

Rapid Rise of Log Hero



PHOTO: BRADLEY AMBROSE, THE AUCKLANDER

CANTABS BLINDSIDED: North Harbour blindside flanker, Anthony Boric is overjoyed after his team won the Ranfurly Shield for the first time ever in the team's history.

North Harbour's blindside flanker Anthony Boric has had a stellar year. He talked to JOHN WHITING about his burgeoning career and Harbour's dramatic Ranfurly Shield victory.

North Harbour rugby's up-and-coming blindside flanker Anthony Boric still can't believe his team stole the Ranfurly Shield from Canterbury.

The shield has a home on the North Shore for the first time in the club's history after a determined 21-17 victory over Canterbury at Jade Stadium.

"It's definitely come as a shock. It's just such a massive thing and at the moment our heads are still in the clouds."

It was the lightning-quick feet of Fijian flyer Viliame Waqaseduadua out on the wing for North Harbour which sealed the historic win after he picked up the second of his two tries in the 68th minute.

"He was amazing. His first intercept try was magic and then that second try, wow. He came through when we really needed it," Boric said.

Boric also paid tribute to his side's defence which held strong when it mattered, securing the four-point lead over the final 10 minutes in the face of incredible pressure from Canterbury.

"That final ten minutes just seemed to stretch on forever. By no means were we home free at that stage.

"We busted our guts on defence as time wound down. I'm just so proud of the boys for keeping our composure. Holding that shield up in the air was a fantastic feeling."

At just 22 Anthony Boric has now proven more in the world of rugby than

many men will achieve in a lifetime. The next goal for the ambitious young man is to be a contender for a spot in the All Blacks' forward pack.

He wants to make the side "as soon as possible" but is pushing for a place in the end-of-year European tour.

He said one of his secrets of success was having the family support. Boric, known as "AB" to his team-mates, owes his bloom-

"It's just such a massive thing and at the moment our heads are still in the clouds"

ing rugby career to his grandparents who immigrated to New Zealand to work as gum diggers north of Auckland.

"If they hadn't come here the family would probably still be in Croatia, and odds are I wouldn't be playing top level rugby here."

The big forward's grandparents set-up an orchard in west Auckland which has been passed down through the family and is where he currently lives with his parents and 20-year-old brother Michael.

Mother, Sonja, and father, Milenko, go to all of his home games at North Harbour Stadium and Michael does his best to watch his big brother amid balancing his own rugby schedule.

Michael has carried on the family's

short but successful rugby tradition, playing lock or blindside flanker for Marist.

But Boric admits his family weren't really involved in sport until he began playing tennis at the age of eight. He's always loved tennis and rugby wasn't even in the fray until the age of 10 when he started playing for the Kumeu junior side as a winger. And no, he wasn't always the big kid.

"When I was young the coaches wouldn't let me near the forwards, I was one of the smallest guys on the team.

"Eventually I had a bit of a growth spurt and once I was playing rugby at Rosmini I was big enough to run alongside the big boys."

In 2000, at the age of 16, he was selected at blindside flanker for the Rosmini first XV which came as a great surprise to the entire Boric family.

But it was his second year in the first XV which gave him the best experience of his schoolboy rugby days. As a 17-year-old seventh former in 2001 the Rosmini side won the North Harbour championship.

Ironically it was that side in which Boric played alongside Rudi Wulf, Michael Reid and Ryan Wilson, who have now joined him in the North Harbour Air NZ Cup squad.

The University of Auckland engineering student played 12 games of the NPC in his inaugural 2005 season, has secured himself a lucrative Blues contract and is now

an important cog for North Harbour's solid forward pack.

The minutes before Boric marched out onto the paddock in the Harbour's first game of the Air NZ Cup this season were a blur.

Not only was his side anxious after losing both their pre-season matches, but the 22-year-old had the added responsibility of being stand-in captain due to Rua Tipoki's 16-week suspension.

Boric's boys reacted well to his captaincy, recording their first win of the season under his rule.

Boric relished his time as team-leader, handing the reins back to Tipoki after an unbeaten three-match streak. He admits he would have been under the scope had the results gone the other way.

He has also captained the North Harbour Colts but narrowly missed out on the New Zealand Colts side, because he was considered too slow and too small to compete in international competition.

After the selection snub a disheartened Boric was determined to make an impact. He trained every day adding 5kg of muscle to his frame.

The hard work paid off as he landed himself a place in the Junior All Blacks at the Pacific Five Nations in June this year.

"It was a bit of a buzz really to play in that team. It was just a massive step up from anything I'd ever had."

Until now.