

Time to leave the hair products at home



The camera pans out to reveal long, black eyelashes, smooth-as-a-baby's-bottom skin, and a painfully fashionable haircut, then lingers on a muscular well-tanned thigh.

You could be forgiven for thinking your boyfriend's rugby channel subscription had inadvertently crossed wires with an E! channel exposé of elite male models.

The alarming trend of image-conscious rugby players seems to have reached ridiculous heights. The stars of a game based on strength, quick-thinking and skill seem to be preoccupied with hair product, fake tan, mascara, eyeliner and deep-pore cleansers.

A growing interest in beautification by men shouldn't be completely disparaged. If women can work it, then why can't men? But when players receive huge salaries, endorsements and public support because of their superior talent and skill, a focus on such trivialities seems ungrateful, and has an air of phoney about it.

While admittedly the current commitment to looking good can make watching the rugby just that little bit more interesting, it can leave a bad aftertaste. This feeling is somewhat akin to kissing a promising new date good-

bye on the cheek and feeling the scrape of clumpy mascara while noticing close-up a faint line of fake tan on his jaw.

If players such as former All Black Carlos Spencer spent more time training and less time having bleaching foils and hot wax applied, then a commitment to the public's faith and dedication would be recognised.

A cross-continent move has been made towards shorter, tighter, body-hugging uniforms (ascertainably for "aerodynamic" reasons, but clearly chosen to titillate audiences and inflate already astronomical egos).

The recent British and Irish Lions tour threw the problem into sharp relief. Welsh second-five-eights Gavin Henson looked afraid to be tackled in case his solid, four-foot-high shock of red hair be tousled in the process.

We all understand the lure of highly paid endorsement deals fighting for space in the players' locker-rooms. But the possibility of Henson's All Black nemesis Daniel Carter missing a conversion whilst distracted by a 30m high billboard of himself clad in jockeys is decidedly sad.

This phenomenon is not a new one. Paisley Dodds, writing for

the Associated Press, says the now-common word "metrosexuality" coined by British journalist Mark Simpson in 1994 refers to urban, heterosexual men who wax, exfoliate and perform other grooming rituals that some consider strictly feminine.

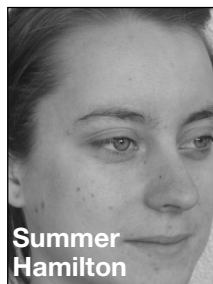
Looking back to the late 1990's, the pioneer of male sports star preening, British soccer captain David Beckham, created a worldwide furore over his ever-changing hair creations ranging from a mohawk to a white man's version of corn rows.

Beckham spawned multitudes of pampered sports stars infiltrating every sports arena from yachting to rugby.

More noticeable than ever on the rugby field today, they need to leave the beauty tools on the sideline, keep the concrete hair gel out of the scrum and concentrate on the basics of a game that attracts hundreds of thousands of viewers.

Let's hope that the next All Blacks' plane leaving for an international test is delayed due to excess weight and forced to unload the team hairdresser, manicurist, organic chef and spray-on tan assistant on the tarmac.

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Summer Hamilton

Hooters takes on the Old Girls' Club

New Zealand's matriarchal society is under threat. But it's not from Don Brash's gentlemanly demeanour or even the dreams of the Exclusive Brethren. The insidious threat comes from the famously chauvinist "Hooters" restaurant chain which is opening in Auckland early next year.

The American restaurants are renowned for busty waitresses – the Hooters Girls – and a general antipathy to all matters feminist. What impact will the impending arrival of the Girls (possibly to be flown in on a Hooters Air jet) have on New Zealand's Old Girls' Club?

Sue Kedgely has already declared Hooters "retrograde", but she can rest easily – Hooters says it is a friend of women's rights because it guarantees women the ability to do whatever they wish – "be it Supreme Court Justice or a Hooters Girl." Hooters provides the wonderful rags-to-riches story of Kat Cole who started as a Hooters Girl and is now in the glorious position of vice-president of training and development. It's inspirational.

But can Hooters be a success in New Zealand? Granted it does have the greatest brand name known to man and that alone will snare all John Tamihere's red-blooded supporters. But that image is misleading.

Hooters calls itself a "neigh-

bourhood restaurant" and requires its staff to wear bras. This is obvious false advertising and the dearth of actual hooters is bound to cause consternation among potential patrons. Far from being a young male's fantasyland of beautiful topless women, the restaurants even feature a children's menu.

Moreover, the obvious question of discrimination will arise if New Zealand men apply for a Hooters Girl position. The legal argument has been settled in the US where an out-of-court settlement found that "being female is reasonably necessary" to succeed as a Hooters Girl. But New Zealand employment law frowns strongly on sexual discrimination and Kedgely, or a male friend, could file a law suit.

But Hooters may be a bonanza for New Zealand sport. It sponsors party-loving golfer John Daly and events like the Hooters racing series. With the rugby NPC expanding, teams which are expected to struggle for money will have a new source of funds. The Manawatu Hooters does have a good ring to it.

Additionally, the Hooters Community Endowment Fund (HOO.C.E.F.) raises money for causes such as diabetes, which is a major problem in New Zealand. One doesn't doubt that a Hooters Girl could convince many a man to cut down on fatty

foods, although the 5 Wing Flappertizer may have the opposite effect.

And if Hooters Air arrived, staffed by Hooters Girls as air hostesses (the job offers versatility) it would provide much-needed competition to the aviation market.

But will it be just too American? New Zealanders have a long antipathy towards Americana with "friend of America" the harshest insult in the recent election. While hooters are a universal word in the male language, perhaps the company will need to adjust to liberal New Zealand.

There could be a Hooters Prime Minister, Governor Girl and Chief Hooter to reflect the position that women hold in this society. Guest appearances by Hooters Girls on bro' Town is an obvious marketing idea and "No Nukes" wet T-shirts for the Girls would negate the anti-Americanism.

But the Hooters brand has changed little since it first opened in 1983 and it is unlikely to bend for little New Zealand. After all, it regards its critics as a "vocal minority of politically correct minded individuals".

The seductive appeal of Hooters will be a testing point for just how liberal and PC this country is – and how strong the female fraternity really is.

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Miles Erwin

Who wears short shorts?

Hooters is a US-based restaurant chain that serves up a typical Americana menu including tortillas, steak and chicken wings.

The brand's point of difference is that the food is served by large-breasted women wearing tight singlets and skimpy shorts, called Hooters Girls.

The restaurant goes by the tagline "delightfully tacky, yet unrefined".

Hooters is planning to open

a restaurant in Auckland early next year.

Its first restaurant opened in 1983 in Clearwater, Florida and Hooters has since expanded to 375 restaurants worldwide.

In 2003 the chain cashed in on its popularity and launched an airline, Hooters Air, where passengers are attended to by the famous waitresses.

There are about 20 restaurants outside the US.