



WESTERN FORCE

- v -

Blues

Saturday 12th March 2011
nib Stadium, Perth

Kick Off: 7.05pm



JB Orielly's

- The Teams -

Force		Blues
Pek Cowan	1	Tony Woodcock
Ben Whittaker	2	Keven Mealamu (C)
Tim Fairbrother	3	Charlie Faumuina
Sam Wykes	4	Anthony Boric
Nathan Sharpe (C)	5	Ali Williams
Richard Brown	6	Jerome Kaino
Matt Hodgson	7	Daniel Braid
Ben McCalman	8	Chris Lowrey
Brett Sheehan	9	Toby Morland
James O'Connor	10	Luke McAlister
David Smith	11	Rene Ranger
Gene Fairbanks	12	Benson Stanley
Nick Cummins	13	Jared Payne
Alfie Mafi	14	Joe Rokocoko
Cameron Shepherd	15	Isaia Toeava

Reserves

Nathan Charles	16	Tom McCartney
Matt Dunning	17	John Afoa
Tevita Metuisela	18	Kurtis Haiu
Jono Jenkins	19	Luke Braid
James Stannard	20	Alby Mathewson
Matt Brandon	21	Stephen Brett

Players to Watch...

Alfie Mafi is making his run on debut for the Force. Mafi showed some glimpses of brilliance when he came on late in the game against the Sharks and it will be great to see what he can offer from the get go.

Jerome Kaino is the beast of the Blues back row. He is a model number 6: Tackles hard, powerful ball runner, good line-out option, and gets himself to a fair few rucks. Kaino will definitely need to be contained in order to overcome the Blues.

- Match Preview -

This weekend's game couldn't come soon enough; anything to wipe out the memory of the game against the Sharks. There aren't a whole lot of positives you can take out of a 27 point drubbing, a red card, and two players out injured and one suspended for the next few weeks.

Regrettably, this week's opposition isn't going to be much easier. The Blues are sitting in 6th going into the fourth round courtesy of wins over the Crusaders and Lions. The Force have dropped to 12th with a depressing one bonus point to go with our four bye round bonus points. The Force are much better than 12th and Saturday night will be a great opportunity to prove it.

How we will win it...

The Blues are probably the most inconsistent team in the competition. One week they are pure class and the next week they are total ass. They scored themselves a win over the Lions last weekend which definitely works in our favour, though they were hardly classy in the process. They will be pretty fatigued having spent the last two weeks in the Republic. These are things we have to count on and use to our advantage, as their team is dangerously littered with All Blacks. Hopefully, they will also be taking us for granted.

So how do we capitalise on that? With the very average form of our attack we aren't going to be able to mix it with the Blues' backs, so we've got to take it to them in the forwards. We need the kind of forward display we showed against the Crusaders last year. We need to play for territory and pressure the Blues into making mistakes in their own half. Unleash Cameron Shepherd. With speedsters Alfie Mafi and David Smith ready apply the blowtorch as chasers we can keep the Blues far away from our try-line. As the Lions found out, if you give the Blues a chance, they will take it. This also means keeping the same intensity and accuracy in defence that we have brought to the last two games to limit these chances. Two weeks ago, the Sharks' defence pressured the Blues into handling errors and ill-discipline. We have the resources to play for territory: A monster kicker, speedy chasers, and a line-out general in Nathan Sharpe who can worry to the Blues. Keven Mealamu is very

much a hot and cold thrower, and if he has another off night, it'll definitely work in our favour.

We can't afford to let their backline get going. In Auckland last year the Blues threatened every time the ball went wide. We need to close them down before that happens. We also can't afford to take our foot off the pedal. Back in the season opener in 2009 at Subiaco Oval we had the Blues on the ropes coming into the final quarter. A fade out in that final quarter, with some very pedestrian tackling, saw the Blues steal a 6 point win.

Head to Head...

Force vs Blues games have tended to be very one-sided affairs, with the only close match being our 25-19 loss in Perth in 2009. These matches have seen some pretty depressing scorelines: 39-8 in 2006, 33-6 in 2007, and 38-17 in 2010. The good news is that the 2006 and 2010 editions were followed up by two of the most sensational games in the club's history, resulting in a draw and a win against the Crusaders. In our past five games we have only ever been the victor once. It would be good to chalk another win in the Force column.

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Blues	2006, Round 10	Force
Venue: Auckland, Date: 2006-04-14, Time: 15:35:00		
6	Tries	1
3	Conversions	0
1	Penalties	1
0	Drop Goals	0
39	Total	8

Force	2007, Round 14	Blues
Venue: Perth, Date: 2007-05-04		
0	Tries	4
0	Conversions	2
2	Penalties	3
0	Drop Goals	0
6	Total	33

Blues	2008, Round 5	Force
Venue: North Harbour, Date: 2008-03-15		
2	Tries	3
2	Conversions	3
1	Penalties	2
0	Drop Goals	0
17	Total	27

Force	2009, Round 1	Blues
Venue: Perth, Date: 2009-02-13		
3	Tries	4
2	Conversions	1
0	Penalties	1
0	Drop Goals	0
19	Total	25

Blues	2010, Round 10	Force
Venue: Auckland, Date: 2010-04-17		
6	Tries	2
4	Conversions	2
0	Penalties	1
0	Drop Goals	0
38	Total	17