

Dianella Soccer Club 2021 AGM – President’s Report.

When we look back at Season 2021 and remember the chaos throughout Australia and the rest of this pandemic ravaged world we will surely wonder how we managed to get through the entire season with just one Covid enforced break, and that was with the minimum of disruption as Perth’s lockdown occurred during the July school holiday. Granted this was extremely frustrating for the parents and children but happily we only had to suspend training for two weeks and the season continued without interruption.

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.

Following the disruption during the 2020 season it appears our community learnt the importance of children being involved in sport, as despite concerns that participation levels would drop, our playing numbers remained at near full capacity. We had 291 registered players for the Club (a small increase on last year), playing in 26 teams from under 6s to under 16s. 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. Following the near-record winter rain (most of which appeared to fall on Sunday mornings) the pitches have remained in excellent condition.

We have worked hard with the City of Stirling to establish Yokine Reserve as our home of football, hopefully for many years to come. However, we will continue to lobby for additional lighting on the Oval, and more importantly increased lighting across the car park. With the addition of a cricket pitch in the middle of the oval half our squads are training in near-darkness, and the lack of lighting in the car park remains a major concern. I have been assured by our local councillors a draft Notice of Motion has been prepared should our push for a resolution in the car park fail to gain traction. After five years of discussion it is my hope that the dangerous lighting in the car park is acknowledged and addressed in good time.

With our pitches offering superb playing conditions from April to September, and after the end of the regular season we were approached by Football West asking whether we were agreeable to hosting the Top 4 Grand Finals, four days later on Sunday September 25th. Football West’s “go to” venue at Rosalie Park had suffered with waterlogged pitches and several clubs were refusing to play there. The late switch of venues was only possible as Country Week was scheduled to return to Yokine the following week and an additional five full sized pitches had been prepared.

Somehow everyone involved managed to pull together and despite a wild storm early on Grand Final morning, 19 Finals were played throughout the day with the last trophies being presented just after 4 pm. The day was hailed as a tremendous success.

The following day saw the Country Week carnival roll into Yokine. 11 Associations, 63 teams (including 14 girls teams) and 1000 players from Hedland and Karratha in the north, through the Goldfields and all the way to Esperance in the south descended on our home ground and proceeded to play over 400 matches through the first week of the school holidays.

I spoke to many participants, spectators, and visitors to Yokine Reserve over the course of the event and they were all pleased to be back at Yokine. I was told on countless occasions how lucky we are to play our football at Yokine and how happy they were to play on true grass pitches. Our club provided 15 players to help run the lines for some of the associations which gave them a great insight into the excitement and enthusiasm the game of football brings to so many people from near and far. Overall, the week was a fantastic experience and a wonderful celebration of junior sport and communities coming together.

Alongside Football West, those two events were only made possible through the hard work of several committee members who went above and beyond their usual remit. At a time when they should have been thinking of a well-deserved break from football, they soldiered on to deliver an outstanding advert for the game and our club.

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. We are very fortunate to have them 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 senior football does not lend itself to affordable registration fees and NPL clubs pay wages to senior players, coaches and their administrative staff. Imagine the impact this would have on our registration 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 2022.

I continue to be amazed at the enthusiasm and dedication on show from our Coaches. Many of them returned and we were joined by several new coaches who, to their credit, took on the responsibility with pride. I hope they have been “bitten” by the coaching bug and we see them back next year. I hesitate to mention individuals, but special thanks go to Mario Zinni in the 15s who continued to give up his time to coach and sit on the committee despite his son no longer being present at the club. But to every Coach, a special thank you for a job well done.

I wish to thank the 2021 committee for their tireless efforts. Each and every one of you should feel a sense of pride, 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 and Maria Stella for continuing in their respective roles as Junior and Miniroo’s Team Co-ordinators. Maria again went above and beyond looking after the Small Sided Clusters as Mario continued to marshal the senior teams at the club. You were the backbone of the playing side this season and I have lost count of the times members have praised your enthusiasm and contributions to the running of the teams.

Sonia Beros returned as our secretary this year. You have more than fulfilled your role, organising, cajoling, and reminding us all, me more than most, of the tasks in hand. You have certainly perfected the art of hurrying us along at committee meetings, ensuring we stay “on the ball” and meetings remain on track. It is with enormous regret I have to announce this will be Sonia’s last function in her capacity as secretary so before I continue Maria will make a small presentation on the club’s behalf.

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

Akash as always has controlled 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. He is a great man to lean on, which I have done many times over the last 5 years. 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, but more of that later on.

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. I cannot move on from John without mentioning his daughter Tahlia who plays in our U14s. Tahlia's contribution to the running of the club cannot be overstated as she busies herself in the shed, helps open the club on Sunday mornings, and generally gets involved as and when her kick-off times permit. If we could allow 14 year olds onto the committee there would definitely be a seat at the table for Tahlia.

Despite coaching at Morley Windmills Josh and Nathaniel Dowling remained on the committee to look after our social media. It is safe to say we have finally caught up with the rest of the world as our exposure has grown on both Facebook and Instagram.

Our posts on Facebook vary from subjects as diverse as player welfare and mental health, to respecting officials and club volunteers. One string of posts in particular has really caught the imagination of our members, and they followed our donation of old playing kits to Football West Kimberley. Through the work of Garry Church at Football West in Perth we were put in touch with Football West's Kimberley Officer Kamil Chetty. This inspiring young man organised the distribution of our equipment across the Kimberley ensuring every item went to the youth of the region. If pictures could speak, well, the images we posted on Facebook indeed spoke a thousand words, as our initial posts reached over 700 people. A recent follow up post has the distinction of being our most 'hit' item with over 1300 views.

Ahead of the end of this season we organised a collection of unwanted football clothing from our members and the response was staggering. Mick and I met with Kamil at Country Week to hand over the latest donations and he was overwhelmed. We fully intend to pursue the relationship with Football West Kimberley with the full support of members.

Back to the committee. Vince Bell's role as our Perth Glory Liaison Officer has sadly been rendered redundant, as the level of participation from Glory at junior community level has become non-existent. We have tried to engage and given the opportunity Vince will continue to work towards cementing relationships with Perth Glory. I sincerely hope that Perth Glory remember grassroots football will continue to be their lifeblood and they ignore successful junior clubs to their detriment.

Josh Stella took on 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 understand that Nicky is returning next year which is great news for our members.

Duncan Mackay and Rob Kentish also joined the committee this year and have both made much needed contributions to the running of the club. We appreciate their time and hope we can involve them further next season.

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.

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

Heinrich epitomises what a community club stands for, taking volunteering to a new level. Since I have been at the Club he has always been involved in coaching, starting in the U6s, through to 8s and 9s, back to the 6s and most recently in the U8s. He is not a member of the committee, being honest he probably does the job of 4 committee members and he always goes about everything he does with a smile on his face. He has three sons playing so a typical Sunday this year has seen Heinrich coach his squad in the 8s, be a Game Leader / referee in the 12s and then run the line in the 14s. It is little wonder he jokingly refers to his boys as “Normal Time”, “Time and a Half” and “Double Time.” Over the years, his dedication, enthusiasm and can-do attitude has positively impacted the lives and well-being of so many kids on and off the sports field. Simply put, without characters like Heinrich, Dianella Junior Soccer Club could not survive.

Dianella Soccer Club in 2021 awarded Caesar Aquino with Life Membership. Caesar’s relationship started with Dianella when he coached his daughter Morgan’s team back in 2008 and as some of you may know, Morgan has since gone on to play in goal for her State and Country. Over the subsequent years, despite not having a junior member playing, his contribution to the club providing equipment, uniforms and other supplies, has meant our pitches and players are ready every Sunday morning, for all the families that visit Yokine to play junior football. Not only do we have the best pitches, we also have the best equipment available for everyone. And not forgetting, in addition, Caesar and Morgan’s mentoring of our goalkeepers is also a worthy contribution, much treasured by our custodians in goal. We are very grateful for everything Caesar continues to do for the club.

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 successes of our Juniors. The 16s secured promotion in Division 3 finishing the season clear in second place. Our 14s Team 1 made Top 4 Finals finishing a creditable third in Division 2 and our 13s excelled themselves finishing top of North Division 1 and then went on to win the Top 4 Final beating Subiaco in a great game of football.

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. Zane Carbone, Sebastian D'onofrio, Levi Madeleine, Joel Petrillo, Otis Brescacin, Mason van Bronswijk, William Caruso, Christian Coletti, Damon Sack, Taj King, Annika Wu, Anthony Versaci, Archie Brescacin, Copper Jones, Aarav Paul, Tahlia Griffiths, Jona Wu and Monty Farley. Chris Di Marco from our 16s played his eleventh season thus cracking 200 games, a truly remarkable achievement and display of loyalty towards the club and his team-mates. Well done to Chris and his family who have watched every minute of Chris in action.

Following our last two surveys in 2018 and 2020 a number of respondents asked whether the club could offer any football activities outside the regular season. With out of season access to Yokine Reserve restricted, and a coaching team staffed entirely by volunteers our options are severely limited. Seizing the initiative however we have joined with Pro Football Training (following their successful hosting of our pre-season Miniroos assessments) and they are offering our members Friday evening sessions at Carmel school from this Friday to mid-December. Going forward hopefully the numbers allow us to expand the options available. Fingers crossed our members support the initiative.

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 they even had guest coaching appearances from former Everton captain and legend Mick Lyons. A few of the other clubs involved in the United Reds League have not been so fortunate with numbers, but Mick Owens was up to the task and suggested to Inclusion Solutions they should re-format the league and follow the clusters model so successfully in place in the U6s and U7s.

It was little surprise that the clusters format worked a treat and the league finished the season in fine shape. Only last week the United Reds players were invited to play a curtain raiser match for the inaugural WA Paras Football Championship, and then also got involved in this year's Telethon at Optus Stadium. Appreciating what exactly Mick brings to the game, Inclusion Solutions recently offered him a part-time role where he will hopefully revolutionise football in empowering inclusive communities. Well done Mick.

On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage others to become part of the Dianella 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 I am sad to say that 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.

2021 has not been without its challenges, but participation in Association Football continues to outstrip all other sports in WA and across Australia. With the help of the committee and members Dianella Junior Soccer Club should continue to serve the community for many years to come.

Thank you.