

# Surf life savers test to be the best

by Kate Fisher

About 25 of New Zealand's most experienced lifeguards boosted their skills at a Muriwai trial last weekend, kicking off the season and getting ready for another busy summer.

The Lifeguard Support Team joins the Westpac Rescue Helicopter as the main response for rescues outside patrolled areas from Whangaparaoa to Raglan. They also provide support when called out to crowded beaches.

Fishing, swimming and surfing have claimed the lives of 95 people in the Auckland region since 1980. Surf Life Saving Northern Region identified the need for support between patrolled areas and set up the team three years ago.

The crew will train for the next six weeks with the helicopter and on rescue jetskis.

All lifeguards on the support team volunteer one day a week-end every three weeks. They are also volunteers at their own clubs and paid guards throughout the season.

Greg Fallon, support services officer for the support team, says the lifeguards each have at least six years' experience with four years as an operator of



PHOTO: KATE FISHER

**BIG LEAP:** Expert lifeguards prepare to take the plunge as part of their team trial at Muriwai.

inflatable rescue boats.

"We have a fair bit of experience that we're calling on."

One new triallist, Mike Finch, 23, recently joined Muriwai Surf Life Saving Club after being a lifeguard at Paekakariki in Wellington for six years.

He says being in the team offers a whole lot of challenges

to increase skill levels.

"It puts you in demanding situations and it's fun — you get to jump out of helicopters and ride jetskis."

One rescue jetski operates on Auckland's east coast, which runs from Devonport to Whangaparaoa, and one on the west coast from Raglan to Muriwai.

Fallon says, if water is involved, a lifeguard will usually go with the helicopter.

"Many paramedics on Westpac aren't confident swimmers in the surf, so lifeguards get thrown into the drink. That's their field of expertise and the Westpac paramedics aren't put in any danger," says Fallon.

Northern Region is the only area in New Zealand trialling jetskis, but they may yet be adopted in other parts of the country.

They are specially outfitted with advanced communication and emergency gear.

They are based on an Australian model, where they have been used for years.

# Warriors neglecting grassroots, says ARL

by Todd Hewitt

After ten years in the NRL, the New Zealand Warriors are still struggling to run a successful recruitment and player development programme.

The Warriors' ignoring of local talent forced Auckland Rugby League (ARL) to establish its own player agency.

The agency's coaching and development manager, Stan Martin, says SportsVision, which was created three years ago, is a reaction to the Warriors' poor commitment to

coaching and development in the region.

"I'm very disappointed with the Warriors' coaching and development. They don't go into schools or clubs. They don't come out and help us in the community and promote themselves," says Martin.

But Warriors assistant coach John Ackland says the ARL should stick to developing football at the grassroots rather than trying to be involved at every level of the game.

"At a lower level it's suffering and it's up to all organisations to take a look at the roles they're

playing in the game.

"It's whether the ARL are in the business of keeping the game healthy or going down the elitist path," says Ackland.

The ARL also established SportsVision to protect young players from disreputable overseas agents and to ensure development levies were paid back to Auckland.

Martin says there are a lot of unscrupulous managers.

"A lot of our boys were being made promises that weren't kept."

He says the ARL makes a small profit but the money goes

directly back into player coaching and development. SportsVision receives a fee from player agencies or clubs once the player makes the step forward.

"When the boys turn 18 we relinquish them to other player management companies of our choice or those we recommend.

"SportsVision keeps them here as long as possible and then sends them offshore or to the Warriors if they are good enough."

Ackland says it's difficult for NRL clubs to build themselves in a comprehensive coaching and development programme.

He says constraints on the Warriors include the salary cap, the fact it is a privately-owned business and the impact of player managers.

He notes there are only two clubs in the NRL that run at a profit and the Warriors isn't one of them.

"I think personally that [NRL clubs] should have a holistic approach. If the game is healthy overall then they'll benefit," says Ackland.

"The Warriors have to create a place where the players think they have a good system to build a football career."

Classic.

AuSM

debate

debate@aut.ac.nz

FREE weekly

## Showing up the 'old ladies'

by Rosie Cotter

Croquet has long been considered a game for old ladies, but a Christchurch 17-year-old is breaking tradition by becoming one of New Zealand's top players.

Paddy Chapman, ranked 16th in the world, also beat a former number four player at the recent world champs in Britain.

Chapman says younger players are put off by the image of croquet, but he believes once they try it they'll be hooked.

Club captain for the Carlton Croquet Club in Auckland Deirdre Rogers says the game is like a big version of snooker on a lawn.

"People think it is an old ladies game, but it's not. It is a very complicated game."

She says there are more female

than male players, but young men in New Zealand are doing very well.

The main international version of the game is called association croquet. This involves groups of singles or doubles hitting balls through 12 hoops, each trying to complete the round first.



Paddy Chapman

"You need to have a cool head under pressure as you may only get one shot," Chapman says.

Rogers says the game is very tactical and players need to think ahead, deciding how to advantage themselves and disadvantage others.

Chapman says it took a year to figure out what was going on, as it can be very confusing.

He says that although there is no money in playing croquet, it is relatively inexpensive to play — all you need it a mallet and some good shoes.

He receives funding from his local club and Croquet New Zealand, but also has to raise a lot himself.

## AUT looks after the brains behind the brawn

AUT is backing the futures of Auckland NPC and Blues players by offering them a tailor-made diploma in business.

The university has been running classes at Eden Park since last year, with students including Ben Atiga, Derren Whitcombe and Brad Mika.

"The course gives the players a qualification that they can use to enhance their employment prospects," says lecturer Roy Smollan.

"and another interest, other than rugby, in their lives."

The course aims to be relevant to the players' lives as rugby players but also provide them with business skills.

Smollan says teaching the classes has been a fascinating experience.

"It was unusual to see these people in class and then see them at games and in the media over the weekend." — Emma Moore