

Off the site and into the gym

By NICHOLAS BOYACK

Professional rugby and building are an unlikely path to a career in personal training, but that's the avenue followed by Mike Kingsbeer.

The 26-year-old played professionally in Ireland and Japan, and looked to have a career in Sevens until he decided that a life in the gym offered a better future.

A member of the St Pat's Silverstream First XV for three years, he left school in 2002, joined Hutt Old Boys Marist (HOBM) and looked to have a big future in rugby.

In 2004, he made Wellington B and Wellington Sevens but never quite got the break he needed to make it in to the top ranks.

Although he wanted to make a name for himself here, he decided that it was time to head overseas and he joined the powerful Munster Club as a development player.

Kingsbeer spent two years with Munster without ever making the top team but it was still a great experience for a young man on his first overseas trip.

He went with the team to Italy and Spain, and he took the field with a number of players who went on to play for Munster and now Ireland.

His accommodation and other living expenses were taken care of and although the money "was nothing flash" he made a comfortable living.

"It [the money] was similar to being a builder in New Zealand but I had no overheads."

Eventually the dismal weather, and a nagging feeling that he wanted to have a final shot at making it here, saw him return to New Zealand after two years.

He was only back a few weeks when he received an offer that was too good to turn down from Japanese team Yamaha.



High profile Fijian Waisake Sotutu was head coach and he says it was an amazing experience. The coaching was good and, with its big budget, it was the best experience of his professional career.

The standard was similar to premier club rugby here and occasionally the game would reach Wellington B standards.

It was there that he met former New Zealand Sevens trainer Keith Robertson, who sparked his interest in personal training.

Japan was "an awesome experience" and the food was a highlight, but his contract was not renewed when Yamaha signed former All Black Reuben Thorne.

On returning to New Zealand in 2009 his priority was getting a job and enjoying his rugby. After a season with Marist St Pats, he joined Hutt Old Boys Marist in 2010 and is now looking forward to the new season with a team he believes can win the Jubilee Cup.

The big change for Kingsbeer was the

decision to give up his building apprenticeship and become a personal trainer.

He completed a certificate in personal training at the New Zealand Institute of Sport and is now working at Les Mills.

"I have to work hard to get my clients but it is a good job because I can fit it in around rugby."

At 26, he has not given up entirely on a professional rugby career but says time is running out and he will stick with Les Mills unless he gets a really top offer.

His background in rugby does have one disadvantage.

"The [rugby] boys come in and I help them train but they don't want to pay for it!"

Although he initially wanted to carve out a niche training established athletes, he has found in reality many of his clients are those wanting to lose weight.

In good shape: Mike Kingsbeer has made the transition from professional rugby to personal training.

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