

PACNEWS SPORTS BULLETIN

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AUST - RUGBY LEAGUE: NRL

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Maroons spoil Blues homecoming to take series opener

SYDNEY, 09 JUNE 2022 (NRL)---Queensland star Cameron Munster stole the show as the Maroons spoiled NSW's return to Accor Stadium, upsetting the Blues 16-10 to take a 1-0 series lead.

In front of 80,512 fans at Sydney's Olympic Park, the Maroons, led by Munster, Daly Cherry-Evans and debutant Patrick Carrigan, dominated on their own terms with big moment plays helping Queensland to a special win.

The Blues enjoyed the field possession early to take a 4-0 lead but the injection of Carrigan in the 15th minute swung momentum Queensland's way and from there the visitors came up with points and the defensive efforts late as NSW struggled to take any control in the match.

Carrigan upstaged Broncos teammate Payne Haas and the remainder of his Blues teammates and brought Munster, who was at his usual roaming best, and Cherry-Evans, who scored a decisive try in the second half, into the game.

Munster ignited the contest in the second half as the Maroons took a 6-4 lead into the break with a piece of individual brilliance, where he fended off four defenders mid-field before breaking the line to spark the Maroons in enemy territory.

He then produced a special one-on-one strip on Stephen Crichton with minutes remaining to ensure the Maroons secured the result, their first under new coach Billy Slater and following their 2-1 series loss last year.

Both Munster and Cherry-Evans were well-supported by Ben Hunt and Harry Grant at the ruck while debutant winger Selwyn Cobbo finished with 162 metres and a try assist for the match.

A game-ending leg injury to Xavier Coates had the Maroons on the back foot for the second half but the visitors rallied in defence as NSW began to charge home in the final quarter of the game.

Blues coach Brad Fittler sprung a double change to the line-up with Reagan Campbell-Gillard and Liam Martin promoted to start, shifting Blues regulars Cameron Murray and Junior Paulo to the bench.

However, the switch didn't come off for the Blues with Fittler now expected to review his side ahead of a must-win Origin II game in Perth. ...PACNEWS

Fijian Drua and Moana Pasifika's success benefits national teams

SUVA/APIA/NUKU'ALOFA, 09 JUNE 2022 (WORLD RUGBY)---World Rugby investment in the establishment of the Moana Pasifika and Fijian Drua Super Rugby franchises has been rewarded with 43 players being selected for their respective nations for the upcoming World Rugby Pacific Nations Cup 2022, which takes place in Fiji from 2-16 July.

With the objective of increasing the competitiveness of the international game, World Rugby has part-funded the franchises to provide an impactful environment and pathway that will ultimately benefit Fiji, Samoa and Tonga on the biggest stage – Rugby World Cup.

The selection of 43 players for the Pacific Nations Cup from Moana Pasifika and Fijian Drua is an important step in that journey, providing each union with the benefit of access to a group of players performing in an environment geared towards achieving success at international level.

Selection highlights

- * World Rugby has committed £3.6 million to supporting Moana Pasifika and Fijian Drua
- * More than half of the players from the two squads have been selected for their respective national teams
- * Of the 43 players involved in the first year of Super Rugby Pacific, 14 will represent Manu Samoa, 13 the 'Ikale Tahi and 16 Fiji
- * Three players join the squads under the 'homecoming' eligibility amendment
- * Performance pathway geared towards success at Rugby World Cup 2023 and beyond
- * National coaches have access to players all year round with optimal preparation availability

Fiji

*= uncapped

Fijian Drua players: Haereiti Hetet, Tevita Ikanivere, Mesulame Dolokoto, Manasa Saulo, Isoa Nasilasila*, Ratu Leone Rotusolia*, Te Ahiwaru Cirikidaveta*, Rusiate Nasove*, Frank Lomani, Simione Kuruvoli, Peni Matawalu*, Teti Tela, Apisalome Vota*, Kalaveti Ravouvou* (pictured), Vinaya Habosi*, Ilaisa Droasese*.

Prop Manasa Saulo is the most-capped player in the squad and one of three veterans of RWC 2019 among the Fijian Drua players in the Flying Fijians squad. Among the nine uncapped Drua players selected are centres Apisalome Vota and Kalaveti Ravouvou and winger Vinaya Habosi who all caught the eye in Super Rugby Pacific with their try-scoring exploits.

Samoa

Moana Pasifika players: Ray Niuia, Samuel Slade, Mike Curry*, Henry Stowers, Alamanda Motuga, Jack Lam, Ere Enari*, Jonathan Taumateine, Henry Taefu, Danny Toala*, Neria Fomai, Nigel Ah Wong*, Lolagi Visinia*, D'Angelo Leula.

Three players from Samoa's RWC 2019 squad in Ray Niuia, Jack Lam and Henry Taefu are among nine players already capped by Manu Samoa. Danny Toala scored a golden-point try against the Hurricanes in March to secure Moana Pasifika's first Super Rugby victory, while Henry Stowers made 144 carries.

Tonga

Moana Pasifika players: Lotu Inisi*, Joe 'Apikotoa*, Samiuela Moli, Solomone Kata, William Havili*, Solomone Funaki, Tima Fainga'anuku*, Veikoso Poliniati*, Sione Tu'ipulotu, Fine Inisi, Anzelo Tuitavuki*, Manu Paea*, Taukiha'amea Koloamatangi*.

Four players already capped by Tonga, including second-row Solomone Funaki who scored Moana Pasifika's first-ever Super Rugby try against the Crusaders in March. Joe 'Apikotoa and William Havili both scored tries as Moana Pasifika upset the Brumbies in May.

World Rugby Director of High Performance, Peter Horne stated: "This selection marks a significant milestone in elevating performances of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga on the world stage. For the first time, the respective national team coaches have had regular access to a group of players playing together in Super Rugby in an environment that has been built around providing a platform for the players and their teams to be the best they can be when it counts at international level.

"More than half of the players have come from the two Super Rugby Pacific franchises, justifying our investment. This is just the beginning of the journey to Rugby World Cup 2023 and beyond, but it is an exciting step in bolstering our holistic support of the Pacific Islands."

Fiji coach Vern Cotter said: "Individual players develop by being put under repeated performance expectations. They learn the benefits of conditioning programmes, preview/review exercises, skill development and being challenged mentally. Super Rugby for the Fijian Drua has put these players in demanding situations, and they have learnt to respond accordingly.

"For the Flying Fijians this has been an important step for Fiji Rugby, it not only provides a pathway for U20 and other high-performance programmes but also takes them a step closer to the demands of international rugby."

Samoa coach Seilala Mapusua said: "The benefits of Moana Pasifika playing in Super Rugby has meant that I was able to select players coming from a tough campaign, which is the perfect stepping stone into test rugby. I no longer have to search for players and wonder if they will be fit enough to play internationals. This will only make Manu Samoa stronger with the inclusion of 14 players from Moana Pasifika."

Tonga coach Toutai Kefu added: "Moana Pasifika has played a crucial and vital part in developing our players this year. Although it's only been a year, I have seen a huge benefit across the playing group.

"To have my players, who otherwise would only be playing club, be exposed daily to expert high-level coaching in a professional environment benefits the 'Ikale Tahi enormously moving forward.

"And, to have these players play against the best rugby players in the southern hemisphere week in, week out will fast track their progress even more."...PACNEWS

FIJI - RUGBY: FIJI TIMES

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Golden mission – Fiji 7s wants gold at Commonwealth Games

SUVA, 09 JUNE 2022 (FIJI TIMES)---Winning gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games at Birmingham, England next month is next on the cards for the Fiji 7s teams.

Fiji has never won gold in rugby 7s at the Commonwealth Games and the team management and officials are working hard to get their first gold.

Fiji Rugby Union chief executive officer John O'Connor confirmed the Fiji 7s team is in camp in Sigatoka and will be joined by head coach Ben Gollings later this week.

The Fiji 7s and the Fijiana 7s sides will take part in the Oceania 7s from 24-27 June.

O'Connor said the FRU would decide whether a Super Sevens Series would take place before the Commonwealth Games.

"Ben (Gollings) arrives today (yesterday)," O'Connor said.

"We will have a meeting with him and see if he requires more game time for his team. Accordingly, we will plan a Super Sevens Series.

"The team is in camp and will go through thorough training sessions once the head coach joins them later this week.

"The men's side has won three silver medals (1998, 2022 and 218) at the Commonwealth Games and a bronze medal in 2006.

The Fijiana 7s side is yet to reach a podium finish at the games. The 2022 Commonwealth Games Rugby 7s competitions will be held from July 29- 01 August...PACNEWS

FIJI - RUGBY: FBC SPORTS

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Fijiana on serious business

SUVA, 09 JUNE 2022 (FBC SPORTS)---Fijiana Head Coach Senirusi Seruvakula is leaving no stone unturned heading into their first Rugby World Cup this year.

Seruvakula says Fiji is in one of the toughest pools with 2017 runner-up England, France and South Africa.

He says they're not going out just to make the numbers.

"But for World Cup, playing Fijiana, it is very tight going into the competition and no one wants to lose, you lose you are out of the quarter-finals. And we are in a strong pool in the World Cup, so there is no chance to lose."

A good testing ground for the Fijiana will be the Oceania Championship from the 9th to the 17th of July in Australia.

Meanwhile, former Flying Fijians captain Mosese Rauluni and Asaeli Tikoirotuma will be part of the Fijiana coaching team for the Oceania Rugby Women's Championship next month in Australia.

The duo is expected to join the extended squad in the country next week.

After retiring in 2007, Rauluni was part of the 2014 Flying Fijians coaching staff that helped Fiji qualify for the 2015 Rugby World Cup.

Tikoirotuma last represented Fiji against the Barbarians in 2019, and was part of the 2012 Super Rugby champions Chiefs.

He also played for Harlequins and London Irish clubs, but has been involved with coaching lately.

Fijiana Head Coach Senirusi Seruvakula says the inclusion of the two will boost their preparations.

"Two of my overseas coaches are arriving next week, Asaeli Tikoirotuma and Mosese Raulini. So they will be part of the Fijiana going into the Oceania, so we need a lot of quality coaches going into this management because of the consistency that we want from these girls. We need guys who have been here before looking after them."

The Oceania Championship squad will be announced next week, with the players to join camp next weekend....PACNEWS

Fijiana Drua talks progressing well

SUVA, 09 JUNE 2022 (FIJI TIMES)---The Fiji Rugby Union says talks between relevant stakeholders regarding the continued participation of the Rooster Chicken Fijiana Drua in Australia's Super W competition are progressing well.

FRU chief executive officer John O'Connor said the stakeholders involved the FRU, Rugby Australia and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs.

He said they were moving ahead to confirm final details to ensure the Fijiana Drua return to defend their Super W title in 2023 and beyond.

"The three stakeholders remain committed to the Fijiana Drua and are buoyed by the platform the team has set for the continued growth and development of women in sport in Fiji," O'Connor said...PACNEWS

Team PNG to send small contingent to Mini games

PORT MORESBY, 09 JUNE 2022 (POST COURIER)---This year's Papua New Guinea team to the Pacific Mini Games is a much smaller contingent compared to the previous team which attended the 2017 games in Vanuatu.

Chef de mission Kila Dick said they would travel with a team of 92 and take part in five of the nine sports.

"Every team we are sending, we want them to go and win medals and it's not about exposure," he said.

"Team PNG finished second in the last games and we want to go one step higher.

"That's at the back of our mind so we had to be quite specific in the teams we send and make sure they win medals.

"Many of our athletes that will be taking part in the Mini Games will be using it as preparation and lead up to the Commonwealth Games next month," Dick said.

"PNG will be taking part in athletics, golf, tennis, va'a and weightlifting.

"Beach volleyball and triathlon were not endorsed due to non-compliance with the Justification Committee's requirements.

"Baseball and Badminton National Federations opted not to participate due to their team's preparations."

Dick said PNG's three high profile athletes Dika Toua, Morea Baru (weightlifting) and Toea Wisel (Athletics) will be vying for gold medals in their respective competitions.

"Other notable weightlifters who are medal contenders are Scofield Sinaka, Thelma Toua and Toua Udia.

"We also have the likes of our tennis sisters Violet, Patricia and Abigail Tere-Apisah, and the Va'a team that can also win medals for Team PNG," he said.

"We are bringing over some of our top athletes so it is possible to win the games but will only depend on their performance."

Dick acknowledged the corporate houses that have been very supportive to Team PNG in participation for the games abroad regardless of the downturn in the economy impacted by Covid-19.

"I am sure we're going to get more support from the corporate houses before we travel to the mini games," he added.

The Pacific Mini Games will commence on June 17-25.

The team returns on the June 26....PACNEWS

PNG - RUGBY LEAGUE: THE NATIONAL

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Marum hoping to bring success into politics

PORT MORESBY, 09 JUNE 2022 (THE NATIONAL) ---Former Hunters and Kumuls coach Michael Marum plans to bring the attributes that gave him success in rugby league to the political arena as he contests the East New regional seat at General Election 2022.

Speaking during a rally at Queen Elizabeth Park in Rabaul last month Marum said his leadership and success as a player, coach and manager had been built on discipline, not cutting corners, following systems and trusting in them and surrounding himself with good people.

"Whether you are leader in sports or in politics, it all depends on how you lead," he said.

"For me, I played my leadership roles and responsibilities in sports for so long and I see no difference with politics.

"For as long as you lead and deliver for the people you're already defining leadership.

"I am coach and I know how to build a team and with that experience I can build a perfect team for East New Britain into the future."

The 2017 Q-Cup premiership winning coach said despite enjoying his commitment to the country's number one sport for over 20 years as a player and then coach he wanted to help develop his home province. The 48-year-old said he was ready for the challenge of running for office because he was sure his leadership, experience, fresh perspectives and desire to make his people's lives better would be a winning combination for the province.

Marum made a name for himself in the rugby league world first as a rugged hooker-lock forward playing for the Kumuls and the Rabaul Gurias and Port Moresby Vipers in the first decade of the then SP Inter-City Cup before transitioning into coaching working under men like Adrian Lam, Bob Bennett and Mal Meninga before taking the reins of the national team in 2015. Under Marum, PNG improved its world ranking from 16th to 5th and regular success over Fiji, Cook Islands and even the British Lions.

Marum acknowledged all in his rugby league journey that had contributed to making him the person he was today.

"I'm thankful to everyone over the years who helped me and gave me the opportunity and support to do what I have done."

With the slogan 'Leadership is not a position, it's an action', Marum said, "You can be a leader, you can talk but when you don't do the action, nothing will happen.

"So let's put it this way, less talk more work. Enough of talking let's work together and create a better East New Britain."..PACNEWS

PNG Hunters' Alu recovering from injury

BRISBANE, 09 JUNE 2022 (THE NATIONAL)---Injured PNG Hunters captain Ila Alu is still recovering from a pre-season injury and will not return to the side soon, coach Matthew Church says.

The 27-year-old's Hostplus Cup season was dealt a cruel blow when he broke his collar bone during a trial match against Central Queensland Capras on March 5.

With the season at its halfway mark, Alu is yet to play a game. Church told The National on Thursday that Alu's return would depend on medical advice.

"Ila Alu broke his collar bone in our first trial match, it required surgery and we have been waiting for it to fully heal," Church said.

"He still requires a follow up appointment but we are governed by the bone healing so we will wait for the all clear from the specialist."

Church said another injury concern was former Waghi Tumbe and fullback Matthew Jesse.

"Terry Wapi comes in for Matthew Jesse; Matthew has battled with a niggling injury for the past few games so we are giving him some time to get that right."

Meanwhile, Church said his side's season was on the line and that the next two rounds would be crucial as they look to keep their finals hopes alive.

"We only remain three competition points out of the finals contention," Church said.

"The next three games are against teams around us on the ladder, this presents opportunities to advance our prospects for the back end of the season."...PACNEWS

CNMI - PACIFIC MINI GAMES: MARIANAS VARIETY

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Pacific Mini Games Organising Committee thanks, commends TurnKey Solutions

SUVA, 09 JUNE 2022 (MARIANAS VARIETY)---As we near the start of the 2022 Pacific Mini Games, businesses continue to step in to ensure the success of the event.

This time, the PMG Organizing Committee would like to recognize CNMI company and gold sponsor TurnKey Solutions.

Under the leadership of Broc Calvo, Billy Grow, and Jerry Lin, TurnKey Solutions has donated software application services valued at US\$40,000 plus additional services.

"We are grateful for TurnKey's generous donation. It's a testament to our business community's support of the games," said Northern Marianas PMG Organizing Committee Chairman Marco Peter.

TurnKey will be providing scoring information and other data during the games.

According to Organizing Committee CEO Ben Babauta, "TurnKey's donation is an invaluable asset to the games. We are grateful for their assistance."

"We want to thank TurnKey Solutions for their support of the NMPMG2022 and generous contribution," the organizing committee stated.

"We have been very fortunate to have private community partners and leaders invest not only their time and resources, but also committed staff to ensure that our Pacific Mini Games are a success.

"The community is coming together. It is with great pride to see the hard work, donations and support flood in. The NMI is ready. Our people are ready for the Pacific Mini Games to begin."...PACNEWS

AUST - RUGBY: RUGBY.COM.AU

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Wallaby Uelese re-signs with Rebels

MELBOURNE, 09 JUNE 2022 (RUGBY.COM.AU)---The Melbourne Rebels have continued to lock down their roster for 2023 and beyond, re-signing Wallaby Jordan Uelese.

It comes after the club confirmed Carter Gordon will remain in the Stockdale until 2024, joining the likes of Cabous Eloff, James Tuttle and Brad Wilkin in re-committing over the past month.

The hooker has come through the Victorian system to become the third home-grown Rebel in club history, making his debut in 2017.

He experienced a breakout year, instantly thrust into the national set-up as he made his debut against South Africa.

The 25-year-old has played 15 games for the Wallabies, including coming off the bench in the 2019 Rugby World Cup quarter-final against England, excited about the chance to add further caps.

"Home is where the heart is, so to be able to do what I love here in my home city with my best mates is a blessing," said Uelese in a statement.

"As a kid, I always dreamt of playing for the Rebels, so to be able to play and wear that jersey is a huge honour and I'm keen to keep putting my hand up to go to battle for this Club.

"I can see our Club going to another level next year and I want to be around to help build some success and push for a finals berth.

"To see more Victorian-bred players is awesome and I know with the talent here there will be many more which makes me so proud, and I want to be around to help see them grow and achieve the dreams that I have."

Rebels GM of Rugby Nick Stiles was equally as excited to return Uelese, believing he is the perfect role model for the next generation of Victorian-born and bred players.

"Jordan's contract extension is great news for the Melbourne Rebels and our Victorian Rugby community," Stiles added.

"Jordan's growth as both a player and person has been a pleasure to watch and the impact he makes off the field, mentoring our next generation and helping build up our pathway players, is really important to what we're trying to achieve as an organisation.

"We're extremely proud of our homegrown players, so to retain them, and to continue to see them grow as players wearing a Rebels' jersey, it's great news for our Club."...PACNEWS

AUST - RUGBY: RUGBY.COM.AU

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 09 Jun 2022

Brumbies centre Len Ikitau suspended following red card

CANBERRA, 08 JUNE 2022 (RUGBY.COM.AU)---Brumbies centre Len Ikitau has been suspended for three weeks following his high tackle on Aidan Morgan.

Ikitau was sent off during their 35-25 victory over the Hurricanes after collecting the flyhalf in the head.

The club opted to challenge the ruling in order to have him cleared for Saturday's semi-final against the Blues.

However, SANZAAR's Judiciary Committee deemed the incident was worthy of a mid-range sanctioning, seeing his suspension reduced from six games to three on account of his clean record.

"Having conducted a detailed review of all the available evidence, including all camera angles and additional evidence, including from the player and submissions from his legal representative, Aaron Lloyd, the Judicial Committee upheld the Red Card under Law 9.13," Judicial Committee Chair Stephen Hardy ruled in a statement.

"With respect to sanction, the Judicial Committee deemed the act of foul play merited a mid-range entry point of 6 matches given the nature of the foul play involving contact with the head.

"Taking into account mitigating factors, including the Player's remorse, exemplary judicial record to date, and conduct during the hearing, the Judicial Committee reduced the suspension by three matches."

Ikitau has applied for Head Contact Process Coaching Intervention, which will see the ban reduced by a week.

This will likely ensure he is cleared to play in the first Test against England if called upon by Dave Rennie on July 3.

"The Player sought permission to apply for the Head Contact Process Coaching Intervention. Any player who has a citing or red card upheld by a disciplinary panel for foul play involving the Head Contact Process may apply to have the final match of their sanction substituted by undertaking a coaching intervention that specifically addresses the technical tackle/contact technique-error that caused or contributed to the foul play," they added.

"The Player was granted permission to apply for the Intervention. This intervention will be overseen by the World Rugby Coaching Intervention Expert Review Panel – a panel of expert independent coaches - and is only be available to first time offenders.

"The player is therefore suspended for 3 weeks. The Judicial Committee has sought more feedback from the Player regarding his potential playing schedule and reserves the right to adjust the date of the sanction upon receipt of the information."

Hurricanes winger Salesi Rayasi was also banned for a week for his fourth yellow card of the season, sin-binned late in the defeat.

He is joined on the sidelines by Highlanders hooker Andrew Makalio, who was handed a three-match ban for his high tackle during their loss to the Blues....PACNEWS