



FRONT ROW: Ruck'n'Maul co-owners (from left) Ian Burrell, Les Osten, and Peter Harold, ham it up in front of the noticeable decor on the New Plymouth bar's frontage.

Photo: TREVOR READ

Rugby bar warming up for kickoff

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By JOHN MITCHELL

A FANATICAL rugby tight five is taking to the New Plymouth hospitality field with a rugby-themed bar.

The Ruck'n'Maul is the brainchild of former Taranaki rugby players Peter Harold and Bryce McEldowney, local racing identity John Wheeler, school principal Les Osten and former bank manager Ian Burrell.

Team captain Harold took full credit for the idea of the bar, which opens on July 21.

"The whole rugby thing was my idea and, month after month after month, more and more people got interested."

Something of a loosehead when it

came to the bar's game plan, Harold not only came up with its quirky title, but also the distinctive design for its frontage. A huge Taranaki rugby jersey is splashed across the front of the building.

Osten said the team wanted to make the bar as visible as possible, although Harold's plan to light up the jersey in neon simply wasn't practical. Neither was his plan to put a huge rugby ball out the front.

So far, the compliments on the paint job have outweighed the criticisms.

"No one's really come out to say they don't like it," Mr Harold said. "Most of the hassles have come from our own wives more than anything."

Business, like rugby, tended to be a game of two halves — coming up with an idea and making it work. Harold said the team had picked up the ball and was committed to running with it.

"We might not make any money but at least we're having a good time."

While the bar had a rugby theme, it was open to members of all sporting codes, Harold said.

Even, gulp, soccer players?

"We'll I don't know about that . . . no, of course they will be welcome."

Surely Australians won't be allowed on to the Ruck'n'Maul's hallowed turf?

"If we give them another thrashing in the second Bledisloe Cup test, we might let them in to drown their sorrows."