

# Sports Talk

with Jim McLees



Jim McLees

out with a seven wood on the par-three fourth hole (118 metres) while Ian Benson did the honours with a six iron at the par-three 160-metre 13<sup>th</sup> hole.

"I've waited more than 44 years for that shot," a jubilant Ian Matheson said after his ball hit the green dead in line with the pin and gently rolled into the hole.

"Unfortunately I missed the ball actually going into the hole because after I hit the shot I turned to my mate and said 'That should be close enough for me to get a two'. While I was talking to him he saw the ball drop into the hole."

The wait was just about as long for Ian Benson, who has been playing on and off for about 40 years.

Now playing off a 10-handicap after being a low single-figure golfer in his younger days, it was also his first hole-in-one.

Meanwhile, just before Christmas, golfers from all three city clubs battled almost hurricane-force wind at the Cliff in their annual inter-club clash. Because of the conditions, scoring was not great, and Castlecliff only just won out with an average of 32.2 stableford points, with Wanganui second (31.76) followed by Tawhero (31.69).

Still at Castlecliff, pro shop operator John Means has re-activated the Wednesday Club, a popular club within the club that has been running for nearly 40 years.

It grew from a regular Wednesday morning hit by a dozen or so shift workers from the police, fire brigade and the Chronicle and became so popular that a Wednesday Club was formed.

Players could join for a small fee that covered a matchplay competition and a meal at the end of the year.

Over the years the club flourished, often attracting more than 100 members, but unfortunately last year, for a variety of reasons, it went into recess.

Now John says that because of renewed interest he has revived the Wednesday Club which will again feature a matchplay competition ("and there'll be good prizes") and the popular end-of-season meal. Get your \$10 entry fee to John at the pro shop.

# Rana Reckons...

Well here we are in a new chapter of this highly informative, opinionated, sometimes overbearing and generally pitched as an authority on just about everything. You can blame Trevor down at the River City Press, who often drinks coffee at my office and consulting room which doubles as the Jolt coffee bar. It was getting on to three years ago that Trev suggested that as I apparently enjoy talking, I might like to write the occasional item for his venerable news sheet which doubles as the River City Press. I was kindly offered 200 words a month, which I accepted on the basis that it be a bit longer and more often than once a month. Trev stated that a good title would be Rana Reckons, and I agreed. Regular readers will have noted that the word counting mechanism on my computer doesn't work. So there we are. I certainly enjoy the comments that I get from a whole variety of people.

Yes there are complaints and so far there have been two. I only count written complaints and strangely no one comes up to me in the street to complain verbally. Of the two written ones a gentleman complained about my abusive comments regarding the venerable Reverend Tutu. He thought it disrespectful for me to refer to him as a poncing little ape. I spent the whole of the next week issue really climbing into that subject dealing with each item raised in the complaint, and setting out my basis for calling Dr. Tutu a poncing little ape. I can't remember what the other complaint was about but this column still keeps coming.

Readers will know that there are things I do not like. I will include here a list so that readers whose sentiments I am likely to offend effected will be able to avoid this column. Top of my hate list is "political correctness", and tokenism in its various forms. Communists, Socialists, and their fellow travelers are near the top. I do not like gangs and I especially do not like the 'do-gooders' who get their buzz hanging out with gangs. I get on well with various ex gang members around the country, particularly guys like Willie McGregor, a former formidable gang leader who has completely turned his own, and others lives around. He has become a force for good.

From time to time I get stuck into the cops having been one for more than 30 years. I am not at all keen on

the Police being routinely armed. They have yet to prove that they can control themselves with pepper spray, and not treat it as a punishment device. I, and many others, have doubts about the taser in the hands of cops. And I am absolutely adamant that the Armed Offenders Squad and the similar armed specialist bodies are the only ones to be routinely armed. It is a training and control issue that concerns me, largely motivated by gormless leadership, that infects the upper ranks.

The sooner the Government find the balls to separate the function and identity, of traditional police from traffic police, the better. It always was a bad idea. I will remember what John Banks, Minister of Police, reckoned when I told him his idea of merging Police and Ministry of Transport was crap.

"But Rana there will be so many more eyes to look out for crime."

That would be fine if that is what those extra eyes were looking for. But it wasn't. Collecting revenue from otherwise law abiding citizens was much easier than chasing baddies. All in the name of road safety - bunkum, my diesel mileage certificate has got nothing to do with road safety. Once a

respected, almost revered organisation, seen as the thin blue line between citizens and chaos, the Police no longer hold that repute in the public mind. Traffic cops indeed were a necessary evil and the merging with the police was, as any retired cop will tell you, a disaster.

So what else doesn't this column like. Some of you out there will remember John Minto from his exploits during the Springbok tour of nearly 30 years ago. He has never been able to recapture his glory days when he became a legend in his own mind together with his hanger-ons who like to fight causes in distant lands from a safe distance. Strategic gutlessness is how his protesters carried on in those days. And now he pops up in Auckland at the tennis. Accompanied by his equally gutless brigade of revolutionaries, they assigned themselves the right to protest the presence of the Israeli female tennis player at that major tournament. Real gutsy stuff the Minto scenario. Who knows to what extent they caused her grief but she was publicly stoic and set the example that we have come to expect of Israelis.

I get stuck into soccer as a sport occasionally, but only when they ridiculously over-rate themselves. For example

there is talk around that the qualifying of our national soccer team is our greatest sporting achievement. Yeah, it's certainly an achievement in soccer terms to beat Bahrain, what was it, the 40 second world soccer power? But you really have to consider our ranking in world soccer terms. Even the Wanganui Bohemian rugby team has a higher world ranking than the New Zealand soccer team. It is even rumoured that the Black Ferns NZ womens rugby team could beat the national soccer team at soccer.

Loose talk has the NZ soccer team taking the major prize in the upcoming Halberg Sports awards. If that happens then be most assured, those awards will lose all credibility. The only superstar that we have produced currently is our world champion women's shot putter, Valerie Vili.

Well I reckon that's enough for now and I wish you all a happy and fulfilling new year.



Cr Rana Waitai

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Rana's column

Dear madam  
My wife tells me I should write to you regarding E. Camden's letter of December 22, how much we disagree with her opinion of Cr Rana Waitai's weekly 'reckoning'. We do not mind his occasion criticism of members of the council - that is part of being a councillor. They elect to position themselves in the metaphorical coconut shy, and sometimes they thoroughly deserve to be hit.

We find Cr Waitai's down-to-earth language and practical approach, especially his tales from his past experiences, a thoroughly refreshing change from the all-too-frequent stodgy journalism encountered daily, with the attempted theatrics of describing someone as being 'gunned down' rather than simply 'shot'.

- R. W. Thornton

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Dear Editor,

I'm not surprised when people like Rana Waitai (column Dec. 22) scoff and sneer at those like the Greens and all the people who met in Copenhagen recently. Old grey men have always done it when confronted with change. In their aging years they tend to bemoan the changes which have occurred and want a return to some past time when they believe that things were better.

They certainly don't want more change in the present. In their declining years they want comfort and security. So, very threatening occurrences such as climate change

are met with denial and dismissal, often using name-calling (eg. "green Luddites") or similar put-downs.

There were lots of old grey men in Copenhagen, too, of course, clinging to their fear and self-interest, so it wasn't a surprise that so little was achieved - apparently! What I want to say to the old grey men is - "It's too late! The tide has turned. The world's young people with passion and energy for their own futures have taken up the challenge, the baton of change. I'm very grateful for them, and will support them all I can. It's easy to scoff and sneer and scowl - that won't stop what is already happening. You are being left behind, like old grey men have always been. Perhaps after all it is you who are the Luddites."

- Philip McConkey

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Dear madam,

You had a recent mail criticising Rana's column - may I stand in support of it! Of course we do not all agree with all of his views - he tries to make us think a little! Of course only Rana will agree with all his views! And the same with us all! But he stimulates thought - his views I look forward to each week - please continue his weekly column!

- Malcolm Craig

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Dear madam,

Cr Rana Waitai's pathetic attempt to denigrate his fellow councillors in his column last week seems to have backfired on him.

Rana, echoing his slavish

following of all things according to St Michael, claimed that any councillor that didn't pursue his vendetta against gang members, was a "gang lover" and "gang apologist". Take their names he said - as though he was still in his old job as a Police Commander - and remember who they are at the next election time. He ridiculed my suggestion, once again echoing Mayor Laws, that before the fences at 48/50 Koromiko Rd are pulled down, the views of the immediate neighbours should be surveyed. Never mind what they think said Cr Rana - they are too frightened and intimidated to give an honest answer. Well, I am doing this survey, because Mayor Laws would not get the Council to do it. I will inform readers of the result in the New Year.

Cr Rana and Mayor Laws have turned this gang thing into a personal vendetta - and unfortunately Wanganui's image as a safe and friendly community is being falsely malignd.

- Cr Rob Vinsen

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### Gallery exhibition

Dear Madam,  
When my son suggested we go to "Looking glass: reflecting ideas" at the Sarjeant Gallery I was not very inspired - the title put me off. However off we went and it is one of the most beautiful exhibitions I have seen in my 60+ years. There are displays by 21 New Zealand glass artists and every exhibit is wonderful. The first glasswork you see is Fold in

forms: transmission of light by Christine Cathie and I wanted so much to touch it - it called to me. This got my emotional excitement soaring though the roof - and this emotion only increased throughout the exhibition. Adjacent to Christine Cathie's glass, is Totem Towers; patterns of time and place - oh joy. So beautiful I had tears in my eyes.

If I could just single out several more of my favourites. Ben Young's New Beginnings - walk around it to get the whole picture. I was astounded, and also loved his Wave, showing Ben's background as a body-builder and surfer. I loved Twisted flax pods: towards balance by Ann Robinson - such a clever concept and design. I could go on forever. I do urge you to go. The exhibition is on till March 14, 2010.

- Jenifer Wright

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### Mayor's behaviour

Dear madam

Any city which allows its Mayor to make it the centre stage of a television soap opera is bound to have worse problems coming down the track, like a runaway express train. Mayor Laws is now censuring Councillor Vinsen for the second time over alleged misquoting of the Mayor's own statements about the future of the port. On the first occasion of censure, the censure was withdrawn by the Mayor as there was no substance to it. Councillor Vinsen had raised serious questions about the Council's own internal debt projections. The projected

debt, leaked by Councillor Anderson to a public meeting in Brunswick, showed the city's debt rising to \$160 million. At the time this leak occurred, the official Council debt projection was \$72 million. In 2009, this became an official \$90 million. This rate of increase makes the \$160 million believable. At that level, the city will be quite simply broke, bankrupt.

What I object to most as a ratepayer is not all the hot air spouted by the Mayor, a lot of which is simply childish, but the fact that now the first \$280 of my rates is spent on just servicing the debt - paying interest alone. This means that this money cannot be spent for programmes for older people, for children, on sports development, on roads, on arts and culture and on a real tourist strategy for the city. Our young people receive a good education in our schools but then many of them have to move away for work. Many do not come back, but would if they had jobs to come to. Our city is the poorer for it and families are broken up. Ratepayers should ask themselves how long we can afford to run the city like a soap opera. The Hells Angels Fort punch-up, the punch-up over River City Port, the continual conflict over every possible issue, just to grab media attention for the Mayor's radio shock jock programme - these we simply cannot afford any longer.

- Dave Feickert