**Wednesday 2 August**

**ASAHI SUPER DRY AND OPTA PICK THE PLAYERS THEY TIP TO GO BEYOND EXPECTED AT RUGBY WORLD CUP 2023**

Asahi Super Dry has identified All Blacks winger Mark Telea, scrum half Cam Roigard and prop Tamaiti Williams, as players that have gone ‘Beyond Expected’ this season and have the potential to shine at Rugby World Cup 2023, following the recent international fixtures.

As Worldwide Partner and Official Beer of Rugby World Cup 2023, Asahi Super Dry has partnered with sports data experts Opta to give key insights into the breakthrough players that are predicted to light up stage in France this year.

Comprehensive analysis of player performances across the season has drawn special attention to three players and, based on the data, Asahi Super Dry anticipates that they will cause a stir for the nation when the tournament gets underway.

All Blacks winger, Mark Telea, is one of those that is predicted to have a powerful influence on his team’s campaign. Aside from being an explosive ball carrier, Telea has proved a capable defender, with his 83% tackle success rate being the fourth-best of the 20 wingers to attempt 50+ tackles in the 2023 season. Two of his tackles resulted in a turnover win for the Blues, with Telea adding in three jackal turnovers for good measure, a fact that will help his World Cup chances massively as the All Blacks prepare to open the tournament against a formidable France backline.

**New Zealand legend and former captain of the All Blacks Kieran Read** similarly expects big things from Telea, commenting: “*Mark’s tackle success rate has proved he has the chance to become a formidable force for the All Blacks this World Cup”.*

New Zealand scrum half Cam Roigard is another player Asahi Super Dry predicts will have a huge impact at RWC 2023. Set to fight for the hotly contested All Blacks’ number nine jersey, Roigard opted to pick and go from the base of rucks more frequently than any of his counterparts, this season, doing so from 7% of his touches, more than any other scrum-half to play 300+ minutes. Another weapon Roigard brings to the table is his strong kicking game, being the only scrum-half to gain 2000+ kicking metres (2022). Additionally, 10% of his kicks in play saw the Hurricanes retain possession of the ball (8/80) and with the All Blacks developing a gameplan geared towards gaining territory from kicks deep in their own half, 22-year-old Roigard could emerge as the perfect candidate to succeed Smith.

**Read commented**: “*Cam is showing that he could be a fantastic asset to the All Blacks new game* *plan, and being the only scrum-half to gain 2000+ kicking metres he has the ability to make a huge impact on the teams’ play”.*

Completing Asahi Super Dry’s list of Beyond Expected New Zealand picks is prop Tamaiti Williams. Being able to lock down both sides of the scrum is no easy feat but props who can provide cover at both loosehead and tighthead can be worth their weight in gold during a World Cup campaign. However, his versatility is by no means the only positive aspect of his game. Williams was one of the standout props in the 2023 Super Rugby season, making the most carries of any player in his position (78) with only two props beating more defenders than him during the campaign (10). Any player that dons the famous All Blacks jersey needs to have a strong ball handling game too and Williams will have no issues in that department. He’s made 15 more passes than any other prop in Super Rugby this year (49), including four offloads, while in defence his 11 dominant tackles were the second most of any prop.

**Read backs this up by saying:** *“Tamaiti is one of the most versatile players we’ve seen come through in recent years, showcasing his potential to be a strong pick of the World Cup team.”*

Also on Asahi Super Dry’s list of Beyond Expected picks are Australian back row Langi Gleeson fly half Carter Gordon and second row Tom Hooper. Expect to see all six names make impactful contributions to their respective countries’ efforts in France when the World Cup action begins in September. You can see a full breakdown of how these players compare [**here.**](https://sendfiles-eu.omnicomgroup.com/message/3G63EOmCyVbIlmfylTpcbB)

**Asahi Chief Marketing Officer, Grant McKenzie** commented: “*Asahi Super Dry is a proud Worldwide Partner and Official Beer of Rugby World Cup 2023. We are looking forward to sharing the premium taste of Asahi Super Dry with the 2.6 million fans attending games in France, along with elevating the experience for the rugby fans who are following from home."*

**Two-time Rugby World Cup winner and Asahi Super Dry ambassador Kieran Read** commented: “The World Cup always brings some surprises, and I’m excited to work with Asahi Super Dry to pinpoint who the unexpected change makers could be this tournament.”

Asahi Super Dry have launched a global integrated campaign to support their partnership of Rugby World Cup 2023, spearheaded by a TVC campaign that went live in New Zealand in June. The campaign showcases Asahi Super Dry’s partnership with Rugby World Cup 2023 and celebrates the welcoming and inclusive nature of rugby. The first Asian brand to ever be a global partner of Rugby World Cup, Japan’s Number One Beer will be exclusively served at all tournament venues and fanzones across France, spanning 48 matches in 10 cities.

For the opportunity to win tickets, official merchandise, and behind-the-scenes match day experiences, follow @asahisuperdry