2	s	7

Manawatu 84 v O Taranaki

23 July in New Plymouth

T. Nuku (4), K. Olsen-Baker (3), R. Ferris (2),
H. Mete (2), J. Te Uawiri (2), L. Sae tries;
S Winiata (6), M. Maraku cons.

Manawatū 34-28 Northland

29 July in Palmerston North

R. Sturmey, J. Te Uawiri, K. Olsen-Baker,
E. King tries; S. Winiata (4) cons.; S. Winiata
(2) pens.

Manawatū 57-9 North Harbour

6 August in Silverdale

L. Sae (2), R. Sturmey, J. Te Uawiri, R. Rakatau,
T. Olsen-Baker, K. Olsen-Baker, K. Sturmey,
S. Winiata tries; S. Winiata (5), M. Davis cons.

Manawatū 46-14 Tasman

13 August in Palmerston North

P. Lush (2), R. Malanicagi (2), S. Winiata,
M. Live, C. Windle tries; S. Winiata (4) cons.;
S Winiata pen.

Manawatū 31-27 Otago

19 August in Dunedin

H. Mete (2), J. Te Uawiri, M. Live, M. Davis tries;
S. Winiata (3) cons.

Manawatū 73-10 Tasman FPC Championship Semifinal

2 September in Palmerston North

J. Te Uawiri (2), R. Sturmey (2), M. Live, L. Sae,
S. Winiata, S. Talawadua, T. Bason,
C. Burt-Poloai, P. Lush tries; S. Winiata (9)
cons.

Manawatū 29-32 Northland FPC Championship Final

10 September in Palmerston North

T. Nuku (2), M. Live (2), R. Malanicagi tries; C.
Windle, M. Davis cons.

RESULTS





MILESTONES

TURBOS

20TH (BLAZER) GAME

- Tima Fainga'anuku (#1686) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Flyn Yates (#1688) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Brett Cameron (#1684) v Canterbury, 19 August
- Joe Gavigan (#1692) v Tasman, 3 September
- Ofa Tauatevalu (#1694) v North Harbour, 10 September

DEBUT

- Raymond Tuputupu (#1705) v Wellington, 5 August
- Feleti Ta'ufu'ou-Sae (#1706) v Wellington, 5 August
- Johan Momsen (#1707) v Wellington, 5 August
- Kyle Brown (#1708) v Wellington, 5 August
- Beaudein Waaka (#1709) v Wellington, 5 August
- Vernon Bason (#1710) v Wellington, 5 August
- Jordi Viljoen (#1711) v Wellington, 5 August
- Stan van den Hoven (#1712) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Terrell Peita (#1713) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula (#1714) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Julian Goerke (#1715) v Taranaki, 13 August
- Malakai Hala-Ngatai (#1716) v Canterbury, 19 August
- Cole Keith (#1717) v Canterbury, 19 August
- John Poland (#1718) v Canterbury, 19 August
- Andrew Quattrin (#1719) v Auckland, 30 August
- Waqa Nalaga (#1720) v Auckland, 30 August
- Pene Va'a (#1721) v Auckland, 30 August
- Chris Cairns (#1722) v North Harbour, 10 September

CYCLONES

100TH GAME

- Selica Winiata (#202) v Otago, 19 August



50TH GAME

- Sam Tipene (#326) v Northland, 29 July

20TH (BLAZER) GAME

- Rangimarie Sturmey (#375) v Northland, 29 July
- Sosoli Talawadua (#373) v Tasman, 13 August
- Paige Lush (#384) v Tasman, 2 September

DEBUT

- Traest Mafile'o (#399) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Maia Davis (#400) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Te Uarangi Olsen-Baker (#401) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Te Whetumarama Nuku (#402) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Caitlin Burt-Poloai (#403) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Sam Taylor (#404) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Jayda Maniapoto (#405) v Taranaki, 23 July
- Brianna Wallace (#406) v Tasman, 13 August
- Taufa Bason (#407) v Tasman, 13 August

COMMUNITY RUGBY PARTICIPATION **STATISTICS**

Total Players **4324**

Juniors
2060



Teens
1189



Adults
1075



Females
761



Males
3563



Referees
40

Coaches
328



ACADEMY REPORT

2023 was another positive year for the Manawatū Rugby Academy, with a number of our players excelling on the national and international stage.

Our academy members thrived in the Manawatū club rugby competition, with all them being regular starters for their club teams. This was a testament to the quality of players selected for the academy in 2023.

We had great representation at the World Rugby U20 Championship in South Africa, with six of our academy players taking part in the global tournament. Vernon Bason, Malakai Hala-Ngatai, and Jordi Viljoen were in the New Zealand squad, Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula and Waqa Nalaga played for Fiji, and John Samuelu represented Samoa. Recent academy graduate Raymond Tuputupu also made the New Zealand team for the second straight year.

We were proud to see five of our academy members make the step up to the Turbos for the NPC season. This included second year academy players Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula, Malakai Hala-Ngatai, Jordi Voljoen, and Waqa Nalaga, and first year player Vernon Bason.

Seeing Isaiah and Waqa pick up Super Rugby Pacific contracts with the Fijian Drua at the end of the year, and Jordi part of the Hurricanes wider training squad was a massive tick of approval for the work the academy is doing to help young players develop into full-time professionals.

Identifying and recruiting top local talent for the academy remains a priority for us going forward. It is crucial that we hold on to our players, as they are well sort after – rival unions visit our schools and bring players from our province in to look at their organisations, so we need to identify promising players and have conversations with them early. We have huge support from the Hurricanes to keep our talented players in our union, which is a big plus.



We'd like to acknowledge everyone who contributed to the growth and development of our academy players throughout the year – Academy Manager Lifeimi Mafi, Personal Development Manager Alice Bradnock, Strength and Conditioning Coaches Luke Vasu and Geoff Pound, and Mental Skills Coach Luke Rowe.

2023 MANAWATŪ RUGBY ACADEMY

YEAR ONE

Moses Armstrong-Ravula
Vernon Bason
Sam Coles
Sam Kane
Telson Liuvaie
Tadhg O'Connor

YEAR TWO

Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula
Malakai Hala-Ngatai
Logan Henry
Tutangiora Mafi
Waqa Nalaga
John Samuelu
Jordi Viljoen



2023 ACADEMY HONOURS

NEW ZEALAND UNDER 20

Vernon Bason, Malakai Hala-Ngatai,
Raymond Tuputupu*, Jordi Viljoen

FIJI UNDER 20

Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula, Waqa Nalaga

SAMOA UNDER 20

John Samuelu

HURRICANES UNDER 20

Isaiah Armstrong-Ravula, Vernon Bason,
Sam Coles, Malakai Hala-Ngatai,
Waqa Nalaga, Raymond Tuputupu*,
Jordi Viljoen

MOANA PASIFIKA UNDER 20

John Samuelu

* Was in the Manawatū Rugby Academy in
2021 and 2022

COMMUNITY RUGBY REPORTS

Game Development and Operations

Manager - SHAUN EADE

It was a privilege to return to the Manawatū Rugby Union to lead the Game Development team in 2023. It was invigorating to hear the fresh and bold ideas of the team to grow the game in the community.



The Game Development team had a fresh look in 2023 with Matt Booth (Game Development – Club Lead) and Abby King (Game Development Administrator) coming on board in January, Ryan Evans (Game Development – Schools Lead) joining in April and Irene Walker (Game Development – Women and Girls Activator) joining in August after Kahurangi Sturmeys’ promotion to Game Development – Women and Inclusion Lead.

The team set out with lofty goals, but limited planning time to achieve them. Regardless we saw the launch of a host of highly successful programmes including the Ashleigh Knight Memorial Cup for secondary school rugby, the Club of Origin where secondary schoolboys donned their club colours over two weekends, and the Josef Schmidt Under 85kg Cup – a senior club competition which ran after the main club rugby window in August and September.

The women’s and girls’ space continues to thrive with more than 10,000 engagements registered in 2023. This was also captured by the 41 percent increase in registered junior girls playing our sport.

The rippa space continues to be a major area of opportunity with primary and secondary schools competitions the Junior Cup, the Mark Donaldson Cup, the Sam Strahan Cup, and the Tatarua Cup all receiving strong interest. The Rippa World Cup was also highly successful with 44 teams entering across primary and intermediate schools.

We were also pleased to get sevens rugby moving again with the Central Region Sevens hosted in Manawatū, the first time the competition has run since 2019.

A special acknowledgement goes to all the winners of the club competitions, but also to the Manukura girls side who were sensational in the National 1st XV finals where they were crowned champions. Well done to



Palmerston North Boys' High School who finished third in the boys, and also to Feilding High School who won the Central North Island competition.

Lastly I would like to thank all the amazing volunteers who keep our great game running, including coaches, referees, managers, bar staff, committee members, and all the parents and family members who are on the sideline week after week. You are the people who make our game so special.

Manawatū Club Rugby Executive - CHAIR SEAN O'CONNOR

Community rugby is the core of the Manawatū Rugby Union and a vital part of our wider community, so I wanted to start this report with a huge thanks to all the club coaches, administrators, referees, and other volunteers who give up their time to create the opportunities for the club rugby players in our region.



Continuing on with that theme, it was great to see the acknowledgement of community rugby and even the introduction of some new community rugby awards at the Manawatu Rugby Awards. Congrats to the following winners for 2023:

- Volunteer of the Year - Deborah Heappey
- Community Coach of the Year - Blair van Stipriaan
- Players Choice Referee of the Year, Women's - Brittany Andrew
- Players Choice Referee of the Year, Senior One - Stu Curran
- Senior One Best and Fairest: Jayden Keelan
- Women's Best and Fairest: Brianna Wallace

The 2023 club rugby season saw 38 teams compete across six grades, but before I move on to looking at our usual competitions, I wanted to highlight the

newest competition and a couple of new initiatives launched in 2023.

The introduction of the Under 85kg Grade saw four teams involved in the inaugural season competing for the Josef Schmidt Cup. While a few more teams would be ideal, there were definitely plenty of positives to take from this, including the fact that many of the players across the teams had been inactive and saw this as their opportunity to get back into rugby. Congrats to Massey Lambs who beat Kia Toa in an entertaining final 19-12.

Two other new initiatives were launched in 2023, which saw the MRU and clubs working together with a focus on connecting high school age players and clubs. Both the School Leavers Development Days and Club of Origin were well received, and I am sure will be something that can be built on in the seasons to come.

In our Senior One, competition the Varsity team finally got their hands back on the Hankins Shield after being so close over the past few seasons. It did not come easy though, after being down 33-12. There were probably many who thought it was another year where Varsity were destined to watch the opposition lift the Hankins Shield, but a comeback was launched and a 34-33 win was clinched with a final try deep into injury time. The Varsity win against College Old Boys also means we have had three different champions over the past three seasons, with COB taking the honours in 2022 and Feilding Yellows in 2021. Will we see this trend continue in 2024? I am sure a few clubs will be hoping that's the case, which will be made even more interesting with the re-introduction of Feilding Old Boys-Ōroua and Linton Army to the Senior One competition.

The Women's competition started with a few team changes but remained a seven team comp. Ashhurst Pohangina, a new team in 2022, withdraw and Whanganui Metro pulled out because Whanganui was running its own competition, but two new teams (COB and Freyberg) came into the competition. The other teams that made up the 2023 competition included Kia Toa, Old Boys-Marist, Bush, Feilding Old Boys-Ōroua, and Wairarapa Wāhine Toa. The 2023 Prue Christie Cup final was a thriller with Kia Toa and Old Boys-Marist putting on a great performance, but it was Kias who ran out winners 27-20.



In Senior Two, Feilding Old Boys-Ōroua went unbeaten through the season to claim the Houlihan Cup for the second year in a row. Their opposition in the final was COB, who were looking to make a day of it, featuring in three of the finals. FOBŌ continued the dominance they showed throughout the season to take the final 51-19.

The Senior Three Life Members' Cup was battled out between Bunnythorpe and Massey Vets. Bunnythorpe proved too strong in the final and ran out winners 38-15.

The Presidents Grade saw a close battle between Bulls and Foxton which went right down to the wire. In the end it was Foxton who claimed the last minute win 15-13.

The Gordon Brown Memorial Cup final for the Colts was a replay of the 2022 final with COB and the very consistent Feilding Yellows (2023 was their fifth final in a row) facing off. As mentioned, COB had teams involved in three finals and it was their Colts who showed the others how to get the job done. They were strong through the 2023 season and that continued in the final as they claimed the win 32-15 to make it back-to-back championships.

The clubs who had the championship success in 2023 have had their acknowledgement, but I want to congratulate each and every club for what you do and

what you bring to Manawatū community rugby. We now look forward to what is shaping as an interesting 2024 season!

Manawatū Secondary Schools Rugby Board - CHAIR NICK REID

2023 was the start of our new post-COVID normal. We are well-pleased with what the board and schools achieved in providing opportunities for rugby players, coaches, managers, and fans of the game. We still have opportunities for 2024, with focuses on the female game for those girls entering the college system and the retention of those boys hitting Year 11.



Again we must take the time to thank those volunteers who played a significant role in making 2023 a success - our Operations Board, who Zoomed

often to ensure day to day tasks were completed and events juggled to ensure rugby was played. The board consisted of Damon Durie (PNBHS), Justin Lock (FAHS), Rob Jones (FAHS), Saskia Beveridge (Freyberg High School) and myself, Nick Reid (Awatapu College).

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the contribution Rob Jones has made. Rob, with his family, left to take up an exciting position coaching in Canada. His contribution to the female game here has been significant, as co-founder of the National 1st XV Hine Pounamu trophy but more importantly the push he has given the women's game in our region. A number of new frontiers were broken though Rob and his supporters.

We must also thank those staff within our kura who act as the main point of contact within the school and the union. Your support and hard work is greatly appreciated.

It is timely that we also thank the many other volunteers that helped with our programmes and those staff who are in paid roles; they exceedingly go above and beyond. In particular, thanks to Campbell McNeill (Manawatū Rugby) for his time before taking on a teaching role at Feilding High School (replacing Rob), and Ryan Evans (Manawatū Rugby) for his work in the youth space.

I would also like to acknowledge the work the union has done in the attempt to offer young school leavers an opportunity to remain in the game with the Tautoko initiative which will kick off in 2024.

It would be remiss of us not to acknowledge the support of our referees. In a time where people's time becomes more precious, we are grateful for those refs willing to turn up to fixtures and remain involved in the game. We must all continue to support these volunteers as without them our game will struggle.

HIGHLIGHTS

Manukura (Manawatū) defeated St. Mary's College (Wellington) 30-19 to become the Hurricanes' Female 1st XV Champions. They then went on to be crowned National Champions; an outstanding achievement.

Palmerston North Boys' High School can also be well-pleased with their effort as Hurricanes' Male

Champions. Whilst the National Finals results did not go their way, a bounce here or there may well have seen them also crowned champions.

I would also like to take a moment to mention the efforts of Feilding High School in what proved to be a truly bizarre end to their season. I wish to acknowledge the school for the way in which they all dealt with controversy resulting from their semi-final loss.

Mention should also be made of the Manawatū Under 16 Boys team who won the Manaaki Tangata trophy for the first time at the Hurricanes' Youth Council under 16 tournament.

Finally, we thank the Manawatū Rugby Union and its sponsors for the guidance and support offered throughout the year. We look forward to the challenges of 2024 but are excited about the prospects.

Manawatū Junior Rugby Board - CHAIR KENT HIGSON

The 2023 junior rugby season was a success in the Manawatū. Player numbers remained strong throughout the Manawatū which is a testament to the community's resilience and clubs putting in additional efforts to provide a quality experience for their players and families.



Sideline behaviour continues to be a focus. While the behaviour is generally to a high standard, there continues to be several occasions during the season when it is not at the expected level. It is disappointing that the adults involved in junior rugby do not always conduct themselves appropriately with a focus on the children's enjoyment. Record keeping of these incidents has been poor and we have highlighted the need to make this a much more robust process with the clubs so that the MRU can enforce penalties and build a history

over time. I am confident we can make positive improvements in the 2024 season and beyond.

The 2023 season saw the introduction of the intermediate development module to bridge the gap that has been left from the removal of the representative programme. This was a key focus from the Junior Rugby Board and the implementation was led by the committee members. The programme rewarded children that showed potential and that were eager to learn. The focus was on player development and is intended to give players an opportunity to learn from new coaches and play games at a higher level than their regular Saturday morning games. We made three teams from both Year 7 and Year 8 which allowed 30 percent of children from the eligible school years to participate. By in large this programme was well received by the 130 boys and girls across the six teams, with learnings to be implemented in 2024 to further improve the experience for all those involved. A big thank you to the coaches that put their hands up to run the teams.

2023 brings an end to the age-based grades and we will now move to school year-based grades in 2024 at the direction of the NZRU. The goal of this is to keep children playing with their schoolmates and has the added benefit of removing the often-problematic U13 grade where half of the players play for junior clubs and the other half play for their high schools. Clubs are concerned about the disruption this will cause to established teams and the coaching mix within their clubs. The 2024 season will be an embedding season where the MRU will work closely with clubs to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

I would like to thank all the members of the MJRB for the time you have given this season. Finally, a big thank you to all the club convenors, administrators, and volunteers who have given their time to coach, manage, referee, and carry the water bottles. Junior rugby would not be possible without your commitment and passion.

Manawatū Rugby Referees' Association - PRESIDENT MATT BOOTH

The 2023 rugby year was another unique year. The ongoing issue of low numbers again meant that we were not able to referee all fixtures. But a positive is we grew the number of refs by six. Those referees we do have go

out week after week and ref to the best of their ability in a very professional manner and I'm sure I thank you all, on behalf of all players, coaches, administrators, and spectators across the region.



A big congratulations to five of our referees who have made the new high performance Hurricanes zone referee squad - Stu Curran, Matty McEwen, Sam Couper, Jacob Booth, and Warrick Price.

The relationship between the MRU and the MRRA throughout 2023 continued to grow and we are looking forward to this continuing in 2024. There is a focus on how each organisation can assist each other to further improve rugby across the Manawatū.

The MRRA is very grateful for all the assistance and support provided by the MRU. There are some exciting opportunities coming up in 2024 for the growth of referees with the help of the two organisations.

The coaching and grading members continue to support and guide referees across all grades. There is work to come in 2024 which will further enhance our referee coaching program and assist our new and old coaches. On behalf of the MRRA Executive I would like to sincerely thank them for their efforts in 2023.

I would like to thank the other members of the MRRA Executive for all their hard work throughout the year. The time devoted to running the association can be demanding and without your dedication we simply wouldn't achieve it.

I look forward to seeing how much we can achieve in 2024.

SENIOR CLUB

TROPHY WINNERS

Abraham Cup

Club Supremacy

College Old Boys

SENIOR ONE

Jubilee Cup

End of First Round

Old Boys-Marist

Centennial Shield

End of Second Round

Old Boys-Marist

Hankins Shield

Champions

Varsity

Top Points

Aidan Champion (OBM) – 97

Top Tries

Timoci Seruwalu (COB) – 10

Best & Fairest

Jayden Keelan (COB)

WOMEN

Prue Christie Cup

Champions

Kia Toa

Top Points

Selica Winiata (Kia Toa) – 56

Top Tries

Selica Winiata (Kia Toa) &
Wikitoria Doyle (OBM) - 8

Best & Fairest

Brianna Wallace (OBM)

SENIOR TWO

John Clifford Memorial Cup

End of First Round

Feilding Old Boys-Ōroua

Houlihan Cup

Champions

Feilding Old Boys-Ōroua

SENIOR THREE

Life Members' Cup

Champions

Bunnythorpe

COLTS

Broome Shield

End of First Round

College Old Boys

Gordon Memorial Cup

Champions

College Old Boys

PRESIDENTS

President's Cup

Champions

Foxton

UNDER 85KG

Josef Schmidt Cup

Champions

Massey Lambs

REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY TEAMS

MANAWATŪ EVERGREENS

Squad: Moses Armstrong-Ravula, Harry Black, Chris Cairns, Tomas Casares, Joeli Cataniaivalu-Rauca, Keegan Christian-Goss, Sam Coles, Cam Davidowicz, Kody Edwards, Tyler Edwards, Darren Falaniko, Taniela Filimone, Bradley Fountain, Julian Goerke, Max Harris, Sam Hunter, Jekop Kitou, Darius Mafile'o, Matt Masoe, Kaide McCashin, Ben Minhinnick, Waqa Nalaga, Alec Odell, Lucas Puts, Jakob Rauhihi-Collins, Jay Rolleston, John Samuelu, Ben Schuster, Jared Sellwood, DJ Taoipu, James Tofa, Lotu Tomohuni, Lene Tonga, Kaoru Tsuruta, Pena Va'a, Sase Va'a.

Head Coach: Nathan Williams

Assistant Coach: Sam Mayes

Assistant Coach: Kingi Matenga

Assistant Coach: Jason Adamson

Manager: Kayne Dunlop

Physiotherapist: Mel Poa



Results

22 July - game of two halves in Whanganui

v NZ Defence Force - won 14-7

v Whanganui - lost 0-28

29 July v Wairarapa Bush in Masterton - lost 41-70

12 August v Wellington Centurions in Feilding - lost 17-43

19 August v Wellington Centurions in Wellington - lost 30-48

26 August v Hawke's Bay Saracens in Napier - lost 17-75

9 September v Pasifika XV in Taupō - abandoned leading 17 - 12

MANAWATŪ WĀHINE DEVELOPMENT XV

Squad: Ffion Barr, Jessica Bills, Kaea Boyd, Riahn Brickland, Martha Broughton, Kate Donald, Anyis Drossaerts-Lake, Bridget Gavigan, Anahera Hamahona, Wikitoria Hauraki, Briahna Jackson, Tayla Kuiti, Jordan Kruger, Pounamu Mackay, Jessie Malasilia, Jane Masoe, Paris Munro, Jaka Nikora-Townsend, Sam Olsen, Krimson Pamata, Maddie Reid, Makarena Riddick, Xanthe Somerville, Nia Sutherland, Ata Uaine Riana Tamati, Annemieke van Vliet, Kaia Walker-Waitoa, Shaniqka Wall, Rheanna Wood.

Head Coach: Slade Sturmeay

Assistant Coach: Campbell MacNeill

Assistant Coach: Mallory Nikora-Townsend

Manager: Brittany Andrew



Results

14 July v Waikato Development in Taupō (game of three halves)
lost 0-27, lost 5-10, lost 0-31

30 July v Wellington Academy in Lower Hutt - lost 12-38

6 August v Wellington Academy in Lower Hutt - lost 17-25

13 August v Wellington Academy in Palmerton North - lost 21-32

MANAWATŪ UNDER 18 GIRLS

Squad: Taufua Bason, Lashay Blake-Thompson, Manaia Blake-Thompson, Riahn Brickland-Tatana, Alaiha Bryers, Sasha Crowley, Maia Davis, Fuianina Feulufai, Kaelyn Ilangana-Latu, Maia Leatherby-Milla, Hera Maihi, Jessie Malaesilia, Jayda Maniapoto, Casey Mitchell, Grace Nomino, Ana Lilo-Paki, Shikynah Pearson, Prayer Playle, Storm Ratima, Xanthe Somerville, Charlotte Stachurski, Nia Sutherland, Kaydence Mose Tuillii, Havahna Tuwhangai-Moon.



Head Coach: Paul Craven

Assistant Coach: Rangimarie Sturmeay

Assistant Coach: Taylor Waterson

Manager: Shelley Hanlon

Results

9 September - game of three halves in Palmerston North v Hawkes Bay - won 19-17

v Whanganui - won 44-17

16 September v Wellington in Ōtaki - Lost 12-17

23-25 September Hurricanes Youth Rugby Council Camp in Napier - Finished 6th

MANAWATŪ UNDER 19 BOYS

Squad: Moses Armstrong-Ravula, Matt Anstis, Aloysius Autagavaia, Ollie Beech, Arje Beveridge, Alex Boblea, Nikora Brown, Cam Caffell, Sam Coles, Sam Dyer, Wairehu Elliot, Kees Greig, Ajae Hansen, Ben Harris, Toa Kaleopa, Sam Kane, Roley Kinloch, Otufangavalu Laumape, Telson Luivaie, Sam Lyon, Germain Manson, Ben Minhinnick, Logan Mitchell, Ben Motamed, Reuben Nelley, Tadgh O'Connor, Zayne Poole, Te Wharehoka Rapana, Joe Simpson-Smith, Livai Stevenson, Tyler Stewart, Henry Strang, Akina Tairea-Thompson, Andre Teitinga, Kurtis Tinetti, Sili Toa, Mason Waller.



Head Coach: Chris Long

Assistant Coach: Jacob Meehan

Assistant Coach: Johann Botha

Assistant Coach: Scott Davidson

Manager: Sam Kearins

Results

29 July v Taranaki in Waverley - lost

1 August v NZ Marist Colts in Palmerston North -lost

5 August v Bay of Plenty in Taupō - lost

26 August v Hawke's Bay in Napier - lost

2 September v Wellington in Palmerston North - lost

9 September v Hurricanes U20 in Palmerston North - lost

MANAWATŪ UNDER 16 GIRLS

Squad: Keighley-Rein Araia, Fono Bason, Casey Bolton-Smith, Hannah Cadzow, Eva-Rose Dean, Sirhya Easle, Briar Hales, Patricia Heihei, Kōtuku Hennessy, Kate Hopkins, Tayma Jahnke, Malina Leatherby-Millar, Rebecca MacDonald, Te Waikaukau Mathieson-Julian, India Okanara, Te Aiokura Paniora-Kendrick, Sophie Parker-Cornelius, Malama Palelie, Payten Peka, Kahlliyah Pilkington-Hurunui, Lexi Pomare, Jahdonaye Pritchard, Tayla Seng, Laila Severinse, Te Maia Sweetman, Elley-May Taylor, Anastascia Tufele, Emerald Tuhiwai-Polson, Suitupe Utailesolo, Gabby Wright.

Head Coach: Mahalia Polson
Assistant Coach: Nigel Bilton
Assistant Coach: Brett Cribb
Manager: Kylie Trask



Results

19 August v Hawke's Bay in Napier - won 38-22
2 September - game of three halves in Masterton v Wairarapa Bush - won 29-0
v Thames Valley - won 43-0
9 September v Taranaki in Hawera - lost 26-48

MANAWATŪ UNDER 16 BOYS

Squad: Tristain Chambers, Ryder Crosswell, Harry Dickson, Alani Fakava, Tana Faumuina, Nixon Foreman, Hunter Kennedy, Siokatame Langilangi, Kisione Ma'asi, Jack Redington, Oshay Rogan, Viliami Rongokea-Tupou, Karnyae Ropiha-Waiwai, Alex Palazzo, Moe Sekona, Henry Speedy, Nehemiah Sua, Clark Sutcliffe, Josh Taopua, Jamie Viljoen, TJ Wallace, Frazier Wainohu, Flynn White, Te Wano Winiata-Enoka.

Co-Coach: Matthew Kidby
Co-Coach: Blair van Stipriaan
Co-Coach: Justin Lock
Manager: Belinda Crosswell



Results

2 September v Taranaki in Waverly - lost
9 September v Wellington in Palmerston North - won
16 September v Hawke's Bay in Palmerston North - lost 7-12
Hurricanes Youth Rugby Council Camp - 23-25 September in Napier
v Wellington Black - lost 8-10
v Wellington Gold - lost 7-29
v Wellington Black - won 26-19

MANAWATŪ MĀORI TĀNE

Squad: James Cameron, Rickey Cribb, Jeremy David, Reuben Davis, Bradley Fountain, Jacob Freeman, Taare Ferris, Albert Hemopo, Jalon Governor, Max Harris, Grant Kauri, Shaun Lawton-Sue, Jarrod Mackey, Kobe McLean, Jamie Maoate, Matthew Maoate, Alex Metekingi, Leighton Osgood, Kees Pereka, Harry Purcell, Lucas Puts, Jakob Rauhihi-Collis, Trent Reti, Potene Rolls-Paewai, Tai Rolls-Paewai, Jared Sellwood, Dean Shiels, Shaquille Sue-Waara, Leo Tanginoa, Kopere Tanoa, Daniel Tawhai, Tama Whatuira.



Head Coach: Potene Paewai

Assistant Coach: Kingsley Teppett

Assistant Coach: Dan Butters

Manager: Damian Peeti

Assistant Manager: Alana McKay

Physiotherapist: Elouise Kissock

Results

Te Tini Māori Tournament - 5 August in Napier and Hastings

v Wairoa - lost 14-27

v Te Upoko o te Ika - won 19-17

v Turanganui a Kiwa - 22-19

12 August v Horowhenua Kapiti Māori in Feilding - won 40-25

19 August v Central Hawkes Bay in Palmerston North - won 32-17

26 August v Wairarapa Bush Barbarians in Bulls - lost 29-31

MANAWATŪ WOMEN'S SEVENS

Squad: Rhiarna Ferris, Anahera Hamahona, Itsuki Kimura, Elinor-Plum King, Paige Lush, Jesse Malaesilia, Jayda Maniapoto, Crystal Mayes, Hera Maihi, Hollyrae Mete, Keira Mete, Jayme Nuku, Rachael Rakatau, Layla Sae, Kahurangi Sturmey, Rangimarie Sturmey, Nia Sutherland, Sam Taylor, Brianna Wallace, Alesha Williams.

Head Coach: Kristina Sue

Assistant Coach: Slade Sturmey

Manager: Chris Day

Results

Duavata Pasifika Rugby Sevens, 18 November in Napier - First

Central Region Sevens, 25 November in Palmerston North - First



MANAWATŪ MEN'S SEVENS

Squad: Jone Baba, Alex Boblea, Reece Brosnan, Jared Deal, Kody Edwards, Tyler Edwards, Eli Edwards-Martin, Darren Falaniko, Taiaha Mangu, Brandon Phelan, Leighton Ralph, Tyson Savaii, Jared Sellwood, Shaq Waara, Tobias Wickham-Manuel, Hunter Yarrall.

Head Coach: Troy Sherriff

Manager: Kylie Trask

Results

Duavata Pasifika Rugby Sevens, 18 November in Napier - Eighth

Central Region Sevens, 25 November in Palmerston North - Second







THE TEAM BEHIND OUR TEAMS

Go Media, NZP - An Ice Pharma Company, Paladin,
McDonald's Manawatū, The Cobb

Totalspan, Plumbing World, Naylor Lawrence and Associates,
Best Care Whakapai Hauora Charitable Trust,
UCOL | Te Pūkenga

Scafit, Distinction Hotels, Freedom Plus, McIntosh Farm Machinery and
Cranes, PTS Logistics, DTSL, Humphries Construction, Telcospec,
Team DH, Big Chill Distribution, FieldAir, Breakers, Cocky, Manawatū
Hunting and Fishing, Property Brokers, Truckstops, Avant Decorating,
Over and Out Communications

Allan McNeill Chartered Accountants, RY HR, Hedley Electrical,
LW Electrical, Not Now James Catering, Liz Kane Literacy, Kingswood
Property Service, Precise Flooring, Cross Country Rentals, Veronica
Jayne, 100% Leader and Watt, A&P Trucking, Screenprint Services,
Mediaworks, Hirepool, Black and Co Leather, Lido Aquatics Centre,
Black Stump Fencing, Subway

Broadlands Station, T Market Fresh, Vining Group, Fisherprint, D3,
Ricoh, Tranzit, Powa Products, Heatrite, Horleys, Baker's Refrigeration,
SeeMe Media

Turbine Club, Rural Community Group

Mainland Foundation, New Zealand Community Trust, Pub Charities,
Central Energy Trust, Lion Foundation, Trillian Trust

SINCE: 1886



**MANAWATŪ
RUGBY**

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