



SBS BANK SOUTHLAND SHARKS 2026 SAL'S NBL SEASON SCHEDULE REVEALED November 2025

The road to Sal's NBL 2026 Grand Final is officially mapped out, and it's stacked with blockbusters from opening night right through to the Grand Final!!

The season opens as the Manawatū Jets host the Taranaki Airs on Thursday 9 April and runs through to Sunday 9 August Grand final, as the 2026 Sal's NBL schedule locks in 15 regular-season rounds, rivalry nights, themed weeks as we roll towards the Grand Final. Check out some of the highlights you can look forward to this season.

Rivalry Round sets the tone early

The season tips off with Rivalry Round and it's wall-to-wall grudge matches right out of the gate, amongst the highlights to look forward to are:

Southern Stoush – Sharks vs Nuggets

The first Southern Stoush arrives when the SBS Bank Southland Sharks welcome the Otago Nuggets to ILT Stadium Southland. Southland's fans are never quiet at the best of times – throw in regional bragging rights and it's one of the loudest nights on the calendar.

Battle of the Big Smoke - Tuatara vs Bulls

Auckland's hoops civil war hits in prime time as the Auckland Tuatara host the Franklin Bulls at Eventfinda Stadium. North Shore vs South Auckland, two proud fanbases, with both clubs eyeing a fast start the Battle of the Big Smoke instantly becomes must-watch viewing.

Rivalry Round also features classic match-ups right across the country, making the opening weekend feel more like a mini-Finals series than a gentle warm-up.

Grand Final rematch: Saints vs Sharks

Circle it in red: the 2025 Grand Final rematch between the Wellington Saints and Southland Sharks on May 21st comes with extra spice in 2026.

The Saints and Sharks meet twice in the regular season (first in Invercargill, then in Wellington) with both games landing in the heart of the playoff race. The Sharks will be out to prove last season's title game run was no one-off, while the Saints will be intent on reminding everyone why banner number 13 is going up in the first place.

Two meetings, two powerhouse clubs, and potentially massive implications for the ladder – exactly what you want from a Grand Final rematch.

Themed rounds bringing the season to life

Beyond the headline rivalries, the schedule is loaded with themed rounds that give each part of the season its own identity – including some key holiday hoops.

Round 1 | Rivalry Round

A statement opening week where local and regional grudges take centre stage. It's the perfect way to light the fuse on 2026.

Round 3 | ANZAC Week

The league leans into the ANZAC long weekend with a run of games from Thursday through the Monday.

ANZAC Saturday features a huge triple-header: Franklin Bulls vs Canterbury Rams in Pukekohe, Manawatū Jets vs Auckland Tuatara in Palmerston North, and Nelson Giants vs Wellington Saints at Trafalgar Centre, and that's before the action rolls on with Southland Sharks vs Tauranga Whai on Sunday and an ANZAC Monday double of Taranaki Airs vs Franklin Bulls and Wellington Saints vs Auckland Tuatara. It's one of the biggest basketball weekends on the national calendar.

Round 5 | North vs South

The island divide steps into the spotlight as North Island and South Island teams square off. With bragging rights on a national scale, this round always produces intense, playoff-style basketball.

Round 8 | Rivalry Redemption / Trade Week

The storylines crank up again as teams get a second swing at familiar foes in the lead-up to the trade deadline.

Fans get reverse fixtures of some of the year's biggest clashes, including Franklin Bulls vs Auckland Tuatara in Pukekohe and Otago Nuggets vs Southland Sharks in Dunedin, as well as key match-ups like Taranaki Airs vs Manawatū Jets and Manawatū Jets vs Wellington Saints. It's a full weekend of "we owe them one" basketball all while front offices work the phones to see if they can't improve their squads.

Round 11 & 12 | Inclusion Round

Across back-to-back rounds mid-season, the league highlights community, accessibility and representation. Expect special uniforms, in-arena features and storytelling that shines a light on the people who make basketball in Aotearoa what it is.

Round 2 & 14 | School Holiday Hoops

Timed for families, this window of the schedule packs arenas with tamariki and rangatahi on break. Earlier tip-times, family-friendly activations and plenty of chances to meet players turn these games into destination outings for families all across the country.

Round 15 | Finals Countdown

The final fortnight of the regular season becomes a sprint, with games tagged under a Finals Countdown banner. Every result matters as teams jostle for seeding, home-court advantage and, for some, the right just to stay alive.

These themed rounds layer storylines on top of the on-court stakes, making it easy for fans to drop into the season at any point and find a hook.

Buckle up for 2026

From banner-raising night in Wellington to rivalry showdowns in Invercargill, Dunedin, Auckland and Pukekohe, the 2026 Sal's NBL schedule delivers storylines in every round.

Whether you live for the Saints–Sharks tension, the Southern Stoush, the Battle of the Big Smoke, ANZAC Week or Rivalry Redemption, one thing's clear: there's a date on this schedule with your name on it.