

Samoa reveals a 'secret weapon'

BY MICHAEL CARAYANNIS
31/10/2008

THE needles are enough to make the toughest rugby league players wince with pain, but Miranda-based chiropractor Michael Fordham looms as Samoa's secret weapon in the World Cup.

Through his relationship with Samoan captain Nigel Vagana, Fordham will take charge of the Samoan team during the competition.

"I met Mick when I was at the Sharks," Vagana said before getting acupuncture treatment on an injured hamstring at the back2life clinic.

"He has fixed me up and looked after me. My body feels good now. I asked him if he would be interested in helping us out and he accepted.

"We don't have financial support behind us to pay him anything, but he wants to help the game internationally."

Vagana will play five-eighth when his side takes to the field against arch-rivals Tonga tonight at CUA Stadium, Penrith.

The Samoan squad is filled with top-flight rugby league stars including Matt Utai, Ali Lauitiiti, Francis Meli, Tony Puletua and the Sharks' Terrence Seuseu and Misi Taulapapa, and former St George Illawarra backrower Lagi Setu.

"There is a lot of history between Samoa and Tonga," Vagana said. "Like the Dragons meeting the Sharks in the grand final."

Vagana, 33, said he would reassess his future after the tournament.

Despite having played more than 30 Test matches for New Zealand, Vagana switched his allegiances to Samoa in 2006.

"When I was playing for New Zealand, Samoa wasn't an option," Vagana said. "What I wanted to do before I finished was to build the Samoan rugby league up, so young Samoan boys get a chance to represent their country. There is a lot of Samoan talent, but we just haven't had the set up."



Feeling the pain: Samoan rugby league captain Nigel Vagana receives treatment for an injury by Miranda-based chiropractor Michael Fordham.
Picture: Elliot Housego