

Auckland Rugby Referees Association

Heartland Semi Final Appointments announced

It is with huge pleasure that we can announce that both Shaun Elliott and Sheldon Eden-Whaitiri have been appointed to the Heartland semi finals for the Meads Cup this Labour weekend. Both of these two referees have had a great representative campaign in 2009 culminating in Sheldon's appointment to North Otago v King Country in Oamaru and Shaun's appointment to West Coast v Buller in Greymouth.



Sheldon Eden-Whaitiri



Shaun Elliott

Ben Skeen named as AMI Referee of the Year



At the Awards Evening held on Sat 5th September it was announced that Ben Skeen was the AMI Referee of the Year. He was awarded the prestigious Ash Edwards Memorial Trophy and received the trophy from Ash's widow Lorraine Edwards and AMI's CEO John Balmforth. While Ben had the misfortune to injure himself this year in the Northland v Otago Air New Zealand Cup game in Whangarei at that stage he had already refereed an International between Niue v Cook Islands, a Ranfurly Shield match between Wellington and Wanganui, the Air NZ Cup game between Wellington and Bay of Plenty and his first club final where Ponsonby recorded a sixth Gallaher Shield victory defeating University in the process. Quite an outstanding season to date from a highly accomplished referee.

AGM to be held on Wednesday 9th December 2009.

This year the venue will be the Hall of Legends, Eden Park at 7pm. The same venue as where the Annual Awards evening was held. All members are cordially invited to attend where the Board of Directors will present their annual report and financials. Results of the elections for Vice President and Board will be announced as well.

Obituary for Life Member Richard Allan Wilson (Member 1952-2009)



Written By Rod Rowlands

New Zealanders take their sport seriously, and in the rugby fraternity alone there are many who have admirable records of service to their chosen sport. We were fortunate to have within our ranks a man whose record of service to rugby refereeing will certainly take a bit of beating.

Allan Wilson's involvement with rugby refereeing spanned over 58 seasons, but his association with the sport went back more than 70 years, when he first took the field for Edendale Primary School in 1929. In 1932 he played his first club rugby for Eden, in a junior boys' team which played most of its matches at Potters Park, which still exists today but is no longer used as a rugby field.

Later Allan attended Kowhai School near Eden Park, then on to Seddon Technical College, situated in the central city without any sports fields of its own, so any sporting activities meant a trip to the Auckland Domain. As well as attaining 1st XV status in rugby, Allan represented his college and Auckland in athletics.

On leaving school his rugby playing career continued with Tech Old Boys, where he played at centre or wing. In common with a number of clubs around that time, Tech Old Boys did not have a permanent home, and training facilities were fairly spartan by today's standards. Training took place in a grassed area in Khyber Pass next to Lion Breweries, with two ordinary street lights providing the only illumination on dark winter evenings. Players changed in a nearby warehouse which had no showers, so a quick wash in a handbasin was all that was possible before catching a tram home.

Allan joined the Army in 1940, and had fond memories of rugby matches arranged at every possible opportunity. He recalled one particular occasion when an inter-regimental match was played at the Hopu Hopu camp on Christmas morning, and many memorable games in Egypt and Italy.

On returning from overseas Allan again played club rugby, before joining the Auckland Rugby Referees Association in 1952. He rose to the senior ranks in five years, then after a further seven years made the rep panel. During an active refereeing career of 23 years, he controlled about 650 games, around 150 of them on Eden Park, including 15 representative games on the main ground. At the time the NPC did not exist and provincial unions arranged their own fixtures with the home union providing the referee, with the exception of Ranfurly Shield games. Other memorable fixtures for Allan were refereeing two All Black trials, and touch judging several test matches at Eden Park.

But the on-field aspects of refereeing were only a part of Allan's involvement. A strong interest in the laws of the game led him and fellow referee Geoff Burton into establishing law classes in 1955, which pioneered organised preparation for the New Zealand Law Exam in the ARRA. He also served on the ARRA executive for 11 years in various capacities, including Vice President and President. The position of President at that time involved acting as Chairman for all meetings of the Association. He attended many annual referees' conferences, often presenting papers on various aspects of law, and served several terms on the executive of the New Zealand Rugby Referees Association.

Retirement from active refereeing in 1975 saw Allan become involved with assessing and appointments, and in the same year he was elected a Life Member of the ARRA. For some years he also wrote a regular column in Eden Park's weekly programme, where under the pen name "Advantage", he endeavoured to enlighten the average rugby supporter on aspects of law.

After such a long association with the ARRA, Allan admitted to some misgivings on first hearing of plans to establish the North Harbour Rugby Union in 1984, but on consideration soon became convinced it was the sensible thing to do, and along with Pat Bosley and John Heerdegen joined the initial steering committee which led to the formation of the NHRRA in 1985. He continued his involvement with referee coaching and appointments in North Harbour, served a term as President, and remained actively involved in various capacities until a few seasons ago. In 1996 he was elected a life member of the NHRRA.

In 2003 Allan was the original recipient of the NHRFU's Volunteer of the Year Award. Then in 2007 the NHRRA junior referees banded together and formalised the Allan Wilson Referee Coach of the Year Cup recognising Allan's work to the NHRRA. It was indeed appropriate that Allan became the inaugural winner of that Cup also.

There have been many changes in rugby law over the past 50 seasons, but two stood out in Allan's mind as having a marked beneficial effect on the game. The first was the introduction of the recoverable knock-on, the second the requirement for the 10 metre space between forwards and backs at lineouts.

Refereeing is often looked upon as a thankless task, so why would anyone want to devote over 50 years to it? Allan's response to that question a couple of years ago was immediate: friendship. Referees come from all walks of life, he said, but share a common bond in their endeavours to run enjoyable games of rugby.

Allan, will be remembered and missed by many of his fellow referees, colleagues and life members. We have lost one of life's true gentlemen but we will never forget his contribution to refereeing and to rugby in general.