

Former Chief creates graphic novel

MIKE MATHER

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BRUCE MERCER/Fairfax NZ

Novel approach: Writer/illustrator Paul Martin is the creative force behind *The Adventures of Kory - Flight of the Kiwi*, a graphic novel for kids.

He's been a familiar figure on the pitch at Hamilton's Rugby Park, but Paul Martin is starting to get noticed in an entirely different field - children's literature.

The former prop - who played 69 times for Waikato from 1993-2000, as well as two seasons with the Chiefs and three years playing club rugby in France - is the writer and artist of *The Adventures of Kory - Flight of the Kiwi*, a graphic novel that is in stores now.

The book tells the story of the titular kiwi and his sidekick Gilbert the gecko, who cross paths with the evil Gregor, a grey wolf from Europe, and his henchmen.

Martin said project was no spur-of-the-moment endeavour and the book would hopefully be the first of many.

"Ever since I was quite young I have been involved in drawing comics. Drawing and rugby are my two great passions in life."

He credited his father, a signwriter, and his brother, who works as a music and events producer in Austria, for helping foster his creativity.

"It's definitely in the blood . . . I was really lucky to have parents who encouraged me to pursue my creative side and develop my thinking processes. My wife Kerrie has also been a really big part of getting me to where I want to be going."

Martin, who helped create the Chiefs' mascot Little Chief, said he created Gilbert in the early 1990s. However, while he was playing club rugby for the French side Saint-Claude he decided he needed a new hero for the stories he was planning.

"I knew he had to be a kiwi, a real icon of New Zealand, but he had to be a little bit different."

Martin said he was influenced by the comics he read as a youngster, including the 2000AD series, and Terry and the Gunrunners, created by New Zealanders Stephen Ballantyne and Bob Kerr.

"We have been distributing *Flight of the Kiwi* in bookstores ourselves and it seems to be becoming pretty popular. It seems the word is really starting to get out there."

When he is not drawing and plotting new adventures for Kory, Martin works as the club development officer for the Waikato Rugby Union.

He has been an age-group representative resource coach and junior club coach and administrator, while also serving on the Harlequins committee. "I'm already working on the next Kory book, which I think will involve rugby and could be partially set in Australia. I am also planning a smaller book for a younger age group, which Kerrie has written."

Copies of *Flight of the Kiwi* are available to buy at Mark One Comics, Books for Kids, Le Cave French Shop, Penny's Bookstore and Paper Plus. For more information go to riverstonedesign.co.nz.

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