



BACKGROUND TO THE FOUNDATION

In 1976, the Auckland Rugby Union Supporters Club (ARUSC) was formed as an incorporated society to organise support for the Auckland representative rugby team. Not many years passed before ARUSC saw need and opportunity to extend its activities to include assistance to schoolboy rugby.

The genesis of the Foundation was in 1988, when then ARUSC vice-president Graham Creighton discussed with his brother Murray, then chief executive officer of U-Bix Business Machines Ltd, means by which the Club could give greater support to junior rugby in Auckland. At their joint suggestion, the Club agreed to establish the Auckland Rugby Union Supporters Club Junior Rugby Foundation which was registered as a charitable trust with both the Registrar of Incorporated Societies and IRD. Governance was placed in the hands of a board of trustees drawn from the principal officers of the Club plus H.L ("Snow") White and Grant Fox.

The purposes of the Foundation are: to provide education, assistance and support for the promotion and development of participation by young people in

rugby football within the areas under the jurisdiction of the Auckland Rugby Football Union.

At the outset, it was agreed that a capital fund of \$100,000 should be the target. U-Bix agreed to provide for each of the following five years substantial prizes for an annual Club raffle. For each of the five years, tickets were mailed to every member of the Supporters Club, whose combined selling efforts exceeded the desired funding target. At a function at Eden Park in 1994, the Supporters Club formally handed the Foundation a cheque for \$110,800. With that achievement the Foundation could devote itself to its objectives of assisting junior and schoolboy rugby.

Examples of assistance given in the early stages included:

(i) Initial supply (and later replacement) of four sets of jerseys for divisional teams contesting the annual Walter Dickson tourney for primary schoolboy rugby (this remains ongoing).

(ii) The Scholarship scheme under which each year, 5 or 6 young Auckland players judged likely to qualify for Auckland or All Black honours were awarded \$1000 scholarships for special physical and technique training. (This was later superseded by the Auckland Rugby Union's Development Squad, in which the Foundation sponsored three players at \$3000 each in the first year).

(iii) Provision of coaching equipment (balls, identification bibs, tackle bags, placement cones etc), and team photographs for winning primary school teams.

(iv) Provision of uniform track suits for the Auckland Secondary Schools representative team.



(v) Financing a new competition for "Open Weight" primary school children, including a trophy named in honour of the late Club stalwart and life member Bill McLaren, and sets of jerseys for each of the four participating teams. (This new McLaren Shield competition catered for players too heavy for either the Walter Dickson or Roller Mills tournaments, and now includes teams from North Harbour, Counties, Waikato and Hawkes Bay).



(vi) In 1993, the Barbarians Club decided it could no longer sustain its pioneering of choosing teams of older and promising players for coaching matches against selected college first XV's. At the start of 1994 season, the Supporters Club was approached by the ARFU's then Chief Coaching Co-ordinator, Bruce Robertson and agreed to become sponsors, via the Foundation, of what is known as the Supporters Club Coaching XV. Each college played against receives a Supporters Club plaque as a memento of the occasion, as well as training aids such as tackle shields.

(vii) With the Auckland Union taking increasing responsibility for rising young players through its Development Squad system, the Foundation has turned its attention to future potential Auckland players during their final secondary school year. A new bursary scheme provides up to \$5000 per year for up to 10 young players, chosen in conjunction with the Union, to help with examination fees and other educational costs.

The capital fund now stands in excess of \$210,000 from which the interest, together with donations and further raffle profits from ARUSC are invested in the annual sponsorship programme



MILLENNIUM PROJECTS

Into the new millennium, the Foundation maintains the following sponsorships costing \$20,000 annually:

- (i)** Walter Dixon (primary) Roller Mills and Bill McLaren (intermediate) tournaments for schoolboys (playing jerseys and pennants for each player).
- (ii)** 200 practice balls distributed to rugby clubs/schools for use by junior grades.
- (iii)** Tackle bags and hit shields for secondary schools.
- (iv)** Playing kit for ARUSC coaching co-ordinators XV involved in secondary schools training and coaching programme.
- (v)** Open field days held at Eden Park during school holidays.
- (vi)** Bursary scheme for selected secondary school pupils in final year, to assist with examination fees and other educational costs, for players under 18 who commit themselves to work on their rugby skills and agree to play in Auckland for a further year.

The Foundation has invested over \$100,000 in junior rugby over the past eight years. To continue this level of sponsorship, (at least \$20,000) annually, trustees have set a target of increasing the capital fund to \$300,000 over the next six years.

The major share of the annual sponsorship investment rely on the continuing generosity of ARUSC members in allocating raffle income annually to the Foundation's programme, plus the annual golf tournament at Muriwai.

The Foundation remains committed to doing whatever is necessary to assist, encourage and motivate young Aucklanders with potential rugby skills to achieve representative status for Auckland to at least NPC level.

With the Auckland Union taking responsibility once young players attain membership of its academy squad, the opportunities for the Foundation remain at schoolboy rugby level, and in assisting those on the verge of development squad status to remain committed to rugby while continuing their educational or vocational training programmes. The new bursary scheme is but a start in this direction. The opportunities for strengthening the base of Auckland rugby within these age groups are limited only by the funds available for annual investment by the Foundation.