

Mediclinic Barrelhouse Warriors. Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby 7s 2017. Tournament Review - Matt Rubin.

For those that have been involved over the years from a Warriors perspective it has been a 10 year rollercoaster of an expedition. Here is how we have fared

<u>Result</u>	<u>Year</u>
Quarter Finals	2009, 2010, 2011
Semi-Final	2008, 2012, 2013, 2016
Final	2014, 2015
Winners	2017

3 finals in the last 4 years and a semi-final loss the previous year, all against the Emirates Flying Muppets. A team full of Kiwi rugby playing air stewards, it doesn't make sense..... Any idea how they fit down the aisle? Some could have said they were our bogey team, credit to our mental strength because they can't be called that now. To finally lift the trophy was a dream come true, hours of work on and off the field, some near misses, a few commiseration parties but 2017 was Barrelhouse Warriors' year, finally and so well deserved. Here is a shot of how it felt.



It is great to see a number of the early Warriors side still involved with the club; Tom Donnelly, Chris Fraser, Chris Wentzel, Baptiste Ithurbide, Matt Rubin, Matt Born, Mike Botha, Mike Kuiper and of course 2017 skipper Gus Robertson! We have come a long way and of course the integration with Barrelhouse several years ago has been a new exciting part of the journey which will continue this September as the club joins the 15 a side UAERF community league. This win is not only dedicated to the afore mentioned players but all the great Warriors players from previous years people like CDV, Mike Du Toit, Buzz, Jody Waugh, Chris Romaine, Clinton Heath, Jon Viney, Kev Brent, Alex Caciado,

Andrew Beard, Luis Parreira, Simon Sloan, Mark Neel, Nas Mousa, Peter Foley, Rob Laubscher, Rudi Botha and many more. You have all played your part getting this very talented side into a position last December to lift the cup.

The tournament organisers have recently done work to ensure the Gulf Men's Social category remains exactly that and long may it continue. If I am honest, on paper when Taylor, Gus and myself developed our selection in the build up to the tournament, this wasn't the strongest group in Warriors history plus we only had 14 to choose from which gave us little margin for injuries. Shout out to Randy and Ryall who pushed so hard for a spot and didn't complain when they fell short within touching distance. Nevertheless this squad were extremely well drilled thanks to the top notch training ground work undertaken by Taylor Hamilton. A number of our lads had also been working off the field with Taylor at his EagleEye PT sessions and bootcamps and you could see the direct benefit. In the game of rugby 7s fitness and being able to keep the connection with your teammates in defence, even if it means just stepping a few yards left or right is life or death. If you are able to move and close that gap because your lungs still work, this means that the team doesn't concede that crucial try and this effect results. Put all this together with the natural ability, speed and heart in defence that the Warriors always have and we were quietly confident by late November that we had a formidable unit capable of going the whole way.

Player Review

Craig Moyce	A centre in the forwards. This man offloads like Sonny Bill, has gas to burn, a nice step and a match physically for anyone.
Michiel Basson	A student of the game, our most intelligent player, controls the pace of the game, incredible communication, rock in the scrum, hard hitter and hands like Waisale Serevi.
Pedro Castro	Considering he is a lock and 10s / 15s specialist, Pedro worked so hard to get 7s fit. Everywhere around the park, soft hands, did all of the unglamorous work, unsung hero.
Shane Born	Formerly the Glassman. Utility player comfortable at hooker, scrum half or centre, arguably up there with PJ as our biggest hitter. Made himself a stalwart of this squad after years of high performance.
Peter John-Smit	Tackling machine, fitter than fit, he did boxing as training. Fast as a centre and hands of back this man is a back row and smoked Kiwi Muppets and everyone else in the tournament that went near him or his inside man.
Ant Taylor	CDV's mate who had a knee problem. Why didn't this man start playing sooner? Oozes class, intelligence, defensive heart and what an engine. Classical SA scrum half.
Dewald von Maltitz	The joker, the creator, the hot-stepper. Sometimes confuses himself with his sidesteps, certainly messed up myself and Keifer. Reigned in the unnecessary wild stuff and off bench opened up games for us like nobody else can.
Gus Robertson	Verbiage, Intelligence, the Pass!, Game Management, Tackles, Heart, Respect, Honour, Commitment, El Capitan.

Brad Ford	Eye for a gap, acceleration off the mark, high top speed can run the length. People questioned his commitment, we stuck with him and he repaid us. So committed on the pitch, side on tackling, willing to run.
Pasha Nirozad	Re-learnt rugby recently. Wasn't ready a few years ago, took stick not picking him then, it was too soon. Fought back earned spot. Improves weekly by listening + hard work. Gas to burn. Loves chopping down charging lumps.
Warrick Blowers	Ultra-quick, faster than Kev?, insane athlete, spins, jinks, loves a dump tackle, finally got him going on the outside! so glad I talked this man into playing, glad he won the cup before he left Dubai.
Taylor Hamilton	Paceman, organiser, sweeper, player coach, try scorer, insane one on one defence, heartbeat of everything we do. Note - not the best kicker out of hand other than in a tournament final. What a try!

It is hard to single players out but firstly I have to mention captain marvel Gus Robertson. Gus was 24 when he joined us, an incredible player, pacey, creative and with the most accurate, smooth and drilled spin pass off both hands you will see outside the professional game. At 32 Gus played his best tournament for the Warriors, he controlled everything we did on the pitch, knowing when we needed to play fast and when to play 7s, walk back and reset. What really impressed me was the narrative from our captain, he took all the lessons we had learned over the years and didn't let our current crop fall into any traps, majestic leadership!

Player of the tournament

This was a joint award as we couldn't split them, congratulations Brad and Peter. When in my opinion I look at some of the outstanding forwards (Peter-John, Mike Kuiper, Chris Romaine, Michiel and CDV), halfbacks (Gus, Jody, Mike Du Toit, Ant and Bats) and backs (Mike Botha, Brad, Tom, Kev, Warrick, and Taylor) that have represented the Warriors (don't kill me anyone else I might have missed). We had 7 of our best ever players in this squad. The icing on the cake was when I think it through carefully, it is marginal but I would say that Brad is the best back the Warriors have ever had and Peter-John the best forward. They are both humble, honest and the nicest people you could meet and they performed at a level above and beyond. We simply wouldn't have won it without them, if you watch the semi-final and final footage you will see. In the final the Muppets scored first and after past history this could have killed us then Brad decides he is going to score (Tommy Gun esque), he just decided nobody was going to stop him and he is going to score now and he goes and does the length. That was a huge moment. I didn't let him come off though ;). The tackles that Peter made to cause knock-ons and scrums took the speed out of the game, the cover tackles when they would have scored. To see Michiel always trusting Peter on his inside, you can't hear from the side but you know they are talking, not getting sucked in, then someone gets smoked.....

Peter and Brad well done you have raised the bar your performance 2 raised everyone's level and well done lads for responding. Gus and all the lads, to a man you all performed. You smashed it and at the same time delivered for yourselves, families and Barrelhouse. We need to celebrate this moment, it was several years of some of our lives, personally I don't think there were many days in the last 10 years that I didn't think about the team, how it could be grown and then do something to act on it. We are all so proud and you lads, well done, enjoy the reign as champions, we can celebrate on tour and then come back in September play some 15s and you can do it all again!

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Rubber

Matt Rubin (295)

Director of Rugby

[Barrelhouse Rugby Club](#)

