



Dianella Junior Soccer Club 2022 AGM – President's Report.

It is with some relief in 2022 we successfully completed a full season of eighteen rounds with no pandemic interruptions. The success of the season is again testament to the enormous amount of work put in by our State Government, the City of Stirling, Football West and the players, parents and carers, Coaches, and committee of this great club. Thank you and well done to everyone involved in getting us across the line.

Following the disruption across seasons 2020 and 2021 it is apparent our community understands the importance of children being involved in sport, as despite concerns participation levels would drop, our playing numbers this season remained at full capacity. We had 308 registered players for the Club, playing in 27 teams, representing every possible age group from under 6s to under 18s. At a time when some clubs reported a further decline in playing numbers our continued strength is a testament to the community spirit present at this club.

With the many distractions of everyday life around us, your committee has continued to work hard on maintaining the infrastructure and practices necessary to provide the opportunity for young people to play football in an affordable, community based, family-friendly environment.

We are again indebted to the City of Stirling for allowing use of Yokine Reserve as our home ground. After the record-breaking rainfall in July and the beginning of August we were forced to cancel just 2 nights training. This season everyone on their travels has played on plenty of bumpy or grassless muddy paddocks, and it is always a relief coming back to train and play at our home ground. The grounds really are a testament to the work the council put in, so a big thank-you to the City of Stirling, our local Councillors David Lagan and Bianca Sandri and our designated Club Development Officer, Ryan Popovsky.

We have worked hard with the City of Stirling to establish Yokine Reserve as our home of football, hopefully for many years to come. We will continue to lobby for additional lighting on the Oval, but I am pleased to say the dangerous issue over the lack of lighting in the car park is close to being addressed. For years, miraculously, we have avoided any serious accidents in the car parks, despite there being only 4 light poles covering over 300 bays. The City of Stirling Engineering Division have confirmed works should commence in late October to instal new poles and luminaires (bulbs) throughout the north and south car parks. They had hoped for the project to be finished before the end of July, but along with everyone else, sourcing products and getting delivery with the ongoing global supply chain issues has severely delayed the project. Our thanks will be extended to Councillors David Lagan and Bianca Sandri when we see the lights in situ, as they have pushed hard over the last couple of years to get the budget approved and the works signed off.

I wish to thank our sponsors Caesar Aquino of Onside Sports and Colin Sanfilippo of Cameleon Coatings. Without their financial support our fees would not remain at the affordable levels they are now. With our sponsors help we have managed to place a cap on our registration fees for the last five years, and this is a trend we are keen to continue. We have also been able to invest in the very best equipment available, including upgrading our larger portable U10 to U12 goals which have been well received by the parents charged with moving them into position every Sunday. We are indeed very fortunate to have our sponsors on board.

We are often asked by members “will we move towards the NPL model or expand to offer senior football?” In short, the answer remains no. We pride ourselves on being a junior community club and part of that commitment is maintaining affordable registration fees for our members. The current structure of NPL or senior football does not lend itself to affordable football. For example, NPL clubs pay wages to senior players, Coaches and administrative staff. Imagine the impact this would have on our registration fees. A conservative estimate would see an immediate trebling of our basic fees. Each dollar we receive from registrations is ploughed back into every player regardless of their age or playing ability. Places permitting, we will continue to offer the right environment for children to play the game they love at an affordable price.

As our Treasurer will shortly report, the Club is in a sound financial position. I am satisfied the future of the Club is financially secure.

Dianella Soccer Club is an organisation that survives solely on the good will of volunteers who give up their time and energy to become committee members, coaches, assistant coaches, managers, referees, linespersons, and many other tasks allowing children to play football. The success of our club is only possible with the support of these families and volunteers and those that value the role of sport in connecting local communities. To these people I say thank you – this is your Club, and we look forward to your continued contributions in 2023.

I continue to be amazed at the enthusiasm and dedication shown by our Coaches. Many of them returned and we were joined by several new coaches who, to their credit, took on the responsibility with pride despite some having no prior exposure to coaching. I hope they have been “bitten” by the coaching bug and we see them back next year. To every Coach at the club, a special thank you for a job well done.

I wish to thank the 2022 committee for their incredible efforts. Each and every one of you should feel a sense of achievement, knowing that your work goes towards making a fun experience of playing football a reality for so many kids.

I would particularly like to thank Mario Zinni whom continued in his role as Junior Co-ordinator. Mario was the backbone of the Junior playing side this season and I have lost count of the times members have praised his enthusiasm and contributions to the running of the teams. Mario continues to give up his time to coach and sit on the committee despite his son no longer being present at the club. I will return to Mario's contributions a little later.

Maria Stella stepped into the role as Club Secretary from her previous position as Mini-roo Co-ordinator (a role which is still vacant). Maria made the transition seamlessly, keeping us in line at our monthly meetings. Maria has organised, cajoled, and reminded us all, me more than most, of the tasks in hand. In the absence of a Mini-roo Co-ordinator Maria also went above and beyond looking after the Small Sided Clusters for the four weeks they played at Yokine. Maria was also instrumental in organising 40 of our players to be involved in the Perth Festival of Football when Crystal Palace, Leeds United and Manchester United were in town. Our players took part in the pitch side parade ahead of the Crystal Palace v Leeds game at Optus Stadium and relished the opportunity. Thank you, Maria for a job very well done.

To my right-hand men, Akash Bisnath, Treasurer, and Mick Owens, Vice President, thank you.

Akash has maintained a tight control of the purse strings, dealing with all the invoices, Football West administration, referees' fees, suppliers' costs etc. and all the while keeping the club's budget on track. His prudence and financial acumen have allowed the club to maintain unchanged fees for the last five years and I am confident this will continue. Akash is a great man to lean on, which I have done many times. Thanks Akash.

Mick Owens is our Vice President and Coaches Co-ordinator. Mick is also the Assistant Coach and Team Manager of the WA State Paras Football team. He again took charge of our very own United Reds Football League squad, and also as a qualified goalkeeper Coach, along with Monty Farley, our senior goalkeeper in the U18s, Mick led the specialised goalkeeper training sessions offered to our keepers at the club.

To John Griffiths our Equipment Manager, thanks for ensuring every team had the necessary gear before and during the season and for continuing to look after our relationship with Mark My Turf, the team that do such a wonderful job marking our pitches. At the start of the Season, I could see the exasperation on John's face as our storage shed was becoming increasingly cluttered. John's answer was to design, construct and install an ingenious shelving system which allows safe storage of our portable goals, and easier access to all training equipment for our Coaches.

Josh Stella continued in the role of Canteen Liaison and with the hard work of Nicky our Canteen Manager they have managed to keep our members fed and watered on some very wet and miserable Sunday mornings. I believe Nicky is returning next year which is great news for our members.

Duncan Mackay and Rob Kentish remained on the committee and served as valuable members making much needed contributions to the running of the club.

Sadly, Vince Bell's role on the committee has been rendered redundant. Vince was and still is our Perth Glory Liaison Officer. However, the participation from Glory at the junior community level continues to be non-existent. I sincerely hope that Perth Glory remember grassroots football will continue to be their lifeblood. Their lack of any activity at the grassroots and community level is a disgrace to the thousands of kids who play every weekend and a shameful disservice to the game in WA.

To the committee, those already mentioned, and to those individuals not on the committee who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, thank you again for making this Club a true, community asset.

One event at the very beginning of the year filled me with an enormous amount of pride and was a fitting reward for everyone who has served on the committee since formation.

January 2022 saw the club invited to attend the SportWest Awards for Season 2021, as we had been nominated and then shortlisted as a finalist in the category for Community Club of the Year. To receive such a strong level of recognition from our peers and the State's top sports administrators was as surprising as it was overwhelming. We didn't walk away with the gong, but what an honour to be there. Our congratulations went to Northampton AFL Football Club who were crowned Community Club of the Year. Listening to their stories of the damage and mayhem inflicted by Cyclone Seroja, and the work the club then undertook in sheltering, feeding and rallying the townsfolk in the immediate aftermath were inspirational. For our Club it was a truly fantastic night, and we were certainly in the company of many incredible and inspirational individuals. My thanks go to Football West for supporting us on the evening.

We are a fortunate club as we have had many strong and active members since formation. Your committee this year honoured one such member, Mario Zinni as Club Person of The Year.

Mario epitomises what a community club is all about. He started coaching the U7s back in 2012. He was immediately bitten by the bug and has stuck with it ever since. The sacrifices he has made for the club over 10 years are too many to mention but I will highlight just a few. Four years ago, Mario graduated from our Mini-roo Coordinator to our Junior Coordinator, looking after our U13s to U18s. In October and November when most of you are dreaming of summer holidays, Mario has his planning head on as he turns his attention to organising the Junior assessments for the following season. He leads from the front at the start of every season presenting to our Coaches and Managers, he has organised goalkeeper training for our older players over the last few years, and all this despite his son having left the club several years ago. He is currently coaching our U16s, who this season made it all the way to the Junior knock-out Cup Semi-Finals, and he assures me he will be back next year to finish the journey in the U18s. To put it simply, without people like Mario, Dianella Junior Soccer Club could not survive.

This is a touch awkward for me, but Dianella Soccer Club decided in their wisdom to award me with Life Membership. I will leave it to others to talk about reasons why, but I was initially overwhelmed and then extremely grateful for the award. All I will say is this Club was there for me when I needed it most and I would like to think I have been here for whenever the Club needed help. I have learnt a lot about sports administration on the journey so far. I have seen the good and the bad side of junior sport and I believe our Club continues to try and shine a beacon of light for the local community, and everyone else involved in helping kids from all sections of society play sport.

The 2022 Season had a start like no other when Football West inexplicably made the decision to move the kick off date forward from May 1st to the April 10th. This decision was belatedly communicated to community clubs on March 8th despite being agreed at a Football West Junior Steering Committee meeting on February 17th. To say there was a great deal of disbelief and consternation amongst community clubs would be an understatement, with confusion and mayhem following as clubs scrambled to organise everything from kits and balls to line marking.

Fortunately, however we were in a good space as our committee had most pre-season areas covered and thanks to working closely with our supplier Onside Sports, we had all essential equipment in place. We had already held our U9s to U12s assessments in conjunction with Pro Football Training on March 3rd, and with the help and incredible cooperation from our Coaches we already had plans to agree our Mini-roo squads the following week. As I said, fortunately we were in very good shape.

The failure to communicate the adjusted season start date to stakeholders has still not been properly acknowledged or addressed by Football West and this is simply not good enough. We will be watching closely ahead of next season for much needed improvements in communication, and a better understanding from our governing body about what exactly goes into running volunteer clubs.

On a happier note, before the start of the season we had the distinction of being asked to host the United Reds Inclusive Carnival which was held on Sunday April 3rd. This fantastic initiative was intended to highlight the growth of inclusive football and was a unique opportunity for children, of all abilities, aged 8 to 12 to experience the thrill of football. The carnival was a great celebration of inclusive football with the WA Paras, United Reds players from all United Reds Clubs, Blind Football WA and players from our U15s Division 1 squad all taking part. The Football Futures Foundation 'Football for all' initiative was also launched, neatly summing up the feel of the carnival, as football is FOR ALL. Thanks to Inclusion Solutions, Football West and our U15s Team who were great ambassadors of our club, for making the day a great success.

This Season the club was also awarded with a Football Australia, National Club Development Programme Certificate, receiving a 4 Star rating. We are very proud of this recognition which certainly gives us something to build on as we strive for the elusive 5 Stars available. My thanks go to Abid Imam, Football West's Engagement Lead who guided us through the process.

Following on from our football clothing donations to communities across the Kimberley over the last couple of years we turned our attention closer to home. Ahead of our Club Season Wind-Up yesterday we made an appeal to our members to donate any unwanted football equipment. This will be passed on to the Koya Aboriginal Corporation, which is a peer-led community program for young West Australians in the Perth region. The program is focused on enhancing the physical & mental wellbeing of children and young adults through multi-sports programmes. The support we receive from our members whenever we make these calls is staggering, as could be seen by the quality and quantity of donated items collected, and we pledge to do whatever we can to keep helping others less fortunate than ourselves.

On the field, as in all sports there were success stories and the not so successful. Whatever the story, our aim was to make the experience for every player an enjoyable one. Worthy of note however, once again, were the achievements of our Juniors. Our U18s finished in the Top 4 of Division 2 and yesterday won their Top 4 Semi-Final beating a very strong Wembley Downs. We wish them well as they play North Beach in the Top 4 Final next Sunday. The U16s battled hard and finished in a respectable mid-table position in Division 1, but the highlight of their Season was making it through to the Semi-Finals of the Junior knock-out Cup competition. They were eventually beaten by a very strong Sorrento squad (who went on to win the Final) and will have learnt a lot from playing in front of a large crowd in the Semi-Final. Both U15s squads just missed out on finishing in the Top 4 (in Divisions 1 and North Division 2) as did the U14s in Division 2, with all three squads achieving some notable victories as the season progressed. This year we had three squads in the U13s and each of them acquitted themselves exceptionally well. It is a big step when players move up from the U12s and it can be a lottery when squads are placed in their respective divisions. Particular mention should go to our U13s Team 2 who played their football in the North Division 1 competition. Even though they won only two games all season, they finished just one point shy of their nearest competitor and not once did I hear a grumble or complaint. I am glad to say their example of fair play and “never say die” attitude was echoed across the Club.

Pleasingly our United Reds team have gone from strength to strength this year, with numbers remaining strong as they continue to be guided and coached by Mick. He has thrown all manner of challenges at his squad and the clusters format introduced during the latter stages of last season continues to work well.

This area of the game needs to be developed and following Mick’s move to a part-time role with Inclusion Solutions last season, he has recently taken on a role with the Football Futures Foundation. We wish Mick well in his endeavours to bring inclusive football to a wider community and the club will continue to support him in every way possible.

In the absence of recorded scores for Miniroos (6s to 12s) it is difficult to highlight achievements, but in our 10s, 11s and 12s we had teams competing at the highest Metro level and each squad performed admirably against the so called “bigger clubs”.

However, our club has always maintained that children's sport is about so much more than winning. So, thank you to every squad for playing the Dianella way this season. Regardless of playing ability, from the fiercely competitive Metro Leagues to the more 'social' levels we are very proud of our players. Well done to all those involved.

I would particularly like to congratulate the following players who played their sixth season at Dianella thus achieving 100 games. Angus Griffiths, Luca Multari, Sasha Rosovsky, Emmett Trott, Milan Vodanovich, Alex Canadas, Joseph Palazzo and Lucas Pelle.

The following two players also deserve special congratulations. Giacomo Izzo from our U16s and Marco Sertorio from our U14s have been rewarded for their hard work with the WA Para football programme and were selected for the Australian Para Training Camp held in August this year. This now means past and present Dianella Junior Soccer Club players have represented Australia in three different formats of football: Josh Rawlins with The Socceroos, Morgan Aquino with The Matildas and now Giacomo and Marco with the Paras. And in a first for the club, both Giacomo and Marco were called up whilst still playing for Dianella, so well-done lads.

It just goes to show letting kids enjoy the game in a fun, inclusive and affordable environment pays off.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage others to become part of the Dianella Junior Soccer Club story, by getting involved at Committee level or at grass roots where the teams are. We are always on the lookout for new ideas and areas of expertise. Without a committee the Club cannot exist, and many on the current committee will not be at the club for much longer as their children move on from junior sport. New blood is desperately needed to ensure the continuity of our work. Dianella Soccer Club is a friendly, welcoming place that offers a rewarding experience. Please give it some thought, we would love to hear from you ahead of our first meeting in the new year.

2022 like all season's has not been without its challenges as participation in Association Football continues to outstrip all other sports in WA and across Australia. We look forward to the undoubted increase in exposure as the FIFA 2022 World Cup kicks off in November, and the focus on the development of the female game as the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, being held in Australia draws closer. We hope this increase in exposure leads to our football code attracting the investment and support it deserves. Compared to AFL our grassroots funding is woefully inadequate and successive Governments at every level have done little to address the gap.

With the help of the committee and members, Dianella Junior Soccer Club will continue to serve the community for many years to come.

Thank you.