

# Keven Mealamu

## *Former New Zealand Rugby Union Footballer*

Barefoot and brilliant. That was how Keven Mealamu made his entrance into Auckland rugby. Keven is a former New Zealand rugby union footballer. He played at hooker for the Blues in Super Rugby, Auckland in the National Provincial Championship, and the New Zealand national team. He was a key member of 2011 and 2015 Rugby World Cup winning teams, becoming one of only 21 players who have won the Rugby World Cup on multiple occasions.



### **More about Keven Mealamu:**

His family had just arrived from Tokoroa, his father having been made redundant from the town's paper mill, and Mealamu had enrolled in the fourth form at Aorere College in Papatoetoe.

On this particular day he was supposed to be watching his older brother Luke - who went on to play for Samoa - in a first XV trial. He had turned up in bare feet. They didn't even let fourth-formers trial, but he got on the field anyway and made a huge impact.

Keven's talent might have been missed by Auckland and New Zealand rugby but for a career-changing decision after his final year at school. As an openside flanker Mealamu had made the New Zealand under-16s and secondary school sides, but missed re-selection in the schools side in 1997. His speed was below that of the best No 7s, but he was developing the square frame of his father, Luka, a Pan Pacific body-building champion. It was suggested that he make the switch to the position of Hooker and the rest is history.

There's a quiet strength to Mealamu, but without false modesty. Mealamu, who comes from a family of "sportsmen or musicians," is not one to blow his own trumpet.

Keven is a talented artist and has illustrated children's books with the proceeds going to the Starship Hospital, a charity for which he is an Ambassador.

He retired from international rugby in 2016 after playing 126 test matches for the All Blacks, one of only six All Blacks ever to achieve the 100 plus mark.

Keven is now employed by the NZ Rugby Union as an Ambassador for the game and resides in South Auckland, where he and his wife, Latai, run a fitness centre.

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