

Media watch

The Evening Post

The demise of the Wellington's Evening Post newspaper on July 6 should be keenly felt by soccer fans, even outside of the capital.

Until last month Wellington was the only city in the country where newspaper readers could get a different take on the same soccer match/event later in the day from a second publication from within their own boundaries.

Jonathan Millmow -- now with the Dominion Post -- did a worthy job in following Miramar and the All Whites, while the old Evening Post was perhaps unique in New Zealand in giving soccer better coverage than it often deserved.

If someone twisted an ankle in training at Miramar on Thursday night, you knew about it in Friday's paper.

And for years it was hard to recall picking up a Monday paper without a large colour action soccer photo, complete with an earnest match report. That was despite almost derisory spectator interest in the match in question.

If there was a criticism of the Post, it's soccer coverage was often boring. Quotes from club coaches would be faithfully reported, but readers were seldom, if ever, informed that a game was actually totally naff.

However if there was sometimes a soft belly to their reporting in Capital

soccer at lower level, I thought the Evening Post actually led the way at top level.

The Post would often break stories of national significance in advance of other media, despite key happenings (from tournaments to meetings) invariably taking place in centres such as Auckland.

For example, in the days before it was shut down, the Evening Post exposed the spat about pay demands and a player revolt from the All Whites for a larger slice of the prizemoney should they win the Oceania Cup.

On July 4 the Evening Post reported players were first offered 30 per cent before Bill MacGowan upped the offer to 35 and finally 40. Millmow quoted a ratty MacGowan refusing to confirm those offers.

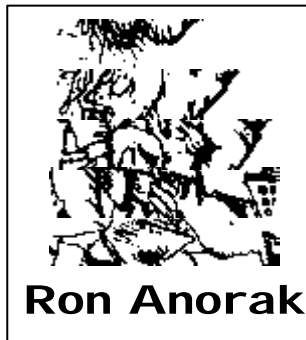
"As far as we are concerned it is no story

and I've said my last words on the subject."

Naturally Millmow had a follow-up the next day taking the story further...

Relations then soured again when MacGowan claimed an apparent leaking of the story to The Evening Post broke a confidentiality agreement. After strenuously denying the issue yesterday, MacGowan today said relations had been a bit "titchy" on Wednesday when he and NZS board member Rex Dawkins addressed the team.

MacGowan has moved swiftly by



insisting that in future all players will sign a contract before embarking on any tour or tournament.

It's something of an incongruity that Millmow should have done the leg work of the soccer round only for sports editor Bryce Johns to scoop the Soccer Media Writer of the Year award in July from a portfolio of his columns.

The Evening Post will also be remembered as a leader in the field of coverage of first XI soccer and age-group rep and national teams, with Linda Wood

doing a string of profiles and stories about up-and-coming players.

Readers can, initially at least, expect a certain carry-over of the Post's soccer flavour in their new, supposedly merged Dominion Post.

But there's a certain inevitability that the same INL shareholder demands for greater rate of return which led to the axing of a paper with a 40-50,000 circulation will inevitably cut ratios and pare back scope for soccer coverage on the new paper.

Here's a selection of press headlines after the All Blacks lost to Australia in Sydney, blowing their bid of winning the Bledisloe Cup (yet again) after Leon MacDonald was penalised in the final minute:

A RUGBY CLICHE, BUT ONE THAT'S STILL WORTH HEEDING
ALL BLACKS CONFIDENT OF ATTACKING ABILITY
ALL BLACKS CONFIDENT OF PUTTING AGONISING LOSS BEHIND THEM
WORLD CUP HOLDERS FOCUSING ON THE HERE AND NOW
MEHRTENS SAYS REF SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF HIMSELF

Had this been soccer, you can rest assured at least one headline would have said:

WHAT THE HELL WAS LEON DOING?

Official OFC (and Sitter!) photographer **Kevin Bridle** has a new website offering images of the recent 2002 OFC Nations Cup for sale. Check out his site and follow the instructions if you are interested in purchasing images.

www.onlinefotos.com/kevinbridle

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