

Sports Talk

with Jim McLees

Golfers from throughout the country will descend on Wanganui during the first week of March when the New Zealand workingmen's clubs' golf tournament is staged over three local courses.

At least 300 golfers will use the Castlecliff, Wanganui and Marton courses during three days of competitive golf for the Pen Hawkins Rosebowl. As holder, St John's Club will host the tournament.

For months a dedicated group headed by St John's Club president Royce Tunbridge has been planning this major sporting event, no easy task when you are dealing with in excess of 300 players, plus their supporters, and moving them and their equipment to the courses they will be playing each day.

However the group, which also includes Mel Ackroyd (St John's manager), Laurie Harding (St John's secretary), Mike Morgan, Allan Barnes, Stu Watts, Keith Travers, Herb Potaka and James Munro, has everything well in hand and all is set for the influx of visitors.

The tournament tees off with a practice day at the three courses on Monday, March 1, and competitive play will continue over the next three days.

The format for the Pen Hawkins Rosebowl (named after a Kamo golfer who instituted the tournament which has been contested for 30 years) will be two-man teams playing 54 holes of combined stableford.

In conjunction, there will be North Island v South Island matches, one with teams of three and the other with teams of six.

Off the courses, there's plenty of entertainment planned for the visitors, all based at St John's Club.

River City Press will keep readers updated on this tournament, which will provide a huge economic boost for the city.

RUGBY: At last, something is being done about the messy tackled ball area, which along with collapsing scrums is blight on the great game.

Best sporting news this week was the announcement that Sanzar, which runs the Super 14 competition, is as brassed off as the fans and has decided to address the problem – and not before time.

This year – and it's



Jim McLees

only January but already there have been a couple of matches – the tackler (as in Richie McCaw) will not have unlimited right to go for the ball and will have to release the tackled player and get to his feet before he can challenge for the ball.

The idea, and it sounds a good one, is to produce clearer ball for the attacking team and speed the game up.

Referees are also going to get tough on the scrums and technique and illegal tactics will be monitored by a team of Sanzar scrum coaches. Offenders will get a lesson from their scrum coach and if they keep offending they'll be named and shamed.

Both these moves will be welcomed by fans, who are fed up with tackled ball scrambles and constantly collapsing scrums, and all credit to Sanzar for doing something about it.

Now we've just get the IRB and the northern hemisphere teams to join the party.

CRICKET: No one should be surprised that Pakistan cricket captain Mohammad Yousuf is about to lose his job. The Pakistan Cricket Board, still smarting after their team's abysmal showing in the just-completed Aussie test series and now the one-dayers, look set to give Yousuf the boot and reinstate Younus Khan.

Yousuf only has himself to blame after somehow managing to lose the second test after being in a certain match-winning position. The dropped catches in that match were bad enough, but there are still serious questions over Yousuf's field placings that gifted the Aussies runs. There's a smell there that just won't go away.

Meantime, Younus Khan has decided to come out his self-imposed exile that followed allegations Pakistan threw a match against Australia in the Champions Trophy in South Africa last September. Khan threw a wobbly over that and gave cricket away in protest. Now he's back, and looks certain to take over the captaincy again.

Rana Reckons...

Some of our District Councillors have only ever paddled in the shallows and boy does it show with the Great Council deputation to Hell's Angel territory to see for themselves. Well that is one cranky idea that bit the dust. The matter of the fortification type fence at the Hells Angels' Aramoho headquarters, and its demolishing, is fraught enough as it is, without some Councillors coming up with the idea of a deputation to suss out the situation first hand. Some five Councillors were pleased to publicly align themselves with this supposed act of participative democracy. But the political impact of being seen as gang apologists sheeted home, no doubt as they were reminded in this column. They were reminded that they are contesting an election later this year and that, I believe the electorate do not take kindly to councillors who wish to have meaningful

dialogue with criminal organisations. You do not have meaningful dialogue with criminal organisations. You never ever appease gangs.

Yes I know I am prejudiced against gangs but it is possible that those councillors really are so naïve as not to know that the Hells Angels are a worldwide criminal organisation? Yes it is possible that they choose not to believe what the Police say about that gang. Anyway, whatever the source of their impulse to visit the wild side, they were finally politically alert enough to step back from political suicide.

Led by Councillor Rob Vinsen, whose pro gang sentiments were well established at the time of the gang patch by-law debate, but I would have thought that his Council followers had a better grasp of things. Anyway realising the inherent stupidity of their proposed action, they

morphed it into a quest to speak to Hells Angels neighbours, and then when all the pennies dropped they kicked their stupid idea for touch.

There is nothing wrong with talking to neighbours but invite them to Council territory to do so. Remember that the mafia in Chicago were also enormously nice to their immediate neighbours, but the Mayor didn't go running down to check them out.

I guess that many readers will have never been to Ratana Pa some 20 kilometres south of our city but most will have heard of the annual celebrations that bring thousands of members of the Ratana faith to the area for several days. This migration has continued since 1918 when the prophet Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana commenced his ministry. He set out to heal his people and the land. In doing so, in such difficult times, the first world war having just ended, and a terrible flu epidemic ravaging the world, he gained a vast Maori following who heard of his aims and faith healing ability. He was reluctant, initially, to set up a church as such as this can tend to create a personality cult problem. However his followers felt otherwise and the Ratana faith developed as a religion. As followers wished to be baptised, married, and buried within the faith, the laws of official Registration of these events required the registration of a church and so that was a natural, if not necessarily a desired consequence for the founder.

My grandfather, Ware Waitai, was in 1926 a Licenced Interpreter in Wellington and he was requested by Ratana to come to the pa and sort out certain matters that were troubling the prophet. My grandfather was so impressed by what he saw happening at Ratana Pa that he decided that he, his wife and nine children would make their home at Ratana. Although trained in the Anglican faith, in which they held office, both of my grandparents adopted the Ratana faith and that extended to their numerous descendants over the last 84 years. Therefore Ratana Pa, its people and the faith that developed there has featured as an important part of my own and my extended family's life.

Ratana pa has a normal community population of about 500 and on any Sunday the Temple is one of the fuller places of worship in the Whanganui and

Rangitikei districts. Self-contained, it has a significant, well trained fire-fighting capacity who range well beyond Ratana pa. They also have a clinic to attend to health needs.

There is no mayor as such, but heading the movement is Harerangi Mason from one of the older families of direct descent from TW Ratana. Ratana as a community has the rare distinction of having been made up from most of the tribes of New Zealand. There is no comparable Maori community. So that is a bit of history to explain how my family came to be in this area as of 1926.

On my mother's side, her family was brought by their mother Jane Winduss to Wanganui in the 1930s. Both of Jane's parents, my great grand parents, were born in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, which probably accounts for my turn of phrase. My mother's father George Winduss, was a McBride descendant from County Antrim, Northern Island and so I have a double dose of the Irish gene pool which probably accounts for my often combative stances. George Winduss, like myself, was also a policeman.

Readers will know that in political terms I do not have a great deal of time for Labour party politics, but having said that I am conscious that at the last election they either strategically excluded, dumped, or otherwise got rid of their really objectionable left wing parliamentary members. The leadership with Phil Goff and Annette King



Cr Rana Waitai

gravitated to the right of politics and had they not done so the left wing may well have exploded out of existence. The team that they lead, were in attendance at Ratana and were much better received than has been the case in recent years. But they have some distance to go to overtake National under John Key, who are in an alliance with the Maori party.

A huge percentage of the Maori vote, and significantly the Ratana vote, migrated away from Labour with the advent of the Maori Party. It is without doubt the case that although deserting Labour, the Ratana vote is unlikely to go to National, but by going to the Maori Party the advantage outcome is the same. Despite hiccups within the Maori Party it has gained significant credibility that Labour will be unable to recapture.

Having said that, it is Labour's fault for having taken the Maori and the Ratana vote for granted. Having said that, it was a pleasure to welcome Phil Goff and his party to the Ratana celebrations. He and I shared special memories of East Timor which I will tell you about later.

LETTER - "Putting the record straight"

Dear madam,
As an elected Councillor I consider it my primary role as one of acting in the best interests of Wanganui ratepayers and residents. And to be able to do this I regard it my duty to acquaint myself with all the relevant facts on any issue under discussion, before I make a judgement as to how I both speak and vote. To date this policy has enabled me to achieve quite a lot for Wanganui - even if it doesn't always make media headlines.

So it was with considerable anger that I read in Cr Waitai's column of December 17 a grossly distorted version of what I had said during the Council debate on whether or not we should seek a court order to demolish a gang headquarter fence in Kaikokopu Rd.

Let no-one be in any doubt whatsoever, I am no apologist for any gang or the criminal activities of these groups! Nor will I shy away from supporting lawful action which will curtail their evil influence in society.

But - and it is a very big 'but' - Council was asked to vote on a proposal which required it to be certain that all of a range of conditions were met. And a majority of Council took the view that until it was satisfied that all of these conditions applied the matter should wait. This was a **majority of Councillors** and not just Cr Vinsen and myself as implied by Mr Waitai.

Cr Vinsen quite rightly wanted to consider the views of local residents (a



requirement) while I was concerned that as the operative word in the legislation is 'intimidation' this could be very subjective and become an extremely expensive plaything for the lawyers. I was not prepared to risk ratepayers' money unless I was satisfied that an application would have a good chance of success. Mr Waitai not only seriously distorts and mis-represents what I said but he then goes on to suggest by implication that people should take note of his version when voting in the October local body elections. Councillors need to work co-operatively if we are to progress our city and as such there is no place for self-serving electioneering based on less than truthful statements.

Mr Waitai's self proclaimed credibility as a lawyer reminds me of the young woman who went home to her mother and said "Mother, I am going to marry a lawyer, and an honest man" To which the response was "But my dear, that would be bigamy!"

- Cr Allan Anderson.

LETTER - "TV3 Person of the Year" leaving debt

Dear madam

Re: TV3 Nightline "Person of the Year" award
It must be an election year for local governments. River City Press' latest issue has three articles about the current council.

I wonder if TV3 Nightline staff knew how debt has exploded under the current mayor when they awarded him the "Person of the Year"? From \$30 million when the current mayor took office to an estimated \$160 million now, the compound interest due on such an exorbitant debt for a city of this income distribution is already starting to crowd out essential services.

For a city to be near bankruptcy when a worldwide depression is starting to take hold is not a good look for a Person of the Year. No amount of media spin and marketing promotion of his undoubtedly lovely city will make up for such profligate borrowing and spending. There will be a day of reckoning coming soon.

Added to this is the government's proposed second increase of GST to 15%. Wanganui has a high percentage of residents on fixed income such as superannuation and benefits. To increase this general tax, especially on food and rates (which is a tax on a tax brought in by the previous government) without increasing fixed incomes is going to create suffering for thousands of Wanganui residents at a time when council will be financially unable to provide additional services.

I expect sound management of the city's budget from TV3 Person of the Year, not out of control borrowing leaving a crippling debt burden for ratepayers.

- Donna Mummery