

PLAYERS IN BUSINESS

TIM BATEMAN Floating First Five

TIM BATEMAN IS IN HIS EIGHTH SUPER RUGBY SEASON AND FIFTH WITH THE CRUSADERS, HAVING HAD THREE WITH THE HURRICANES, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THIS YEAR THAT MAKES IT MORE SPECIAL FOR THE 29 YEAR-OLD.

The former Maori All Blacks captain is grateful to be back in New Zealand and has started a new business venture with his wife Laura, which was driven by their desire to find a treatment for her multiple sclerosis [MS].

The couple have now opened Cloud 9 Float Club in Christchurch, which houses four flotation pods.

Upon returning to New Zealand from Japan, Tim had six months out of the game and has found playing and running a business makes life busy but highly enjoyable. He is excited about being able to do both simultaneously.

Tim Bateman takes up the story: "Having time out of the game has given me more appreciation for actually enjoying the game. Having our challenges with Laura puts everything into perspective. I am mentally refreshed and can't wait to get stuck into it all."

"I knew we were coming back to Christchurch as we needed to be around family support and I was lucky that an opportunity to play again presented itself because you are always worried about what you are going to do after rugby. I was prepared not to play again but rapt to get the chance to throw the boots on."

The Batemans were not seeking business ideas but as flotation therapy had become popular among people suffering from a range of ailments, Laura realised quickly how the flotation tanks provided her with relief and thought there might be an opportunity for them.

"We were just going to have one at the house and then we looked at how it was growing overseas. I was a bit more reserved but Laura was adamant and once we went down the track it was a no brainer," said Tim.

Prior to coming back to New Zealand, Tim, Laura and their two daughters moved back to Japan from the Hurricanes to the Fukuoka region. Tim played for the second time in the land of the rising sun so Laura could receive cutting edge and high risk treatment in a bid to



Tim playing for the Maori All Blacks v Harlequins in 2016.



Maori All Blacks v Munster.

slow down her MS.

"Laura had a stem cell transplant. Obviously it has risks with it, as any new treatment does but for us it was the best option when we weighed up everything. Laura's vision, legs and arms were all getting affected so we had to act fast. It was hard not knowing what was going to be affected next. It was a horrible way to live."

"They harvested her blood and took her stem cells from her bone marrow. They did a week of high dose chemotherapy on her to kill her immune system to get it to zero. She lost all her hair. They re-entered the cells and grew her a new immune system."

"She was in isolation for a month to slowly grow her immune system back.

The goal is to halt the MS and so far we are approaching the two-year mark. She has life-long lasting damage but we are hoping that it won't get any worse. We only have one regret we didn't get the treatment sooner."

Going into business Tim said it was crucial to understand why they were doing it.

"We asked ourselves why are we trying to do this? What is the purpose of the business? Was it helping people?"

"Initially Laura started floating for recovery and relaxation after chemotherapy and then I started doing it for recovery and visualisation for my rugby and we found it improved our quality of life."

"Now we are helping other

"Laura had a stem cell transplant. Obviously it has risks with it, as any new treatment does but for us it was the best option when we weighed up everything." **TIM BATEMAN**

people with stress, anxiety, depression, recovery. It provides a space for people who storm through life to take stock of things. Each person uses it for different reasons even university students use it to help retain information.

"We describe it as 'floats are the best version of you'. It is not a magic tool but it is an environment that people enjoy and respond to. We don't make any promises as the experience is different for everyone. We have found that it takes people a few floats to get in the swing of it. We encourage people to do the intro three pack. That gives them a good opportunity to gain a true understanding and enjoyment of the experience."

"People usually are worried about claustrophobia. They think of sunbeds but our flotation pods were designed by a basketball player so they are big with a high roof so people are surprised how big they are. People are worried they'll get bored but the time goes so fast. We have had to increase the timing options due to client requests."

"We underestimated the demand. We were hoping for six people a day but we were at near capacity of 126 floats in our first week. We have four pods that all have their own shower and toilet."

"We encourage people to use the toilet and have a shower first so they get the best out of their float and are totally relaxed and comfortable. The music plays and clients choose their own genre of music which ranges from waves to meditation. The water is fully filtered three and a half times between each float. The water in the float tank is incredibly buoyant with approximately 450kg of Epsom Salt in each pod. It is relaxing so it's entirely possible that you could fall asleep. People say they find it mentally cleansing."

"Most customers float regularly [weekly/fortnightly/monthly]. Some wait until they are stressed, tired or sore, some just want to try something 'out of this world' and others wait to receive gift vouchers on special occasions. It is an ideal gift for people that are hard to buy for."

Floating has been around for 40 years and Tim describes it as more like floating in outer space than being enclosed in anything. Scientists were initially fascinated by what happens to the brain when there is no stimulation i.e. no gravity, light or input. They were investigating what the brain does while in that environment and then it evolved from there.

Tim has found there are plenty of transferable relaxation skills that he can use for rugby. "I am less anxious going into games."

He has even got teammates such as Andy Ellis using it and has a few of this year's teammates interested.

It has also been used by US and Australian Olympic teams and NBA's Steph Curry, The Dallas Cowboys and Philadelphia Eagles, Daniel Craig 007 Actor and Richard Feynman [Nobel Prize Winning Physicist].

The Batemans are enjoying the trials of running a business.

"I enjoyed the challenges of problem solving. When you are the boss you have to come up with the solutions and it is a bit of trial and error, but I found that really enjoyable. We used a business mentor Karl Waretini who has been really awesome. He has been a massive part of helping us set it up properly. He uses rugby analogies so it makes it easy for me to understand. There are so many transferrable skills, communication, to make the team play well everyone has to do their part."



Tim and Laura with a float tank.



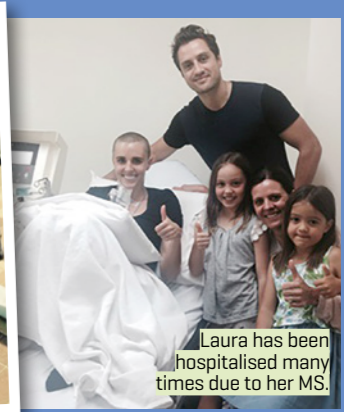
A float tank set up.



Cloud 9 Float Club reception lounge.



Laura Bateman and daughters.



Laura has been hospitalised many times due to her MS.

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