

Text 7 – Buck Shelford

Learner 7: Not Achieved

Intended for teacher use only

Learner's purpose for reading: To learn about a famous New Zealander

Text read:

Biography of Buck Shelford

The following is a biography from Alan Duff's book *Māori Heroes*.



Quick Facts

Born: 13 December 1957

Grew up: Rotorua

Schools: Western Heights High School, Rotorua

Claim to fame: One of the most loved and respected All Black captains

No All Black grabbed the public imagination quite like Buck Shelford. He wasn't blessed with the incredible skills of Zinzan Brooke. He wasn't the man mountain that Brian Lochore, former All Black captain and number 8, was. Yet whenever he picked up the ball from the base of the scrum, or received it in a pass, the spectators felt an immediate, involuntary thrill. 'Buck's got it!' they gasped, expecting anything, including the impossible. And as often as not he delivered the impossible.

Buck ran through opposition players, he flattened them with a mighty hand fend, he bumped them off him, he smashed them over, he bullocked for metre after metre with several would-be tacklers hanging off him like insects making a nuisance of themselves. And he swatted them away like insects!

Statistics are not what Buck Shelford is about. Like all legendary figures, you just see the man standing there, his achievements not so much numbers as a feeling inside you, of respect and admiration. As a Māori All Black captain, a New Zealand sevens star, and captain, or the NZ Combined Services tour of the UK, he led them all.

Unfair dismissal

He was dropped unfairly from the All Blacks, a victim of politics, selectors and a coach not big enough to confront him with concerns that his form wasn't up to his best.

At rugby grounds all over New Zealand, the placards screamed 'Bring Back Buck!' Zinzan Brooke had taken his place and another mighty player of greatness was on his way, but most of the country wanted 'their' Buck back. For a couple of years after he retired, they still compared Zinny to Buck, with Buck often winning the vote.

Goosebumps

When Buck did the haka before a test it made your spine shiver and goosebumps come up all over you. He brought the Māori back into the haka! He put the man into the traditional challenge, so you knew what you were in for, and God help the opposition!

Buck's hard attitude was central to his success. He was a fitness fanatic, developing his superior fitness as a PT instructor in the Navy,

and when most other players had given up after training Buck would want to carry on.

I went to an All Blacks practice session when they were preparing in Christchurch for the 1987 World Cup. They were packing down scrum after scrum against an invited forward pack – and getting a hard time from those young wannabes! Then Buck roared at his forwards words we can't print here and the All Black pack proceeded to tear their opponents apart.

Much respect

Once during a World Cup test against Wales an All Black lock was coming to the sideline for treatment to a nasty head cut when suddenly Buck's voice boomed: 'Murray! Get back here!' Murray Pierce turned immediately and ran back to join the scrum. To hell with the injury.

There was another game played against a Welsh team in a gale force wind of 100 kph. In the second half even a tap kick by the opposition would have gone two-thirds the length of the field. But Buck was ready, with a captain's decision and a captain's will to see it was carried out.

Letting the other side have the ball could have easily resulted in a try. The All Black captain exhorted his players, he urged them, he grabbed tiring players and gave words of encouragement. He inspired a win against impossible odds.

With North Harbour he established a growing reputation as a very good coach. It would surprise no-one to see that name one day in the future as All Black coach. We bet they don't lose many games under Buck Shelford.

Text 3 – Buck Shelford

Learner's purpose for reading: To learn about a famous New Zealander

Learner evidence:

Who is Buck Shelford?

- ① A former All Black who played in the 1980s. He was the captain of the All Blacks, Māori All Black, and a New Zealand sevens star. He was known as a leader and looked up to by fellow team players.

What is the main idea of this text? How does the text express this idea?

- ② That Buck Shelford is a New Zealand hero. The text shows that he is a well-respected player and loved by his fans. In the text Duff says that his fans would bring placards with "Bring back Buck" showing that his fans wanted him back on the field.
- ① ②

How is Buck Shelford's career in the All Blacks important historically or culturally?

- ③ Buck Shelford showed the world how he was passionate about being Māori by performing the haka. The text says "When Buck Shelford did the haka it made your spine shiver and goose bumps come up all over you." Culturally the text says "he brought the Māori back into the haka!" The haka is still performed by rugby teams throughout New Zealand. First XV teams perform it before their games and Shelford was one of the first players to insist it was done properly.
- ①

What was Alan Duff's purpose in writing this text?

- ④ To inform everyone about Buck Shelford's legacy and to show that you can be proud to be Māori. Buck Shelford was just as good a rugby player as any of the others, well respected, and he was proud to represent New Zealand as Māori. Alan Duff called his book 'Māori Heroes'.

Evaluation

- ⑤ I found this article interesting. I enjoyed reading about Buck Shelford because I think he is a great rugby player.