



## Club Rugby Council meeting (2007/5)

**Date:** *Wednesday, 5 December 2007*

**Location:** *Referees' Room, FMG Stadium*

**Time:** *7pm*

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Welcome and apologies**

CRC Chairman John Anderson welcomed all members to the meeting.

**Attendance:** Tony Murphy (MRU board chairman); Peter Clark (MRU board member); Hadyn Smith (MRU CEO); Chris Ricketts (MRU community rugby manager); Martin Brady (MRU club liaison officer); Jason O'Halloran (MRU High Performance Manager); Eugene Skerrett (Referee Education Officer); John Anderson (CRC chairman); Dave Wolland (CRC deputy chairman); Brett Walker (Oroua); Sam Strahan (Oroua); Gary Nesdale (Oroua); Barry Mitchell (Dannevirke Sports); Colin Gates (Te Kawau); Mike Dravitski (Te Kawau); Geoff Hall (Te Kawau); Russell Walker (Kia Toa); Trent Te Kooro (Kia Toa); Dave Parata (Kia Toa); Kenny Johnson (Kia Toa); Kevin Tod (HSOB); Jim Lyons (HSOB); Peter Marshall (HSOB); Colin Parker (Freyberg); Neil Aitcheson (Freyberg); Barrie Angland (MRSC); Malcolm Burr (Marist); Roger Heatley (Ashhurst); Doug Brew (FOB); Vicki Spicer (Bush); Troy Homes (Linton Army); Matt Schmidt (Feilding); David Faulkner (Massey); Kim Durham (COB & MRRA); Roy Todd (COB); John Zander (Bulls); Shane Zander (Bulls); Mike Haddon (Manawatu Maori Rugby).

**Apologies:** Sam Moke (Bulls); Damon Durie (MSSRB); Steve Morris (MRU President); Kevin Shing (FOB). Roy Todd / Mike Dravitski.

#### **2. Introduction of new staff**

MRU CEO Hadyn Smith introduced two new members of staff and asked both to speak to the meeting:

Referee Education Officer (Eugene Skerrett) – Mr Skerrett introduced himself and said he had been a referee in the region for a number of years before moving out of the district 18 months ago. Mr Skerrett also mentioned that clubs also play a role in referee recruitment as becoming a referee is another avenue to keep people involved in the game.

MRU High Performance Manager (Jason O'Halloran) – Mr O'Halloran talked of his background and, in particular, his time in Japan. He went on to say that there were several key development areas which he will be focusing on – one of which is in the schools.

### **3. Confirmation of minutes from 18 July 2007**

Dave Wolland and Colin Parker confirmed the minutes had been circulated.

### **4. Matters arising**

Kevin Tod (HSOB) questioned the vote which was taken at the last meeting and believed it had no relevance under the agenda item regarding Dannevirke Sports' affiliation to the MRU. Neil Aitcheson (Freyberg) believed that the vote happened at the previous meeting and that it should be kept in the minutes.

CRC chairman John Anderson said that the minutes would be changed to reflect the following: 5a. Focus on Dannevirke's affiliation. 5b. Focus on the vote for a 13 team competition in 2008. The meeting agreed.

### **5. MRU Strategic Plan (2004 to 2009) & 2008 Commercial Plan & 2008 Operational Plans (2008) & Update on NZ Rugby scene (Hadyn Smith)**

MRU CEO Hadyn Smith presented a powerpoint presentation on the above topics and highlighted the following:

#### **Manawatu Turbos**

The MRU was pleased with the overall placing of 12<sup>th</sup> – targeting top 10 finish in 2008. The Union is currently working through securing our key players and attracting depth for 2008 and beyond. The team management will now move into the White House at Massey in 2008. Home games - Crowd number averaged at 7,500 for 2007 (sixth best in the country).

#### **Strategic Plan**

It was not a new plan but it is under review. Mr Smith asked for comments from the clubs with the final plan being completed by Christmas.

Dave Parata (Kia Toa) asked Mr Smith to clarify the rating around the academy and its KPI. Mr Smith responded by saying that the NZRU review all academies and the rating was based on the review. Last year the MRU academy was rated at 59% with the national averaged being 60%. The Union will look to have a 5% improvement.

Mr Parata raised two further points:

- Is the Turbos brand trademarked? Mr Smith said it was.
- Regarding the KPI around sponsorship and level of reserves, were these on track? Mr Smith said both were on track.

### **Operational Plans**

The 2008 Operational Plans are drafted but will not be complete until the Strategic Plan review is finalised. The final copy will be distributed to all clubs and the 2007 Plan results will be reported at the MRU AGM.

### **Commercial Plan**

The MRU is planning new “lower” level of packages for 2008 with another focus being TelstraClear (with a mobile option) will be a targeted revenue stream. The MRU is targeting commercial income is 1.6 million cash and \$200k contra with commercial expenses are \$300k or 1/6th of the income and a copy will be supplied to all clubs.

Mr Smith also talked about:

- Manawatu Business Park & IRANZ Youth scholarship function which is scheduled to be held on Friday 8 February 2008 – more details to be released closer to the time.
- AGM timeline – Mr Smith distributed a timeline of when clubs have to nominations in for very aspects of club/Union operations heading into next year’s AGM.

### **Update on NZ Rugby Scene**

Following a recent meeting between Provincial Unions’ CEOs and the NZRU there will be no changes to the 2008 Air New Zealand Cup but the competition review will be brought forward with Unions looking for more certainty around the competition.

Several new rule changes have been brought into the game but will only be used at Super 14 level in 2008.

Mr Smith talked about the 2011 World Cup and was asked by Barrie Angland (Manawatu Rugby Supporters’ Club) if the MRU had made a submission on the Arena Manawatu redevelopment. Mr Smith said yes and he had sent Palmerston North City Council the stadium criteria for the RWC. Capacity must be 20,000 and Arena Manawatu is aiming to have a 22,000 capacity at FMG Stadium.

## **6. Update on the MRU Financial position (Hadyn Smith)**

Mr Smith said while it had been a tough year financially the MRU was on track to record a small surplus. He went onto to talk about the 2008 budget for the Union and again it was looking to record a small surplus.

## **7. 2008 Senior I Club Competition Format (Chris Ricketts)**

MRU community rugby manager Chris Ricketts said that Dannevirke Sports was now an official member of the MRU and as such were eligible to play Senior I rugby in 2008. This left a situation where Freyberg could be relegated to Senior B and the MRU board was asking for clubs’ views on a 13 team competition next

year. Mr Ricketts distributed information to clubs at the meeting of a possible 13 team format and it was:

One possibility of a format that is the most similar to the existing one in terms of season length, structure and allows for a finals day is as follows:

1. Competition Round:

- *Full Round*

- Weeks 1-13
- 12 game round robin + 1 Bye
- 6 games home & 6 games away - alternating
- Bye week preferentially based on finishing position in 2007
- Mirrored 13 team Senior 2 competition

2. Post season:

- *Top 8 split round and play-offs*

- Weeks 14-17
- 4 games cross-pool in two pools of 4 based on finishing position in competition round: 1,3,5,7 & 2,4,6,8.
- Weeks 18 & 19
- Top 4 ranked teams (top 2 from each pool) contest Hankins Shield by playing semi-finals and final.
- Bottom 4 ranked teams (bottom 2 from each pool) contest Val Holland by playing semi-finals and final.

- *Bottom 5 split round and play-offs:*

- Weeks 14-18
- 4 game round robin + 1 Bye
- Bye week preferentially based on finishing position in competition round
- Week 19
- Top two ranked teams contesting the Goldfinch and Cousins final

A general discussion ensued, including clubs' view that there was still uncertainty as to the composition of the 16 teams in 2009. Mr Smith said that the Union would have a 16 team competition in 2009 and used the Dannevirke Sports affiliation to the MRU as an example of boundaries becoming irrelevant. The Union (at board level) is working towards getting the three additional teams to make up the 16.

The clubs were then asked to vote on that in the interim year (2008 only) 13 teams comprise the Senior I competition.

The clubs voted in favour (20 to 6) of a 13 team competition for 2008. The Manawatu Rugby Referees' Association abstained from the vote. Mr Ricketts said he would consult with the clubs over the coming weeks through the Operations Support Committee regarding the final make up of the competition.

## 8. 2009 Premier Club Competition Update (Chris Ricketts)

Community rugby manager Chris Ricketts explained that there were several aspects to the 2009 competition format that the MRU was required to report back to clubs by the end of 2007. Mr Ricketts stated the following at the meeting:

**Paragraph 6:** *The MRU will pay Clubs a bonus level of "team related funding" for every new team that completes the season from 2008.*

*The 2008 club Partnership Agreement reflects the emphasis on player registrations and new teams. Grant payment will be made on a per player basis, and the new team bonus will be the refunding of affiliation fees for any new team.*

**Paragraph 7:** *MRU will supply administrative support and guidance in both these areas (women's game and transition plan for secondary school players) as a priority focus later in 2007 and beyond.*

*Initially the MRU has produced the 2008 Club Guide, which has been distributed to all registered secondary school players who are school leavers this year.*

*The Club Liaison Officer will be meeting with all clubs in early 2008 to assist in the development of plans to target women and school leavers.*

**A. Explanation from the Board Para 6:** *the Operations Support Committee will assist staff in developing the finer details of the competition (2009).*

*This will be done in early 2008 when the OSC has been elected for 2008.*

**B. Explanation from the Board Para 7:** *A planning tool will be developed and used for this process in 2007.*

*For the last 2 seasons the MRU has conducted a fairly comprehensive review of the season. This tool will be expanded to receive wider and more specific feedback with regards to the 2009 competition format.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Oroua's Sam Strahan raised the issue of the 2009 competition structure with those present at the meeting. Mr Strahan said given that it has been some months since the MRU board had made its decision to go to a 16 team, clubs have had time to reflect and question whether it was good for rugby.

Hadyn Smith (MRU) responded by saying that it was not simply about changing the on-field performance. The MRU had a concern about the health of the clubs and had recently completed an assessment of clubs with a view to assisting where necessary.

A general discussion arose with Oroua, Te Kawau and Bush clubs being prominent in their opposition to the MRU board's 2009 competition structure.

The main points to be raised were:

- that the board's decision was weighted in favour of increasing the level of play to assist the Turbos playing club rugby and not focused on amateur rugby which is what club rugby is about
- that if a club was to play in the second tier competition then it would lose players and the club could lost forever
- that the 16 team competition was forced onto the clubs and no feedback has been sought from the clubs on such a competition
- that there is still uncertainty about finding three additional teams to compromise the 16 team competition in 2009
- the competition was essentially a "top eight – Senior B competition" and not a two tiered 16 team competition

Dave Wolland (Bush) spoke to the meeting and believed the MRU board had its "head in the sand" over its 2009 competition structure. Mr Murphy refuted that the MRU board had its head in the sand, saying it had considered the 2009 structure long and hard before making its decision. Mr Smith echoed Mr Murphy's comments as he would welcome clubs' written views on the structure of a 16 team competition.

Information on the 2009 structure is on the MRU website under "The Union" and then click on "MRU Documents" Website: [www.manawaturugby.co.nz](http://www.manawaturugby.co.nz)

## **9. CRC nomination to the MRU Appointments Committee**

Malcolm Burr (Marist), seconded by Colin Parker (Freyberg) nominated Dave Parata (Kia Toa) for the position of CRC representative on the MRU Appointments Committee. The meeting unanimously voted Mr Parata into the position.

## **10. Board Report (Tony Murphy)**

Board chairman Tony Murphy gave his reassurance that the Board does take the clubs' concerns seriously. He also urged clubs to consider nominating people from club background for the board.

## **11. General Business**

- Neil Aitcheson (Freyberg) asked for an indication as to when the board would make the final decision on the 2008 competition. Mr Murphy said the board would ratify the 13 team competition within a week.
- Colin Gates (Te Kawau) said he would like to, on behalf of the TKRFC, thank the MRU staff for their assistance during the year.
- Dave Parata (Kia Toa) suggested that the MRU do a media release regarding the 13 team competition to go out to the media.
- Chris Ricketts (MRU) stated that the club grants had been set and it was 50% of each club's 2007 affiliation fees. The grant would be paid in February/March 2008 following MRU AGM. The MRU will ask clubs following the AGM to invoice the Union for their grants.

Meeting concluded at 8.53pm.

