

Ūawa versus Tokarāangi The "River" versus the "Rock"

Ngāti Porou East Coast Rugby Club Final
Ūawa Domain Tolaga Bay • 29 July 2006



Ūawa laying down the challenge. Left to right. Peewee Tuapawa, Whetu Rangihaeata, Harley Phillips, Kerehama Blackman, Reuben Monika-partially obscured, Allan Waru, Mark Hunia Walker. (Back) Daniel Townsend.

The Ūawa, Tokarāangi NPEC club rugby grand final held at the Ūawa domain lived up to all expectations. The huge crowd of loyal supporters and followers of East Coast rugby were treated to a tight pulsating contest between two great sides that had played consistent, entertaining rugby all season. The Ūawa Rugby Club had worked hard to prepare the ground reduced to a quagmire the week before from torrential rain, and the scattered showers leading up to the final.

For Ūawa and coach Manahi (Buck) Gray it was a case of "you're once, twice, three times a finalist" – having been beaten finalists for the last two seasons, Ūawa were determined for history not to repeat itself. But Tokarāangi and new coach Bennet Haenga weren't about to acquiesce to a spirit of familial generosity. Quite the contrary "Toka" were in a grooving mood to punish. And for three quarters of the game "the rock" was a giant colossus, impenetrable and irresistible. Half way through the first half, a powerful forward surge followed by a touch of individual brilliance from Leroy Sadlier, the Toka left winger, who scored in the corner, saw Toka go ahead 5-0. Only resolute defence from Ūawa kept the red force from Tūwhakairiora and Hinerupe having a greater advantage at the half time break.

In the second half "no quarter was

asked and none given" as the two powerful forward packs again surged against each other –at scrum time and lineout. Despite being fairly heavy underfoot, both backlines were adventurous and sparkling on attack.

It was only in the final stages of the game that Ūawa were able to pry free from the vice like grip of Toka and exert continued pressure on the opposition goal-line. With 1-2 minutes left on the clock (depending on who was keeping track of the time!), the fabulous line of Tokarāangi with the greatest reluctance was finally breached and the river of Ūawa forwards pressed through. Daniel Townsend scoring the equaliser under the posts. Mark Walker converted to give Ūawa a valiant 7-5 win over Tokarāangi. Denied for the previous two years, jubilant Ūawa whānau and fans swarmed the pitch and joined in a victory haka with their heroes.

Team captains Kerehama Blackman and Morgan Wirepa Junior were gracious in victory and defeat respectively. Both coaches agreed that the standard of rugby displayed in the final and the talent throughout all the clubs on the coast bodes well for our NPC team Ngāti Porou East Coast this year and the future. Congratulations Ūawa and well done Tokarāangi, worthy finalists of the 2006 Ngāti Porou East Coast Club rugby competition.



Ūawa Coach, Manahi (Buck) Gray.



Left to right: Whetu Rangihaeata, Harley Phillips, Kerehama Blackman.



The River vs The Rock."



"Toka" Solid as a Rock!

**Photos courtesy: Nori Parata
Article writer: Victor Walker**