

Inline Making History While Developing in First Matariki Series

What do you get when you combine experienced superstars with young up & coming players? You get a recipe for success with an opportunity full of development and growth. That is exactly what Inline Hockey New Zealand is putting together for the First Annual Matariki Series in New Plymouth this weekend.

IHNZ has invited rangatahi in the 16U & 18U grades from around NZ to compete and participate in a series of inline hockey games. This will consist of 8 teams led by some of inline's top players. But IHNZ wanted to lead by example and didn't just invite anyone eligible. They wanted both good players AND good people. These players need to display good sportsmanship, effort, humility, respect towards others, and most importantly, a great attitude where they are willing to listen and learn. This creates a fantastic opportunity for Inline's up and coming players to play alongside and be mentored by senior players of the game.

THE MEANING BEHIND THE TEAMS & THEIR CAPTAINS

The Matariki Series includes a little bit of history with each of the 8 teams named after a star in the Matariki star cluster, and each team is led by a captain with a wealth of experience in the sport.

Team Waitī Led By Lewis Taiapa: The Waitī star watches over our freshwater environments, our awa (rivers), roto (lakes), kūkūwai (wetlands), and waipuna (springs). As the waters flow, she sees how they support us, provide for us, connect us, and sustain us. Waitī has heard the important stories that our waters have to tell and encourages us to listen and learn from them as well.

Lewis has a long career in Inline Hockey and has been one of our successful New Zealand Senior Men's team captains for a number of years. Lewis has also represented New Zealand in Floorball and represents the Wellington region in Ice Hockey. As an original member of the Maori team in 2015 Lewis has a keen interest in ensuring this tradition continues. More recently Lewis has been coaching a number of Junior teams for the Vipers.

Team Waitā Led By Ben Thompson: The Waitā star surveys our vast oceans, Te Moana-nui-o-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean) and Te Tai-o-Rehua (the Tasman Sea). The variety of life in these waters is diverse and covers different species of marine plants, whāngote (mammals), manu (birds) and ika (fish). Waitā encourages us to respect our coasts and oceans, and treat their inhabitants like the taonga (treasures) they really are.

Ben represented New Zealand at Oceanias from 2008 - 2011, IIHF Worlds in Germany in 2012, FIRS Worlds in Los Angeles in 2013 and the IIHF Worlds in Slovakia in 2017.

Waipuna-ā-Rangi Led by Anthony Nathan (Nētana): Waipuna-ā-Rangi star is a reminder that what you give to others will generally come back to you. Waipuna-ā-Rangi is connected to rain, and translates as 'water that pools in the sky' and welcomes the winter sky waters in all their forms – ua (rain) ua nganga (hail) and hukarere (snow) included.

Anthony is currently in his 21st year as a prem player and has an impressive background in both Inline and Ice Hockey. One of the original Maori team members in 2015, Ant has a keen interest in the future development of players and mentoring of the Matariki series players. Whilst currently playing for the Wanganui Lightning Premier team, he is also busy coaching the next generation of players. For the past two years he has coached both the Mt Wellington Panthers and the Northern Region 16U teams and in late 2021 was appointed the New Zealand 18U NARCH coach.

Team Tupu-ā-nuku Led By Paul Jameson: Tupu-ā-nuku has a special interest in our edible plants, growth and harvest. This includes the natives pūhā (sowthistle), kawakawa (pepper tree), kōkihi (NZ spinach), and tī kōuka (cabbage tree). Tupu-ā-nuku encourages us to consider what we are putting into Papatūānuku (the earth), and in what quantities.

Paul has played Inline Hockey since 1995 and represented his region and New Zealand on multiple occasions. Paul has been named Captain of the IHNZ All Stars 2022 Team and the Tupuānuku Matariki Series Team Captain.

Team Tupu - ā- rangi Led By James O'Donnell: Tupu - ā- rangi has long looked out for the ngahere (forests). Our native wildlife – manu (birds and bats), mokomoko (lizards), and ngārara (bugs) – are being ravaged by introduced pests and predators. As are our ancient rākau (trees) – like tōtara, pūriri, pōhutukawa and rātā. Tupu-ā-rangi encourages us to take action to help to bring our forests back to life again.

James started playing Inline hockey for the Wanganui Lightning at just 9 years old and has represented New Zealand at Oceanias from under 16 to senior grades. He's also been part of AAU & IIHF World Qualifiers & championships. James currently plays for the Wanganui Lightning Premier team and has recently taken on the role of Club President.

Team Hiwa-i-te-rangi Led By Brandon Nash: Hiwa-i-te-rangi is connected to the promise of a prosperous season and is known as the wishing star. It is to Hiwa that people would send their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the coming year in the hope that they would be realised. Similar to the notion of wishing upon a star, or making a new year resolution, this star encourages us to hold firm to our goals, and seek out opportunities to see them realised.

Brandon played ice hockey in Ontario, Canada, through the Minor Leagues, Triple A and the Junior Ontario Hockey Academy before he emigrated to New Zealand in 2001. After moving to New Zealand Brandon has played more Inline - firstly for the Sharks whilst living in Napier and for the last several years whilst in Wellington has played for the Capital Penguins.

Team Pōhutukawa Led By James Halliburton: Pōhutukawa is the star that connects us to the deceased and is the reason people would cry out the names of the dead and weep when the star was seen rising in the early morning. It is through Pōhutukawa that we remember those who have died in the past year. Pōhutukawa encourages us to hold tight to our memories of treasured people who have passed on, encourages us to take time to remember them, and to acknowledge their impact on our lives.

James started Inline hockey in 1999 playing for the Canterbury Cyclones and multiple other South Island clubs. Spending 6 years as a Christchurch Sniper, James then played 3 years for the Renegades before joining the Wanganui Lightning Prems in 2020. James has represented his region and country on multiple occasions. His highlights included playing in the New Zealand U21 and gaining selection to the 3 Māori teams. James was a member of the inaugural NZ Māori team in 2015 and again in 2017.

Ururangi Led By Josh Whitston-Lee: Ururangi is close friends with te whānau puhi (the wind family) – including Hauraro (the north wind), Tonga (the south wind), Hauāuru (the west wind), and Marangai (the east wind). Ururangi encourages us to get to know the winds well, embrace its strength and prepare for any challenges it creates.

Josh has played Inline Hockey for the Mt Wellington Panthers and currently plays for the Stingrays Premier team. He has represented the Northern Region and New Zealand on multiple occasions. He is also in the NZIHL national league playing for the Botany Swarm Men's team and plays in the AIHA Men's A League.

THE MAIN EVENT: NEW ZEALAND MAORI VS NEW ZEALAND ALL STARS

The centerpiece of the Matariki celebrations will be the Exhibition game where the NZ Maori Team will face off against the NZ All Stars on Saturday, June 25th at 7pm. This match will showcase some of the most exciting talent within Inline hockey. Rosters include:

<p style="text-align: center;">New Zealand Maori</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">New Zealand All Stars</p> 
<p>Lewis Taiapa C</p>	<p>Paul Jameson C</p>

Anthony Nathan A Ben Thompson A James Halliburton Anthony Taylor Aaron Stockman Jaan Turia William Jackson Jacob Jackson Hayden Stockman Ritchie Hopkinson Braeden Kettle Eythan Prendergast (G) Scott Collins (G)	Alex Novak A James O'Donnell A Brandon Nash Sam Beardman Josh Whitston - Lee Brandon Johnston Oscar Hamilton Vinnie Cistrone Adam Kingston Trent Kemsley Jarrod Carroll Connor Parr (G) Scott Eastwood (G)
Coach - Shane Clark Manager- Willy Harvey Assistant Manager - Gary Toa	Coach - Jason McLean Manager - Todd Velvin Assistant Manager - Cameron McIver

You can view more information including the draw for the Matariki Series, the rosters, and the live streams here: <https://bit.ly/3O5ot3Z>

You can also view all the livestream links and get the latest up to date information at the Inline Hockey NZ Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/inlinehockeynz>

This will be the first Matariki Series of many, and the weekend will be full of competition that inline hockey supporters won't want to miss. All of us here at Centre Ice are proud supporters of the Matariki Series and we look forward to watching history in the making. Congratulations to all of the players who have been named on these teams and best of luck as you move forward within your inline careers.

"Mā mua ka kite a muri, Mā muri ka ora a mua"

"Those who lead give sight to those who follow, Those who follow give life to those who lead"

By Stefanie Smith