



Dianella Junior Soccer Club 2023 AGM – President’s Report.

It is with some relief this year we successfully completed the second consecutive season and a full eighteen rounds with no pandemic interruptions. Dare I tempt fate and say, “never again?”

Once again, our playing numbers in 2023 remained at full capacity. We had 309 registered players, playing in 28 teams, representing every possible age group from under 6s to under 18s. At a time when some clubs across various winter codes reported a 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 Regional Open Space as our home ground. After the record-breaking rainfall in June and early July we were one of the few clubs not forced to formally cancel any training sessions. 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 our local Councillors David Lagan, Bianca Sandri and Suzanne Migdale, and our Club Development Officers at The City of Stirling.

We have worked hard with the City of Stirling to establish Yokine Regional Open Space as our home of football, and I am pleased to say after a six-year campaign the new car park lighting was fully operational in time for the start of the season in April. We now have over 300 bays that are fully illuminated making the area a much safer place for players and parents to enter and exit after training. Our thanks again to Councillors David Lagan and Bianca Sandri who supported this upgrade and helped us get this important safety issue over the line.

Following the release of various State and Federal Government Community Grant initiatives for Oval Floodlighting, we explored the possibility of an upgrade to our floodlighting, which would benefit not only ourselves but also ECU Rangers, the other licenced winter user of Yokine ROS. However, after a period of time it was established that as the floodlights were upgraded 10 years ago and currently exceed the safety thresholds for training purposes, we are somewhat down the list of priorities. There are a great number of reserves throughout the city that have seen no upgrades for decades so we will wait for the next opportunity before asking the question. The question of improved floodlighting will be raised by the club at every available turn, as this remains one of the major roadblocks for the club’s membership to increase in size.

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 currently are. With our sponsors help we have managed to hold the cost of our registration fees for the last six years. We have been able to continually invest in the very best equipment available which is an ongoing requirement as balls deflate, goal nets perish alongside other general wear and tear across all other equipment. 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. Approximately 40% of the registration fee is immediately paid away to Football Australia and Football West, but we continue to guarantee that every Dollar we receive from registrations is ploughed back into each player regardless of their age or playing ability. It does not go towards feeding the First Team after training, paying the travelling costs for NPL Coaches or other such expenses. 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 2024.

I am constantly amazed at the enthusiasm and dedication shown by our Coaches. Many of them return every year 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, a special thank you for a job well done.

Likewise, our Team Managers. Without your administrative duties many parents would still be trying to find their last venue ahead of kick off time. The work you did in organising the team photos helped us enormously in raising a tidy sum, as a near record number of parents bought the individual pictures of their children.

I wish to thank the 2023 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.

Maria Stella continued in the role as Club Secretary and more than supported the club in doing so. Maria has kept us in line at our monthly meetings where she has organised, cajoled, and reminded us, 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 and crucially organising the fixtures for the three weeks we hosted at Yokine ROS. 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 six years. However, I fear with the inexorable rising costs of seemingly everything we may be forced to adjust fees for 2024. Akash is a great man to lean on, which I have done many times. Thank you, Akash, and I will return in a while honouring your commitment to the club.

Mick Owens is our Vice President and Coaches Co-ordinator. He again took charge of our very own i-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. Again, more on Mick's commitment to the club 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. At the start of the Season, I could see the exasperation on John's face as our storage shed was becoming increasingly cluttered. But as always once the season was underway a sense of calm and order returned to the running of training and match day operations. Special mention should go to John's daughter Tahlia, who joined him at sunrise for the mornings we hosted the Clusters and helped prepare the grounds for the arrival of around 160 very excited 5- and 6-year-old children, and their equally excitable parents and siblings. The amount of "toing and froing" John does for the club is beyond compare and should qualify him for a prime sponsorship deal from Pirelli tyres. Thank you, John.

Josh Stella continued in the role of Canteen Liaison. His role changed somewhat this year, as firstly our Canteen Team who had looked after us so well could no longer commit to helping run the canteen. And then we received a damning report on the state of the kitchen from the City of Stirling's Environmental Health, Food Business Inspection team. This came as no surprise to us or the other users of the kitchen, so we were forced to secure the services of a mobile catering business. Koffee2Go answered Josh's call for help, and they provided a wonderful service to our members and visitors on Sunday mornings. Thanks, Josh, for making sure there were hot drinks and more available throughout the winter months.

Duncan Mackay and Rob Kentish remained on the committee serving as valuable members, and they were joined this year by Dean Little, Simon Borck and Melissa Sack. Each one of them contributed fully and like all committee members, valuable insights were made, ideas aired, and different perspectives were shared and discussed. Their contributions are vital.

Once again, Vince Bell's role on the committee was redundant. Vince was our Perth Glory Liaison Officer. However, the participation from Glory at the junior community level continues to be non-existent. I hope that Perth Glory remember grassroots football will continue to be their lifeblood. Their lack of any activity at the grassroots community level has been a disservice to the thousands of kids who play every weekend and has done nothing for the grassroots game in WA. Following the recent announcements around the change of ownership at The Glory we understand however that changes are afoot. We will be watching with interest.

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.

Following the closure of the kitchen, we were approached mid-way through the season by two Mum's from U14s Team 1, with a proposal to fire up the BBQ and provide food and drinks for training evening's every Thursday. This was agreed by the committee, with an initial trial period of 3 weeks to see how they got on.

Their first night was the same evening we invited local Councillor's to Yokine to thank them for the car park lighting. The club provided a free sausage sizzle for players and unsurprisingly the demand was strong, with Councillor Suzanne Migdale very appreciative of a hot dog on a cold evening. Initially we were concerned for the second week as members would have to pay, but to say the demand was overwhelming would be an understatement. With the proceeds being split 50/50, between the club and the teams end of season wind-up celebrations the idea was well received, and a steady stream of players, siblings and adults paid for hot dogs, packets of chips and drinks for no more than \$4 for a 'meal deal.'

The venture was a resounding success and the two Mum's involved, Tracy McGuire and Sue Reid were excited to continue. They also suggested providing a breakfast BBQ service when hosting the Clusters on Sunday mornings, and again were blown away by the strong support they received, not only from our members, but also from many visiting players and supporters.

A big thank you to Tracy, Sue and the other U14 Team 1 parents who helped when they could.

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

Akash epitomises what a community club is all about and does so much work behind the scenes that many will be unaware of. At one time all three of his children were playing their football at the club, but he now has just his youngest son in the U16s to cheer on from the touchline.

He has been an integral part of the Club for over 12 years, soon joining the committee where he became Club Treasurer back in 2015. As soon as the season finishes, when most are dreaming of summer holidays or cricket pitches, Akash has his planning head on as he turns his attention to the following season's budget, ensuring the club's finances are as strong as they can be.

I have got to know Akash very well and I really appreciate he has my back through thick and thin and will always have the club's best interests at heart. To put it simply, without people like Akash, Dianella Junior Soccer Club would struggle to survive.

This year, the Committee voted overwhelmingly to recognise the work and dedication that Mick Owens gives to the game of football, awarding him with Life Membership.

Some of you will know Mick as our Coaches Coordinator, or Vice-President. Some of you might know Mick as the coach of your kids' team, or even the long-suffering Everton supporter, but most of you should know Mick as a tireless campaigner and advocate for junior sport, making football in particular, accessible for everyone in the community.

Mick's journey at the club started back in 2008 when his son Evan first pulled on the gold OLA club shirt in the U6s. Mick joined the committee soon after and became the Club's Vice President in 2015.

He has coached every age group, starting as an assistant to Chris Kazakis in the Clusters in 2009 before taking charge of the U8 Galah's in 2010. And when Evan moved on with his U18s teammates three seasons ago, true to form Mick stayed with the club remaining fully involved to this day.

Football West in 2020 awarded Mick with the David Schrandt Volunteer of The Year Award, recognising his unstinting work with the WA State Paralympic squad and his integral role in the formation of the United Reds Football League. But back in 2020 Mick's interest in and commitment to inclusive and accessible football was only just beginning. He is now employed with the Football Futures Foundation and can be found running workshops, coaching courses, and training sessions for any number of people the length and breadth of WA. Only last year he started to embrace the challenges of 'Blind' Football.

Quite simply his enthusiasm and dedication to the game has touched so many players and changed their lives for the better. We are proud to call Mick "one of our own" and hope he remains one of us for years to come.

The 2023 Season had an interesting administrative start as Football West rolled out a new game day and team management platform named Squadi. To say implementation was chaotic would-be kind, with multiple clubs left scrambling with no access, partial access and some driving blind into Round 1 of the season. I'm pleased to say we were not as badly impacted as some clubs, thanks to our Coaches and Team Managers who battled through the issues we faced.

Dianella Junior Soccer Club fully appreciates that rolling out a new system anywhere is a challenge, particularly when the users are spread far and wide and mostly consists of volunteers. But we hope Football West has learnt valuable lessons ahead of the vaunted registration system upgrade expected for next season. Any repeat would surely be disastrous as reports of club administrators and volunteers working for hours were widespread and surely damaging for the game.

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 third in Division 2 and yesterday won their Top 4 Semi-Final 2-0 against a very belligerent, second place Noranda side. We wish our U18s well as they play North Beach in the Top 4 Final next Sunday.

We had two U16s squads this year. Team 1 played in Division 1, the very top level. They only won a handful of games but were never completely outplayed and gave every opposition team a proper game. U16 Team 2 competed in Div 4 where their level of play was admirable. They had their fair share of injured players but continued to improve and played some attractive football as the season progressed.

Our U15s squad had a tough season, drawing just 2 games as they continued to struggle following Football West's decision to keep them in North Division 2. They never gave up; they didn't stop playing and they trained with gusto. Their results improved as the season wore on, and they never once complained so I hope they take heart and return next year.

U14s Team 1 also played in the Top 4 Finals having finished fourth. Yesterday in a very entertaining encounter, against all the odds they defeated Hamersley Rovers, the run-away leaders in North Division 1. The match finished 1-1 at full time with the team holding their nerve to win 4-3 on penalties. We wish them well in their Top 4 Final against Mindarie on Sunday 10th. U14s Team 2 came together, and it was great to see their hard work at training being rewarded with some fine wins. Lastly, our U13s made the transition from the smaller Miniroo pitches to the full-size game with mixed results. They trained well and at times played some marvellous football. We hope they continue to develop and progress in the years to come.

Pleasingly our i-League participation has 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 a couple of years ago continues to work well.

This area of the game needs to be developed and following Mick's move to a full-time role with the Football Futures Foundation, growth seems assured. 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 (U6s to U12s) 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 like to recognise the following players who played their sixth season at Dianella, thus achieving 100 games. Ben Barry, Liam Borck, Patrick Clarke, Adrian Palazzo, Declan Vo, William Tyson, Haami Hosseini, Luke Stewart-wynne, Oliver Ecclestone, Maxwell Hart, Ruby King, Chad Svenningsen-Wee, Daniel White, Ethan Carter, Callum Mclean, Oliver Nicoletto, Thomas White, Lawson Evans, Alexander Kentish and Luca Palmero.

In addition, we had 6 players playing their 200th games this season, meaning they have played over 11 years at Dianella Junior Soccer Club. This is a truly incredible achievement in the current environment, in this era of so called "development" squads and false promises on offer at NPL "Academies." Particular thanks should go to the parents and caregivers who have supported their children through the inevitable highs and lows of 11+ years of junior football. Our congratulations go to Nicholas Borck, Alex Parlongo, Marc Parlongo, Luca Vodanovich, Hamish Cathcart and Ethan Trott.

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

That fun and inclusive environment was much in evidence at yesterday's end of season wind-up. The sun shone, which always helps, and the hard work put in by many of the committee members over the weekend was rewarded as the reserve was full of excited players and their supporters. Medals were awarded, trophies handed across and teams came together to celebrate the season in style. Our thanks go to our partners at Prime Trophies and Midland Photography in playing their part in delivering for the players.

One particular football event during the year filled me with much joy. As a Londoner I did not expect West Ham United to make the trip to Perth. West Ham are my team and being born only a few miles from West Ham's old ground of Upton Park, they are the club I have supported from birth. I really had no choice. You can only begin to imagine the excitement in our household as their arrival drew near. This excitement was compounded when we received an invitation from the Mayor and City of Stirling Councillors to join them at a reception to welcome West Ham, who were based in the City of Stirling at Stirling Macedonia. I made no apologies as I took the 'executive' decision that our senior squad, the U18s, should have the honour of representing our club at the reception.

Once again, the mid-winter Festival of Football hosted at Optus Stadium, this time involving West Ham United, Tottenham Hotspur and Perth Glory was a great success and showed just how good, and global, the game of football can be.

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 grow out of junior sport. New blood is desperately needed to ensure the continuity of our work. Dianella Junior 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.

Next year will be an exciting one for the club as we will be celebrating our 25th season in junior football. From the humble beginnings of OLA Soccer Club, over 25 years we have grown to become an established force in community football. A few ideas have been kicked around during the last two committee meetings on how best to celebrate our 'silver' jubilee year, but if anyone has any suggestions or can help us celebrate next season in style, please get in touch.

2023 like all seasons has not been without its challenges as participation in Association Football continues to outstrip all other sports in WA and across Australia. It remains to be seen what impact Australia and New Zealand's successful hosting of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup will have. But surely the sight of every competing team being supported in full or nearly full stadiums will have made an impression. And who will forget the epic journey the Matilda's went on before falling painfully short. When WA's own Sam Kerr hit that thunderbolt shot past the English keeper in the semi-final the home support exploded with joy and believed again. They are memories that will remain for a very long time.

We would like to believe as well. Believe that the chronically low level of funding for football at a Federal and State level is to be addressed. For way too long Association Football has been the poor relation to AFL, where levels of funding dwarf every other sport played in the country. Particularly for female football, no longer should players have to tolerate the lack of dressing room facilities or bathrooms. If change is not forthcoming now, it may never happen. If more children have facilities available to play sport the benefits for society are obvious. With sport comes belonging, with sport comes fitness, fitness leads to healthiness, healthiness leads to less pressure on social and medical resources, so the cycle continues.

And we will do what we can to play our part. 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.