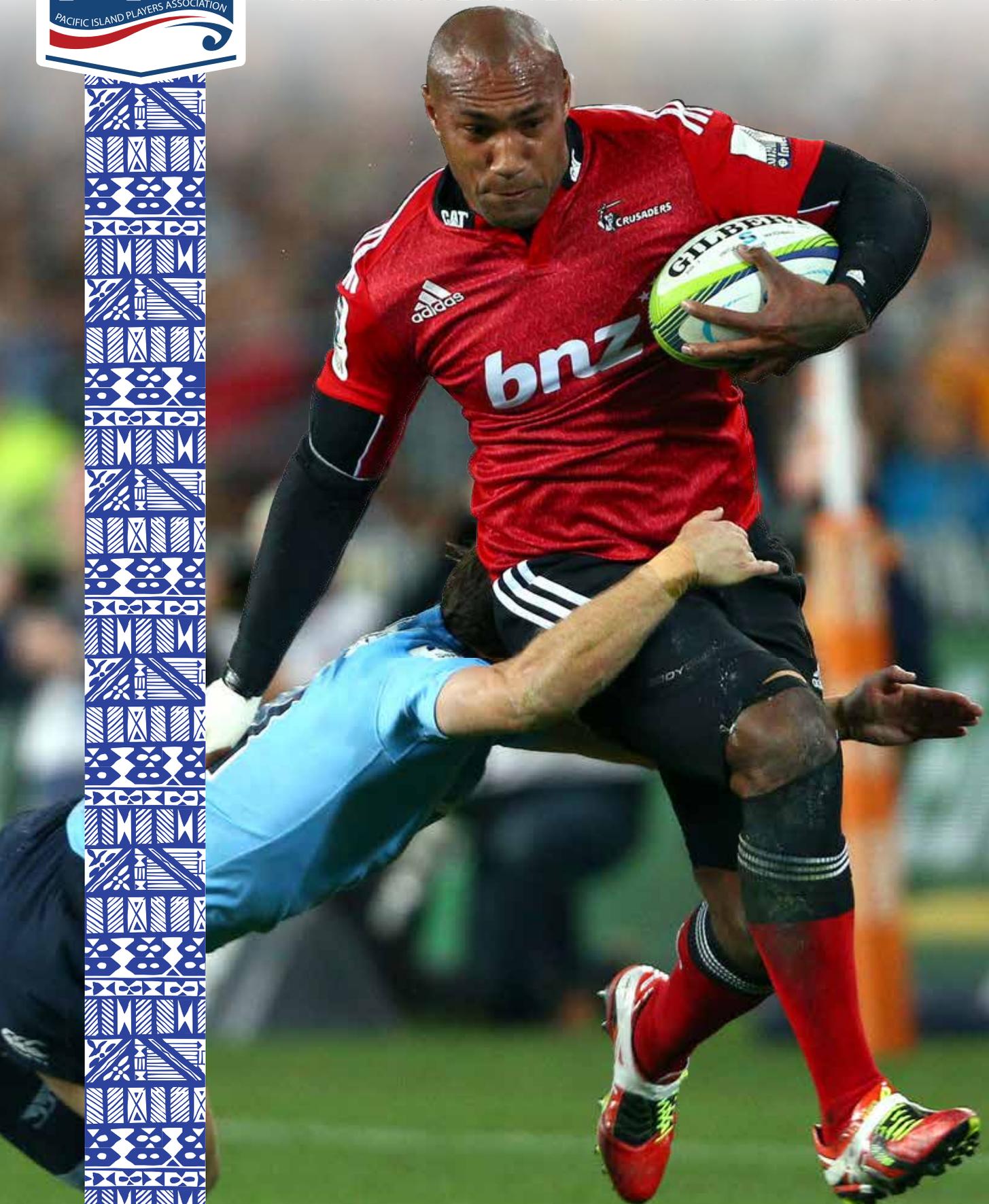




UNDERKAVA

THE PACIFIC ISLAND PLAYERS E-MAGAZINE MARCH 2015



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TALOFA, BULA AND MALO E LELEI

Warm Pacific Greetings and Welcome to the March edition of UnderKava. With the global showpiece of our sport just a few more kickoffs away, 2015 is an exciting year on the rugby timepiece. The hard work by players in the build up to the pinnacle event is well and truly underway. Examples of the desire and enthusiasm to gain selection in a world cup squad will well and truly be on display at this month's Pacific Rugby Championship (PRC) in Fiji. 2nd XV National teams from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Japan, Canada and Argentina will have players all pushing for higher honours at this tournament. Being a World Cup year the stakes are high and the reward of being selected in a world cup squad will make all the hard work and sacrifice worth it.

There is no doubt that the players participating in this year's PRC are at the precipice of professional rugby careers. The opportunities that a professional rugby career can provide are numerous and well documented. What is not so well known are the responsibilities that come with being a successful professional rugby player. Having the ability to make sound decisions off the field has become a crucial element for players to be successful athletes as well as well-rounded people in their everyday lives. A large amount of the work player associations throughout the world undertake is ensuring players have the support and resources available to develop as people as well as players.

During the PRC PIPA is looking forward to running education workshops with the teams. These workshops will focus firstly on raising awareness of the potential pitfalls elite athletes experience and secondly the importance of seeking good sound advice. With the support of World Rugby and PIPA a number of former players and athlete welfare specialists will be presenting these sessions.

Once again we thank all those players who have contributed to this edition of Underkava. Tongan player Sione Vaiumounga shares with us his experiences in Romania and the health challenge he is now facing. Jerome Kaino who has a strong Samoan heritage has developed into an international rugby icon provides some great insight into how he progressed from being a talented schoolboy into one of the best players on the planet. We also managed to catch up with Campese Maafu as well as the widely respected Ikaile Tahi coach Mana Otai as he prepares for the biggest year of his coaching career. PIPA also announce the Pacific Island Players Player of the Year awards.

Finally, without the help of various people and organisations PIPA would not be able to undertake the work we do. We thank all those who are supporting the players.

Hale, Deacs & Maps

PLAYERS UNITED TO HELP A BROTHER IN NEED

When the players first formed PIPA in 2012, one of the main drivers was to provide support for players who were facing hardship. In 2011 Sione Vaimounga played for Ikahe Tahi with distinction at the Rugby World Cup, he was the only player in the Tongan squad who was still playing in the Tongan domestic competition. Sione now playing professionally in Romania is facing the fight of his life to receive treatment for kidney disease and ultimately to find a kidney replacement. For further information and how to contribute to this support please read on for contact details.

Background

Sione Vaimounga is well known, like many Pacific island players, for his hard running and bruising tackling ability. He comes from a hard working family in Vava'u Tonga where his father is a local farmer and manages the family plantation. His mother is well known for her creativity, she weaves baskets, mats, hats and souvenirs and also makes traditional Tongan tapa cloths. Coming from a family of six Sione is the second oldest and is just 25 years young.

Rugby history

Sione is no stranger to the game as he boarded full time at Tupou College, Toloa for six years and his true love for rugby grew stronger whilst in high school which led him to secure the position of hooker for Toloa throughout his time there. He continued to play hooker right up until playing for Tonga under 19s and when playing under 20s he switched to Number 8. In 2009 Sione got the call up from Ikahe Tahi and also represented his country in the 2011 Rugby World Cup in which he played open side. Post Rugby World Cup Sione made his way back to Tonga not knowing what was to become of the year ahead of him.

His transition and journey to Romania?

Early 2012 Sione was made aware that there were rugby scouts from Romania on the island. It wasn't long before the scouts had heard of Sione's location and made their way to see him. They expressed serious interest and Sione had now secured himself a contract to play in the Romanian Rugby Federation competition.

What is life like in Romania?

"It was 2013 and I moved to Romania not really knowing what to expect. Personally it was going to be a huge financial gain for me and my family back in Tonga which kept me very eager to stay fit and play rugby! I think you will find it pretty common to meet PI players who take up contracts to be able to support their families back in the islands, I've been in Romania for two years now and I love the place."

How and when did you learn of your medical condition?

I was really starting to enjoy my life in Romania along with the rugby. I was content but I was experiencing some quiet pain. I had played half a season with chronic pain throughout my body and I just thought it was normal. I thought my body was sore and tired from training and playing but then I started getting bleeding noses and a swollen chin neck area. My neck would swell up then disappear. We were given a week off which came at a good time so I went away for holiday and completely relaxed. When I returned, leading into the semi final game the pain just came over me. I thought I was going to die. The pain was excruciating. We went to hospital to receive pain relief and after the doctors had finished examining me they were in shock that I was still alive given how bad my kidney was at that stage.

What exactly is happening with this at the moment?

The people of Romania and my club have been so helpful, accommodating and understanding especially given my immigration status. I'm receiving dialysis three times a week and currently living with one of the Tongan boys. My condition is that I need a kidney transplant. I am unable to return to Tonga for treatment as they do not offer dialysis there. As I am a Tongan national I am also unable to seek immediate medical care from Europe, NZ or Australia. For now I will put all my faith into God and pray that we are able to find a donor in order for me to receive a transplant.

What type of support have you received from the Tongan government and the locals?

I haven't had any immediate correspondence from the Tongan government however I've been informed that there is a meeting taking place with the nobles who may be able to offer advice.

There have been Kava ceremonies in which a lot of the boys and members of the community have come together and made donations. They have taken place in different Tongan communities around the world from London to Dunedin. I'm so appreciative and grateful and can't believe how many people are thinking of me even though we may not know each other. I'm forever grateful for the love and support received and Thank God mostly.

What do you think about contracts and how they are structured & what words would you say to young men from Tonga considering leaving?

It's very important to talk to the right people when considering taking a rugby contract especially if you're leaving the island for the first time. Don't be in a rush to leave and wait ensure you ask lots of questions and enquire about what you will be covered for medically when in your new country of residence. This information is important. Make sure that the people you talk to have your best interest at heart too! I've only recently learnt about PIPA and I think getting some of those boys who are being scouted from Tonga to play in other countries it would be a good idea for them to talk to the PIPA reps.

Last wise words for the boys?

Don't act like your tough. Panadol isn't always enough! If something does not seem right, GO TO THE DOCTOR & don't leave it too late!

If you would like to know more about how you can contribute and help Sione and his family please contact Ana Mapusua on anamapusua@pacificislandpa.com

There are over 600 players with Pacific Island heritage playing rugby professionally throughout the world

Careful what you sign - If presented with a contract to play overseas - seek independent professional advice from someone who is knowledgeable and experienced with professional sport contracts. This may include a reputable agent, a lawyer or your player association.



“ I will put all my faith into God ”



“ Don't act like your tough, Panadol isn't always enough ”



WHEN TALENT MEETS HARD WORK

JEROME KAINO

There was a period when Jerome Kaino was in danger of never quite amounting to all he could have been.

It's not quite true that to say that in his earlier days he was flirting with being a wasted talent, more an unfulfilled talent.

In his first few seasons in the professional ranks, he was a regular starter with Auckland and the Blues and to those who didn't know him, he looked to be living the dream.

But he was only scratching at the surface of his potential. At just 20-years-old, he'd been selected to tour with the All Blacks as a development project.

The All Black coaches had seen a raw-boned athlete with the physical attributes to become a world class player. In time, they were confident Kaino would be an irresistible force on the side of the scrum.

But only if he fully applied himself. Which he wasn't. "I was doing the bare minimum at training to be honest," says Kaino.

"That was me – I'd do as little as I needed to do to get away with it. I didn't work any harder than I needed to and looking back, yeah, I struggled for a while with that. I struggled to come to terms with what was required to be a professional."

To an extent, his incredible natural talent was both a blessing and a curse. It was his natural talent that attracted the All Black selectors to him. Yet it was his natural talent that allowed him to get by without having to work as hard as others.

He'd been able to excel at age-grade level on natural talent alone, but it wasn't enough to enable him to play consistently well as a professional.

"I struggled a bit too with getting the balance right off the field," he

says. "I had been a student with very little money and then suddenly you are being paid, well paid, and you have the means to really enjoy yourself."

"It was especially tough having a lot of friends who were not involved in rugby or really had any idea about it. They didn't know the demands or what was expected of me and they just wanted to have fun.

"And that was fine with me as I had this view, thought it was a normal attitude, that you worked hard during the week and then had your reward on the weekend."

It's easy to see why Kaino was in and out of the All Blacks between 2004 and 2007. He wasn't strong enough either physically or mentally to deliver consistently good performances.

He wasn't doing enough at training or looking after himself well enough throughout the season to give as much as he needed to. At that level, any weakness in preparation are easily exposed.

He was on-off, on-off and by 2008, he decided he needed to make the transition into being on...permanently.

There may, with the benefit of hindsight, have been an element of rebellion driving Kaino in those first years in the professional ranks.

"Mum and dad had been very strict with us," he says. "They are strongly religious, go to church and things such as alcohol weren't allowed."

"Discipline had been a big part of our upbringing and then when I left home and went out on my own..."

Perhaps it wasn't rebellion, though. Perhaps it was simply a case of disconnecting from the family as a result of living under a different roof.

“The test in Samoa is going to be huge for Polynesian”



Kaino was a young man, equipped with a bit of money and moderate fame. It wasn't necessarily an active or conscious choice to be cutting corners or be sailing close to the wind; it was perhaps an inevitable consequence of his new found freedom.

He can't say now what it was that turned him around. It was, best he remembers, a combination of factors. Enough people – good people who knew what they were talking about – had told him he needed to train harder.

Hear the same message enough times and the penny eventually drops. He'd also come to realise that an element of sacrifice was needed to differentiate himself from the pack.

More or less everyone in the professional game is talented. It is discipline, commitment and sacrifice that sets the best apart.

And, after a few years, like most maturing adults, he came to see that perhaps mum and dad weren't so crazy in their strict beliefs.

He went out less, trained more and went beyond the minimum and it was a tougher, more focused Kaino that played every minute of the 2011 World Cup.

It was through adversity that Kaino learned most about himself and that by meeting challenges head on and committing himself to beating them, that he established himself as a world class talent.

Asked now what advice he would give young Pacific Island players trying to transition from age-grade or ITM Cup into the professional ranks, he says: "It's really important to have another passion outside of rugby.

"It doesn't really matter what it is - whether it's a hobby, or a

business or whatever...just something that gives you a distraction away from the game.

"If it all gets a bit much then having another passion is a way of getting some release. There's also the fact that it could be setting you up for life after rugby.

"That's so important. I know that when I was younger I used to hear the same things and I thought I'd never really need to think about stuff like that, but eight years has gone by so quickly and you understand how important that other interest is and being prepared."

Kaino now seems more than comfortable with the idea he can guide the emerging generation of Pacific Island talent. He knows, though, that his ability to inspire pales in comparison with the test match in Apia this year.

That's an occasion that will capture the hearts and minds of young men in Samoa, the other Pacific Islands and New Zealand. And it's a test that Kaino is hugely excited about.

His Samoan heritage was prevalent in his upbringing. "Mum and dad spoke to us in Samoan. We probably answered back more in English but we [Kaino siblings] were bi-lingual. I still am. We went to church and while I'm proud to be a Kiwi; proud to be an All Black, I'm also proud of my roots and where my family comes from.

"The test in Samoa is going to be huge for Polynesian people around the world. I am genuinely interested to first of all see how Samoa handles the occasion. It is going to be a big game and a lot of people are going home for it or are going to be watching on it on TV.

"I'm also interested in what sorts of opportunities it opens up and what it will do for the growth of the game."



NEVER FORGET YOUR ROOTS CAMPESE MA'AFU

A wise philosopher once said, "culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit." Campese Ma'afu the current Fijian loosehead prop can claim to know a bit about different cultures. Born and raised in Australia by a Tongan father and Fijian mother. His amateur rugby days were spent tirelessly learning his trade at West Harbour in the Sydney club rugby competition. Along with his brothers he was always destined to go further afield in rugby, his mum hails from the Fijian island of Kandavu renowned for producing exceptional rugby talent. One brother plays for the Wallabies and the other has played for Tongan U20s. After making his debut for the Flying Fijians in 2010 Campese has continued to expand his cultural learnings, firstly playing in Wales at the Cardiff Blues and currently in England with Nottingham.

Campese is a magnet for the lazy journalist. His name stands out in any team list which provides an easy by line that gets thrown into most stories about him. Then there is the remarkable feat that almost has to be mentioned every time a story is written about him – two brothers, playing for two different countries, loosehead versus tighthead going down against each other in the scrum, and both on their international debut. You'd forgive Campese for becoming sick of the millage reporters have got out of the story of him and his brother playing for Australia and Fiji as opponents on test debut, but Campese cherishes this as one of the biggest days in his life and is proud of what Salesi and himself continue to achieve.

At 30 Campese has just hit the age where a lot of props start to play their best rugby. This comes about through the combination of years of scrums at training and in games crafting their skills, the ability to expect what will happen next no matter what is thrown at them, and the wily knowledge of what to do in the dark places. These attributes are the reward for years of grind learning the most difficult trade in the game. He has represented the Flying Fijians in 28 tests and you can sense when talking to Campese about his hopes for Fiji at the upcoming Rugby World Cup that he is ready for the challenges that lie ahead, Fiji has been drawn in a pool with three tier one countries, "it's a matter of who turns up to play on the day. We'll leave the results for after the games and believe that we can compete with the best at the highest arena the game has to offer." Spoken like a true prop, deal with the task in front of you and worry about the rest later.

Playing rugby has meant more than just pulling on the boots and locking horns every week for Campese, playing professionally has allowed him to expand his horizons and develop as a person, "I've been fortunate enough to travel the world through rugby, something I never thought I would ever do," for a young man with a young family, "it has opened many doors to life experiences and career opportunities that I never ever dreamed of." However he also points out that the life of a professional athlete also comes with sacrifices,

"one of the difficult parts of playing is being so far away from your family, your friends and just being out of your comfort zone." However when he sits back and reflects at what he has achieved in the past few years, the sacrifice made is worth it, "representing your nation is an honour and a privilege to yourself, your family, and your friends. It means I get a chance to showcase my talents at the highest level to the world on behalf of my country and most importantly my family."

Similar to the hard work Campese puts in to his rugby, he also has a focus on preparing for life after rugby. He is in his last year studying Workplace Health and Safety Legislation by correspondence. When asked what wisdom he can impart to younger Fijians who are on the cusp of securing professional contracts he says, "never take anything for granted. Make the most of your spare time because rugby is a very small passage of your life, take your chances when you are given them, hard work always pays off so always work hard and be humble. And never forget your roots – God, Family, Friends."



PACIFIC RUGBY AWARDS

2014 saw some fantastic individual performances from players representing Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Following the November internationals players from all three teams cast their votes for the annual Digicel Pacific Island Players Player of the Year Awards. The players vote for their own teams player of the year and also the Pacific Island Player of the Year. As players there is no greater award than the one voted by your peers in recognition of your performance across a season.

PIPA would like to congratulate the three winners.

Fijian Players of the Year - Nemani Nadolo

Tongan Players of the Year - Tevita Halaifonua

Samoa Players of the Year – Khan Fotuallii

Pacific Island Player of the Year – Nemani Nadolo

Nemani Nadolo busy schedule in 2014 was no barrier to producing some scintillating performances for the Flying Fijians. He played in all 7 of the Flying Fijians test matches during 2014, scoring 85 points which included 7 tries. The Crusaders and NEC winger showcased his consistency throughout the year to be judged the Pacific Island Players Player of the Year. Nadolo was honoured to be recognised by his fellow players, "It's a huge honour to receive such an amazing award as this. To be voted not only by my

teammates but players from the other Pacific Island nations as players player is such a humbling feeling, I want to thank the Lord for this award for without him I wouldn't b here. Also I want to thank my team mates who helped me achieved such a prestigious award. Last but not least the players from the other nations that voted for me. Vinaka".

Tonga Fullback Tevita Halaifonua played in all 5 of Tonga's 2014 test matches. He was delighted to receive the award and is looking forward to a big 2015.

"Its an honor to be voted by my team mates for this award, I want to thank them and hope we can all win this award after 2015 RWC".

Consistently one of the top half backs in the World over the past few years, Kahn Fotuallii was one of only 3 players alongside Jack Lam and David Lemi to play all of Samoa's 2014 test matches. "I am honoured to be named players player of the year amongst some talented players in the Manu Samoa team. To be recognised from my Uso's is a huge honour and pleasure. It's truly a blessing and a privilege playing for our country. Thank you all and God bless".

A huge congratulations to all the 2014 winners, as we look forward to some more exceptional performances from Pacific Islanders on the field in 2015.



21 QUESTIONS

MANA 'OTAI

Q. What did you enjoy most about touring?

A. Rugby tour is of course very different from sight-seeing tours as it is more of a 'mission / tour of duty' kind of tour. In that respect, it was an honour to know you are representing your family and country on a 'tour of duty' and also get to see and meet people outside your normal environment.

Q. What is your most memorable game & why?

A. Winning against Scotland in Aberdeen in November 2012 was memorable to date simply because of a couple of reasons; **1)** it is the first time Tonga won against Scotland in their own backyard.

2) it was more about the team overcoming the struggles and hardships like no allowance, travel logistics, limited resources to name a few, that most tier one teams take for granted.

Q. Who is your ultimate hero? (Does not have to be sport)

A. Jesus Christ is my ultimate hero. Despite my shortcomings, He still loves mankind and me unconditionally.

Q. Which famous four would you like to invite to dinner?

A. **1.** Late King Siaosi Tupou 1st who offered Tonga and his people for God's protection.

2. Late Nelson Mandela. **3.** John C. Maxwell **4.** Jonah Lomu

Q. Who is your most respected opposition?

A. The next one!

Q. What gave you the most satisfaction as a player?

A. That has been awhile but as a coach, it is seeing players realize that it is a God given talent with a short window of time. They can invest it wisely by helping their families financially, becoming good role models through their own growth both as a player and as a person for the better.

Q. Most memorable moment in your career?

A. To date, it is seeing God work through challenges even when man said it is over.

Q. What's one of the hardest experiences you've had in rugby?

A. As a player, it was dealing with injuries (broken leg) and as a coach, it is dealing with how your family can be indirectly affected by social media and the likes because it is the nature of your job.

Q. Sum up the transition of player to coach?

A. I believe there is no one size fit all formula. The key for me is the difference between doing it as a job vs. as a passion/calling and getting paid for it like any other profession. In my case, I believe it is my calling. This has helped greatly in tough times. With the actual transition, nowadays players who want to be coaching after playing have pathways and trainings that I think it's great. I started coaching kids (U13 & U19) for three years straight after playing for fun. Initially, I struggled as I was expecting them to see and understand things like me. Later, I learned that I needed to break it down, simplify things then get that shared understanding across. This helped me to improve my coaching because in essence, it is making sure the players shared the same understanding with you irrespective of their age. Coaching senior men was challenging early on as I often got on the field as player/coach. This was not good because instead of finding a way to get the shared understanding across to men, I thought I would show them on the field instead. It was until I could not have a team talk at halftime as I was concussed and did not remember anything that my wife said; "one or the other or let go totally." I guess that is not the ideal transition but a good lesson learnt.

Q. If you had one day to live what would you do?

A. Spend it with families and friends. It is sad to think that we spend 80% of our time doing and chasing everything else but spend time with what is most important to us.

Q. What is one thing you could tell us about yourself that people would be shocked to know?

A. That I am a vegetarian..... only for a day every month.

Q. What did you want to be growing up?

A. Firstly, I grew up next door to the catholic priest house and I wanted to be a priest as I loved their outfits and having regular meals, I could hear their bell ringing every meal. At high school, I wanted to be a scientist .i.e. wear white lab coats and glasses and conduct experiments with all sorts of cool chemicals.

Q. What do you like to do in your downtime?

A. DIY jobs at home and gardening.

Q. If the world could hear one message from yourself what would it be?

A. Love one another.

Q. What did representing Tonga mean to you?

A. At the time as a player, the games were huge occasions and as times goes you take it for granted. However, in the twilight years, it meant a lot more. This is because I realized that not every Tongan boy/girl can represent his/her country playing rugby at the highest level. What an honor!

Q. Name three differences between the Ikahe Tahi now & when you were playing?

A. **1.** Rugby was not professional when I played for the Ikahe Tahi. **2.** There are more Tongan players playing high level rugby to choose from now. **3.** It is the livelihood of most players nowadays.

Q. If you could rule the world for a day what would you have everyone do?

A. Everyone do something good for someone else. (Pay it forward for a day)

Q. Who's going to win Samoa Abs test match?

A. The All Blacks has the better odds but I have seen big teams lost games in the Pacific Islands.

Q. Hardest rugby player you ever played against?

A. Sean Fitzpatrick, the former All Black captain is right up there.

Q. If a movie was made of your life, who would be the main actor?

A. I enjoyed Gerard Butler in 300 (Spartans) and the parallel to our struggles in the Pacific, so he will be the one.

Q. What is the best piece of advice you were given as a young up and coming player?

A. If you want to get picked, you have to be seen with the ball as much as you can. Also, Good is not good enough where Better is expected.

I would like to thank PIPA and IRPA for what they are doing because very often as coaches and managements we are so caught up in the moment / games / competitions and we forget about the player as a person with other challenges outside rugby just like everyone else. They are not immune to life's challenges. There is also the expectations because of who they are as portrayed by the media to behave in such a certain way. On a recent World Rugby forum in Samoa, a presentation from Josh Blackie opened the eyes of FORU coaches and managements to see the vast areas that PIPA is dealing with ranging from contractual issues to an increasing number of suicides from Pacific players to name a few. From a Pacific perspective, due to the fact that we don't have the players with us as much as their professional clubs, PIPA fill this void with the empathy and understanding of the right support for these athletes. Keep up the good work guys.



“ Good is not good enough where better is expected ”



“ I believe its my calling ”



WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF PNG

26th of January 2015, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Digicel is on a mission to transform rural Papua New Guinea by investing in infrastructure destined to improve the lives of millions. There's no denying Digicel's Project Discovery is as ambitious as it is visionary as it aims to make the mobile phone service accessible to all – even to those living in the most remote regions of the nation. To date, 265 solar powered sites have been completed with 300 due for completion by the end of January. All towers have a solar charging station installed at the tower location or nearby at the nearest village to ensure customers can remain connected to the bigger better network. These new installations connect many isolated communities to the rest of the world for the very first time.

Digicel CEO John Mangos believes mobile telecommunications will have a transformational effect on rural life in PNG, enabling contact between distant family members, connecting communities to information and services; ultimately paving the way for myriad small business opportunities to unfold. "The investment we are making in upgrading our infrastructure and positioning the requisite towers is substantial but it is an investment in PNG's future", he said, " supporting the livelihoods of individuals and further strengthening connections between our families and communities".

The people of Tagula in the Louisiade Archipelago recently had their tower installed, moving the Governor of Milne Bay, Titus Philemon, to excitedly declare, "Our province is no longer cut off from the rest of PNG and the rest of the world. We are now

connected!" Fortuitously, the tower was powered on Mother's Day, enabling many children living on the mainland to phone their mothers with heartfelt messages of love.

The cultural, social and economic benefits of mobile phones in remote regions are well documented. In urban areas people tend to take phone calls, text messaging and access to the Internet for granted. But in rural regions this technology can have a completely revolutionary effect. Project Discovery has the power to improve education and literacy, to increase citizen safety, raise awareness of civil rights, facilitate banking transactions and other financial services and provide access to information that will improve and save lives.

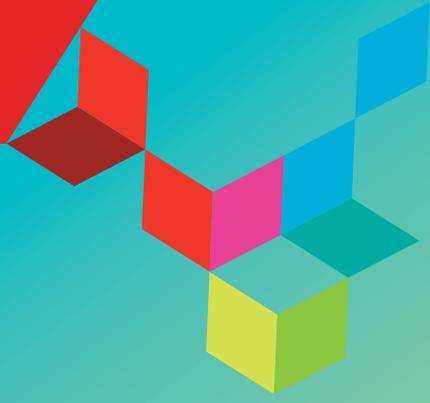
Digicel's Government Relations Director, Gary Seddon said, "It is a basic human right to have access to reliable, affordable, modern communication. People need this technology – it is not good enough to simply build a tower in a major city or town. We must connect everyone in PNG and we will."

Mobile technology can drive economic growth and raise the standard of living in rural communities. Project Discovery has already provided employment for more than 700 Papua New Guineans, but as communities are connected to the network, potentially thousands of individuals will use the service to create and facilitate new micro-businesses. Digicel's prepaid plans allow people living in remote communities to tailor their mobile phone use to suit their financial situation and take control of their futures.



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