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V



ROUND 1

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2021 SUPER RUGBY AU SEASON | ISSUE 1

6: Q & A

Dan McKellar gives us some of his thoughts heading into tonight's derby dustup against the Waratahs.

9: HEAD TO HEAD

Two of the best young playmakers in Australia go head-to-head in Noah Lolesio and Will Harrison.

13: KEY PLAYERS - BRUMBIES

Who will be the difference for the Brumbies in tonight's game. We go through who will be the Hitman, the Cool customer, the match winner, and the key to victory.

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Who you need to look out for tonight from the 'Tahs. Their biggest addition, their X-factor, their biggest loss and their glue guy.

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There's still plenty to come in Harvey Norman Super Rugby AU.

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COACHES Q&A

WITH DAN MCKELLAR

DAN, THE TEAM IS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED APART FROM HOOKER FROM ROUND ONE, GIVE US YOUR THOUGHTS ON TONIGHT'S SELECTION.

Yeah we've gone with a settled 23 other than Folau dropping out with a slight niggle. Connal gets his first start of the year, and I said last week, Noss (Lachlan) Loneragan was very unlucky to miss out round one. I'm pleased for him especially after having an excellent preseason and Connal, he's not a rocks and diamonds player, he's always very consistent you know what you're going to get with him and that's good set piece work rate repeat efforts and physicality and he brings all those things and he's very comfortable now, he's played a lot of super rugby now and he is pushing Folau every week to start.

WHAT IS THE MAIN TAKE-AWAY FROM LAST WEEK'S GAME? I KNOW YOU SAID YOU ARE MORE THAN HAPPY WITH THE RESULT, A FEW DAYS AFTERWARDS WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE WIN?

We are still really pleased, we thought we did a lot of things really well for round one, in particular around our attack we created a lot of opportunities. If we compare it to round one last year it was certainly a lot more fluid and cleaner which is pleasing. Defensively

we were put under good pressure as well at times. So, it's just about building on from week one of the competition and getting better.

WARATAHS LOST A FEW TO INJURY AND SUSPENSION, WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING FROM THEM?

Its rugby, we have all lost by 40 points in the past and the first thing you want to do is get back on the field and turn it around. They will have a bee in their bonnet about that. We need to focus on ourselves and make sure we turn up with the right intent and improve execution and take more opportunities and if we do that, outcomes will look after them self, we are expecting a team that is fired up.

IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK AT HOME, ARE YOU KEEN TO HAVE A HOME CROWD BACK AT GIO STADIUM?

The Brumbies and the Waratahs, it's always a game that attracts big crowds, so hopefully the local ACT rugby community gets behind it and others as well, people who might not go to a brumbies game, get an opportunity to see some really good rugby on a Saturday night in what will be good conditions.

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MATCH PREVIEW

WARATAHS

In the lead up to any great derby clash, a common cliché is often uttered – throw the form book out, this is a one off.

To the underdog, it's used as a galvanizing creed of hope, a team mantra to drown out the drones of self-doubt, however warranted. For Goliath in this biblical metaphor, the phrase keeps your side grounded, or at least that's the theory. For most of history, ACT rugby and the Plus500 Brumbies have proudly worn their 'David' nametags when staring down the NSW Waratahs.

They have embraced the underdog tag, some would say they have perpetuated it, using it to ensure the chip on their shoulder is never fixed. In 2021, few could argue the Brumbies are not overwhelming favourites heading into tonight's matchup.

The Brumbies have won nine of their last 10 Super Rugby games against the Waratahs including their last six meetings on the bounce and are coming off a clinical display against the Force, while the 'Tahs were dismantled by the Reds. NSW have major injury concerns, while the Brumbies boast a relatively healthy side.

It's the biggest gulf, on paper, that's existed between the two teams for some time, however, this time it means nothing. The Waratahs have every piece of bulletin board material they could ever wish for heading into a game of rugby, this match preview included.

If the Waratahs were a Stan series, they'd have been cancelled after the first episode. But like lots of shows on that excellent platform (wink), the 'Tahs need more time, and have plenty of good elements to build on, starting tonight at GIO Stadium. Forget the narrative right now.

The Waratahs have Jack Maddocks, James Ramm, Alex Newsome and Will Harrison in their backline; all quality players with the ability to hurt you from anywhere.

Up front, Lachie Swinton is back to bolster the visitor's backrow that also includes Jack Dempsey (who is expected to go well against the Brumbies as usual) and the tackle-bot 5000, Carlo Tizzano. Angus Bell, Tom Horton and Harry Johnson-Holmes are all dynamic and will look to respond after a tough outing last week. Luckily for the Brumbies, there will never be a lack of motivation heading into this game.

As long as Canberra products and out-of-state misfits wear the colours, the Brumbies will buy into their central identity – we hate the Waratahs. This is a one-off challenge, a cup-final feel. A proper derby clash where the script is never written 'till the final whistle blows! (Cliches are cliches because they're true)

HEAD TO HEAD



NOAH LOLESIO

21

10

68

NAME

AGE

SUPER RUGBY CAPS

SUPER RUGBY POINTS



WILL HARRISON

21

15

128

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1 James Slipper

Nic White

9

**DOMA
HOTELS**



2 Connal McInerney

Noah Lolesio

10



3 Allan Alaalatoa [C]

Mack Hansen

11

**DOMA
HOTELS**



4 Darcy Swain

Irae Simone

12



5 Cadeyrn Neville

Len Ikitau

13



6 Rob Valetini

Andy Muirhead

14



7 Jahrome Brown

Tom Banks

15



8 Pete Samu

REPLACEMENTS



16 Lachlan Lonergan

Harry Lloyd

17



18 Tom Ross

Nick Frost

19



20 Tom Cusack

Ryan Lonergan

21



GIVIT 22

Reesjan Pasitooa

Issak Fines-Leleiwasa

23

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KEY PLAYERS (BRUMBIES)



THE HITMAN - ROB VALETINI

Rob Valetini has returned to the Brumbies in 2021 as the player he has promised to be since joining the club out of school in 2017. Brumbies fans got glimpses of the bruising backrowers intent to take his game to another level this season in the side's trial match against the Force, and Valetini backed that up with a solid outing in WA in round one. Cadeyrn Neville is unlucky not to take this nod for the 'Tahs clash but expect both Neville and Valetini to be setting the tone defensively.

KEY PLAYERS (BRUMBIES)



THE COOL CUSTOMER - TOM BANKS

Tom Banks is known for his electric pace and increasingly, his ability to put the ball into the 5m channel for rolling mauls. However, something that goes a little unnoticed is his work defensively. Banks has improved dramatically under the high-ball and you'll rarely find him out of position. In attack, Banks' distribution continues to flourish and his unheralded delivery to Issak Fines-Leleiwasa for the halfback-turned-winger's try in Perth was in-stride, on the money and a reflection of just how composed a player he has become.

KEY PLAYERS (BRUMBIES)



MATCH-WINNER - LEN IKITAU

This has come as no shock to the fans who have tracked Len Ikitau's progress through the ranks, but last week's showing against the Force has shot the young centre into the spotlight as the Brumbies most-potent weapon with the footy. Footwork, offloads and fearless commitment in the carry, Ikitau is a throwback in the 13 jersey, closer to a Conrad Smith than a Tevita Kuridrani. You may not see him truck the ball over people much, he'll likely have twisted their feet so much that they don't lay a hand on him. If he's on tonight, watch out.

KEY PLAYERS (BRUMBIES)



THE KEY TO VICTORY - IRAE SIMONE

Irae Simone keeps getting better. The bags of talent Simone brought with him from the Waratahs has been opened, bit by bit. Now, the Wallabies centre is the linchpin of the Brumbies attack. A voice for Noah Lolesio and Nic White to rely on, the best passer of the rugby ball in the country right now, something Andy Muirhead and Mack Hansen will attest to and a committed defender too. Against the side who spurned him, Simone will be out to prove an already proven point.

1 Angus Bell

Jack Grant **9**

2 Tom Horton

Will Harrison **10**

3 Harry Johnson-Holmes

James Ramm **11**

4 Sam Caird

Tepai Moeroa **12**

5 Jack Whetton

Alex Newsome (c) **13**

6 Lachlan Swinton

Mark Nawaqanitawase **14**

7 Carlo Tizzano

Jack Maddocks **15**

8 Jack Dempsey

REPLACEMENTS

16 David Porecki

Tetera Faulkner **17**

18 Sio Tatola

Jeremy Williams **19**

20 Hugh Sinclair

Henry Robertson **21**

22 Tane Edmed

Triston Reilly **23**

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SCOUTING REPORT (WARATAHS)



BIG ADDITION — IZAIÁ PERESE

At one stage, Izaia Perese could be described as one of the most promising talents in World Rugby, not just in Australia. That was a while ago now though. An unsuccessful time in the NRL and a stint in France has done little for the former Junior Wallabies speedsters' reputation.

This is a bonified Hail Mary play from the Waratahs, signing a guy who has had troubles on and off the field, but that talent still exists and if he can get right, they'll have snared a potential superstar. But it's only potential for now.

Has Perese still got the fire in him that we saw in U20 gold five years ago, which saw him light up the Junior World Cup, scoring four tries in four games?

SCOUTING REPORT (WARATAHS)



BIG LOSS - MICHAEL HOOPER

Unless prime David Pocock or George Smith are waiting in the wings, you can't replace Michael Hooper.

2020 wasn't a vintage Super Rugby season for the former Brumbies openside but through force of will alone, Hooper kept his young side together and stayed competitive towards the back end of the year.

Hooper has remained committed to rugby in Australia, but his absence will be felt in Sydney and with Rob Simmons also out the door, the 'Tahs have a gaping hole in the leadership department only filled currently by injured captain, Jake Gordon.

SCOUTING REPORT (WARATAHS)



X-FACTOR - JACK MADDOCKS



Jack Maddocks wasn't the flavour of the year in 2020 as he was the year before, but he still had some serious flashes in light blue after shifting to the 'Tahs from the Rebels.

Obviously, the move didn't lead to a Wallabies berth for Maddocks, but his balance and eye for space were still there to see and when you say 'x-factor', and look at the 'Tahs group, he is the obvious shining light, with winger James Ramm a close second.

Maddocks can crack open a game at any point, and a bit like our own Tom Banks, he is often at his best when joining the attack at odd angles, inserting himself into the line and picking off a helpless front rower trying to cover a 10m gap.

SCOUTING REPORT (WARATAHS)



GLUE GUY - WILL HARRISON

Any flyhalf, on any rugby team at any level has arguably the most responsibility on the field, and in his second professional season, Will Harrison will have more weight on his shoulders than any other in Super Rugby. Harrison simply has to be the driving force for the Waratahs now, with Jake Gordon out for an extended period of time. Lolesio, O'Connor, To'omua; they all have characters and options in front of them and out wide, Harrison may have to rely on the heavies in front of him for a lift. If he's under pressure, the job will be that much harder, and the Tahs fire power out wide won't get a chance to spark. Harrison's left boot may be their most potent weapon, and they'll call on it often, so again, no pressure for the young playmaker.

UPDATED 2021 SUPER RUGBY AU DRAW



ROUND 1
FRI 19 FEB



9:55PM (AEST)
AWAY

ROUND 2
SAT 27 FEB



7:45PM
HOME

ROUND 3
SAT 6 MAR



7:45PM
HOME

ROUND 4
SAT 13 MAR



7:45PM
HOME

**B
V
E**

ROUND 6
FRI 26 MAR



7:45PM
HOME

ROUND 7
FRI 2 APR



7:45PM (AEST)
AWAY

ROUND 8
SAT 10 APR



7:45PM (AEST)
AWAY

ROUND 9
FRI 16 APR



7:45PM (AEST)
AWAY

**B
V
E**



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