

SITTER!

The NZ football fanzine

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\$3

Hey, look! I'm
on the cover of
Sitter! for the
second successive
issue

And it's
my second
appearance
in four issues

All Whites' Oceania highlights



The Line Up

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Unsolicited articles on New Zealand soccer welcome.

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Feedback

The Sitter! website, complete with forum, is now up and running at **www.sitter.co.nz**

Over the next four months this site will become increasingly active, to compensate for the lethargy on the print side. You can also join the Sitter! mailing list at the site to receive occasional Sitter! opinion releases

Congratulations to occasional Sitter! contributor and closet Shrimps fan **Tony Smith**, who was named Qantas Awards sports columnist of the year. He might have won it for his rugby columns, but we know football is his first love. For those with longer memories, Smith used to write Targetman columns in Soccer Express.

Sitter! has donated \$168.75 to **Papatoetoe AFC**. That's the amount of their entry fee to the 2004 Chatham Cup, where they effectively disqualified themselves from the second round after discovering an error with the registration of two of their players. We thought the club's honesty was worthy of a small gesture.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST: Sitter! editor Bruce Holloway has joined the **Melville United** committee. Deputy Grant Stantiall has joined the **Waikato FC** board. It's easy to criticise from the sidelines (*it bloody well isn't -- Ed*), but sometimes you have to roll your sleeves up. If readers don't like it, well they can piss off.

Memo to Jon Bentley: your article will be in next issue. Try and stay out of literary trouble.

COVER: Sitter! deputy Grant Stantiall captures Noah Hickey in full flight against Australia. Stantiall was one of the few All Whites fans or media personnel to make the trip across the ditch.

Disclaimer: Sitter! is published pretty irregularly these days, but there you go. We bet some of you readers aren't as regular as you used to be either. We've been in existence since May 1995, which means we've outlived three versions of the national league, you know. Meanwhile, don't touch that photocopier. If you like something you see in Sitter!, write and ask for more copies (at discount rates), rather than xerox it for all your mates. We don't do this to make money, you know, but we do need the odd bit of coin. And you wouldn't believe how miserable soccer supporters are.

Up front



Soccer surrogates

When the federation system was set up in 1999, two very clear targets were set.

Federations were to deliver us the ideal platform to achieve two major, unchangeable targets: qualifying for the Women's World Cup (2003) and the 2006 (men's) World Cup.

That neither have been achieved means we need to take a good hard look not just at the Adelaide debacle, where we mirrored our efforts at under 20 and Under 17 level in dropping outside the top two in Oceania, but at our whole structures and

methods of work.

We've had years to plan those goals, but in the case of the senior men's team, have fallen at the first hurdle. It is not unreasonable, at a time when we seem to be drifting at U17, U20 and full senior level – and have a women's team not allowed to compete – to ask if our structures are compatible with our international objectives. We've tragically failed to build on the impact of the U17 Fifa World Championships in 1999.

When the code of rugby suffered a similarly huge setback with the loss of hosting of the World Cup, the middle layers of the game took action. To a large extent that was only possible because rugby's provincial associations were able to have their say, and a degree of grass roots accountability still existed.

It's hard to see the same thing happening in soccer because by its very nature the federation system, with its top-down control, has all but emasculated provincial activism.

Yet why should the All Whites and their coach be held to account, but nobody else? Coaches and players are accountable to NZS. But who is NZS accountable to under the current system? Who do the NZS board report to? Seven federation chairmen? Except federations have been set up as "branches" of NZS and can't do anything without NZS approval. So there you have it. A system of in-built unaccountability. Brilliant.

Presumably it was the board that set the targets and voted the resources for the Oceania campaign. But unlike rugby, there is no mechanism for activating a public review. No doubt there will be a review of sorts, though the experience of the Ineson Review – where findings are kept top secret – suggests we shouldn't be expecting anything like a cathartic experience at top level.

As I write, so far Mick Waitt has been the only casualty. And that was, in a sense, automatic, with his contract expiring when the All Whites failed to qualify.

But was anybody else surprised to see that in the post-Adelaide debrief, Waitt was interviewed by Bill MacGowan and Paul Smalley? Hang on. Weren't these two among those under criticism themselves for their role in the All Whites failure?

I could go on for pages in this vein, but sense there is little point. There is another reason why soccer won't replicate rugby, and it has nothing to do with the conspiracy theories so often canvassed on these pages.

If we step back from the internal politics of the game (and fingerpointing such as mine) there may be a more fundamental explanation for our international struggles.

Trawl around the football parks on a Saturday (or Sunday) afternoon and you'll see thousands of participants and a thriving sub-culture. But few of these people could even

tell you who the All Whites captain is.

The sad truth is so many of us get our consumer “fix” of top soccer from avenues quite distinct from any sense of national pride or sense of ownership of a national team. As consumers of the game we all get our weekly hit of top action by following overseas clubs or their national teams.

For example, in my neighbourhood, pubs were opening at 6.30am to show Euro 2004 matches. Our “outlet” or “release” for top-level football is mostly not from our own national team. To a certain extent we’ve reaped what we’ve failed to sow. It’s hard for fans to relate to a team they never see, though under this chicken-and-egg scenario, it must be acknowledged internationals in soccer are money-losers in New Zealand, not money-spinners.

The end result is the vast majority of Kiwi football lovers are totally alienated from any emotional link with the All Whites. Manchester United, Arsenal, England, Brazil, even Greece for goodness sake, have become our surrogate “national teams”. In turn this means there is less grass roots pressure “to get it right” with the All Whites. In that respect, it’s not overstating things to argue overseas football interest holds local development to ransom.

NZS has not been besieged by a swathe of resolutions, angry mobs or volcanic media pressure. Sitter! readers will be the exception, but out there in Soccerland too many people simply don’t give a rat’s arse. For the diet of soccer consumption, right now they feel completely sated, having sat through a brilliant televised Euro 2004. Portugal was their Adelaide.

It’s all very well for people like me to say we’ve instituted a top-down culture of failing to listen to the needs of the game. We do have a bureaucratic system of governance whereas we previously had a democratic one. But the bottom line is too few people care enough about the All Whites to say anything worth listening to in the first place.

That we succeed, occasionally, at international level is in spite of the fabric of our New Zealand game, rather than because of it.

Before the Oceania tournament started, I suggested in other forums that the All Whites were one of the weaker combinations of the modern era.

Because we never see them, it is hard to say who of our overseas contingent deserve selection and who don’t.

But the writing was on the wall when we included 10 players from a pretty ordinary Olympic squad. These players we *had* seen. History suggests you get three or four players breaking through together from this level, but 10?

If I’d been selecting I’d definitely have had Michael Utting in ahead of Glen Moss and Tamati Williams, despite a mixed season with the Kingz. Ditto for Harry Ngata and Chris Jackson. Kris Bouckennooghe and Allan Pearce would both have got the nod far ahead of Neil Jones.

Billy Harris suggested Jonathan Perry a better bet at fullback than youngsters. I’m not convinced on my sole viewing of him this season (though Billy coaches him every week) though I’d definitely have his team mate Hoani Edwards – perhaps the best player in New Zealand never to “make it”.

If eligible, I’d take a punt on Miro Major, if only because he has international level technical skill and would also be valuable at free kick time.

Good on All Whites captain Ryan Nelsen for having the courage of his convictions and speaking his mind about the All Whites in Adelaide.

In case you missed it, interviewed on Sky Sport, Nelsen said Waitt was given a rough deal by NZ Soccer and that others should also take some blame; that NZS was arrogant in not arranging warm-up matches; that he felt sorry for Waitt because he was a head coach who wasn't allowed to pick his own management team (assistant coach & manager) and he had a technical director staring down at him every minute of the day; that he didn't feel the management were on the same wavelength as a result and there were a lot of different agendas.

Yes, it might have been more diplomatic to shut up and say nothing, and you can empathise with NZS frustration at having their captain, role model and best player speak so frankly.

But the fact that such unprecedented dissension has become so apparent means it is time for the chief executive to acknowledge there is horrible dysfunction in our international coaching dept -- Sitter! publicised this last year -- and sort it out.

For fans at least, it has been a breath of fresh air to hear a leader speak so candidly. And a leader is what Nelsen is. Nelsen's personal integrity has been recognised everywhere he has played, from Canterbury junior reps though to DC United. We might have a multitude of problems at senior international level, but at least we have a skipper who knows real leadership is about more than tossing a coin.

Anecdotal evidence supplied to Sitter! suggests the following in-house problems with the All Whites:

- # The senior players generally didn't rate the newcomers.

- # The senior players were generally happy with Mick Waitt but the very presence of technical director Paul Smalley really got their backs up. ("Why can't he just stick to coaching coaches"). At least one player has privately suggested he will not play for the All Whites again while Smalley is involved.

- # A minor rift between "arrogant" US-based players and the rest.

Further, Ricki Herbert appears to have had significantly different ideas to Waitt (nb: this suggestion was relayed via other coaches, not players) prior and during the tourney. The very purpose of a No 2 is to be there to support a No 1. If not, he should step aside and let the No 1 fail/succeed all by himself.

It's not so long ago that the sense of camaraderie was one of the strengths of the All White camp. So what has changed/gone wrong? Players hopefully will pluck up the courage to say publicly what they are saying privately.

The Adelaide disaster means its only natural our development programmes will also come under scrutiny.

The other day I was at the hairdressers and the bimbo with the scissors proudly told me her girl was doing New Zealand Soccer's International Player Development Programme (IPDP).

"She thinks she's going to play for New Zealand one day", Scissor-Lady said.

"That's fantastic," I replied.

"Umm, she's actually not very good," Scissor-hands said. "We're just humouring her and trying to encourage her to get into sport."

To be fair, that's great too. But what on earth is she doing on a programme supposedly designed to make New Zealanders "totally competitive against the likes of

the David Beckhams, the Zinedene Zidanes"? (NZS IPDP pamphlet.)

There seems to be mixed messages on whether the IPDP is an elite development programme or just a low-quality experience that can raise a lot of money.

(Not that that should be sneezed at – at least such programmes offer a financial pathway for more people to get into coaching professionally.)

I particularly dislike "the blackmail factor" NZS has built into its IPDP programme. The NZS pamphlet described IPDP as: *"the only means by which any player will be able to participate at the international level for New Zealand"*. In other words, if you are a good player and choose to fine-tune your game by getting specialist coaching anywhere else apart from having a kickaround with my hairdresser's daughter, you are ineligible to play for NZ. How stupid is that?

The fact is that many of our better younger players -- who are already in top school and club teams -- are over-committed soccer-wise. And these high achievers can get usually better value with first team coaching at club and school than hang around in massive groups with poor coach-player ratio, covering a vast spectrum of ability.

They either opt out (now officially out of the loop, despite their ability, remember) or pay the "blackmail tax" to remain in the IPDP system, but don't go. Evidence of this can be read in club internet forums around the country.

There is an urgent need to take a broader approach. The ruling mantra that "this is the only path" is as bad as saying there is only one way to play. To be fair, I know some federations are challenging this. They call it "the Paul Smalley approach", and they intensely dislike it.

Everyone will have their own view, but personally I'd rather have our national academies full of the very best prospects, regardless of whether they went to Mike Groom's samba soccer, Wynton Rufer's Wynrs or IPDP.

Clubs, schools and players themselves pretty much know who the best prospects are. They're the ones everyone wants to play for them. In my neighbourhood I see good players who are not part of IPDP and I see average players who are. Then, not unreasonably, I wonder if we have the best system, if good players are outside it, and average ones inside.

It may be fairer to people who pay big money, but will it give us better national teams (which was the original purpose)? You decide.

But if our better players are to be excluded from national academies on "blackmail" grounds, does that not raise a number of questions about the processes and what you are trying to achieve from them?

On the positive side, we do need broad community programmes like IPDP. The problem is, that on a week to week basis (apart from a couple of regional academies a year) we don't have our best young players working together under the best coaches.

If we are to take the IPDP seriously, should we also be alarmed at the amazing variance in enrolments?

Force 3 has 185 boys in its 13s intake, Fed 4 has 20. Fed 4 doesn't have any 15s or 17s boys. Mainland only has four girls in total in 8s, 9s, 10s and 11s programmes. You heard me, four of them.

In our 15s national academy -- from where we might hope to find our All Whites for the 2014 campaign -- there are just 25 players. There are 28 in the 16s. Some of these things could be fixed/improved quite easily. Others require a change in mindset that

people at the coalface tell me they are not expecting any time soon. Meanwhile federation tournaments had their "identification" status removed last year. Just to make sure they were downgraded, NZS ran their coaching courses at the same time, so that all the top coaches weren't tempted to attend with their fed teams.

Remember how the initial theory on creating seven federations was that they would play, with the eighth team comprised of a national squad from the age group below, and from these good players would be identified. Dismantled.

A national youth squad also did not play at the Napier Youth Champs for the first time in ages last year. The philosophy today seems to be more about training than playing. In the circumstances perhaps it's hardly surprising there were no warm-up matches for Adelaide. I suspect the governing belief was that training sessions would be more useful.

Meanwhile, some more factoids. There are 88 players in the national 14s academy and 119 in the 13s. Of the 14s, just 30 live north of Taupo. The suggestion is, at that age group the bulk of the best players reside down South, rather than in the presumed junior powerhouse of the north. Of course, if we re-instituted "identification" tournaments, we'd have a better means of evaluating whether they were the best.

In girls soccer, there are just 24 players in the national 14s academy. How alarming is that, if IPDP really is the latest magic formula? There are also just 24 in the 16s academy. If the answer is getting them even younger, in the IPDP nationally there are just 40 9-year-old girls, and 23 8-year-olds. This future we are building for in wimmins soccer (rather than contesting the Olympics) looks dodgy.

On a similar subject, it alarms me even more that, after a dearth of significant coach education and development for years, we find that new programmes are founded on ignoring or refusing to recognise all previous domestic qualifications.

~~There hasn't been enough information in the public domain to judge whether Ole~~

WorldNet

**Internet service provider WorldNet is sponsoring the
new (but still embryonic) Sitter! website at
www.sitter.co.nz**

**See details on their services on page 27
Or check out their homepage at www.world-net.co.nz**

Madrids have any sort of case against NZ Soccer after missing out on national league selection.

In case you've been on Mars, the Porirua-based consortium has filed for damages and legal fees against NZS in the High Court after not making the cut, and they are also seeking entry into the revamped league.

But I did chuckle at the news their court case included an application for costs of \$300,000 for "foregone profit."

At first I assumed this was some sort of accounting jargon to cover the profits the franchise personnel might have earned had they not been tied up with all this wrangling.

But no, their spokesman Mark Scott told me it was what they expected to earn in league profits. Ho, ho, ho.

I asked him for a copy of their league application to allow independent scrutiny, but he said it was central to the court case and could not do so.

A person not badly positioned to comment said the Madrid's league application was arguably the best of all submitted. (East Auckland's was the worst).

If I follow this correctly, Madrid's prime beef isn't that they weren't selected, but that the rules of the process, as prescribed, weren't followed.

They're arguing they weren't operating on a level playing field -- that they met the criteria and were excluded while entities that did not meet the criteria were included.

The suggestion is they lost out not for quality reasons, but for reasons (geographic spread, playing strength) which fell outside of the set criteria. If you were in that position, and believed in what you were doing, is a court case surprising?

My own view is that if you go through an exercise like this, and 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 teams meet the criteria, you go with them. That's the whole point of criteria. You either meet it or you don't.

If too many make the criteria for the logistics of a season-- settle it on the field.

And if a place the size of Wellington hasn't got the playing strength to support two teams -- (it was pathetic hearing Wellington people actually argue this was the case), it's about time somebody asked what the hell is going on in Capital Soccer?

The other thing about the court spat is all applicants signed a basically worthless pledge saying they wouldn't take legal action.

Here you can't help but note the irony of NZS making such efforts to court limited liability companies. It is of course much harder to brow-beat and intimidate other "non-soccer" entities once they have bought into such processes. And NZS doesn't have a great track record in court cases -- ask Nelson, who beat them 1-0 on an own goal in 1999.

For all that, I'd be more astonished if this court case went the distance.

Steve Sumner was the pick of the Sky TV pundits for the Euro 2004 coverage. His comments were insightful and eloquent, added great value and never failed to capture the essence of the moment. I don't think it is overstating it to suggest Sumner is our pre-eminent football pundit by quite some margin.

Fred de Jong was also excellent value, furrowing his brow like a true fan, and never being afraid to offer strong contentious opinions on players and teams.

Quite what Virgil Tracey from Thunderbirds was doing there some mornings, I'm not sure, but all in all, there are signs that we are finally achieving some sort of maturity with our television presentation of soccer

– **Bruce Holloway.**

2003 annual report

New Zealand Soccer's 2003 annual report, presented to the 2004 congress on May 1, continues the same steady improvement of recent years as a document of record, though its financial statements still lack the detail you might reasonably expect from an incorporated society.

The good news is it reports a surplus for the year to December 31 of \$394,000. Of that \$250,000 is related to an Oceania loan being converted into a grant for NZ Soccer projects at North Harbour Stadium.

Board member responsible for finance, Ian Wells, notes the rapid appreciation of the New Zealand dollar over the previous two years served to reduce income from the annual Fifa grant by over \$250,000 in 2003. Sponsorships and grants were worth \$2,281,000 in 2003, up from \$1,828,000 in 2002.

As to the breakdown of what came from where in terms of revenue streams, your guess is as good as mine, with the report again unacceptably vague on detail. Indeed, income is lumped together under just five general headings, with "other" accounting for \$645,000. ("Levies" were up \$31,000, by the way, to \$653,000.) The net effect is that NZ Soccer stakeholders get to know very little detail.

For example, there is no indication as to how much of a windfall there was from the TAB (over \$350,000 in 2002). With such significant sums, there is a moral obligation to enlighten.

To be fair to NZS, this practice of masking rather than revealing detail in annual reports is relatively common today in other national sports bodies.

By way of comparison, I checked netball's annual report. Netball did offer more transparency in terms of noting exactly how much it got from Sparc, separated grants from sponsorship and included things like interest received.

But the general trend of keeping grass roots less informed is prevalent there as well.

For all that, net assets of \$715,000 are as good as our national body has enjoyed in modern times. If grass-roots ignorance of financial matters is the price we must pay, at least the payoff is a healthy balance sheet.

Chairman John Morris gives an upbeat report.

"I sense there is a growing trust, a feeling that the game is heading in the

right direction," he says. "There are so many positives to talk about over the season just past that even the most sceptical observer would have to accept that the game is on the right tracks." (Over to you sceptics out there to challenge him, I guess.)

In his first annual report as chairman in 2002, John Morris wrote: "there were undoubtedly some mistakes made in the setting up of the Federations and a significant gap between theory and practice".

In 2003 he notes "federations continue to evolve and are a work in progress. We are aware of the challenges



confronting us as a national body in this area and in making the Federation structure work.”

It's a shame, given federations are branches of NS, the annual report doesn't provide a pithy financial overview of their years as well.

Bill MacGowan gives his take on the national league, women's football, Confederations Cup, coaching, federations, the Kingz and the Nike sponsorship without giving further insight beyond what is common knowledge.

Director of Football Paul Smalley gives a more coherent summary this year than his rambling first-up shocker, and

provides well-overdue statistical data on national academies and federation coaching schemes.

It is a concern to read that the Asia-Oceania Cup match versus Iran lauded as “an opportunity to introduce new and young players”. This is a championship between two world confederations, and New Zealand's glib view is it's a nice place to blood teenagers.

Referees chairman Rod Pelosi offers a few factoids – there are 871 refs in New Zealand (including inspectors).

-- Cordwainer Bull.

After so many years in the United States, dress Simon Elliott up in red, white and blue (the All Whites new away strip) in an international and you could almost excuse him for thinking he was American.

But for the record Simon, the patriotic hand on heart stuff is reserved for the Yanks (or, for students of history, the old Roman empire. Us Kiwis will happily settle for a phlegmatic snort, 100 per cent effort and a vow not to argue about prizemoney afterwards.



Where are they now?

A snapshot of the fortunes of the teams that were in the old club-based national league

By Gordon Glen Watson

Here's a summary of what has happened to the clubs that formed the final club-based National League and a very brief assessment of whether or not restructure and reformatting has been good for those clubs/entities in particular. In some cases I can delve with complete confidence into whether or not a club/entity has benefited from the introduction of a franchise league, in others I can only offer an assessment based upon what respective league tables tell me, combined with my experience of having played against them in the National league or Chatham Cup at some point.

CENTRAL UNITED - Northern Premier League 1st

The conclusion of the STNL and subsequent stepping stone to the franchise league hasn't presented Central United with many obvious problems on the pitch. Allan Jones is installed as first team coach and club is enjoying a more than healthy dominance in the Northern Premier League as well as a Chatham Cup Quarter Final away to PN Marist. The style of football being put out isn't one for the purists, but when you are ransacking all and sundry for the spoils, who really cares how you do it. Good case for this club being the best in New Zealand in 2004.

TAURANGA CITY UNITED - Northern Premier League 7th

Relegated from the ST National League, Tauranga City United have stuttered through their first winter campaign back in Northern Premier League. Declan Edge has developed an attack-minded and youthful side, though enjoyed a fractious relationship with many of the club's older players. Some of whom have joined the mysteriously resurgent Gisborne City Marist.

Losing out to Waikato FC in the race to join the franchise league hasn't done any immediate harm, especially when Declan Edge and James Pamment, Tauranga's coaches, secured the Waikato FC job.

However, in the long term, soccer in the Bay of Plenty may suffer, with only the occasional Waikato FC fixture planned to take place across the Kaimais.

NORTH SHORE UNITED - Northern Premier League 3rd

The fallout of STNL disbandment appeared to hit North Shore hardest amongst Auckland's elite. A horror start to the NPL campaign was largely eradicated with the signing of Chris Jackson, Brad Scott and Jeff Campbell. Shore now sit in behind the frontrunners, although a large goals against record still hints at the early season malaise.

The long term future of the North Shore club itself appears open for debate as no franchise exists across the bridge. Traditionally a powerhouse in Kiwi football, the

North Shore may yet become a backwater, farming out its best players to Auckland City or Waitakere United.

EAST AUCKLAND - Not Applicable

Strange to look back at this entity and realise it is no longer part of the modern landscape, particularly after it helped shape it. Ellerslie, Eastern Suburbs and Uni-Mount Wellington are all in Northern Premier League, two clubs sitting just outside the top three, the other, struggling against relegation.

Understandable that many within this grouping feel aggrieved at having missed the cut. Looks likely many of their best players will line-up for Waitakere United or Auckland City. Maybe even travel to Waikato FC to get exposure.

NAPIER CITY ROVERS - Central Federation League 1st

Straight back into Central Federation League for Rovers and a revert to type. The death of the STNL hasn't harmed Napier's strength, although the quality of the competition is questionable, with only the top six teams in the league of any quality. Napier City's franchise entry will sustain Hawke's Bay's strong soccer connections. News that many of Napier City Rovers stalwarts have signed playing contracts with the new entity show that the bay will again be strong, with Charlie Howe and Perry Cotton again at the helm.

MANAWATU AFC - Central Federation League 5th

The end of the STNL hit Manawatu AFC (the club) hard. With the Youngheart Manawatu franchise bid largely driven by Manawatu AFC's relative success in the club league coupled with the departure of Colin Tuua to rival club, PN Marist, the Memorial Park-based side are struggling to maintain a significant presence locally.

Tuua's departure across town saw him lure many of Manawatu AFC's players with him, leaving behind an assortment of stalwarts. Whilst the long term future of soccer in Palmerston North seems assured, the same cannot be said of Manawatu AFC itself. With only a handful of teams its difficult to see the club rise to the heights of 2000 and 2001.

MIRAMAR RANGERS - Capital Federation League 1st

New Zealand Champions two years in a row and leading the way in an intriguing four way race locally. Rangers have retained the core of their championship-winning side and are pushing hard for further honours this season.

The demise of the STNL hasn't affected Miramar greatly and the success of Team Wellington's bid should see the bulk of the Rangers side included in the capital squad come the summer months.

CANTERBURY UNITED - Not Applicable

The entity that replaced Christchurch City in the first years of the STNL is in mothballs, awaiting the franchise league's October kickoff. With so many teams dominating the Canterbury Premier League (yet not leading the competition's top two spots), it should be intriguing to see what sort of strength Canterbury will muster for summer.

DUNEDIN TECHNICAL - Soccer South Premier League 3rd

Weakened since the STNL died, Technical sit in third place in what is generally - and unfairly - regarded as the weakest section in New Zealand football. Technical once won this competition five years in a row and appeared in two Chatham Cup Finals and STNL semi-finals. Now it appears to be winding down.

CAVERSHAM - South South Premier League 1st

Runaway leaders in the SS Premier League, Caversham - like Central, Miramar, Napier City Rovers - are dominating their local beat. Balanced up against Dunedin Technical's weakened state, the pair will no doubt contribute much to the Otago franchise entry.

CENTRAL UNITED - 1st Northern Premier League

NORTH SHORE UNITED - 3rd

TAURANGA CITY UNITED - 7th

EAST AUCKLAND - N/A

NAPIER CITY ROVERS - 1st Central Federation League

MANAWATU AFC - 5th

MIRAMAR RANGERS - 1st Capital Federation League

CANTERBURY UNITED - N/A Mainland Federation League

CAVERSHAM AFC - 1st Southern Soccer Federation

DUNEDIN TECHNICAL - 3rd

The winners

Napier City Rovers
Miramar Rangers
Central United
Caversham
Canterbury United

The losers

Tauranga City United
Manawatu AFC
Dunedin Technical
East Auckland
North Shore United

And where do the Football Kingz feature in this new formula? Are the Kingz going to be winnerz or loserz in this new system?

Entities in the NZ Soccer Football Championship are going to (presumably) get their financial acts together, be run professionally... will some NZ players prefer to opt for playing for local sides, rather than a side in the Australian League?

After all, the aims will be the same, ie win your NZ or Australian league title, and aim for a spot at the FIFA World Club Championship.

The prospect of the Football Kingz facing off against, say, Auckland City, for the right to go to that FIFA sanctioned tournament is a juicy one.

Get the book out...

Red card: To NZ Soccer for pulling the wool in the Manchester United Premier Cup Asia Pacific qualifying tournament in Kuala Lumpur in May.

Press releases suggested our national U15 team was playing other national teams at the tourney. But in Kuala Lumpur the team traded under the name of "Capital FC" -- the suggestion being it was a Wellington representative side, despite it clearly being tagged a national selection following the North Harbour tournament and only containing five Capital players. And whereas NZS reported New Zealand lost 1-0 in the final to Thailand, according to organisers, Capital FC were beaten by Chonburi Sport Association, a club with about 300 players. We can't have it both ways with these things, with a team being "national" for local consumption, and "regional" for foreign consumption.

Red card: To the Oceania confederation, who found the need for three match commissioners -- Lee Harmon (Cook Is), Tautulu Roebeck (Samoa), Madiu Andrew (PNG) -- for the Nations Cup in Adelaide. Naturally none of them came from Australia or New Zealand.

Yellow card: To Billy Harris. In his Sunday Star Times column on May 16 he called for the NL to be expanded to 10 teams with the admittance of both Ole Madrids and East Auckland -- without declaring himself as coach of Eastern Suburbs, which is part of the East Auckland consortium.

Red card: To all television entities for their singular lack of interest in the Australi-New Zealand match in Adelaide, let alone the others.

Three cheers: To NZ Soccer for nominating former All Whites captain Steve Sumner to receive the Fifa Centennial Order of Merit. Just days after bagging the national association for their role in the Adelaide Oceania debacle, Sumner joined the company of legends such as Sir Stanley Rous (Eng), Ferenc Puskas (Hungary), Johan Cruyff (Holland) and Eusebio (Portugal) in getting a gong.

Three cheers: To the New Zealand Schoolboys for their efforts in beating England Schoolboys 1-0 at Newbury -- our best international result in ages.

Yellow card: To schoolboy administrators for not being more proactive on the publicity front. They were awarded a big crystal glass football which they carted through Europe, but never once organised a team photo.

Crossfire

"Chris Ruffells (sic) was not present at that meeting and has not been present at any other meeting of the two organizations throughout this process, before or after the decision was announced. Allegations from Ruffell of a lack of communication from New Zealand Soccer are particularly galling in light of this detail."

-- NZ Soccer press release (May 7) despatched by Andrew Dewhurst which offered details of a 90-minute presentation to East Auckland officials in the wake of their failed national league bid and proceeded to slag Easts spokesman Chris Ruffell. Ruffell had earlier been quoted on radio as saying Easts were so frustrated with New Zealand Soccer's lack of communication, they had been considering applying for the Australian National League.

"Andrew Dewhurst wasn't at the meeting either, but that hasn't stopped him from telling everyone about it."

-- Chris Ruffell responds, explaining how he was appointed Easts spokesman, given Ray Bunbury's unavailability for the original radio interview.

How Waikato made the national league :-)

A copy of an email to Erich Bachmann, a member of the selection panel for the new national league, from a player in his 5-a-side indoor team, which inadvertently turned up in the Sitter! mailbox...

Hi Erich...

I went to the Chiefs game on Sat nite and the new stadium is a great venue with a fantastic pitch.

Certainly it would grace the National league, as I'm sure a Waikato team would. Following in the hallowed footsteps of Waikato greats such as Stamp and Nelson (and half our indoor team!), Waikato are turning out some great young players and the game has good grass roots following.

Make sure you give them your vote!

All Whites Rant

By Simon Milton

OK, so I've had a bit of time to calm down and reflect on the All Whites results and thought I'd share some thoughts.

Like many of you, I was at Ericsson when the All Whites beat the team that Australia sent out to face them in 2002. What a day! And we knew at 5 o'clock that afternoon, that in 10 months time we'd be playing at the Confeds Cup.

Many of us spent those months saving our hard earned dollars (or ££s !!) to get over there. In those same 10 months, NZS managed to organise two friendlies in Europe toward the end of 2002, and then three games as tournament preparation (one of which, beyond their control, was cancelled).

So, going into a rare major international tournament appearance we played four games in 10 months. There are over 200 countries in FIFA. Some would not want to play us and would be too expensive. Many others could well have been available. Either way, it didn't happen. We played two friendlies in preparing for Confeds 03, in comparison with nine prior to Confeds 99. Any coincidence that our performance in Mexico was so much better?

I had a great time in France, excellent place to travel to. But if I had known what I was going to be offered up by my national team and national association, I

may have reconsidered going. The ticketing issue has been discussed ad nauseum, and as NZS and FIFA each blame each other, it will never be resolved.

All I know is that fans from EVERY other country there told us they bought tickets from their national associations, and as a result had co-ordinated support for their team in a designated section of

the stadium. We, as fans who had travelled further than any others, were denied that, and we were the laughing stock, pitied by the fans of other countries.

I don't know what was going on within the squad in France. Some of those guys are mates of mine, but quite rightly remain tight lipped about squad matters, and have never told me what went on. But when you hear enough rumours, from enough different sources (including newspaper interviews), you begin to wonder if there isn't some truth to them.

Squad factions, lack of team spirit, prima donna-like behaviour, different rules for certain players - does this sound like a focused and professional international football team?

And I figure many of these things must be true, because it showed badly out on the pitch. A sensational first-half against Colombia aside, we were embarrassing,



and a shadow of what we had been only a matter of months earlier.

The reason I'm droning on about Confeds 03 is because it seems pretty damn similar to what has just happened at the ONC 04. Efforts vs Solomon Islands and Vanuatu sound a lot like those of a team lacking spirit, drive and focus. Is this acceptable?

I'm no expert on coaching or management, but I would have thought that the three main jobs of an international boss were fostering the team's sense of purpose, clearly explaining the roles of each player in the team system, and then picking the players to fit those roles. Yet those seem to be the elements lacking in our national side.

Of course, player effort/responsibility comes into it, but why would any player need motivating to play for their country, or put in their maximum effort, unless the environment in which this happened was negative or unsettling?? Three or four years ago, the All Whites, Olympic side, and Youth team (U20s) were renowned for their tight, together spirit, shown in Mexico, and v South Africa, and in beating the Australian U20s at NHS - where has that all gone?

I don't want to get into issues of squad selection, or players etc - there are people far more qualified than me to talk about

them. But what I will say is that if one of our best players, with English Premier League experience, retires from the national team claiming it is a total waste of time as it is currently run, then something is wrong. If one of our most experienced players of recent years, and an NSL regular, is dropped and replaced in the squad by two NSL reserves, then something ain't good.

Don't get me wrong, bleeding young players is essential and vital, but as Steve

Sumner said, the All Whites shirt should be earned, and some of these guys, through no fault of their own, have been promoted far too early. I know we don't have a massive pool of players to choose from, and that's why it's so worrying when some of our better players are dropped or retire in anger.

People are entitled to their opinion on Ivan Vicelich, but I think there is a risk here of reacting as some used to to Wynton Rufer. We don't

see Ivan much on telly, just as we didn't see Wynton, and so often get a blurry picture of his actual achievements.

Ivan plays week in week out in the Dutch league, and performs very well. In the two games I watched last season, he scored a hat-trick against Den Haag, and was the best Roda player on the pitch v Ajax. So he is definitely capable.

But maybe he finds it harder to shine

Three or four years ago, the All Whites, Olympic side, and Youth team (U20s) were renowned for their tight, together spirit, shown in Mexico, and v South Africa, and in beating the Australian U20s at NHS - where has that all gone?

in a team where there is a lack of spirit, effort and quality, rather than in the competitive, driven, professional environment he works in week after week. Maybe I'm wrong, I've never asked him, but this is just an observation.

As for now, well, I think the management team of the All Whites should be replaced. They did not achieve the more than realistic target of us being the second best team in Oceania, and what is more worrying is that very little seems to have changed from the situation in France last year. Again, maybe I'm wrong, but that's what I see. I would like to see someone with a respectable pedigree running our team (a la Sepp Piontek, the German who turned Denmark and Turkey from international minnows to respectable World cup competitors).

If finance means this person is employed part time and based in Europe, so be it. One game (v Iran) between France 03 and ONC 04 wouldn't exactly tax his time... and now apparently there will be even less fixtures over the next two years, if media reports are at all accurate.

I tell you who I feel sorry for - the people who are doing so much work behind the scenes, with little recognition, for the benefit of our game, and yet all their good work is undermined by certain egos and bad organisation.

Much is made of the fairly decent state of NZS's financial health. But are you aware that one person is solely responsible for attracting every major sponsor NZS has, and launching the Small Whites programme, and gaining our game NZ sport's second biggest ever apparel sponsorship?

So basically soccer in our country was rescued from the financial pit by the work of one man? Yet you will never ever hear this man's name in the media, because other people in the organisation claim the credit for his initiative and ideas. It is quality people like this, not to mention the raft of coaches, fans and administrators down the years, who our game will lose the services of if things don't change. And that bites...

The most depressing thing is I don't see how this will change. Ever since I was a kid, football in NZ has been known for political in-fighting, and still it goes on. To be frank, if I was a non-soccer person, I'd be laughing and saying 'as per usual', and I probably wouldn't touch the game with a barge pole. I know I'll carry on in the game, but I'm far from normal...

I'm still angry and gutted about what I heard from Adelaide, and as a Kiwi, I can handle my team losing, but only if they've sweated blood and left all they could on the park. Otherwise, I will remain angry and disappointed.

Sorry for the length of this rant, and cheers if you've gotten this far!

But I would like to think that, for the good of the game, certain things from our past (like housing the NZ Junior team at Mt Albert academy) would be resurrected, and the contacts of experienced pros like Rufer, Fallon and de Jong would be utilised to get our players into the pro game. And that Ryan will move to a better league soon. If only...

But at the very least, our senior and age group teams should be beating smaller Oceania nations. Anything less than that is a complete joke.

Last September Melville United striker Steven Holloway began a 4-year soccer scholarship in New Jersey, in what is becoming an increasingly popular career path for budding Kiwi players. Here he gives a summary of his experiences so far.....

In America

I have been at Monmouth University, New Jersey, on a soccer scholarship (New Zealand equivalent value \$38,000 annually) for the past year and have marvelled at the professional nature of the setup.

In fact the structure of the US college soccer system should be a model for all sports competitions.

Monmouth are a division one university, competing against other top universities in the New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania region.

With over 200 division one teams across America, this top league is split up into a host of conferences and we are in the North East Conference.

Every division one college has the same goal and dream -- to reach the NCAA national championship finals, and to accomplish this they have to do very well in their conference. Winning your conference gains you automatic entry into the playoffs, from where teams compete for the finals.

Wildcard entry's are also given to teams who have a lot of potential or have had many good results. The National finals or "the big dance" as the Americans call it is the culmination of a years hard work, which results in a huge stage for both the college and the individuals on the team to show their goods.

Sadly for us at Monmouth we didn't make the NCAA championships this year

as we finished seventh in our conference. But with a young team and a new coach coming in, we are showing a lot of potential for the new season.

The standard of play in America is high. With the majority of players in the college system under 22, it is similar to a youth league, but not one you would find in New Zealand. To give some comparison with the youth leagues here, I think that the winners of any of the U19 Napier tournaments would have a very difficult time in any of the division one conferences. Reaching the NCAA tournament would be simply unrealistic.

What the American players lack in experience they make up for in determination. The game in the States is a lot more physical with a lot of teams putting large emphasis into weight training and strength, however the discipline is also a lot stronger.

The off-ball scuffles and handbag throwing which you see at nearly any northern league game are very uncommon in the states. This may be out of respect for each other, or just the way they are brought up but it's an interesting difference. An incident in one of my games stands out, when we were playing West Point (US Army College). There was an off ball altercation and as one of our players went to push a well-built Army defender, he began laughing before replying in a strong Jersey accent "You

realize we are trained to kill men". That was the end of that.

Americans are only interested in the best. A great example of this is how none of the sports at my college or any I know of have reserve teams. They are only interested in pumping as much money into the first teams as they can. If you can't make those teams, tough luck.

We carry a squad of 20 players at the start of pre season, which later gets cut down to 18. For those two players who are dropped, there is no team for them to play in, which either means they give up soccer altogether, or play social indoor stuff on week nights. I sometimes wonder what would happen if we had 5 or 6 major injuries in a season, as there is no reserve team to call players up from.

Having a Kiwi accent in the US was similar to having a gold card that got you all sorts of discounts and special treatment. As soon as I open my mouth in many situations I get interested looks and warm smiles, usually followed by "Oh my god, your accent, where are you from?"

So far I've used it to avoid fees at the bank, talking my way out of a sticky situation in court and to skip my final art history exam and still receive an A. Its my greatest weapon.

I have found that Americans love the sound of the accent, although many are unfamiliar where NZ is, and in many cases I have to persuade them that we are not in fact in Europe. They see NZ as a paradise, and so I choose to make it sound like one. It's amazing the ignorance of the Yanks, and how little they know about the outside world. I was asked one day by a team mate, "do you

have winter in New Zealand?"

While having a Kiwi accent has unparalleled advantages, having to put up with some of the US slang is almost a leveller. The majority of them sound like those annoying ESPN commentators Tommy Smyth and JP Dellacamera. Boots are cleats, bibs are pinnies, top corner is upper ninety, 0-0 is a shutout, and the list goes on.

One of the main attractions of playing in the States was the opportunity to train daily. It really is great to get into a set routine of training at 3.30pm every day in

beautiful sunny conditions on a nice pitch. It's a world away from the mud and slush of Gower Park on a Thursday night.

A groundsman mows and rolls the pitch everyday and the setup really is top class. It's great to have full turnouts at training every day too, and as everyone pretty much lives together there is never any excuse for not being there. Rules are strict. No practice, no games.

The off field culture of the univeristy is largely based around sports. There are really two types of people at Monmouth University: athletes and non athletes.

An athlete is a term used for someone on a sports team, and as there is only one sports team for each code, it usually means the athletes are serious about what they do and tend to interact with each other a lot more.

As is the case in NZ, soccer is largely in the shadow of other sports. American football, baseball and basketball are the big three, and soccer is currently like the little brother, although it seems to be growing in popularity very quickly.

From a personal standpoint, I had a good season. Having arrived late in pre-



season after getting dispensation to play in the 2003 Chatham Cup final for Melville, I began quite slowly, finding it difficult to adjust to so many unfamiliar players, but as it went on I settled in nicely. The coaches preferred me either up front or in central midfield, and I went on to be the leading goalscorer and points scorer on our team.

They are all into statistics, big time. You get two points for a goal and one point for an assist. Our season ended earlier than we would have liked, as we didn't qualify for the conference finals, but I scored 6 goals in the last 7 games, and was later named the MVP for the year, which I am told is almost unheard of for a "Freshman".

The low of the season was playing Peter Howe's team (my former NZ Secondary Schools captain) from Central Connecticut University late in the season, and losing 6-1, in a very tired ugly display of football. The highlight was scoring two goals (and one assist) in the thrashing of our university's old rivals Quinnipiac, as we went onto win 5-2.

Monmouth University is small in comparison to a lot of the division one schools in the US. With a school roll of around 6000, it's always going to be difficult to compete with the bigger schools, some carrying over 30,000 students.

I watched St John's (they finished runners up in the national final) play in New York in a conference quarterfinal and was amazed at both the standard and setup of this university. Their pitch is made out of the latest astroturf technol-

ogy, which is amazing to play on, and it sits on top of a carpark, with a stadium built around it.

They had a huge band playing throughout the game, it was televised, and there were thousands of people there. I believe Steven Old and Sam Matthews are heading there to play this year, and wish them the best of luck, it will definitely be worth their time.

International players were something of a novelty at Monmouth. There was just myself and Derek Opuko-Darko from Ghana, fulfilling the foreign contingent. This was a large contrast to the many other colleges we played, where foreign voices were almost as familiar as Yankee ones.

There is a heavy influx of English and Scottish kids in a lot of teams, and some very good players too. However I always felt that our biggest threats came from the large muscular pacy African Americans.

These boys can move, and I think it's a genetic thing that we have missed out on in New Zealand. Some of these boys, especially in the better teams, are just so fast and powerful, usually strikers, and they would

often terrorize our defence.

If there was one major difference in the US college system to soccer in New Zealand, I would say it is the number of good skilful strong strikers. Here they are almost non-existent. In the States they can be found at every University.

The American college system is becoming so popular that many teams are made up of over 50% foreigners. I went across to stay with (Kiwis) Ross McKenzie

If there was one major difference in the US college system to soccer in New Zealand, I would say it is the number of good skilful strong strikers. Here they are almost non-existent, in the States they can be found at every University.

and Cameron Knowles in Akron, Ohio, and found that their team was three quarters foreign talent, with players from NZ, England, Yugoslavia and Sweden.

The pre-match routine I would describe as "pure Americana". Had I dreamed of anything like a stereotypical display prior to going, I probably would have knocked it on the head.

We meet in the locker room, around an hour and a half before the game, where we relax, and start to focus. There are couches and TV's and always music playing, to get us 'hyped' for the game.

Our coach Shannon Poser would then come in and bring out a 'scouting report' detailing there danger men and how they play. After studying that for about 20 minutes and talking about their team, the coach would leave and the captains would take over.

They would give motivational type speeches before everyone was at the point of utmost energy and yelling and screaming. I am not really that type of player -- I like to get motivated on the field -- so I would often sit in bemusement in the corner.

We would then make our way out onto the pitch where we would go through the typical warm up normalities, before being called in by the coach. This was my favourite part. We would all gather in a tight huddle, with our hands outstretched in the middle, and Shannon would Yell "HAWKS ON THREE", then we would count to three and scream Hawks.

Real emotional stuff. Hawks was sometimes substituted for WIN, depending what sort of mood Shannon was in.

Then we would get called out individually on the loud PA System . "And here comes STTEEEVEN HOLLOWAY, A FRESHMAN STRIKER FROM HAMILTON, NEEWWWW ZEALAND..."

This would carry on through the whole team before we would line up to face the

American flag and sing the national anthem. I always tried to take the piss at this time by trying to make a team mate laugh but they would all stand there stone faced, staring up at the flag. Very Patriotic. Finally the game would start and I would feel at home again.

Our farthest away game was eight hours by bus, and that was to Pennsylvania, but its not as bad as it sounds, as the buses are decked out with TV's and DVD players. We would often miss classes to go to games as we would leave on the Friday, so we were told we would have to have 'study time' at some point on our trip, but we never did.

A few weeks into our off-season (Jan-May) we found out our coach had resigned. It's up for debate whether he resigned or was sacked, but either way it was because of our disappointing season, and the board at Monmouth wasn't prepared to go through that again.

So the job was advertised, attracting 90 applicants. They short listed the applicants to four, all of whom had coached professional teams before. I have met the new coach Rob McCourt just once, but am really looking forward to getting back to Monmouth in August and working with him.

Away from soccer, police and law enforcement in the US is very tough. The cops, to put it bluntly in US terms, are "assholes".

They really go out of their way to give college students a hard time, and it is very easy to find yourself on the wrong side of the law.

The legal drinking age of 21 can be particularly hard to get used to, but you have to take the good with the bad.

Going to college in America has been the best move of my life thus far, and I'm sure it's only going to get better. I recommend it to anyone who has the opportunity. It's a real eye opener.

According to Polish newspaper Fakt, Aaran Lines left the Arka Gdynia club because he couldn't stand all the corruption. Sitter! subscriber Andre Zlotkowski provides a translation in...

Lines call

Wed, May 12: My Money Was Used to Bribe Referees!

"I don't want to have anything to do with Polish soccer anymore. I've never encountered anything like it: selling games, bribing referees.... How can something like that be allowed to happen?"

That is what "Fakt" was told by Aaran Lines.

The New Zealand international arrived in Poland in November, 2002. He played for a while, for Ruch Chorzow and earlier this year moved to Arka Gdynia. He was supposed to help the club stay in the second division. But he won't be helping them anymore....

Lines has had enough of the shadowy dealings taking place in Polish soccer. Last week he decided to terminate his contract with Arka Gdynia, packed his bags and left for Germany. He won't be returning to Poland.

"Arka will definitely be my last club in Poland", assured the Kiwi. "I didn't feel well in Gdynia. The city itself is pretty but a lot of the things at the club weren't as they should've been.

"When I first joined Arka, I had no knowledge of how things were being run. For example some of the money we were supposed to be paid was being used to bribe referees," said the visibly angry Lines.

"I only found out what was taking place later on, from my teammates. Things weren't that bad in the First Division. Canal+ (TV station) covered all the matches. However, things are much different in the Second Division. The way the games are being refereed is scandalous! This has nothing to do with 'sport'.

"I played in Germany, Australia, but I have never encountered anything like it. I had enough of all this corruption. (*Here Aaran curses, something on the lines of 'This is f**king bullshit'. Fakt seems to be a tabloid style paper - AZ*).

However, the player from Down Under doesn't regret his stay in Poland.

"I made many friends here, among them Damian Gorawski and Klaudiusz Sevkovic," he stressed.

The Kiwi is currently in Cologne. Next week he will leave for Adelaide to take part in New Zealand's Confederations Cup campaign.

When the tournament is finished, he will depart Australia for Asia where he has an offer from one of the clubs playing in the South Korean league.

We are indebted to Don Service, one of oldest subscribers, for another installment of the untold story of New Zealand football in...

Our history

With the game so firmly club-based now, one of the things old timers like myself tend to miss is the fielding of representative teams. It was always a minor thrill to see the Auckland team take the field against another province or an overseas team in the traditional blue and white colours, the same colours as the other codes used.

There was much discussion as to who should be in the team, as we had the chance to see all the clubs play at the central headquarters, and the selectors were household names in soccer circles, and perhaps to some extent even beyond; chaps like Jim Rowatt in the 40s, Ray Speed and Dave Wallace in the 50s and Billy Walsh, Ken Armstrong and Juan Schwanner in the 60s.

Some of the games were one-sided though, particularly against minor provinces, and it was surprising how often an Auckland player would collect five goals.

Leo Hope-Ede got five against the Navy in 1942, and Arthur Masters against Otago in 1950, both these games in Auckland.

I haven't got details of opponents and venues, through not having kept enough of the old weekly programmes. But this feat was also achieved in the 1950s by Gordon Neute, Jack Gommers,

Ron Cochran and Gerald McCormack. Ronnie Moore also got five in a game, but was it for Auckland, Wellington or Canterbury? He played for all three.

In a game at Newmarket Park in the late 1970s Jacques Vercauteren performed this feat when Franklin beat Tonga 7-3.

The small crowd's sympathies were with Tonga and when the fifth one went in the ground announcer said: "cut that out, Jack".

Reading the book "Canterbury Soccer", with its mass of interesting detail, makes one appreciate the vast amount of research involved, but a couple of minor quibbles, and it might be amusing to find an Auckland player going into bat for the Mainland...

We read that "in 1957 Fussball Klub Austria beat New Zealand twice by the same score, 7-1... Between the tests they played a South Island team... winning by only 2 goals to 0... They could not dominate the local combination, it was said, because of the ingenuity of the Canterbury coach, Gordon Smith. Having watched the Auckland tests, he spent two days planning tactics against the visitors and then, using coloured counters on a miniature baize football field to represent the different positions, talked tactics to his players."

Actually things worked out even better, as it was the South island team that won 2-0.

Also, I thought, even if only to add spice to the record, there might have been some account of the goings-on after the Canterbury v Chinese Universities game in 1924.

After all, it was probably the worst post-match behaviour in this country apart from the fun and games after the famous Kuwait World Cup match at Mt Smart Stadium in 1981.

The crowd, sympathising with the underdog tourists, thought that two of Canterbury's goals in its 3-2 win resulted from offside play.

Large numbers stayed behind to loudly boo the referee, and amidst cries of "Haul him out", "Throw him off" and "Give him a rule book", tried to pull him down from the front seat of the official bus, before the police intervened.

There is a five page account of this game, and a four-page account of the FK Austria game in "Great Days at Lancaster Park" by Gordon Slatter.

Reading "Seasons of Honour: A History of NZ Hockey" I was struck mostly by two things. Firstly the popularity of the three Indian teams that toured in the 1920s and 1930s, at least equal to that of any soccer visitors in these years. The Indian Army team of 1926 drew about 150,000 spectators to its 22 games.

Secondly, the large number of

international games against strong opponents by both the men's and women's teams every year.

Mandy Smith played 150 international, Anna Lawrence 164. If hockey can do this, why can't soccer?

When the NZ women's team was beaten 11-0 by North Korea in the Australia Cup in Brisbane in February, pre-tournament figures showed the Korean squad had a combined tally of 1022 caps, the New Zealanders just 62.

How on earth can the New Zealand team ever be expected to reach the top

world standards if they are never given anything remotely approaching a proper international programme?

Reverting to two players named before, Jack Gommers, like Theo Van der Brock, Hans Kaiser and Gerald Textor in

Auckland and Klaas and Frits Poelman (two New Zealand reps from Technical Old Boys in Hamilton), was one of many talented Dutch players who emigrated here in the post-war years.

The first player I heard of to be lured across the Tasman was a Dutchman from Otago, Bill Westerveld, who went to a Melbourne club in 1955 after touring Aussie with the New Zealand team the previous year.

Ron Cochran, like Bob King, Don Brewer and Stu Kinghorn, was well known in softball, in the days when the seasons didn't overlap so much.

***Mandy Smith
played 150
international, Anna
Lawrence 164. If
hockey can do this,
why can't soccer?***

I am the Anti-Christ

Over the past five years I have watched the Kingz play some fancy football and lose miserably more often than not. The reason for this is quite simple and it really cuts through all the metaphysical bull that surrounds the game of football here in New Zealand. It is simply that the opposition scored more goals in each game than the Kingz. They had one or more individuals who could put the ball in the back of the opposition's net on a regular basis. The Kingz have had one striker of any note and he had a horror start mainly due to his off field troubles settling here.

Dennis Ibrahim was his name and I really wish he'd stayed on and not become a Wanker (literally). Before and after Dennis there really hasn't been any player capable of scoring lots. Chances galore have gone begging, especially in the third season.

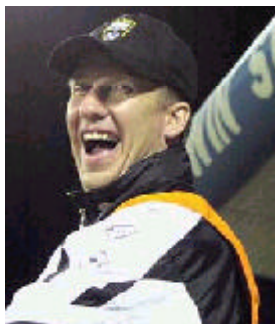
You can't teach strikers how to score goals. They either have it or they don't. You can only improve what is there already. I know many coaches will ridicule this but they are coaches and believe they can turn a sow's ear into a silk purse given the time and the money. But it's bollocks.

Coaches in New Zealand have way too much control over our game. Technique, technical ability, ball control, and all the skills in the world aren't worth a crock of shit if the player cannot read the game, is not physically fit and fast enough to cope with the pace of the game and

most importantly, doesn't have the courage to commit 150 per cent.

Call me old fashioned but I believe that the role of the manager in the British sense of the word is far more vital. Management is getting the best out of what you have at your disposal. Management is working to find a blend of players that will produce results without bankrupting the club. Management is knowing that each player is different and knows how to bring the best out of each.

We currently have a classic case of a coach in overall control of our game. He has no rapport with the players. He has no idea of man management. He does have a vision. His vision of what we should be doing with football in New Zealand. A great crusading technical sweeping big mamma of a vision to change everything and stamp out heresy that dares to sway from the



Kevin Clarke

common line.

This is the FA way. It is also the SFA (Scotland -- Ed) way. It is about control. If you follow the path and learn the ways then you will be accepted and you will gain. If you stray from the path then you will not prosper. There is no room for individualism. It is football by the book or not at all.

He believes mightily that the path is the correct one but he cannot sell the vision to the players and others that need to believe as he does apart from the coaches. The coaches need to believe

because to get jobs they must have the qualifications and to get the qualifications they must go by the book.

So all we end up with is 400 odd coaches all teaching the same tactics, all giving the same drills, no more individuality. No more creativity.

But I am the Anti Christ and I fear for our game. I really do if this way of thinking continues. The best players I have ever seen play this game either here or overseas have been individuals. Yes they had brilliant skills and they had vision and tactical awareness and heart and all the rest. Was this coached into them, drummed into them by repetition from an early age?

No it wasn't. No amount of coaching will make a Pele or a George Best, Maradona or a Zidane. I preach to

Philistines on this theme ad nauseam. There is no I in team, I am constantly informed. Yeah yeah, Blah Blah Blah. But you see they forget one thing which is just as important. There is an I in WIN.

We need the individuals. We need the glory hunters. The players that the coaches say are un-coachable. That don't fit into their team plan. If the Kingz had that individual brilliance that could be harnessed by a good manager then who knows what they could have achieved.

So at the end of it all I come full circle. To the Kingz I suggest that you don't look for a coach you look for a manager. A leader of men. Unless you inspire the players and earn their trust through act, word and history, they will not win for you let alone die for you when the road gets tough.



Legends

Alan Stroud

Back on March 28, Rangers AFC (Christchurch) held an Alan Stroud testimonial match (Alan Stroud XI v a Malcolm Ellis Invitation XI which contained the likes of Bobby Almond, Nick Tolerton, Tony Smith, Lee Germon, Steve Sumner).

Stroud made more than 200 national league appearances on top of 180 regional league appearances between 1980 and 2003. He only made four New Zealand appearances between 1986-95 -- it probably should have been more -- but did pick up three national league winners medals.

It's something we don't do enough of in soccer: honouring our long-time servants. But full credit to Rangers not just for pursuing the concept, but also for the class with which they did so.

The programme was a true collector's item. Here are some excerpts from the tributes in it...:

Danny Halligan:

I first met Alan Stroud in 1985 when I made my senior Canterbury debut. He was the first player to greet me with a handshake and that smile that he is well known for, and from that moment I have always thought of Stroudy as the perfect team player.

Stroudy has always shown the great qualities that coaches look for. Along with his brilliant anticipation and athleticism, his other great qualities have been his courage, competitiveness, concentration and, obviously, his sense of humour.

I have always admired Stroudy's great work ethic and the high standards he has set himself and his team mates. When things got tough during a game you always knew that no-one would be working harder, or driving his team mates on more, than the man in the No. 1 shirt.

Every team must have a great atmosphere in the dressing room and Stroud was always the heartbeat in our dressing room. If the heads were down and times were tough, he would be the one to add some spark and some life. Conversely if the dressing room was abuzz with high spirits and banter then Stroudy would be in the thick of it.

Stroudy has always been a great mentor and role model to younger players and it is in that role that I have enjoyed working with him over the last couple of years. He has so much to offer in a coaching and advisory role and, as with all players of his quality he has the respect of all past and present players.

Al, I know you claim that today's game is the start of your retirement but we all know that the only reason you are having a benefit game is to give you another excuse for a few beers, a good laugh and a late night.

Garry Lund:

He has stood behind me in goal since 1986 in hundreds of games for Christchurch United, Rangers and Canterbury. We played our first games for New

Zealand together. We have cried together over injuries. We have celebrated so many times together over many themes with such great passion. We have travelled through Europe together and most recently we play golf and socialise together as friends.

He was an incredible goalkeeper, of that there is no doubt. We always saw him, especially during the late 80s and 90s, as the best in the country and it is a crime that he did not represent New Zealand more often. His worth to teams was simply priceless. Defending and keeping a clean sheet was a huge sense of pride for us defenders but for Stroudy it is an obsession. There have been so many great saves that you almost take it for granted. I refuse to talk about the goals he scored!!!

I'm privileged to have shared some of the most intense and alive experiences with him that only sport at the highest level can bring. The shared trust that exists in the best teams is unique and it brings a bond that is timeless.

Stroudy is one of my closest friends and has helped give me some of my greatest life experiences both on and off the field. Pilgrim Dismount, you are a legend.

Allan Carville:

When it came to training, Stroudy was one of the most dedicated players I have ever seen. After a full session training he would ask the strikers to stay behind to do extra shooting with him. He would then carry on with sit-ups and press-ups. Needless to say with all that extra training we had to ensure we put sufficient fluids back into our bodies. While on overnights playing away games for Christchurch United it wasn't uncommon to find Stroudy leaning against a wall, asleep, following a bit of fluid replenishment.

Back to his footballing talents. Stroudy would undoubtedly be the best keeper I have played with or against, and his abilities as a striker are right up there as well.

Programmes scene

I managed to watch an IDPD programme game on Monday and truthfully I have to say I was disappointed with the quality and skills shown by the next generation of players. This age group 16-17 could not possibly be the best players available. If it was, then I feel the IPDP programme is not working. Maybe it is no more than a money making exercise and that once again the best players are not being identified properly.

This can be borne out by the fact that our Under 19 side has been undefeated in 28 games (now 32 -- Ed) and I have never seen a federation coach at any games.

These boys are aged between 15-18 so must be of consideration and only one was on show at the game. They ask for nominations, but the club and players are never contacted. Same goes for the National Youth federation team.

--Metro chairman Doug Rencher, Metro v North Shore, July 2.

Attention all Numpties



In our latest fundraising effort, for the benefit of the growing army of Kiwi soccer anoraks out there trying to get in touch with your past, Sitter! has reprinted copies of the 1948 match programme (Lancaster Park) for New Zealand versus Australia. These are available for \$5 each (plus \$1 P & P) from

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Federation-watch

Since the last issue, the Central Federation soccer board has fallen into disarray, with the annual meeting filling just one of several board positions and the annual report showing an operating loss of \$88,300 for the 2003-04 year. A string of resignations over the past 12 months and a lack of nominations for the 2004-05 board left Hawke's Bay's Phil Holt as the sole board member.

"They've been left without a board and with a huge deficit. It's a result of dissatisfaction (with the operation of the Federation) and total mismanagement," Soccer Hawke's Bay chairperson Milene Haakman said.

Mrs Haakman, a Hawke's Bay representative, was among the resignations (last May) while Manawatu's Chris Wilson, the chairman, and Wanganui's Mike Boniface also pulled out during the year.

Manawatu's Tony McCrae had a year left on his two-year term but resigned, while Taranaki's Campbell Waugh stood down after serving four years on the board.

Haakman said the future of the board, which employs an administrator, Toni Burnley, and director of football, Bob Sova, was uncertain despite the organisation receiving a \$200,000 New Zealand Community Trust grant to fund a new management structure last month. She said the problems facing the umbrella organisation of the geographically huge Central region (from Gisborne to New Plymouth) were great.

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Talking bollocks

The nonsense that gets written about soccer

Soccer does not rate at all well in NZ, but we do the best we can to cover as much as we can. We get complaints that we show too much soccer and try to explain to customers that there is an audience for the games, just as there is for other sports."

-- Sky TV staffer Mandy Vickery replies to an inquiry about the increased price to watch Sky and the drop-off in soccer coverage after the completion of Euro 2004. Mandy firstly argues soccer does not rate well -- then argues the complete opposite in revealing they are forever telling others there is an audience for these games. Kingz boss Guy Hedderwick said over 1.5 million watched the Kingz play last season on TV, up 100 000 on the previous year. And that was despite the decision not cut back on live away coverage in the second half of the season.

It's hard to believe any Sitter! reader would still be unaware of Glen Price's monthly Soccer Talk magazine (\$5.95). But if so, make contact at

**PO Box 83299, Edmonton, Auckland, (09) 836-8656 or
info@soccertalk.co.nz**

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Magnetix, Wellington
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and... Mr Gordon's Laundry Service 115 Valley Rd, Mt Eden

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NZ Soccer Annuals 1972, 1987 \$4 each
1986 programme: NZ v Newcastle United \$3
Outside the Area (Best NZ Soccer Writing 1970-95) \$5. (Excellent reading)

**Orders to Bruce Holloway, 11 Thames St, Hamilton
(bhollow@iconz.co.nz). Add \$1 post & packaging.**

Toby 'Jugs' Kroon, a Nottingham Forest fan who used to play National League for Nelson Suburbs and Uni-Mt Wellington has a day at Chelsea in...

The good life

Please indulge me while I tell you of my jammy piece of luck on Saturday. Rachel and I went to visit her friends who have been in the country for about 6 weeks. They are working as the "hired help" on a manor/estate in West Sussex for a fairly wealthy businessman. When we went to visit he was away so we made ourselves lords and ladies of the manor for the weekend.

He also left two tickets for the Chelsea game against Middlesborough. As he has an apartment at Chelsea village these weren't your average tickets. When we arrived we got taken to the Di Matteo suite. Upon arrival we were seated and given the menu. (Di Matteo was at the table next to us). I opted for the stilton and broccoli soup for the starter and the swordfish steak as a main. I felt a bit out of my depth during the dinner conversation about the best off-piste runs in the Swiss Alps and how one would be travelling to the game in Monaco next Wednesday.

At 3pm the bell went so we went outside to our seats in the stand on the halfway line. Two rows behind us were the rested Chelsea players - Duff, Melchiot, Parker etc... . At halftime we went back into the suite for our dessert. I opted for profiteroles. I thought the pastry was a little dry and aired my views on this matter. Overall not bad for a day out for free although the game was fairly dull. Still, not a Forest game though.

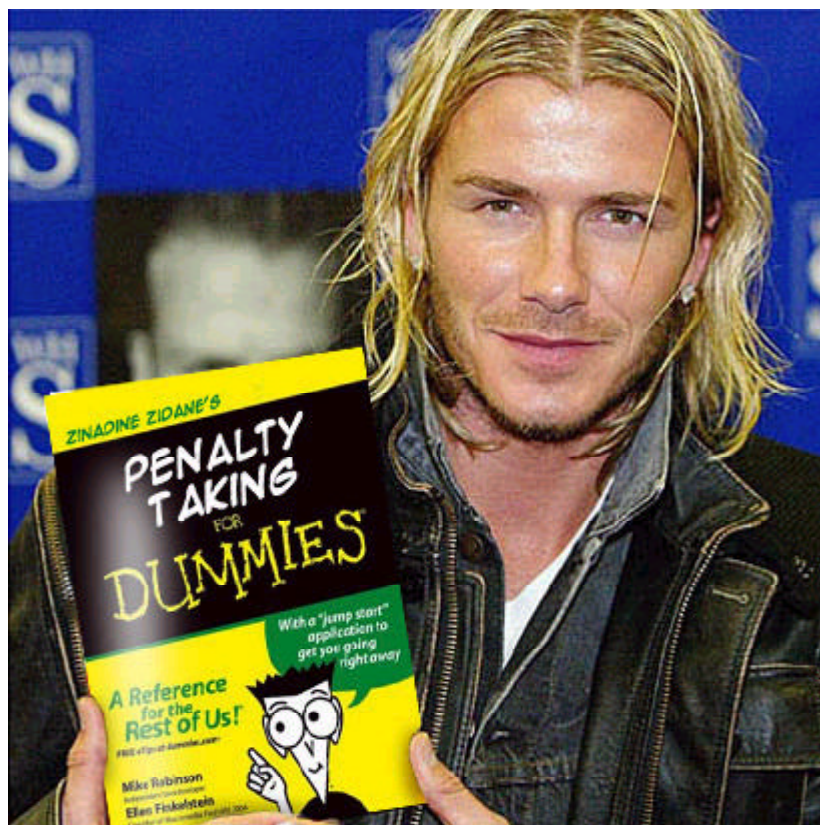
Q & A

Will the Kingz team have a few Chelsea players in it next season, or has that fallen over?

Kingz manager Guy Hedderwick's reply on Goalnet (the internet soccer mailing list):

Give that some logical thought. The first team squad of 30 players are not going to come, the reserve team of 30 players are trying to make the first team so we could get player number 61 who is likely to be 18 and really learning the trade, is that what we want? I would suggest not. The deal works for us sending players to them and the ability to get tickets for the games etc. Would not get overly excited about it.

Euro 2004 memories...



Did he REALLY say that?

"And now there's a little bit of evidence that things are really progressing nicely. We're in phase two of a five-phase plan and by phase four I'd expect us to be very competitive internationally"

-- Paul Smalley, Dom Post, June 4 (a day after the loss to Vanuatu). If phase two involves a loss to Vanuatu, does phase 4 involve a loss to American Samoa ? And 5 a loss to Bhutan? (Courtesy of Goalnet).

Programmes scene

The best bits from programmes around New Zealand

Waikaraka Park, we've finally made it. The \$1,700,000 building project which began during last season has now finally been opened. The clubrooms, along with six separate changing room facilities for teams, separate referees rooms, ground level canteen all overlooking six soccer grounds. We hope you enjoy the new facilities.

-- Onehunga Sports v Waitakere City, March 14.

Just like Sir Alex Ferguson, Lee (Root) has swung the axe and cleaned out some of the "dead wood". Gone are the aging Sean Douglas and Heath McCormivich and again we see a new crop of talented young players...

-- Kara Waetford, Mt Wellington v North Shore, March 6.

With the demise of the national league this season, the northern premier league has been extended to a 14-team competition for the 2004 season. This will reduce back to 12 teams in 2005.

To do this the northern council has decided that the bottom two teams will be relegated. The teams finishing 11th and 12th will go into a playoff with the top two teams from the first division. So there is no automatic promotion to the premier league at the end of the season. At this stage the northern council has not said when this playoff will happen or what format will be used -- surely this information should have been circulated prior to the start of the season.

While on the subject of the northern league, why did today's visitors from Lynn Avon have to go through a play-off series with Manukau city to earn their place in the first division? Manukau were an embarrassment to the competition last season and after finishing last did not deserve another chance at this division.

-- Ken Sargent, club manager, Three Kings v Lynn Avon, April 3.

I'd like to finish by heartily disagreeing with comments made by former Melville player Matt Parkin in Gordon Glen Watson's excellent interview with him in the last home programme.

Asked about his views on the departures from Melville this season, Parkin said: "I think it's fantastic that guys have stayed to help Melville United out. At the same time, I can't fault guys for leaving, either. I feel some of what I have read [about players leaving] has been unfair. You do what is best for yourself, like anybody does. That's not just football, that's life too."

I dislike this Generation X "me-first" attitude at work here, which seems to operate on the premise that soccer clubs are there to take from, rather than

to give to. While nobody can complain about players moving on to play at a higher level, to move sideways or downwards or travel out of town at a time when a club is in an hour of need, is harder to justify.

Clubs are, at heart, the embodiment of our soccer community, and given they are largely populated by players rather than supporters on the New Zealand scene, they will not survive if there is not a greater buy-in from players themselves. Clubs are, in effect, an organisational unit whose operation is largely dependent on subordinating the individual to the greater collective good.

The lack of sense of "community" as expressed by Matt's philosophy that you only ever do what is good for yourself, is slowly suffocating the game. Besides, the whole fan ethos is based upon the act of support, or giving. And by implication, deferring to the "individual good", is anathema.

If people in earlier times at Melville had done what was good for them instead of what was good for the soccer community, there would be no club or facility for players to bugger off from. And if it was really true that we only ever do what is best for ourselves in life, I certainly wouldn't bother contributing to this programme.

– Cordwainer Bull, Melville United v Onehunga Sports, May 15.

In my last report I mentioned that I had hoped to name a new signing for us, but unfortunately this has not happened as the player has been signed by a fellow premier side for what can only be considered an absurd amount of money to play. I am quite happy we didn't get into negotiations, as I could never have justified to the club such expenditure and wouldn't want to!

Is it any wonder that clubs are struggling financially when players are asking, and getting, payments that could be spent elsewhere? The club concerned is not in relegation trouble, and there is no prizemoney or promotion from this league, so why pour money into players?

Why not spend it on equipment, training aids, better facilities, or even youth football, as this club is certainly not strong in the U19 league, so where is their future coming from, more money on players?

-- Doug Renshaw, Metro v Waitakere City, June 4.

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Reviews

On May 28th 2002, an FA Commission granted permission for a group of businessmen to relocate Wimbledon FC Ltd to Milton Keynes, 70 miles from its history, home and community. Devastated fans mourned the death of their club, but before long they took a fresh approach by creating their own team. Tony Sasso reviews the DVD...

Womble till I die!

The AFC Wimbledon story so far...

Shattered fans met in a local pub for what started as a wake but ended with the will to fight and start again with AFC Wimbledon. *Womble till I die! The AFC Wimbledon story so far...* is a documentary DVD that charts the progress of a team created as a response to money men taking away a community's sporting representation.

It interviews the key people responsible and accompanies them on the early stages of the journey to get the club up and running practically and financially. There is also game-by-game summary providing well-shot footage of goals. The interviews of players, coach, management together with dressing room talks is a fantastic insight into lower-level English football - something rarely seen here with the Premier League and Sky coverage.

Once the idea of a community-run team was decided upon, advertisements were placed in local newspapers for open trials to take place on Wimbledon Common; over 200 hopefuls turned up for the chance to play.

Ex-Wimbledon hero Terry Eames was named Manager and once a team had been selected, Joe Sheerin (ex-Chelsea) was named the inaugural AFC Wimble-

don captain.

Backed by the Wimbledon Independent Supporters Association and The Dons Trust, with a membership of nearly 3000, AFC Wimbledon was born.

Just six weeks later, having obtained a ground (Kingsmeadow, in a ground-sharing arrangement with Kingstonian FC), sponsorship and many hundreds of season ticket applications, AFC Wimbledon played its first game on Wednesday 10th July 2002 against Sutton United at Gander Green Lane in front of a crowd of over 4500.

They lost 4-0; a pitch invasion by ecstatic fans at the final whistle ignoring the result on the day, instead celebrating the greater achievement.

Beginning life in the Seagrave Haulage Football League, AFC Wimbledon has only two goals: to claw its way back up the Footballing leagues' ladder and to remain a part of the Wimbledon community. Currently Wimbledon FC (the MK Dons) is in Administration and remains rooted to the bottom of Division One.

Attendances are pitiful (while still at Selhurst Park there were more people protesting outside than supporting in the

ground). While approximately seven leagues below, AFC Wimbledon is perched high atop the mighty Seagrave Haulage Football League (Combined Counties Premier league) with record attendances for that league! [As of 30/3/04: AFC Wimbledon Played 35, Won 32, Drew 3, Lost 0, points 99].

This tale is testimony to the self-belief and strength of conviction of 'true' fans. It is a positive and heartening example to the development of fledgling football teams here in New Zealand. Those involved with the Kingz, Waikato FC etc. should take heart from this story.

So long as it is never forgotten that football is a game for the people by the people and that for a team to be truly successful it can't just be about the money (sorry to all the capitalists who may have just choked on their bile).

The common theme throughout is that of "football reclaiming its sport" and returning to its roots. It's about sticking

"two fingers up to the establishment...people really do count" and that fans are "not going to be run roughshod over by money."

These are all worthy sentiments, but it just may be the latent socialist in me clenching my fist and going Yeah, stick it to the Man!

I thoroughly recommend this DVD. You don't have to be a Womble to appreciate what AFC Wimbledon are doing and have already achieved. Even though, like the team at this stage, the DVD is reasonably amateurish, the production values are perfectly acceptable and the footage of the games still gets the heart racing and the blood pumping.

The only downside is that at the time of release the DVD was so current that it does not cover the end of the inaugural season hence it doesn't really have a 'natural' conclusion. Nevertheless it is a worthy addition to your football library.

Cynic's corner

News item, July 21:

The chance for a lifestyle change has persuaded former South African soccer striker Keryn Jordan to turn his back on his homeland to play for Waitakere United in the upcoming national league. Jordan, 26, the first big signing for the West Auckland-based club, arrives early next month and comes on the recommendation of Football Kingz general manager Guy Hedderwick, who hopes that he may in time join the Kingz.

Jordan, who played twice for South Africa in 2000 before his international career was cut short by a knee injury, said from Johannesburg that he was determined to make the most of the opportunity to play here.

Translation:

New Zealand's domestic soccer competition is so weak that a South African player who was forced to quit top level football four years ago with a knee injury is being touted as a major signing -- and a potential Kingz player.

(Letters of complaint to the usual address)

Changes to the laws of the game

On 1 July the new Laws of the Game, modified at the 118th International Football Association Board (IFAB) meeting in London, England on February 2004, came into force in the northern hemisphere (and in New Zealand next year). The meeting approved a number of amendments to the Laws of the Game. Key decisions included the following:

-# Law 1 - The Field of Play: If permitted under the applicable competition rules, matches may be played on a natural turf or artificial turf surface. In the case of artificial turf, the surface must meet the requisite quality standards (i.e. the FIFA Quality Concept for Artificial Turf or the International Artificial Turf Standard).

Law 3 - The Number of Players: No more than six substitutions per team shall be permitted in friendly matches.

Law 10 - Method of Scoring: With regard to the method for determining the winner of a match, the IFAB ruled in favour of extra-time, consisting of two periods of no more than 15 minutes each, followed by kicks from the penalty mark. As a result, matches will no longer be decided by "golden goal" or "silver goal".

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct: Any player removing his jersey after scoring a goal shall be cautioned for unsporting behaviour.

Furthermore, Law 5 will now dictate that if the rules of a competition endorse the use of a fourth official, his function and responsibilities shall correspond with those laid down by the IFAB.

The IFAB chose to reject proposals to increase the maximum length of the half-time interval from 15 to 20 minutes and to advance free kicks by 9.15 metres if a player from the penalised team fails to retreat the required distance or prevents the free kick from being taken.

The International F.A. Board is constituted of The Football Association (England), The Scottish FA, The Football Association of Wales, The Irish FA and FIFA, each of which is represented by four delegates. FIFA have four votes on behalf of all of its affiliated associations. The other IFAB member associations have one vote each. For a proposal to be passed, it must receive the support of at least three-quarters of those present and entitled to vote

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-- Tommy Smyth, irritating ESPN commentator, Inter v Real, Champions League 26.11.98.

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