NOVEMBER 2026

BAABAA NEWS

The Newsletter of the New Zealand Barbarian Rugby Club Inc.
Level 6, ASB Stand, Eden Park, Auckland, New Zealand.

www.barbarianrugby.co.nz • FB: @NZBarbarianRugby • Insta: @nzbarbarianrugby



The NZ Barbarians and King Country mingled for a post-match photo in August.

PRESIDENT'S TEAM TALK

After a hugely busy season for rugby and the Barbarians club, it's time to reflect on my two year tenure as your President.
You don't really appreciate what's involved until you're immersed in it. Then you understand just how the club functions day to day. There's much more to it than meets the eye when I was on the committee overseeing financial stuff. It's been eye-opening, a lot of fun, and a bit of work. Having a good team around me has been critical and I pay tribute to our hard-working committee. There's a strong foundation as I pass the baton to Nick Sheppard. Shep will do a fantastic job for the next two years. We'll continue on the 'quality not quantity' approach to events.

We also tip our hat to outgoing members of the committee. Grant McCurrach is stepping down after more than a decade as the club treasurer. Thanks for your hard work, Scurrah. Great to see a surplus again! And Monalisa Codling is stepping away after four years as club secretary. Thanks for all you have done, Mona. There is other movement on the executive, but all will be unveiled at the AGM on November 25. We hope to see many of you there for the last major event at the club house, along with the Xmas party, which features wine tasting from the Passage Rock and Cable Bay vineyards, on November 20.

Since our last newsletter, the Barbarians have been busy on the field. We fielded a team that played and beat the King Country Rams in August. That must have helped the Rams as they won their first Meads Cup, a trophy very close to that union's heart. Our NZ Barbarians Area Schools were in action against the Counties Manukau Cavaliers Under 18s, and our NZ Barbarians Under 18 boys had a 2-1 record, showcasing some real talent, including school leavers. We look forward to our NZ Barbarians Under 18 girls in action on December 19-20 in the Global Youth Sevens at Auckland's Dilworth College.
The clubrooms were pumping for two Test matches, Ireland in July and Australia in October. The latter was one of our busiest nights in years.
Our Strategic Plan is ready for action in 2027. I will speak in more detail about that during the AGM, but the revised plan enables the club to remain relevant in today's changing rugby landscape and helps set us up for the future. There are four key pillars to the strategic plan:
Defining the strategic role of the club; Membership, engagement, growth, and effective communication; Campaign and events; Revenue growth and sustainability.

Thank you to all the Barbarians I have worked with or run into over the last two years, including Campbell Burnes (and designer Dave Burke) for the newsletter. I'm sure I'll catch up with many of you again in 2027.

Rick Johnston
President
NZ Barbarian Rugby Club



Deaths Of Members

Phil Gifford (1947-2026)

Phil Gifford, ONZM, was 79 and had been a member since 2016.

After his induction, he loved coming up to the club and catching up with mates old and new.

Phil was one of the great storytellers of our game as a journalist and via his alter ego Loosehead Len, created in 1973. His love of rugby was fired from the time of the 1956 Springboks tour of New Zealand, while his vocation as a journalist and radio broadcaster took him around the world as a columnist and prolific rugby author for myriad publications.

His latest book was Smithy, the Wayne Smith story, published in 2023.

Other prominent rugby books he penned included Grizz: The Legend, a history of Canterbury rugby, and bios of Peter Fatialofa and Todd Blackadder. He wrote a 2014 memoir entitled Loose Amongst the Legends. He also wrote on other sports, and his biography of Valerie Adams was a very good seller.

Phil had an innate ability to connect with rugby people from all levels of the game and drew on hundreds of anecdotes for his popular columns. He was a two-time NZ sports journalist of the year.

Cheryl Waaka (1970-2026)

Cheryl Waaka, MNZM, was Black Fern number 80 and died after a long battle with cancer.

She was 56 and had been a Barbarian since 2022. She played 20 Tests for the Black Ferns from 1997-2004 out of Auckland and Northland as a tough loose forward, winning two Rugby World Cups, in 1998 and 2002. She scored a try in the 2002 final against England. In all, she scored seven tries for the Black Ferns.

Cheryl was a proud Northland wahine, playing for the Kauri out of the Kaikohe club, which she later served as President and Patron. She was a trailblazer, becoming the first woman to coach a senior men's club team in Northland (Kaikohe) and then taking the reins of the Kauri in the Farah Palmer Cup. Cheryl worked more recently for the Northland union and Sport Northland. At Auckland, she played out of the College Rifles, Suburbs and Ponsonby clubs.

In 2023, she was awarded the MNZM for services to rugby. Her father Wattie Waaka played for the Maori All Blacks, while her brother Tuck Waaka lifted the first NPC trophy in 1976 as captain of Bay of Plenty.

RUGBY REVIEW



Try time for the Baabaas U18s.

Since our June newsletter, our Barbarians teams have been flying the flag in their scarlet jerseys.

In particular, the club made a first-class appearance, its first since 2024, in Taupo on August 1 when the NZ Barbarians were hosted by the King Country Rams, managed by Barbarian Ben Sherriff. The Baabaas, coached by Craig Hill, Buck Manning and Kingi Matenga, won 53-33 in fine style, giving the ball plenty of air. Fullback Harry Carter of Auckland Marist ran in four of the nine tries.

Players were chosen from clubs in the North Harbour, Auckland and Counties Manukau unions who were not in NPC squads. A handful had previous first-class experience, including captain Will Furniss (Counties Manukau) and Henry Saker (NZ Universities).

Craig Carter, Nick Sheppard and Regina Sheck were running the cutter for the club at this fixture. King Country absorbed many lessons from that and two months later won its first Meads Cup title.

The NZ Barbarians Area Schools, now into their 14th season under club sponsorship, had a most enjoyable and beneficial camp in Ahipara, where they were given a pep talk by Eric Rush and beat a Northland Natives XV 35-10 in a practice match. They then travelled down to Auckland, spending a memorable afternoon at Eden Park for a tour and lunch at the clubrooms. The squad stayed at the Papakura High School marae the night before the main match of the campaign, an evenly-contested 29-25 loss to the Counties Manukau Cavaliers. Thanks again to the Patumahoe club for hosting and the long-time Area Schools management of manager Steve Beck, coaches Justin Marsh, Hone Manuel and Kingi Matenga.



The NZ Barbarians Area Schools and the Counties Manukau Cavaliers U18s after their tight match in Patumahoe.

The NZ Barbarians Under 18s, 14 years after being established as the NZ Barbarians Schools, showed their qualities in September/October in Hamilton, beating Tonga and Samoa Schools comfortably before going down 54-31 to the crack Australian Under 18s.

The Barbarians are giving opportunities to players who are a year out of college. In the starting XV against Tonga, only Eric Miller and prop Deon Fifita were still in high school. Standouts included loose forward Luke Goodman, Aucklanders Santino Naufahu (prop) and Junior Aukuso-Slade (lock), and smooth fullback Noah Rogers. The coaching team was Greg Feek, Tasesa Lavea and Matt Howling.



The Baabaas U18s perform their haka before facing Australia.

Your Under 18s boys squad was: Alapati Soagia (Hautapu club), Axel Daken (Petone club), Caleb Collins-Polata (St Andrew's College), Chanel Filiva'a (Clifton club), Deon Fifita (Hamilton BHS), Eric Miller (Palmerston North BHS), Harry Baddington (Wellington College), Jett Timbrell (St Andrew's College), Josh Shore (Lincoln University club), Junior Slade (Pakuranga club), Kane Shedlock (Brisbane BC), Kitiona Talaepa (Petone club), Luke Goodman (Hautapu club), Matt Harris (College Rifles club), Max Talbot (Kelston BHS), Niko Boylan (Southern club), Noah Rogers (University of Waikato club), Oliver Groenewald (Sacred Heart College), Poliko Javaan Faalialia (Southland BHS), Reuben McIntyre (Stoke club), Santino Naufahu (Grammar TEC club), Sean Burgess (Hautapu club), Solomone Tuitupou (Takapuna club), Toni Tuuhoko Pole (St Kentigern College), Triumph Voice (Hastings R & S club), Viliami Rongokea Tupou (Kia Toa club).

To come are the NZ Barbarians Under 18 girls, who will play in next month's Global Youth Sevens in Auckland. We encourage as many Auckland-based Baabaas to get along, as this is a talented young group on an important pathway. They'll be coached by Anthony Campbell and Josh van Lieshout with Rebecca Burch as physio.



Triumph Voice of the Hastings R & S club and the Baabaas U18s shows some fancy footwork against Australia.

WHAT'S ON IN 2026-2027



Friday November 20
Club Xmas party
4.30pm

Wednesday November 25
Club AGM,
6pm

December 19-20
Global Youth Sevens,
Dilworth College,
Auckland, 9am

Saturday February 13
Blues v Hurricanes,
7.05pm

Sunday February 28
Blues v Crusaders,
4pm

Saturday March 6
Blues v Reds,
4.35pm

Friday April 9
Blues v Chiefs,
7.35pm

Saturday May 1
Blues v Brumbies
7.05pm

Friday May 7
Blues v Drua,
7.35pm

Saturday May 29
Blues v Highlanders,
7.05pm

**All events are at Eden Park unless otherwise specified.*

**Keep an eye on the website and your email for confirmation of further 2027 functions/events.*



The NZ Barbarians Under 18s before their clash with Australia in Hamilton.

BAABAAS BRIEFS

The Barbarians club has been on social media for some time, via Facebook www. facebook.com/NZBarbarianRugby and Instagram www.instagram.com/nzbarbarianrugby so you can more swiftly keep up with all the club news. The website is looking good too.

The newsletter editor is also the editor of iconic monthly magazine Rugby News.

There's plenty of provincial, sevens, grassroots and women's coverage in there to sink your teeth into, as well as All Blacks and Super Rugby content. The November issue is out now. *Rugby News* ***is available at all good magazine retailers and supermarkets or you can subscribe by calling 0800-77-77-10 or visit*** *www.rugbynews.co.nz*

The 2026 subs notices were sent out months ago. Please pay your subs, if applicable, at your earliest convenience, as this is a requirement of membership.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

The club uses email and the website for most of its communication and dissemination of information these days.

Some of you may not have an email address, but can you please let us know a possible email address for a family member or friend that could expedite our communications to you. This would also help reduce the cost of postage. Please contact secretary Monalisa Codling if you wish to take this route. You will then be able to keep up with the club activities on a far more regular basis. If you are moving or changing your email or contact number, please email *secretary@barbarianrugby.co.nz*

VISITORS TO THE CLUB

Eden Park security will only allow members and/or visitors into the ASB Stand and our clubrooms by showing your membership/visitor cards. If you need more than one visitor card to bring friends or family to the club, especially on 'game days', please contact Monalisa Codling to obtain additional 'visitor' cards. Please ensure any additional 'visitor' cards are returned before leaving the club at the end of the function/event.

CLUB CONTACT

Your first port of call is our club secretary Monalisa Codling, who is at times based at Eden Park in the clubrooms' office.

Monalisa's details are:

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