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All Blacks: Sonny Bill ready for pandemonium in Samoa

By Joseph Pearson

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The All Blacks are expecting a rapturous fan frenzy when they arrive in Samoa ahead of Wednesday's test in Apia.

Both the All Blacks and Manu Samoa squads are taking part in a public parade through Apia's town centre tomorrow before a presentation with Samoa's Head of State – his Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi.

There will also be rugby skills sessions with local children and Sonny Bill Williams said it will be pandemonium from the moment they step off the plane.

"I'm loving being back in this environment and it's going to be crazy over there in Samoa. I've been there a few times so I kind of know what to expect and when you've got the superstars like Richie and DC [Dan Carter], it's going to be crazy.

"The boys won't be able to move. They love the All Blacks just as much as they love the Manu Samoa team. It's exciting times and special times because there's a few of us that have Samoan heritage and I'm just hoping my old man wears his All Blacks jersey."

Williams' family loyalties will be divided on Wednesday because his father was born in Samoa and cousin, and Chiefs team-mate Tim Nanai-Williams, will be playing for Samoa.

"He's been sending me videos of the boys training over there and how hot it is; billboards and stuff which the boys are on and I'm looking forward to playing him. If I get a hold of him I'll make sure to give him a little nudge!

"The people are really lovely and it's pretty intense out there. I have family out there and I always try to go and see them when I'm back. I'm sure they'll know that we're in town."

Apia Park will have a capacity of just 8000 for Wednesday's test match but Charles Piutau expects the atmosphere to be similar to Eden Park.

It's the All Blacks first game of 2015 and it gives players a chance to stake their claim before Steve Hansen cuts his provisional squad down to 31 for the Rugby World Cup in September.

"This year every game is massive and this is new territory", said Piutau. "Samoa is going to be a physical and



Sonny Bill Williams says the reception in Samoa will be crazy. Photo / Brett Phibbs

tough game, especially with their home crowd. That's something the whole team is looking forward to.

"They'll be getting stuck into their game and every little tackle or kick or anything, they'll be cheering and enjoying themselves."

The all Kiwi Super Rugby final on Saturday between the Hurricanes and the Highlanders means the All Blacks aren't quite at full strength but the squad for their first ever test match in Samoa boasts more than 800 international caps.

Dan Carter starts at first five–eighth and he said the players would have to go with the flow amid the excitement in Samoa for their arrival.

"I'm sure they'll be pretty fanatic, the Samoan people living over there and the way they like to play the game, not giving you any space as well but a challenge is what this team needs.

"Something I love about being a rugby player is travelling to new countries. I've never been to Samoa before so it's going to be exciting but at the same time we're not there for a holiday. We're there for a test match."

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