

Richie comes home to work on the grassroots

By **Brendon Egan**

TAKARO PARK became a rugby lover's paradise yesterday as the Mastercard All Blacks Roadshow swung into town.

A major highlight for the large crowd of youngsters at the event was the appearance of North Otago-born All Black captain Richie McCaw, who participated in many of the roadshow's rugby activities. He was joined by former New Zealand skipper and renowned hardman Wayne "Buck" Shelford, who will also attend many of the 20 roadshow destinations being held around New Zealand over the next six weeks.

The roadshow began in Dunedin on Saturday and brings the All Blacks experience to grassroots supporters. Its other main goal is

to get young children interested in the sport of rugby and to teach them the fundamentals of the game.

The roadshow features a series of five activities that aim to give supporters a chance to test themselves and experience what is like to be an All Black.

Five enormous inflatable rugby challenge stations will be set up at each of the venues, with North Otago youngsters yesterday getting the opportunity to test themselves under a high ball, attempt a place kick, and have a go at passing, throwing into a lineout and pushing over for a try.

This is the first year the roadshow has been held and Shelford believed it was a fantastic concept.

"It's important to take it to the public and the people who support

the All Blacks. It creates a bit of fun for the kids and adults – they can try out their skills."

McCaw was a massive hit with the North Otago children at the event, the All Black legend spending over an hour and a half signing autographs. He said it was "great" to be back in Oamaru.

"I've played a lot of rugby down here. It's home I suppose."

Shelford was also popular with autograph hunters, but admitted that many of the children did not know who he was.

"Richie is the man of the hour at the moment – it's his era. A lot of these kids were only born in the last 10 years. They don't know me, but their parents do."

The next roadshow event will be held in Christchurch on Wednesday.

■ **Richie McCaw interview – page 10**



Core skills: All Blacks captain Richie McCaw shows youngsters how to throw in to the lineout.

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