

ACROSS THE  
TASMAN  
**BRETT MCKAY**



## CAN'T TIE A WALLABY DOWN, SPORT

**Hear that faint whirring sound coming from the west? It's not a new cold front, it's actually Aussie brains (yes, we said it) in top gear dreaming up scenarios of success for... the Wallabies.**

**A**h, July. That wonderful time on the Australian calendar, when the Wallabies remain unbeaten for the year. It's a time of prosperity, when anything is possible and everyone is beatable.

I don't know if this is happening in New Zealand, but in Australia in this Rugby World Cup year, I'm seeing a hypothetical Wallabies combination listed every day. If I had a dollar for every new team listed, a Lotto win would come in second. Everyone's a selector.

Folau is a must. The Brumbies wingers. No, not Speight, he's lost his zing. Taquele Naiyaravoro has to be in there. Taquele Naiyaravoro isn't eligible yet. Taquele Naiyaravoro is going to join Glasgow. Taquele Naiyaravoro is going to play for Scotland eventually. Good, they can have him - have you seen his defence? Exactly, no one has! Taquele Naiyaravoro moved here five years ago. Oh, right.

Where does O'Connor fit in? Adam Ashley-Cooper is a world XV player. Forget him, he doesn't pass. And Tevita Kuridrani is better anyway. Beale at 12. Toomua at 12. What about Mitch Inman? Ran through Beale like a fat kid destroying a cupcake. We still need two playmakers. Toomua at 12. No, we need Lealifano's goal-kicking. Lealifano's barely kicking seven from 10.

The Brumbies halves. The Waratahs halves are the incumbents. Only because the Queensland halves were injured. No, it was because the Queensland halves were rubbish. Yeah? Well, your team was rubbish before that. Yeah? Well, my dad said your dad is a moron. Phipps and Cooper. White and



**Michael Cheika**

Foley. Genia and Toomua. White kicks too much. Phipps can't pass. Genia's too slow. Your team's rubbish.

Palu-Pocock-Fardy. McCalman-Pocock-Higginbotham. Timani-Hooper-McMahon. Palu-Hooper-Potgieter. Potgieter played for South Africa. And your team is rubbish. You won't win a RWC with Hooper running decoy lines in the centres. Gill is better than all of them, open both your eyes. What about Hodgson? Pocock or Hooper? Hooper or Pocock?

**POCOCK OR BLOODY HOOPER?**

Simmons is still a must at lock. Will Skelton will win the RWC. Sam Carter's injured. Luke Jones? Is Lopeti Timani too short to play lock? Skelton is world class. Horwill. Gee, it'd be good if we could pick Kane Douglas. What about a Tasmanian? Adam Coleman looks handy.

Skelton is a maul-destroyer. Let's go tall and pick Rory Arnold. Skelton is a thug.

Waratahs front row. Brumbies front row. Reds have the best front row in the country. Slipper and Kepu. Sio and Holmes. Moore. Should Polota-Nau even play? Tolu Latu could be a star, if he stops tipping blokes on their head. Not Benn Robinson. Not Ben Alexander. Do we even have five quality props?

I need to lie down.

And that's without even contemplating where - or if - the likes of the newly eligible Matt Giteau, Drew Mitchell and the great George Smith might fit in.

And then there's the whole can-the-coach-do-two-jobs-at-once thing that, in fairness, was borne out of necessity, but it's something that has been grating on Wallabies fans.

Michael Cheika told me in an interview back in February that he found out very quickly juggling the two jobs was going to be difficult, but he has been very methodical in the way he has split the roles, and the juggling may well be over by the time you read this.

Cheika's major asset is his man management. He knows when is the right time to give Kurtley Beale a hug. He knows that two days of underfeeding, and not three, is the difference between Skelton running through blokes and wanting to cause them unfathomable harm. He really is a nice kid, big Will.

At least our RWC jersey will be unanimously loved nationwide. Oh, wait...

So, we head into another Wallabies season, and surprise, our nervousness over what lays ahead is being washed over with a good old-fashioned dose of glass-half-full and hubris.

We're not just in Pool A at the Rugby World Cup, we're in the Pool of Death. Debate and discussion on whether the Wallabies can get past one or ideally both of Wales and England (and with no disrespect to Fiji and Uruguay) is as much about convincing ourselves we can.

And our prize for getting past the pool stage? Forget about playing South Africa or Samoa or Scotland in the quarters, just start engraving the Bill Ellis Cup and hand it over, thanks!

It's July, dammit, and we're unbeaten. ☒