

The columnist who always comments on speculation...

Sitter! readers will know damned well by now that Kingz general manager Chris Turner never comments on speculation. Apart, except, to tell us he doesn't comment on speculation.

I was reminded of the fact by news stories on December 12 -- the date when, late in the day, Wynton Rufer announced his retirement.

Earlier in the piece the Kingz refused to confirm or deny the club was even meeting with Wynton Rufer to discuss his contract, under which he claimed he only had to train three times a week.

Turner would not confirm any meeting between the club and Rufer.

"Wynton is a special player so people are speculating," he told NZPA's agency man Mike Houlihan, who incidentally has done a fine job in keeping tabs on the Kingz. "We won't comment on speculation."

Kingz chairman Paul Smart is another who has caught the Turner disease. "We never comment on speculation," he added for good measure.

Personally I can't fathom why they have this mortal fear of commenting on speculation.

But the point is, if they were a bit more up front in providing answers when questions were put, people wouldn't be forced to speculate in the first place.

If the Kingz were more proactive in making their official position clear on issues as they unfold, the dreaded speculation would not arise. Speculation is usually the product of an information vacuum and entirely natural.

For instance, say a football club's

most high profile player reckoned he had a contract which said he only had to go to the training sessions he fancied, but the coach wanted all his players at all sessions, and this had had a couple of days airing in the media... No surprise people are speculating what the hell is going on?

Perhaps the bigger issue here is the continuing "crisis culture" of the Kingz management. From appointing coaches and players, to management (they've never bothered to replace chief executive Simon Heineken) to financial matters, to transfers, their record is dodgy.

Fallon should prove a civilising influence, but there is much work to be done. In the interim, we will continue to speculate. As for the media, the next time Turner or the misnamed Smart say they don't comment on speculation, please, can somebody ask them, in that

case, whether they speculate on comments.

Big ups to Miramar Rangers for their skill in playing the pokie machines. In latest community funding grants from the Gaming Machine Trusts Association, for the six months to September, I counted 49 parcels of grants channelled Miramar's way totalling \$176,836.73.

Stunning. That's first division stuff. So, for all you readers who wondered how they could afford a string of imports when hardly anyone goes to watch them play, now you know. Does make you wonder about Stu Jacobs' newspaper comments earlier this year saying the club needed to be more professional though.

