

# Grass Roots Franklin Grows Future Rugby Stars

## Feed your youngsters ambition

**Pukekohe All Black,  
Mark Brooke-Cowden**  
eLocal contributor

Mark Brooke-Cowden had rugby in his family right from the start... he was a great-grandson of Wiri Nehua, a member of the 1888-89 Native team and nephew to Maori All Blacks, James, Leon and Ness Toki. He played 46 games for Auckland and six for the All Blacks, including the Semi final of the 1987 World Cup. "A mighty contributor to Ponsonby's double, he was Auckland's top flanker and virtually ever-present in the Shield holder's team." (All Blacks NZ) Mark is a Pukekohe businessman who is involved with his son's Pukekohe rugby team and Premiers. He has a very clear concept of the value of rugby for youngsters.

### **What are the advantages of a team sport to a child's development in their future working and personal lives.**

A team environment is essential, I believe to any individual, as they're growing up - the ability to be able to work with others, to respect others' space, to develop good work ethic. This continues on when you retire from the sport, and go out to work for yourself. That work ethic is imperative - to know when to knuckle down. All sorts of disciplines are obtained through sport, obviously things like knowing when to keep your mouth closed, when a referee has made a ruling. It's imperative for children to experience a team sport, if only for those different values they can pull out of that. There's respect and a lot of camaraderie. The boys will make very good friends as they get older, 19, 20. There might be individuals who will have professional trade careers and become very close friends and you will be able to depend on those friends to assist you later on in life. There is so much to be gained from team sport and it starts with a six, seven year old boy playing and never finishes. And then later, they will be out there again, coaching young players.

### **Disciplines: what are some that are reinforced through playing rugby?**

Discipline affects the whole team and if you have an individual who perhaps keeps getting sent off, week after week for misdemeanours, that individual needs to take stock of what he's doing, because he's not just letting



"Like most youngsters, I dreamed of being able to play for the All Blacks. Certainly, when I did make the All Blacks there were many I went to secondary school with who could recall me telling them I would become one. It's imperative that kids do have dreams. You need to be able to follow your dreams and do your very best to fulfil them. Parents - provide the environment and opportunities for your kids to be able to give it their very best shot. They can never be discouraged, so long as they have given their full effort. If they don't make the grade, at least they can say they have tried. Kids, continue to have confidence in your own abilities, work hard, and you will get to the highest level."

Thank you for the pictures to Richard Spanger (Cover shot, page 3,5) and Ray Le Cheminant (page 6).

