

# PACNEWS SPORTS BULLETIN

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PACNEWS SPORTS

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FIJI - RUGBY: FIJI TIMES

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

## Fiji 7s focus

SUVA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (FIJI TIMES) ----- Fiji interim 7s coach Nacanieli Cawanibukla has a new challenge in the lead up to next week's 2016-2017 Sevens World Series start.

With the change in 7s rules announced this week by World Rugby, matches in the series will be limited to seven minutes - from pool games to the Cup final.

While it has come as a surprise to Cawanibuka, the former national rep turned trainer who helped the Vodafone Fiji 7s team win the gold medal in the Olympics, said Fiji could not afford to "sleep in matches.

"We were caught by the seven minutes, but we have to make sure to reach the finals," he said.

"First we won't look too far ahead of ourselves and we will take each game as it comes.

"With seven minutes each side, obviously there is no time to put our foot off the pedestal and we really have to work hard throughout the game."

He said coaches had been fighting a long time to make the 14-minute final game a reality.

He said one key area for them would be to ensure that players remained focused on the game for the whole 14 minutes.

This means Fiji have to score early and defend well throughout the match to avoid defeat because of the short time span.

This will also take away Fiji's attitude in catch up games especially in 20 minutes finals.

"Obviously it would change how the game is played and it's going to be full on in the finals.

"There is not time for us to slip off in the first half and then play catch up in the second half.

"So that's good for Fiji rugby because we want to play positive rugby and enjoy the ball in space and have as much time with ball in play," he said.

The ruling will see 20 minute final of rugby 7s tournament a thing of the past now.

World Rugby reported that there'll be no more marathon 7s finals in 2017, after the announcement of a series of law changes this week.

With injuries more prevalent in the second half of finals during the World Rugby Sevens Series tournaments, with those deciders going for 20 minutes instead of the usual 14, the governing body has opted to keep the games the usual seven minutes a half.

As well as that change for Sevens, World Rugby has introduced a number of minor changes, including adopting one of Super Rugby's recent law changes.

If a penalty is kicked into touch after full-time without touching another player, teams will be allowed to take their line-out, with play continuing until the ball goes dead.

Contact with the head in Rugby will be dealt with harshly by the game officials.

Sevens regulations have also been changed, with strict time limits to be introduced for teams to prepare for set piece.

The amendments will be introduced from January 1, 2017.....PACNEWS

FIJI - RUGBY: FIJI TIMES

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **The tanoa that unites Fiji's disciplined forces**

SUVA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (FIJI TIMES) --- It is D-Day today.

That's what they say when troops march on to the battlefield.

It brings to the forefront months and years of planning, strategising, training and preparation.

The sweats, the sleepless nights, the walk through jungles, and hours of training to get fit get tested on D-Day.

The fittest and the smartest will survive.

It is fight to kill and kill to win.

At the Laucala Bay Sports complex in a few hours it's 2016 Sukuna Bowl Challenge.

This day has been on the lips of our country's security forces personnel 12 months ago since the dust settled at the ANZ Stadium, Suva, on September 18.

That's when Fiji Police Force rugby team wrested the Sukuna Bowl tanoa from the Fiji Military Forces rugby team 25-17.

The kick-off today at 4pm and an hour later will decide the winner for the year.

This is the 65th year of the annual challenge. This year it's sponsored by ANZ Bank.

The tournament started in 1951 by the late Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

He established the competition, according to those in the forces and Rakavi.com, to bring about unity among security forces personnel.

The tanoa known as the Sukuna Bowl was presented by Ratu Sukuna in 1951 to be competed for between the two disciplined forces on an annual basis.

The aim of the event being to foster brotherhood between the two disciplined forces through rugby.

Ratu Sukuna himself launched the tournament in 1951, Rakavi.com reported.

It has been played every year except for 1965, 1987-1991 and 2000-2001. Over the 65 years and 57 matches of the Sukuna Bowl, defending champion Police have won it 29 times, Army-26, draws - 4.

The tournament is not only an annual highlight. It has become colourful and the adrenalin has spilled down to the families, friends and those associated with our security forces.

It has now become an annual carnival where almost all sports are played.

It is like the Melbourne Cup horse race in Australia. Today, tools are down and sports unite our security forces personnel.

Their rivalry where they always fought before which made Ratu Sukuna establish the tournament, will see no love lost contest on the field.

Sukuna Bowl is in their blood.

They will not want to lose.

It will be a disgrace to their men and women back in their respective barracks and offices, as the Sukuna Bowl takes precedence.

Even families split today because of their respective allegiance to the force they represent.

As they place their bodies on the line for their institution, the question remains as 'Who dares win?'

Police have a heavy and experienced pack and is coached by former Fiji rep cum Nadroga coach Esala Nauga.

His captain Keverieli Bulivorovoro said: "We have prepared well and we will play clean and hard rugby to keep what is ours and that is the Sukuna Bowl."

Army team manager, Major Apolosi Veve did not mince his words.

"When the lights go out at the ANZ Stadium tomorrow (today), the Sukuna Bowl will be sitting at QEB Barracks."....PACNEWS

SAMOA - RUGBY: SAMOA OBSERVER

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Samoa Sevens team top secret**

APIA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (SAMOA OBSERVER) --The Manu Samoa Sevens coaching staff is keeping the list of the team to represent Samoa in Dubai and South Africa a closely guarded secret.

Although the team was expected to be announced Wednesday, the Samoa Rugby Union has decided to withhold the names for an official announcement tomorrow.

The Chairman of the Samoa Rugby Union and Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi will officially announce the team during a special send off at Tuana'imato.

Head coach Sir Gordon Tietjens wasn't giving away much about the team he and his assistant, Stephen Betham, have selected.

Asked to name players whom he thought have been outstanding during training, Tietjens said he couldn't. He said he is a coach who is more concerned with the "we" than individual players.

Team selections are not about individuals, he said.

Rather they are about a group of players who can get the job done.

"One of my favourite sayings is to empty the tank," he said. "I'm looking for players who empty the tank in everything that they do.

"I'm mindful that with these tournaments, some of the players might get injured in the first game and that's where you need all your players to step up. That's why it's important everyone in the team is of the same mindset."

Tietjens is likely to name Falemiga Selesele as the captain.

Asked if there was Uale Mai in the team that he has seen so far, he said yes. But that will take time to develop. ....PACNEWS

SAMOA - RUGBY: SAMOA OBSERVER

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Results disappointing but Samoa rugby chief optimistic**

APIA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (SAMOA OBSERVER) ---The Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Rugby Union, Faleomavaega Vincent Fepuleai, has not hidden his disappointment about the Manu Samoa's results of their Northern Hemisphere tour.

But he is also realistic that Manu Samoa is going through a rebuilding process.

With two losses from two games, Faleomavaega said the team desperately needs to win its final game of their tour.

Speaking to the Samoa Observer yesterday, Faleomavaega said that the Union is just as disappointed as every other Manu Samoa supporter there is.

"We're all disappointed like the whole country," said Faleomavaega.

"But that is something the Union can't control and I think at this point in time, I think when the completion of the Northern Hemisphere tour, the Union will then sit down with the coaches and the management team and go through the process.

"We will have a look at our team again and see where we are at this point in time whether we are on track with the progress or whether it's going backwards or whatnot.

"And then we will review the whole set up of what's happening with the team and so forth.

"Basically the management team will sit down with the selectors and look at the whole campaign to see where we are."

Faleomavaega said their focus now is to get the best possible team for the next Rugby World Cup in Japan.

"Our focus at the moment is rebuilding Manu Samoa to try and qualify for the next World Cup," he said.

"And we're second at the moment in the Tri-Nations with Tonga and Fiji and the top two qualifiers will go to the World Cup.

"And that's a game we will have next year. We will be hosting Fiji here next year in July and we are also hosting Wales in Samoa in June next year.

"So the whole programme is focusing on trying to qualify."

Finally, he admitted that the results have been really disappointing but he didn't want to comment further.

"Yeah to be honest, the results haven't come our way and I think it's best that you ask the coaches on where he thinks we've gone wrong in terms of the team's performance.

"I think that is something Alama should come up and see where we are at this point in time, and how we are progressing."...PACNEWS

PNG - SOCCER: THE NATIONAL

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **PNG Ticket scam**

PORT MORESBY, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (THE NATIONAL) ---Papua New Guinea Sports Minister Justin Tkatchenko has labelled as shameful and disgraceful the sale of Fifa Under-20 women's soccer World Cup tickets on the streets well above the intended prices.

He told The National that he and Fifa officials in Port Moresby were aware of what was happening.

It is understood that K5 tickets are being sold on the streets of Port Moresby for K10, and K15 tickets for K25. Tkatchenko said it was a disgrace.

"These people selling or scalping tickets should be ashamed of themselves as they are denying ordinary Papua New Guineans, the grassroots, who will never get a chance to watch a World Cup, the opportunity to do that," he said.

"I'm aware of the situation and David (Chung) and the Fifa people are too.

"At the moment we cannot do anything about it because the tickets have already been sold. But we will monitor the situation.

"This goes against the spirit of sports, of football and the World Cup and what it stands for.

"It is totally unacceptable and those people should be ashamed of themselves."

The local organising committee when contacted for comment yesterday said it would issue a statement later.

Tkatchenko said they would learn from the experience when preparing for the rugby league World Cup.

"We will learn from this because we have a rugby league World Cup next year and for future games," he said.

A football fan in Port Moresby in a letter to The National said he went to a Fifa ticket outlet shop in the city to purchase tickets for a match.

But he was told by the lady at the counter that tickets had been sold out.

"I came out and some random guy approaches me and said tickets on sale, at higher price," he said.

"Why are the stadiums not fully packed when it comes to match days? Well apparently some demented people go and buy this tickets in bulk, mitigating them in the shops and selling them on the streets at a higher price to accrue profit."

The fan said that was the reason stadiums were not filled to capacity during other games and the current Fifa Under-20 World Cup, which is into finals....PACNEWS

PNG - SOCCER: STUFF NZ

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **State thanks PNG U20s**

PORT MORESBY, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (STUFF NZ) ---The Papua New Guinea Government has assured the national football governing body, PNG Football Association, of further financial assistance for women's football and its other endeavours.

Sports Minister Justin Tkatchenko gave the assurance while thanking the PNG Under-20 women's soccer team for their effort — and especially scoring a goal at the World Cup against North Korea.

Despite PNG going down 7-1, Tkatchenko told the U20 women that the first World Cup goal had made history for the country in football.

He said there were a lot of criticism from people who did not know football and how the game was played "A lot of people did not realise the odds, especially the opposition, in the group matches," Tkatchenko said.

"Once they realised that you were not playing with teams at the backyard in Wewak or Port Moresby, they started to turn up in numbers to give us the support," he said.

Tkatchenko said PNG's one goal was the start of a new legacy for women's football in the country.

"For you to play the best and score against North Korea is an unbelievable achievement," he said.

PNG Football Association president David Chung, who hosted the farewell dinner for the U20 women, encouraged them to continue in football.

"You have done yourself, the country and your parents proud with your performance against North Korea," Chung said. He told the women that they were still young and should continue playing in order to maintain their form for future representative duties.

He thanked them for their commitment, understanding and sacrifice for the country.

Team manager Cathy Agunam thanked Tkatchenko and Chung for their support during the team's 12-month camp in Goroka.

She said the road did not end with the World Cup and they would continue the legacy and hopefully become champions in Oceania....PACNEWS

FIJI - RUGBY LEAGUE: FWCC

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Rugby League in Fiji makes commitment to ending violence against women**

SUVA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (FWCC) ---- The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre has signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with the National Rugby League (NRL) and the Fiji National Rugby League (FNRL) to help them run a program that uses the sport's platform to prevent and end violence against women.

NRL's Voice Against Violence program, first launched in Australia, will be implemented in Fiji and the Pacific over the coming months, with players, officials and administrators receiving training on gender, violence against women and human rights.

FWCC Coordinator Shamima Ali says the organisation is constantly looking for opportunities to work on the elimination of violence against women and using sport was an ideal way to target attitudinal and behaviour change among young people.

"NRL works with young people and one of the best global prevention strategies is working with young people, particularly young men," Ms Ali said.

"This is the first time that we've had a formal arrangement and NRL has a program I see a lot of potential in."

Ellen Beale, NRL's General Manager of Community Programs, said: "It is Rugby League's stance that violence against women and children is never acceptable.

"Our key messages are stand up, speak out and take action to contribute to the prevention of violence against women and children.

"Standing up for us is all about acknowledging that there is a serious issue in Australia, in Fiji, in the Pacific and globally. It's not an issue that is just affecting one particular community; it's affecting all of us and we've got a real opportunity to stand up and acknowledge that. We've also got an opportunity to speak out."

Ruan Sims, the Jillaroos captain, who has Fijian heritage and is sister to the Sims brothers who played for the Fiji Bati, will help roll out the Voice Against Violence program in the Pacific.

"Rugby League, I believe, has a very powerful voice and we as rugby league players have a social responsibility to use that voice in the right way," Ms Sims said.

"We can go to junior rugby league clubs and we can actually influence this next generation coming through. We can empower them regarding domestic violence. It's a social responsibility that I believe we have. It's a global issue but we can make a difference in our own backyard.

"With our slogan, 'stand up, speak out and talk action', we empower them to do all these steps in a safe manner for themselves and all the people involved. It's about being socially responsible and using the voice that we have to bring about social change."

John Jewiss, NRL's Fiji in-country manager, acknowledges the FWCC as the specialists in the area of ending violence against women, saying it was important that the messages being sent out through the Voice Against Violence program were consistent.

FNRL Chief Executive Timoci Naleba said such initiatives in sports bodies were "most effective" and he was grateful to NRL and FWCC for partnering with them to implement it.

The FWCC will work with the NRL to incorporate local culture and context into the VAV program over the coming months. ....PACNEWS

VAN - ATHLETICS: VANUATU DAILY POST

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Athletics Vanuatu workshop certifies volunteers for National Provincial Game**

PORT VILA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (VANUATU DAILY POST) ---A one day workshop was conducted in Luganville to prepare volunteers for the National Provincial Games.

Athletics Vanuatu with the support from the Vanuatu National Youth Council have gathered 30 young boys and girls at the Sanma Chiefs Nakamal on Friday last week to go through different skills and trainings particularly in athletics.

"These 30 youths are lucky to be chosen by the Vanuatu National Youth Council to be volunteers in the Game and we have conducted a very helpful session on athletics with them," says Luganville athletics President Rex Issachar.

Issachar told the press that different skills on how to start a race, time keepers and more have been invested to these youths during the training.

While opening the one day workshop, National Game Coordinator, Jacques Tronquet urges the participants to take the workshop seriously and learn all they could about athletics. The 30 youth participants are from different wards in Luganville. According to the National Game Local Organising Committee, 300 volunteers from the Vanuatu National Youth Council in total will be assisting the National Games in Luganville and Sanma. Vanuatu Athletics Federation is the first National Game sports discipline to conduct such workshop with its volunteers.

President for Athletics Vanuatu, Jansen Molisingi is in Luganville to run this training and make necessary preparation particularly in his discipline for the National Games.

The workshop ended with a two hour field practical which participants get to experience what they have been trained for. Athletics Vanuatu also gave a certificate of participation to the youths who attended the workshop. Molisingi confirmed that for the coming National Games, his federation will make sure that with athletics competition and venue, it will have to be to high standards ready for the game as Vanuatu prepares for 2017 Mini South Pacific Games.

While presenting their certificates, President Molisingi congratulated the youths and assure them that the one day workshop is a plus to their skills and the certificate is to certify them to be a qualified volunteer in any athletic competition in the country and regionally.

The press understands that the volunteer workshop is part of preparation in the country towards 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu. While the National Games date is yet to be confirmed by the authority responsible, each federation and the Local Organizing Committee itself are preparing for the Game.....PACNEWS

VAN - PACIFIC MINI GAMES: VANUATU DAILY POST

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Van2017 –Join a winning team**

PORT VILA, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (VANUATU DAILY POST) ---Van2017 the Organising Committee for the 2017 Pacific Mini Games, is on the hunt for more qualified staff who want to join a winning team.

CEO Clint Flood said- "We are coming up to the One year to go mark on December 04. We want to add to our pool of great staff some more key individuals to help deliver the Games. Our focus is to get people who are good communicators and good planners. People that want to come on board for an experience that will honestly last a life time. "

Flood stated that "The kind of people that thrive and succeed in a Games environment are those that can give 150% effort every day, who want to make a difference to the country in the work they do, who are passionate about what they do, and want to join a team that really becomes a second family over the next year as we focus on delivering a great event for the country.

We are not looking for people that just know sport; we want planners, project managers, accountants, and dreamers!!"

Van2017 is currently recruiting for the following key positions Graphics Artist/Social Media Officer, Venue Manager, Sports Manager, Communications Manager, and Finance Manager.

### **New Zealand Sevens teams named for Dubai, featuring few debutantes for new cycle**

AUCKLAND, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (STUFF NZ) ---Despite a lack of time with the team, New Zealand's new national sevens coaches are happy with what they've seen from the squad.

Scott Waldrom and Tomasi Cama have named one debutant in the national men's side to play the opening two tournaments of the World Rugby Sevens Series, in Dubai and Cape Town.

Jonathan Ruru is the new man, joining a youthful squad led by captain Scott Curry.

Sarah Goss will lead the NZ women to Dubai, where they are confident of ending a losing streak at the hands of Australia.

Experienced trio Lewis Ormond, Joe Webber and Sam Dickson are out through various injuries, while Teddy Stanaway is suffering from concussion and the likes of Gillies Kaka are playing overseas.

Core players such as Curry, DJ Forbes and Tim Mikkelsen remain in the squad.

"I'm impressed with what I have seen in the squad. They have trained and trialed with real intent and are keen to rebuild some pride in the black jersey," Waldrom said.

"Because our experienced players are bringing some real excitement to their game they have earned their place in the squad. We are also excited to bring back some players who have previously played sevens who have thrived in the Mitre 10 Cup, and also introduce some new talent to international rugby."

Waldrom said pairing with Cama as interim New Zealand coaches, with Scotsman Clark Laidlaw set to take over in June, 2017, has been easy.

"We've played a bit of sevens together and then even when we'd stopped playing, he was coaching Manawatu and I was coaching Wellington," Waldrom said.

"We had a bit of a connection there and always keep in contact, so it certainly doesn't feel like a new combination.

"New Zealand Rugby have made sure we've bonded pretty quickly by making sure we're in the same room. We haven't had much of a chance to get away from each other."

Waldrom's main focus will be the contact area, given his breakdown expertise, while Cama's sevens brain should see New Zealand's creativity improve this season.

The women's squad sees two debutantes come into the fold, with exciting Waikato teenager Tenika Willison and Rebekah Cordero-Tufuga named by new coach Allan Bunting.

Few players of Willison's age have the ability to control a game like she can, with a sharp tactical brain. Her ability to direct a side around the park was evident at the national sevens in January, where she led Waikato superbly despite coming in as a late injury replacement.

Cordero-Tufuga is an exciting playmaker with the natural ability to win a game on her own.

"Dubai kicks off our new journey to the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. There is a real sense of excitement and we can't wait to get going," Bunting said ahead of his first tournament in charge of the national side.

"Having Sevens introduced as an Olympic sport has changed the game. It means we now operate on a four-year preparation cycle and it has created a new pathway for athletes to become Olympians.

"We are building a player-led culture where everyone enjoys themselves and in turn plays great rugby. Our team focus for Dubai is kaha and whakawhetai -courage and gratitude. We want to front the challenge and learn from what we do and be grateful for the opportunity we have each day and represent our country with pride."

Captain Sarah Goss said the team is excited to get started in the world series, and is enjoying working under new coach Bunting.

New Zealand women: Ruby Tui, Shakira Baker, Jordon Webber, Niall Williams, Sarah Goss, Michaela Blyde, Tyla Nathan-Wong, Kelly Brazier, Tenika Willison, Katarina Whata-Simpkins, Portia Woodman, Rebekah Cordero-Tufuga. Travelling reserves: Jess Drummond, Danielle Paenga.

New Zealand men: Scott Curry, Tim Mikkelson, Antonio Kiri Kiri, DJ Forbes, Dylan Collier, Beauduin Waaka, Iopu Iopu-Aso, Rocky Khan, Sherwin Stowers, Jonathan Ruru, Isaac Te Tamaki, Sione Molia....PACNEWS

AUST - RUGBY LEAGUE: STUFF NZ

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Australia reclaim top spot in world rugby league rankings, Scotland big movers**

SYDNEY, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (STUFF NZ) ---Australia have reclaimed the top spot in the world rugby league rankings after their convincing win over the Kiwis in the Four Nations final.

Scotland, who drew 18-18 with New Zealand during the tournament, have climbed to a new high of fourth.

The Kangaroos reclaimed the No 1 position from New Zealand after beating them 34-8 in the final at Anfield on Monday (NZ time).

England remain third, losing ground on their rivals after their poor showing in the Four Nations when they failed to beat either New Zealand or Australia at home.

USA and Canada, who have been jointly awarded the 2025 World Cup, appear in the top 12 for the first time.

The 2016 international season featured the most accredited international matches since official rankings began.

Top 10: 1. Australia; 2. New Zealand; 3. England; 4. Scotland; 5. Samoa; 6. France; 7. Fiji; 8. Ireland; 9. Wales; 10. USA.....PACNEWS

UK - RUGBY: INSIDE THE GAMES

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **Georgia, Romania and United States welcomed to World Rugby Council**

LONDON, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (INSIDE THE GAMES) ---Representatives from Georgia, Romania and the United States have been officially added onto an expanded World Rugby Council during an interim meeting in London.

Wales' Gareth Davies was also elected to the body's Executive Committee to replace South Africa's Oregan Hoskins during the meeting.

Elsewhere, Kazakhstan were suspended from the world governing body with "immediate effect owing to ongoing governance issues".

The addition of the three new countries onto the ruling Council comes as World Rugby seeks a "new governance model paving the way for wider representation" under new Chairman Bill Beaumont.

"We are delighted to be welcoming Georgia, Romania and USA to Council for the first time today," the Englishman said.

"These are unions who have contributed so much to the game and are making massive strides on and off the field.

"I know that they will make a strong contribution as we grow the sport together."

All three countries will be represented by the head of their national federations in Gocha Svanidze for Georgia, Bob Latham for the US and Harry Dumitras for Romania.

Latham has sat on the Council since 2011 but was previously a representative for North America.

Voting rights for nine unions - Australia, England, France, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa and Wales - have also been expanded in "accordance with wide-ranging and historic governance reform announced last year".

There are now 46 votes on Council with each of the six regional associations receiving two in addition to the individual union allocation.

World Rugby's Nominations Committee will consider applications from other countries targeting a Council seat during their annual meeting in May.

Argentina's application for an additional vote was not accepted, but will also be considered again in May.

"Their inclusion shows that the pathway is in place and the door open to other unions who aspire to have a seat on Council," Beaumont, who replaced France's Bernard Lapasset earlier this year, added.

"It is an inspiration and we encourage all unions to take inspiration from Georgia, Romania and the USA, review their governance and strive to achieve the required criteria.

"World Rugby is committed to the sustainable growth of the sport set against a backdrop of transparency, integrity and strong governance and we will continue to work with our unions to ensure that they have all the necessary support to achieve and maintain the necessary criteria moving forward."....PACNEWS

AUST - RUGBY LEAGUE: AAP

PACNEWS SPORT: Thu 24 Nov 2016

### **NRL faces possible club rebellion after stormy meeting in Sydney**

SYDNEY, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (AAP) ----The NRL is teetering on the edge of a rebellion from its 16 clubs as anger over its failure to secure a funding agreement blazes like wildfire.

Relations between the game's governing body and clubland is described as being at its lowest ebb since the Super League war after a disastrous meeting on Wednesday in which four club chairmen stormed out.

ARL Commission chairman John Grant is now facing a test of his leadership and could find his position under threat if the clubs and state bodies unite to overthrow him.

On Wednesday, Canterbury's Ray Dib, North Queensland's Laurence Lancini, Cronulla's Damian Keogh and Melbourne's Bart Campbell prematurely left a meeting with Grant and NRL chief executive Todd Greenberg in a sign of the growing rift.

The meeting, between the club's 16 chairmen and the NRL, was convened to finalise a deal on club funding.

Last December the two parties reached an in-principle agreement that from 2018, club funding would equate to 130 per cent of the salary cap.

However, that deal was never finalised and the club's frustration at Greenberg's and Grant's inability to get the deal done is growing.

There are a number of sticking points getting in the way - including the NRL's insistence on creating a sinking fund to prop up failed clubs. The clubs insist it is not their responsibility to provide funding to a failed rival club.

At Wednesday's meeting the NRL pulled the club funding agreement from the table, prompting the four chairmen to walk out.

The NRL argued that until the collective bargaining agreement and salary cap is agreed upon, it is pointless negotiating the funding deal.

There will be another meeting between the chairmen and the clubs next week at which Grant is expected to be scrutinised.

The NRL's inability to finalise the salary cap for 2018 is also a source of growing frustration with agents, players and clubs.

It's an unwanted distraction for the NRL which will on Thursday launch its draw for the 2017 season.....PACNEWS

FRANCE - RUGBY: STUFF NZ

PACNEWS SPORT: Wed 23 Nov 2016

### **Judiciary bans Malakai Fekitoa for one week, Sam Cane cleared**

LODON, 24 NOVEMBER 2016 (STUFF NZ) ----All Blacks centre Malakai Fekitoa has been banned for a week for his high tackle in the controversial win over Ireland in Dublin while flanker Sam Cane has been cleared of a similar charge.

World Rugby's independent judiciary decided Fekitoa's swinging arm tackle on Irish wing Simon Zebo was dangerous.

Fekitoa will now miss the All Blacks test against France in Paris this weekend.

He received a yellow card for the tackle in the 21-9 win against Ireland in Dublin last Sunday but was cited and faced the judiciary in London on Wednesday.

The judiciary, chaired by Antony Davies (England), alongside Derek Bevan (Wales) and John Doubleday (England), viewed video footage of the incident, listened to evidence from Fekitoa and representations on behalf of him, and reviewed all of the other evidence.

They decided the tackle warranted a red card. They conceded it was reckless rather than intentional.

They banned him for two weeks, but reduced it to one given there were no aggravating factors and noted Fekitoa's immediate acknowledgement of wrongdoing, his previous clean disciplinary record and his good conduct at the hearing.

Sam Cane was cleared by the same judiciary of a dangerous tackle charge that left Irish centre Robbie Henshaw unconscious.

After reviewing all the evidence provided, the committee found Cane's actions were accidental and that he therefore didn't commit foul play.

Cane will miss the test against France due to a high-ankle sprain he picked up in the test against Ireland.

Meanwhile, Argentina received a boost ahead of taking on England this weekend with their goalkicking first-five Nicolás Sánchez found not guilty of striking at his hearing.

Sánchez was cited for allegedly striking an opponent just before the end of the Pumas' loss to Scotland last weekend.

In their ruling the judiciary said "although Sanchez had committed an act of foul play, he had done this as part of an attempt to free himself from the illegal grasp of an opponent and that in any event, it would not have warranted a red card, so no sanction was imposed".....PACNEWS