

# In Command

with  
Peter Commandeur

"Beware of Greeks bearing gifts" with regards to Val Kalageracos and Con Boutsianis.

Talk about dodgy imports. These guys must rank with the dodgiest of the dodgy we have seen in this country, both scampering back home to Mum, like jittery girly brides having second thoughts before the wedding day.

Con, with his background, probably understands Mafia-style language: *"Look Con, eets loike theez, brother: da Kingz 'av got a contract out on ya. Ya wid me? Ya know ver oim coming frum? We're makin ya an offer ya can't refuse. Eida ya plays fa uz, or ya no plays at all. Capiche?"*

*When Con's Mummy reads this not found in a Kiwi sheep's head's mouth dumped on their doorstep (Mafia style) she sends her son packing with a blow from her frying pan to his un-injured knee and not disgrace his father's grave (Dad died after breaking into a Greek restaurant and eating all the olives, choking on them).*

# Chris Turner has been quoted as saying "one of my ambitions is that in five years time I'd like to see not one Kingz player in the All Whites because it will be like Australia, where all their players are in European leagues..."

Surely from a Kiwi fans' point of view we'd prefer to see a strong Kingz side full of the best New Zealand players, so that we can see our best players of All Whites calibre playing regularly in local stadiums and on TV. Better than having them

playing in reserve teams at clubs like Leeds and Barnsley, or Roda and clubs in Finland, where they are not star players, and the media can't be bothered reporting on them anyway.

When is the last time an overseas-based All White featured on TV news? Hardly ever, even when Danny Hay made his first-team debut for Leeds in front of 90,000 at the Nou Camp, and footage was available.

Turner is also out of step with what top Aussie coaches are saying. Frank Farina says he only wants the very best Aussies playing overseas and the rest to stay in the NSL (rather than struggling in reserve teams overseas).

# The goals have now dried up for Wynton. No surprise at his age. The same thing happened to ageing stars like Ian Rush and Mark Hughes in the final stages of their once-prolific careers.

Duncan Oughton should be a shoo-in for any future All Whites side after an excellent season with Columbus Crew in the MLS in the USA, where he emerged as a first-team player. ESPN commentators informed us Oughton and Ryal Nelsen will change their player classification next year from "transitional international" to "senior international" and will have to compete for one of only three "senior international" spots in each team.

# Two cracking finals on TV last month. About 300,000 viewers watched the Chatham Cup final (which is pretty good) and TVNZ fielded 150 phone complaints when coverage was cut to continue the excessive coverage of a building collapsing in New York.

A tragedy like New York does however make you realise people often take sport far too seriously.

It's only entertainment. It has its place in society, but it's not life and death.

***In spite of being a winner himself, Bruce Holloway, so cheerful last month, returns to being a Miserable Old Bastard, in critiquing the annual soccer awards in...***

# Celebrating achievement

This may sound strange from somebody who grew up in the heyday of the Stones, The Who and, oh I don't know, Pat Plonker and the Deadbeats, but I've never really subscribed to the rock music aesthetic in general life.

In other words, I'm happy to watch sports highlights on TV without the need for drums-n-bass back-beat music reminding me this is up-tempo stuff, or subliminally telling me how to react to what I'm seeing.

Similarly, when I go to a soccer awards evening I'd far prefer to completely lose the now-mandatory naff disco beat blaring out of the speakers when achievers are being feted.

Call me old fashioned, but I'd far rather hear a little bit about the people themselves, their successes, and why the various judges thought they were best.

The New Zealand Soccer Awards – a combined effort from New Zealand Soccer and the Soccer Media Association – were staged at North Harbour Stadium on September 14, the eve of the Chatham Cup final.

It's encouraging that the two bodies were finally able to find common ground rather than duplicating awards, and this

was shown in an attendance of about 450 – twice as many as either lot managed last year.

But I couldn't help thinking there's a lot of scope for fine-tuning. The evening was a victory of style over substance. We got the glitzy audio-visuals accompanying every award (not that most of us could see anything) but sadly, for most awards when it came to the actual presentation it was a once-over-lightly job.

Here are some things that didn't happen, that I would have liked to see:

# For Young Player of the Year I would have liked to have been told what club the lads were with, how old they were, and their major achievements this season.

# For Players' Player I wanted to know how many players voted, and who was eligible.

# For Club of the Year award I'd have liked to know who the judges were, what the criteria were (even the clubs themselves didn't seem sure), and a pithy summary of why the winner was best. Incidentally MC Andrew Dewhurst prefaced the announcement of this one by saying: "and the winners of this award will come as no surprise".

Well, no disrespect to Napier, but it

bowled me over. Napier appeared to have a fairly ordinary year compared to a few other clubs and simply aren't in the ballpark when it comes to progressive touches like club websites. But then, hey, I don't know the criteria, do I?

On this subject, a Central United club member later made a valid point in favour of his club getting this award.

# When the Club Magazine was awarded, rather than learning "Island Bay" I would have liked to hear what made their effort special, or at the very least, its name.

# With Broadcaster of the Year and Photographer of the Year I'd really like them to announce who the sponsor is. And the prizemoney that goes to each winner and runner up.

Sitter! donated \$1000 towards the awards in total (the bulk going as prizemoney to Soccer Media award winners). I would have said sponsored, but I can't actually see any return when the programme ignores our contribution, as does the MC.

While we got "Uncle Toby's this" and "Prime Print that" with the NZ Soccer Awards, somehow the Sitter! contribution was overlooked throughout.

Sitter! likes to be associated with achievement in soccer, but we simply didn't get any return on our investment at all here. Like any sponsor, we'll look real hard at what we're prepared to cough up next year.

When the Writer of the Year was

announced I would really, really have liked to have learned who they were writing for (or am I just being paranoid about everyone pretending Sitter! doesn't exist?).

When the Website of the Year was announced (again I'd like to know the sponsor and prizemoney awarded) I'd like to hear a quick summary of what made it so special. (Okay, I've been told I banged on far too long in making the inaugural presentation of this award last year. But really, 15 seconds of key detail wouldn't hurt, would it?)

As it was the evening finished 30 minutes ahead of schedule as we glibly rushed through the presentations.

There was time to put much more meat on the bones and all sorts of factoids which could have been thrown in. If we are to celebrate achievement, sometimes we have to let people know the achievement in the first place. There is plenty to work on for next year.

Now, having criticised the pseudo hi-tech approach, let's also credit it with bringing us a live address from International Player of the Year Ryan Nelsen (Washington DC) who couldn't be present at the do.

"I am thrilled and humbled to win this. Just to be nominated alongside the likes of Ivan (Vichelich) and Simon (Elliott) is an honour," he said. "I am genuinely surprised...it emphasises all the more to me what an honour it is to wear the All

Whites jersey." Good stuff.

The New Zealand Soccer Media Association also honoured the late Terry Conley by including him in the Hall of Fame. Conley, remembered for his remarkable coaching successes in Christchurch United's national league and Chatham Cup glory days, died in 1996. His induction award was accepted on behalf by former All White coach, Ian Marshall.

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It's probably out of keeping with the awards ethic to find fault with an award winner, but stuff it, I was genuinely disappointed to see former NZFA chairman (and NZ Soccer president) Justice Warwick Gendall awarded the Jim McMullan Trophy (for service to the game). We have a bad habit of tending to rewrite history in soccer when it suits us, and this was a bad manifestation of it.

In presenting the award Charlie Dempsey (yes, him) told us: "He (Gendall) has done more for our code in the last 20 years than he has been given credit for."

Dempsey should really have run us through a few of these things he has done, because all I can remember from his years at the helm (1988-91) is good soccer people seething with frustration.

Just to check I wasn't losing the plot, I went back over my old Soccer Express copies to refresh my memories of the Gendall years. Sure enough, there was a consistent thread. The game was a shambles structurally with yearly changes to promotion-relegation in the national league and Chatham Cup formats, turnover of chief executives, ad-hoc NZFA council rulings which changed

week to week on things like guest player regulations, threats from Auckland to break away from the rest of the Gendall-led country, and huge confusion in the game. Almost weekly there were complaints in Soccer Express that the game was going nowhere fast, there was a lack of direction and leadership, and general inertia within the code.

For instance, here's a typical excerpt from Tony Wilkinson, from the February 28, 1990 issue who was explaining why he stood (unsuccessfully) for council: *"It was a personal attempt to effectively change something that is wrong about the NZFA – the gap between the administrators and the 'doers', the players, the club people. Nothing inspirational seems to come from the NZFA. They always seem to be tidying up the mess rather than creating anything innovative. They soldier on, but never seem to take up on the good ideas that come from outside... collectively on the NZFA I see something as being lacking."*

Maybe I've missed something, but for me, that remains the Gendall legacy.

What makes me angry is soccer has hailed a very average performer while it has overlooked the likes of Harry Dods, another former chairman who has been a pillar of the game at all levels for decades, and is still beavering away behind the scenes in Auckland.

Perhaps the difference is Gendall has played ball in the largely non-sensical Federation-building exercise while Dods has consistently lobbied for a far more democratic structure in the game. I wonder what Jim McMullan would have made of it all.

# Sitter! Website of the Year

"The World's Biggest Game". That title can also be attributed to soccer's web presence. Today the net offers people access to football sites from all parts of the globe, with subject matter ranging from artificial leagues to individual player's sites.

You name it, and it can be found, with many of the world's larger clubs having more than 20 or 30 sites, from the official site, to a fan's effort 12,000 miles away. New Zealand has its own web presence, and can now boast upwards of 100 football-related sites.

The rate of increase has been incredible. Only four years ago Mark Hallett's Goalnet website was about the only source of New Zealand football to be found on the net.

The quality and content is also improving, with federations now using websites to inform their customers of fixtures, results, coaching courses etc.

Databases of historical info on our game can also be found, a New Zealand football magazine and even a fanzine. Of course the largest number by far are the club sites. That is where you find the people with the passion for their club putting in many hours of work to create and administer a web presence.

And it is from the "club" section that the 2001 New Zealand Soccer Website of the Year has been selected. The Olympic AFC site at [www.olympicafc.org.nz](http://www.olympicafc.org.nz) is not only the

best soccer site around, it is one of the best sites you will see anywhere.

An optional "Flash Intro" greets you at the site entrance. Once inside, you are treated to a site that is consistent throughout, with pull-down navigation links on every page. The main page gives an indication of what's ahead. Well organised and up-to-date information is available at first glance.

There are over 250 player profiles.

These age great and stretch back over 30 years, many with pictures of the players. The gallery section is excellent, with photos of games and occasions, live action (with sound) of games and much more.

Another good feature of the site is the Club section. This had PDF (Adobe Acrobat reader required) files which allow the visitor to download and print

match programmes, official competition regulations for Chatham Cup, Federation Soccer, Junior Soccer, NZ Soccer, even warm-up routines. There is much much more. But suffice to say, I love this site and feel it is a worthy winner. In the highly commended category is [www.soccerobserver.co.nz](http://www.soccerobserver.co.nz). This is the only website in New Zealand which offers updated news on a daily basis, and therefore is an essential part of our soccer landscape. Colin Chin deserves every encouragement to keep it going.

Colin Cook, webmaster

[www.centralunited.co.nz](http://www.centralunited.co.nz)



**National League:**  
**Young Player of the Year:** Brent Fisher, Christchurch City

**Players Player of the Year:** Thomas Edge, Waitakere City.

**Adidas Golden Boot:** Thomas Edge and Graham Little, Miramar. 17 goals.

**Fair Play Award:** Central United

**Club of the Year:** Napier City Rovers

**Player of the Year:** Jeremy Seales, Manawatu

**Coach of the Year:** Stuart Jacobs, Miramar Rangers

**NZ Soccer Media Association:**

**Club Magazine of the Year:** Island Bay United.

**Publication of the Year:** 'Stand up if you love the KINGZ', Grant Stantiall Mike Stephens

**Sitter! Website of the Year:** Olympic Wellington

**Sitter! Broadcaster of the Year:** Simon Milton

**Photographer of the Year:** Sandra Teddy

**Writer of the Year:** Bruce Holloway

**SMA Player of the Year:** Graham Little, Miramar Rangers.

**Vic Deverill Memorial Straight Shooter:** Vic Deverill

**SMA Hall Of Fame:** Terry Conley

**Prime Print NZ Soccer Assistant Referee of the Year:** Paul Smith

**Prime Print NZ Soccer Referee of the Year:** Steve Sargent

**Uncle Tobys International Young Women's Player of the Year:** Zoe Thompson

**Uncle Tobys International Women's Player of the Year:** Amanda Crawford

**Adidas International Men's Young Player of the Year:** Peter Howe

**Adidas International Men's Player of the Year:** Ryan Nelsen

**Southern Trust National League All Stars team:** James Bannatyne

(Miramar), Michael Ridenton (Central), Nic Longley (Miramar), Ben Sigmund (Christchurch City), Miro Major (Central), Paul Bunbury (University Mt Wellington), Tim Butterfield (Miramar), Daniel Aliaga (Central), Jonathon Taylor (Napier), Graham Little (Miramar), Campbell Banks (Central), Jimmy Cudd (Napier), Simon Eaddy (University Mt Wellington), Graham Pearce (University Mt Wellington), Jeremy Seales (Manawatu), Thomas Edge (Waitakere).

**NZ Soccer Service to the Game, in conjunction with the SMA Jim McMullan Trophy:** Warwick Gendall

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