



MEDIA RELEASE
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TAB tips Ranfurly Shield to be capital-bound

The TAB is picking the Ranfurly Shield will be locked away in the Wellington Lions' trophy cabinet at the end of the national provincial rugby season.

The Hawke's Bay Magpies snatched the shield from Otago in a 20-19 thriller in Dunedin on Sunday and will defend it against Counties-Manukau in Napier on Saturday.

It's been 44 years since the Magpies have held the most famous trophy in New Zealand provincial rugby, and TAB rugby bookie BJ Martin says they should enjoy it while it lasts.

"We've got Hawke's Bay as firm favourites to see off Counties-Manukau in their first defence, with the Magpies at \$1.25 and the Steelers at \$3.75. We think they'll successfully defend it against Northland in round five and North Harbour in round seven before taking on Wellington in round nine.

"Wellington will almost certainly be favourites for that match, so it looks like the shield will be heading to the capital to spend the off-season in the Lions' trophy cabinet."

But when it comes to the Ranfurly Shield it's always advisable to expect the unexpected.

"There's something about the shield that lifts the defender and the challenger to a whole different level. That's what makes these games so exciting – often form and favouritism can go right out the window.

"It's often simply a case of which team wants it the most."

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