

Under-rated Rasmussen leaves a record legacy

By Michael Romanos

The curtain has finally come down on a slightly battered Randwick club and Wellington representative rugby league team captain and loose forward, Rodney Rasmussen. He will forever be remembered as the leader of a fine, exciting league side which played (and lost) in four successive Tusk Cup national club finals.

The 6ft, near 14 stone league player leaves the playing side of the 13 a-side code a little bitter and much frustrated.

Bitter and frustrated because of all the injuries which clouded his career and finally wrecked the hearing in one ear, and because of the elusiveness of the Tusk Cup in going so far so often, only to slide backwards each time with the linesmen playing a large part at Carlaw Park in affecting his team's prospects.

Rasmussen scored an average of 16 tries a season in a premier league career spanning 15 years but his average of injuries was almost as high.

From his head to his toes, the Randwick warhorse has suffered terrible misfortunes. He has had: a fractured skull, two broken teeth, twice broken nose, three times concussed, chipped bone in his neck, dislocated shoulder, abdominal strain, broken arm, sprained wrist, dislocated thumb knuckle, torn knee tendon, two torn medial ligaments, torn hamstring, ankle strain, archilles tendon problems, snapped foot tendon, quadriceps strain.

Wellington-born, Rodney has in his makeup five-eighths Cook Island Maori, two-eighths Scottish and one-eighths English. But the 34 year old Insurance agent said he feels basically a New Zealand who is especially proud of his polynesian side. He has twice visited Rarotonga.

Rasmussen in action in the 1985 Tusk Cup quarterfinal between his Randwick side and Bay of Plenty team, Pikiaro. Randwick won 36-27.

His "grandfather" Viggo Rasmussen was a famous Danish schooner captain who operated in the South Pacific and married into the Pokoati family. Rodney's father, Viggo (junior) was the whangai, in line with the Cook Island custom afforded to the second born in a family.

Viggo jnr and his wife Peggy moved from Takuvaine, Rarotonga in 1946 to Wellington with four children. The couple had a further four children including Rodney.

Rodney said he is disconcerted when maori-speaking Cook Island people are considered by the New Zealand Maori and Pakeha as "Islanders" which he says has racial overtones.

Rasmussen was rated the most promising softball short-stop in the Hutt Valley as a 17-18 year old and he reped for Hutt Valley in the age grades at national championships. But league took over when he decided to concentrate on a winter sport and give more freedom in the summer months for less serious pursuits.

He was in the first 15 (rugby union) at Hutt Valley Memorial College where league was (and still is) frowned upon. But league was in the family "blood" with his father and his older brothers, John Finley and George preceeding, Rodney into the Randwick Club.

The Randwick Club shifted its headquarters from Randwick School, Moera to Strand Park but following a fire which burnt down their Strand Park Clubrooms, the club moved their headquarters further up the Valley to Naenae Park as part of the complex including the Cardinals Softball Club.

