



Western Pioneers Newsletter 26 June 2011

The Pioneer's narrow loss means **North Shore are now 7 points clear** at the top of the competition, and pretty much assured of hosting a semi final. The race for the second spot and a home semi final has intensified; with the Western Pioneers remarkably still second, but only on points differential from Silverdale. One point behind is Massey and 5 back to Takapuna.

The points are; North Shore 48, Western and Silverdale 41, Massey 40, Takapuna 35 and Northcote 31.

The teams that finish first and second each have the first week of the playoffs on the sideline, and then host the winners of the games between the 3rd and 6th and 4th and 5th teams. Sounds complicated? To put it simply, if the Pioneers win their next two games against Silverdale away and Takapuna at Kumeu, they should finish second, have a week off and then host a semi final. If they finish 3rd or 4th, they will host a quarter final, but have an extra game to play.

You know it must be an important game when **Miles Marcroft** comes along to watch your club play. It was a privilege to have him in attendance on Saturday. Miles cut his teeth in club rugby with the Takapuna club, they of the expensive beer!

He then took his administrative skills to the North Harbour union some 10 or so years ago, where he is Operations Manager overseeing all amateur rugby. (Despite rumours to the contrary, the Pioneers are an amateur team).

Being an administrator at any provincial union these days must be a tough task, with sponsorship/gaming funds hard to access and spectator numbers falling faster than a car salesman's credibility. Miles is a tremendous supporter of the clubs, and always comes to the club rooms afterwards to offer his many years of wisdom to those who will listen!

Miles would have noticed an interesting development in the **beer price survey** when he ventured upstairs after Saturday's enthralling contest. Helensville maintained its position as the club offering the cheapest beer even though bar management increased their price to \$5.00 a bottle.

This price hike was due to it being previously too cheap (\$4.00) and the impending affiliation fee demand by the Union meaning the Helensville club has to try and generate extra income.

Next week it is the turn of Denis Henderson's Silverdale club to come under the guise of the independent surveyors.



Whilst acknowledging Union employees, it was also good to see **Ray Garrett** of the referees in attendance. Ray would probably be preferred to be known as a top ref, but to those who attended a North Harbour prize giving a couple of years ago and saw him under hypnosis, he is a legend in that department, giving huge entertainment to the large gathering.

Ray does a great job with his referee recruitment, and is always on the lookout for more participants in this important department of the game. If you know anyone who is interested, they can call 0800 REFEREE, sign up and see what its like to be in control of 30 testosterone fuelled guys, with just a whistle for protection!

Generally speaking the Pioneers management don't complain TOO much about the referee's performance. As long as there is consistency with their decisions, an even handedness, an ability to get a feel for the game, let it flow and give any 50:50 calls the way of the Pioneers, then both parties will get on well together!

To you **our supporters, thank you for coming to this week's game** in the numbers you did. For many it was the first time you watched the Pioneers, and we hope you will be back again. It was one of the biggest crowds seen at a Helensville game, and the players really enjoy playing in front of their parochial supporters.

We are all disappointed with the result, but not with the physical commitment shown by the players. They have a huge desire to make the final, and your continued support will help them get there.

Next week's game is against our neighbours at **Silverdale, kick off 2.45pm**. Earlier in the season we relieved Silverdale of the Country Cup, and the Pioneers are in no hurry to give it back.

Western Pioneers Match Report 26 June

Gut wrenching, heartbreaking, soul destroying. Just some of the more politically correct terms to describe the **Century 21 Burmester Realty Western Pioneers** 18-17 loss to competition leaders North Shore at Helensville on Saturday afternoon.

Pioneers management and players had a sleepless Saturday night as they were haunted by the narrow loss to North Shore. On Sunday mo(u)rning the bitter taste of defeat was still there, and those who had nightmares of a one point loss were faced with the grim reality that it was not just a bad dream.

In front of a very large crowd of mainly passionate Pioneers supporters, on a field in



remarkably good condition considering the heavy and persistent rainfall of recent weeks, the titans of the North Harbour competition ran out for their top of the table clash.

Shore attacked early and went as close to scoring a try in the first couple of minutes as they did for the rest of the game. The first of many penalties the Pioneers were to concede throughout the game resulted in Shore's kicker, Hayden Abercrombie, goaling for a 3-0 lead. By the end of the game Hayden Abercrombie was to score as many points as his brother Tom regularly does for the Breakers basket ball team.

The Pioneers came back and Regan Oxenham kicked his first attempt to level the scores, 3-3.

Shore then had another penalty attempt which missed, and it looked as if their regular kicker's absence was going to be to the Pioneer's benefit. Sadly, Abercrombie didn't miss another all day.

The Pioneers finally got some ball, and twice went close to scoring as the backs looked sharp. Oxenham kicked his second penalty, and from the restart Shore were penalized on half way. Oxenham demanded the ball, and he proceeded to scape it over the crossbar for a 9-3 lead.

At this stage things looked good, until a succession of penalties went Shore's way and they kicked them all to lead 12-9.

At this stage referee Luke Prangley decided to put the hard working Pioneers flanker Fou Tuivaiti in the sin bin as punishment for the string of infringements they were deemed to be committing.

The Pioneers put this incident behind them, and attacked the Shore line strongly. After good back play, Ray Arlo scored an unconverted try wide out. Ray had another impressive performance, with strong running, back line leadership and punishing defence the hall marks of his game. His North Shore opposite is in the North Harbour squad, which, based on Saturday's showdown, has many of the Pioneer's arm chair selectors scratching their heads.

Half time came with the score 14-12.

Under the instructions of the North Harbour coaches, NZ sevens player David Raikuna came on after the break and made some sharp bursts for the Pioneers. However his reluctance to pass to team mates may have resulted in lost try scoring opportunities.

Oxenham was having a fine tactical game, gaining much ground with well directed kicks



in behind the Shore defence. A turning point in the game occurred when the Western Pioneers elected to take a quick tap penalty from a relatively easy kicking position. No try was scored and an opportunity was lost.

However after more good attacking play, they did successfully kick for goal and the lead was now 17-12. It was all the Pioneers at this stage, with tremendous physical commitment from both teams.

Josh Williams was having an outstanding game at lock and he was deservedly made the team's Player of the Day. Josh has recently taken up a career position with Tegal in Newmarket, which, fingers crossed, may see him stay with the Pioneers in 2012. This was no chicken hearted performance from the Welshman, as he delivered slice after slice after slice of quality performance. He regathered all the kick offs under huge pressure, contested the line outs well, and crashed forward throughout the game with the ball in hand.

Shore made a brief foray into the Pioneers red zone, picked up the obligatory penalty and the gap was now 17-15.

It was then the Pioneers on attack and Oxenham's goal kicking blues returned to haunt the team and supporters as he missed a relatively easy shot. That appeared to not be an issue when they scored a fine try from broken play, only to find the young touch judge standing with his flag held high after not being able to communicate with the ref that play had gone into touch.

The Pioneers appeared deflated with this and let Shore back into their territory, where another penalty was conceded, the goal was kicked and Shore led 18-17.

There was still time left but Shore's defence held and the Pioneers were left to lament another narrow loss.

Once again it was the same three demons that returned to bite the Pioneers; ill discipline, lack of consistency at lineout time and missed goal kicking opportunities.

The Pioneers defence was again a feature, holding the competition's top team try less. In fact, in their last four games they have only conceded two tries.

This was a club game of test like intensity, with strong tackling and determined running. Both teams wanted this game desperately, and on this occasion the Pioneers had it won everywhere but on the scoreboard. They played with great determination as they looked to reward the many supporters who watched this match.



Congratulations to North Shore for winning this match. The Western Pioneers hope for a rematch on July 30 at North Harbour stadium.

Next week the Western Pioneers head to Silverdale to defend the Country Cup. It is another must win game, as these teams are equal second 7 points behind North Shore.

In the early game, the Western Pioneers Senior Firsts won an exciting encounter 27-22 over their higher placed rivals, after leading 22-13 at half time. Half back and captain Ray Tuivaiti again played well and Geraint Walsh was in good form at first five after a couple of weeks off with injury.

