



## **Exciting Warriors converting rah-rahs**

By Wayne Heming – 29/03/2009 1:26:34 AM

FORMER Kiwis coach Graham Lowe says the feats of the Warriors in the NRL and the New Zealand rugby league national team have won over thousands of fans bored with rugby union and the continued failure of the All Blacks to win the World Cup.

Lowe warned rugby union officials to quickly get their heads out of the sand, claiming Kiwi fans were coming out of the closet to watch rugby league. "In all my time, I have never seen rugby league healthier or as many people captivated by it," Lowe said.

"The [league] World Cup win was a great result for the game here, especially considering the high expectations on the All Blacks in the past few rugby World Cups, which haven't been met. Even the most ardent rugby union supporter would find it hard to argue, as a spectacle, rugby hasn't offered up much in the Super 14 this year.

"The real groundswell here is not necessarily coming from league people, it's coming from the rugby union public who are asking why their game can't be the exciting, unpredictable spectacle they're seeing in the NRL every week. "They can see the X-factor [from] players like Stacey Jones and Wade McKinnon, Darren Lockyer, Karmichael Hunt and Israel Folau. All these players bring something that is totally exciting and unpredictable, and the rugby union people over here are starting to actually enjoy it.

"They [rugby] can't match it. That's not being disrespectful to them. They've had their head in the sand, and it's come out with rugby league gripping the fans. "It's quite remarkable because this is a traditional world rugby union stronghold."

After beating Manly last weekend, the Warriors firmed dramatically in betting to win the premiership, which would take league to new heights in New Zealand. "I dare not think that far ahead," Lowe said. "Rugby league has everyone in its grip over here at the moment. There's a lot factors - New Zealand's World Cup win, how ordinary rugby is performing, the way the Warriors are playing, Stacey's great comeback and Steve Price playing his 300th game last weekend."

