

Golden Oldies Rugby Tournament

August 2009

By the time you hear this welcome, I should be safely in New Zealand on a family vacation. The rumours that I arranged the dates for our holiday to coincide with the Golden Oldies Rugby Tournament are without foundation. Anyway, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. I'm genuinely sorry not to be in Norfolk Island to welcome you, to marvel at your prowess on the field or to bend the elbow with you when you slump exhausted on the ground after your heroic on-field exploits.

Now, I did play a bit of rugby. In fact, some people observe that I have played around quite a lot in my time. But I know a little about the game – for example that famous description that “rugby is played by men with odd shaped balls”. I can certainly remember some of the golden rules of the game – such as “first, that the forwards shall win the ball; second, that the forwards shall keep the ball; and third, the backs shall buy the beer.” That seems like a good rule for all of life, especially if you're a forward.

The other good thing about rugby is that it has attracted intelligent comment from some of the most famous people in history. Winston Churchill said that "rugby is a hooligans game played by gentlemen," while that well-known back rower Oscar Wilde thought that “rugby is a good occasion for keeping thirty bullies far from the centre of the city.” Even Elizabeth Taylor showed that she was a very discerning woman by observing that "I prefer rugby to soccer. I enjoy the violence in rugby, except when they start biting each other's ears off." Whatever else you may think about Elizabeth Taylor, she was certainly an expert when it came to men's sports.

So here you all are in beautiful Norfolk Island, ready for a few days of rucking, grunting and sweating. And with a bit of luck, you might get to play some rugby as well. So, although I am not here in person to greet you, I do most warmly

welcome you all, especially the XXXX Goldies from Brisbane and the Bundaberg Rumruckers. We trust that you will have a great time during your stay and that you will have the chance to experience some of the delights of this truly wonderful island that we are privileged to call home.

We have in this small place a wonderful array of things to do and see, and perhaps you will be able to find a little time to marvel at the spectacular cliff, beach and mountain scenery, play your way around the beautiful golf course, inspect our many shops, galleries and craft centres, enjoy our tours and fine dining or get involved in more active pursuits like sea kayaking, mountain biking, deep sea fishing or surfing. And these are just a few of the multitude of things you might be able to enjoy during your Norfolk Island visit.

Now I have said that those of you from other places are welcome, but we do of course expect that you will lose with grace to our very own Golden Oldies team, the much-revered Creaky Ol' Convicts, the pride of Norfolk Island. The Creaky Ol' Convicts trace their lengthy history all the way back to 2003, when some of them were mere whippersnappers. They have competed with distinction in two World Tournaments – in Wellington in 2006 and in Christchurch in 2008. A number of them have now recovered from their 2008 injuries and attacks of gout, and will take the field again this week. So I say to the Creaky Ol' Convicts – get out there and show 'em what you're made of. Or if that is altogether too frightening, just do your best and win for the glory of Norfolk!

To all of you from Bundaberg, Brisbane, Norfolk Island or elsewhere – have a wonderful time together and enjoy every minute of the 2009 Golden Oldies Rugby Tournament!

André Nobbs

Chief Minister of Norfolk Island