

SPENCER: CARLOS JAMES

Born: 14 Oct 1975, Levin, New Zealand

Married: 2005, Church Road Winery, Taradale, Hawkes Bay

To: Jodene Maree Williams (1975 - present)

Honours:

2002: NZ Maori Player of the Year

2003: NZ Maori Player of the Year

2003: NZ Super Rugby Player of the Year

2005-06: Northampton Saints Player of the Year

Carlos's parents are:

Graham Bailey (1950) and Queenie (known as 'Wiki' Toria) (1948).

He has ***one brother***

Fabian Kyle (1971 -)

Carlos and Jodene (Jo) have two children:

Payton Cruz: (2004 -)

Asha Janet Jean: (2007 -)

Carlos is of Muaupoko and Ngati Kahungunu iwi. He grew up in Heather Street in what was then, in the 1970s, the rapidly-developing south-eastern quadrant of Levin. He attended Taitoko Primary, Levin Intermediate and Waiopahu College.

His father Graham was a drainlayer, and played rugby with the Wanderers club. His mother Wiki was a clothes sewer.

From early on, Carlos was a natural sportsman, "amazing at anything he tried" observed a mate who grew up next door to him. Competitive in a game of marbles, lightning on a BMX bike, and a gifted softballer.

His parents drove him and his older brother Fabian all around the country to race BMX and at the age of 6 and 7 Carlos was ranked no. 4 nationally in his age group.

His interest in softball was developed from his mother. He made the New Zealand 'Rest' age group softball teams from under-14 to under-16 in 1990 and 1991.

And then there was rugby – kicking an old heavy leather ball bare feet in the street with the other kids, including brother Fabian, also a talented prospect.

In the more organised environment of Levin Saturday morning schoolboy rugby at Playford Park, Carlos' deft skills would first come to public attention. He turned Horowhenua union officials' heads and at the age of 16, while still a Waiopahu College student, he played 1st class representative rugby for Horowhenua in the NPC 3rd Division.

This was in 1992, a stellar year in New Zealand Secondary Schools rugby history. Carlos was selected for the national Secondary Schools squad that included Jonah Lomu, Geoff Wilson, Darryl Gibson and Carl Hoeft among ten players who would eventually make the All Blacks. They beat Ireland and Australia in international matches that season. Waiopahu College, a decile 2 high school, also finished second in the First XV World Championships of '92.

A year later he gave further glimpses of his rare promise when in an early season Ranfurly Shield challenge he scored a spectacular solo try for Horowhenua against the holders Auckland. Horowhenua lost that game 80-17! But they did go on to win the 3rd Division title that year, the only time they've done so, and Carlos set a union record for the most points scored in a season with 136.

Graham Henry (the future All Black World Cup winning coach) was coaching Auckland then and was sufficiently impressed with Carlos' Ranfurly Shield performance to lure him to the country's biggest union as soon as he finished school.

The deal included a 40-hour-a-week courier driver job in those semi-professional days of 1994. The change from small town Levin to the big city wasn't easy to cope with and Carlos made a few trips back south to relieve his homesickness. However, he soon became a regular feature of Auckland representative sides in succession to Grant Fox. In 1994 he also came into competition with Canterbury's Andrew Mehrtens for the first time when both were included in the New Zealand Colts squad, with Carlos being preferred for the main games.

Their careers would clash at international level for much of the next decade. They were teammates in many All Blacks squads, though their number of appearances together were few. Carlos actually came into the All Blacks for the first time when he replaced an injured Mehrtens on the end of season tour of France & Italy in 1995.

Carlos also went in the expanded squad to South Africa in 1996 although, with Simon Culhane then taking precedence as Mehrtens' deputy, it was not until 1997, with Mehrtens again injured, that Carlos made his test debut.

This was against Argentina at Athletic Park in Wellington on the 21st June 1997, which he marked by scoring 33 points. He held his place for most of the 1997 domestic tests but lost out to Mehrtens on the end of year tour to Britain. The pair then shared the test role for much of an unhappy 1998 season, during which the coach was criticised for, among other things, his chopping & changing of his two first fives.

1999 was World Cup year. After being selected to play with the New Zealand A team, Carlos was included in the World Cup squad. However, a training injury meant he was forced out of the tournament without making an appearance.

In the next three seasons, apart from brief appearances on the end of season tours to the Northern Hemisphere in 2000 & 2001, Carlos struggled behind Mehrtens and Tony Brown for All Black chances.

In 2003 he finally secured the No 1 slot and he played in all 14 tests that year, both domestically & then in the World Cup in Australia. For the most part he played well, however he had the ill fortune to throw the pass that was intercepted allowing the Wallabies (Australia) to win an upset semi-final.

Immediately afterwards, this didn't appear to damage his All Blacks standing as he kept his place for most of 2004. Mehrtens replaced him only for the final Tri Nations match, and then injury ruled him out of the end of year tour. Mehrtens also failed to make the touring team as the All Blacks selectors began looking to Dan Carter as the future.

In 2005, after coming on as a replacement early in the 2nd spell, Carlos set up the winning try for New Zealand Maori against the British & Irish Lions. This was an appropriate farewell from New Zealand rugby for him as the Maori had been one of his most cherished teams. While battling for an All Blacks' place in 2001-2002, appearances for the Maori against top sides, like the Wallabies, maintained his international profile.

Both he and Mehrtens departed to take up British contracts at the end of the 2005 Super competition. Debate continued as to their respective merits, with general agreement they each ranked among New Zealand's best five or six of all time in the position. Kicking, both at goal & in general play was defined as a Spencer weakness. However, as an attacker with a flair for the unorthodox and the unexpected, Carlos had few peers. He was often referred to as "King Carlos".

Overseas, he first played for the Northampton Saints, making 70 appearances between 2005 and 2009, and scoring 172 points. During his time there, he played in four matches for Bob Dwyer's World XV team in 2006, including a match for the Barbarians against England at Twickenham and a 30-27 loss to the Springboks at Ellis Park.

He then moved west across England to Gloucester for whom he ran out 16 times and scored 22 points. From there, it was to South Africa where he evolved into a role as player/coach with the Johannesburg Lions Super team (2010-2012). There was a season with the Sharks (2013) and another with the Eastern Province Kings before he returned to New Zealand in 2015 to settle in Hamilton.

On the New Zealand domestic scene, Carlos won many honours with Auckland and the Blues.

With Auckland he was in sides that won the Ranfurly Shield in 1995 and 1996 and was in the NPC 1st Division winning sides in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 2002. With the Blues he was in the Super championship winning side in 1996 and 1997 and again in 2003. He remains the only Blues player to have taken part in every Super championship the Blues have won (up to 2020).

Playing History:

All Black No 951

International Debut: v. Argentina, Wellington New Zealand, 21 Jun 1997

Final All Black game: v. Australia, Sydney, Australia, 7 Aug 2004

1992 - 1993	<i>Horowhenua Kapiti</i> , 18 games, 192 points, 11 tries, played out of Waiopahu College
1994 – 2002, 2004	<i>Auckland</i> , 89 games, 491 points, 39 tries played out of Ponsonby club
1996 – 2005	<i>Blues</i> (Super rugby), 99 games, 620 points, 25 tries
1994	<i>NZ Colts</i> , 2 games, 5 points, 1 try
1995	<i>NZ Under 21</i> , 4 games, 39 points, 1 try
1999	<i>NZ A</i> , 1 game
1994, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2006	<i>NZ Maori</i> , 10 games, 54 points, 4 tries
Others	9 games, 47 points, 5 tries
1995 – 2004	<i>All Blacks</i> , 35 tests, 9 tour games, 383 points, 16 tries
Total:	280 1st class games, 1,896 points, 102 tries

A book "**Carlos**" authored by Richard Becht was published in 2007

Thanks to information supplied by the New Zealand Rugby Museum website on the All Blacks