



## **Groundbreaking Partnership – Rovers and Vipers**

Feature

**Rovers and Vipers Form Partnership Rugby League**

Hull KR are excited to confirm the club has entered into a ground breaking, development partnership with leading Papua New Guinea club, Port Moresby Vipers RLFC.

Built on the storied history between Hull KR and Papua New Guinea, the unique pathway will allow two juniors from Port Moresby Vipers to link up with the Robins' Academy, play for the U18s side and aspire to play for the club's First Team.

After establishing the first direct development pathway of its kind with the Papua New Guinean domestic side, Hull KR will now look to identify talent from the Port Moresby Vipers before the players join the club's junior set-up ahead of the 2024 Academy season.

The partnership is exclusively between Hull KR and the Vipers across both the NRL and Super League. The relationship opens a new development path for the club and the island nation with Port Moresby's junior players selected for the Robins' Academy being designated as federation-trained players should they sign for the club's first team.

During their time with Hull KR, the prospective players will be given comprehensive education and welfare support whilst with the Robins to aid their personal development and integration into the new environment.

Port Moresby Vipers have a rich history in Papua New Guinea with the club winning the National Cup in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2013. The club has a strong foothold nationally in Papua New Guinea while being the flagship club in the metropolitan city of Port Moresby, the country's capital.

Speaking on the announcement, Hull KR Chief Executive, Paul Lakin said: 'This is a very significant partnership for both Hull KR and Papua New Guinea's domestic game that has been months in planning.

'Papua New Guinea is the only country in the world whose primary sport is rugby league. We'll put the time and attention into this partnership to ensure we give it the best possible chance of success. It's exciting, innovative and has huge potential.'

Following the establishment of the ground breaking partnership, Hull KR's Head of Academy, Jason Netherton added: 'This partnership has been 12 months in the making and I'm really excited to finally announce it. We as a club have a great history with PNG rugby league, and this will allow that affinity to continue for years to come.

'Players from PNG are traditionally very tough and uncompromising, I am looking forward to helping develop their skillset, embedding them into our culture and hopefully seeing them become future Hull KR players.

Governor of Port Moresby and patron of Port Moresby Vipers, Power Parkop MP said: 'I'm ecstatic about this new junior rugby league development program which I must say is the first ever advance program that has a huge potential for young local rugby aspirants.

'We are witnessing a milestone sports deal sealed between two football rugby league clubs from Hull KR from United Kingdom and Port Moresby Vipers from Papua New Guinea will now open a huge opportunity to develop and expose young Papua New Guinean talents to the world.

'As Patron of Port Moresby Vipers Franchise, I assure you of my earnest commitment to support the partnership as Vipers is the flagship franchise of the city and its program is fully funded by the National Capital District Commission as part of its sports program in the city.

'The opportunity to train and develop our young talents will now give prominence to our PNG NRL Bid. The doors are open for our players to train in a tier 1 rugby league competition equal to the NRL system in Australia. We can strengthen our players stock come international fixtures.

'The significance about this arrangement is that our development players will not only play rugby league but also further their education by schooling in the UK. It is a life-changing

opportunity we should grab with both hands.

‘It is important to note that this pathway support players who are in schools. I take my hat off to club executives of both clubs for their insight into opening this remarkable sporting portal to develop rugby league in Papua New Guinea.

‘Let me take this time to thank Port Moresby Vipers Vice Chairman, Tony Sipa for his foresight taking the lead in the initial discussions and the eventual signing with Hull KR executives.

‘The negotiation took place in during the 2022 Rugby League World Cup in England. A very first of a formal and structured pathway direct into UK Super League. Also, my utmost appreciation to Jason Netherton Head of Hull KR Academy and Rob Wilson Head of Recruitment and PNG star export, John Okul part of the initial discussions.

‘These two combined footy executives have carved a path that I believe is the way forward in the development of our national game in the country. I am extremely proud of Dr. Newton Albert Chairman of Port Moresby Vipers for his leadership in our pathway program.

‘I would also like to thank Endeavour Limited the management company that will manage the progress of the development program between Port Moresby Vipers and Hull KR. As Patron of Port Moresby Vipers, I am honoured to witness this historic launch between the two great clubs and wish them all the success in this endeavour.’

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