

SITTER!

The NZ soccer fanzine

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Surely I
can't get
sacked from
two coaching
jobs inside
12 months



Mick's Waitt-ing game

The Line Up

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Unsolicited articles on New
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Feedback

Well, you anoraks are well off your game. Last issue (remember way back then?) we subtly changed our **masthead** and nobody noticed/complained/argued the toss. Disappointing, that.

Where it previously said "The NZ soccer fanzine, we instead labelled Sitter! "The NZ football fanzine".

Some 12 years after it became de rigeur to change the "football" in our incorporated society names to "soccer" the mood swing is going back the other way. There was a time when you numpties used to write letters earnestly pontificating about the purity of such names. Not a sausage this time. So we've gone back to "soccer" in the masthead and will continue to rotate the terms until somebody can front with a half-decent argument. And just because NZ Soccer should vacillate is not reason on its own, remember.

Sitter! regrets the death of one of its oldest subscribers, **Bob Walker**. Bob, 86, was a keen Waikato football follower, occasional Sitter! contributor, astute football critic, and as a former editor of Norwich and Doncaster daily newspapers and qualified lawyer, also a recognised expert on media law. He will be missed.

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

COVER: Sitter! deputy Grant Stantiall caught Mick Waitt in a pensive moment and we guessed the rest.

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, but we do need the odd bit of coin. And you wouldn't believe how miserable soccer supporters can be.

Up front



The national league

Because it is important to have a national league back, I should really be doffing my cap, jumping on the bandwagon and enthusing about the dawn of a new era.

But as a long-time fan I must admit I'm feeling totally underwhelmed by the standard.

At the time of writing I've seen nine matches first-hand and one on video. Despite the presence of 22 former or current All Whites, grandiose criteria and suffocatingly positive propaganda, hand on heart, I can't say the standard has been any better than the supposedly "unsatisfactory" league it was designed to replace. Indeed, some of the matches I've seen this summer would rank as the most dire ever consumed at national league level.

In reviewing progress so far, I'm drawn back to the press statement released after the league launch in September

"Since its inception in 1970, Soccer's National League has been all things to all people. For every champion side there was a team of strugglers; for every boom gate there was a pitiful turnout; for every good import there was an overweight liar getting off a plane. In short, the national league through the years has been hit or miss, with an equal share of each."

Spookily, it strikes me that the New Zealand Football Championship is just as hit and miss as its predecessors.

For every champion side, there is a struggler at the bottom of the table (no matter what the format or league size, one team must always finish bottom, remember). For every monster gate in Auckland, there is a derisory crowd in places like Manawatu, Hamilton, Napier.

And while a couple of South Africans are ripping up trees in Auckland, Waikato's Scott Cassie has returned to Scotland without playing a game.

The theory of reducing the league to eight teams to make competition more elite, hasn't worked. It has effectively managed to sideline good players in Auckland and allowed duffers to get a run elsewhere.

But there should be little surprise there has been no miracle rise in standard (assuming you accept my analysis). Most of the criteria for the new league involved addressing peripheral areas of the game... having grandstands, a drug testing room, a business plan, completing media templates and deadlines, having Osh safety policy, an accounting template. Yada yada.

The biggest thrust of the revamped league was to present a more professional package. And improve financial viability and long term sustainability standard of facilities for players, fans, media, sponsors.

Yes, raising playing standards was also an objective of the new league. But I can't actually recall too many initiatives aimed at addressing questions of on-field

playing standards (though there was a suggestion it would be lovely if everyone played 4-3-3). Eligibility was sorted out through criteria, rather than on-field ability. Promotion/relegation was ditched. The rationale was the previous league focus on playing strength had failed to produce an overall product. Now we have an “overall product” but questionable playing strength.

On that score, my local national league team trains just twice a week. That’s hardly a recipe for quality improvement, though geography conspires against much more, with modestly-talented players travelling large distances to convene. But the club does go out of its way to meet criteria. And as things stand, meeting criteria will determine the club’s future more fundamentally than playing quality.

Are we in a pickle here? Have we got the recipe wrong again?

I was struck by a recent Goalnet internet posting by prolific (and usually positive) Auckland football reporter Jeremy Ruane the other week. He wrote:

“I can’t wait for the girls to get back into action, so my faith in NZ football can be restored. Because the mediocrity I’m being forced to endure in their absence, in something being paraded as this country’s ‘shop window’ competition, is leaving me more than a little disillusioned with and despondent about the game in this country.

So low is the standard and quality of football I’m witnessing at present, compared to that which I’ve come to expect, that the idea of severely curtailing my written coverage of the men’s game...”

On the upside, the overall league attendances would seem to be up, though the real test will come late in February when lower league clubs are gearing for action.

Pitch standards seem to be fine, but I’m not convinced the league is any more spectator-friendly. Places like Waikato Stadium may offer more creature comforts, but the overall package results in far less atmosphere than traditional tight-knit club grounds.

Media coverage has been on about a par with previous campaigns in newspapers, but has improved significantly on the radio front, where it has been possible some weekends to tune into multiple live broadcasts.

Football Central offers a dedicated weekly TV highlights wrap on Sky TV, though is a total embarrassment and full of cock-ups, despite the best efforts of Fred de Jong to add credibility. It’s so bad it’s had me yearning for Miles Davis and the House of Football. (More on this later.)

It’s been a bold decision by New Zealand Soccer to rebrand the new national league as The New Zealand Football Championship.

By ditching the term “soccer” they have re-ignited one of the old chestnuts of the game.

In countries such as New Zealand “soccer” (originally a derivation of “association” as in “association football”) has evolved as the name of the game, if only to avoid confusion with football codes (league, rugby) which are more dominant in the public psyche.

It was for this reason that our national body changed its name from New Zealand Football Association to Soccer New Zealand (and then New Zealand Soccer) in the mid-90s.

In justifying the flip-flop, Bill MacGowan said the use of the word “football” was considered carefully.

“Research indicated that we are preaching largely to the converted with the launch of the new competition. The catch phrase of the local name of the global game sums it up with regards the immediate recognition that we are seeking amongst the soccer playing community, young and old.”

It’s a real worry to hear that with all the efforts made to re-launch the national league, and the vast chunks being spent, we are only “preaching to the converted”. There’s a pressing need to draw in the thousands with natural links to the sport who are far from being “converted”.

But further, I question the validity of the tagline of the new NZ Football Championship, “the local name of the global game”. If you think about it, this is simply not true. In actual fact “soccer” is the local name of the global game. Football is the name of the global game everywhere except New Zealand, Australia and the US.

Still, the good thing is, if it signals we are inevitably heading for another name change all over, at least the game might be able to use the occasion as an excuse to find better names for the northern federations than the awful, nebulous, United Soccer 1, Soccer2 and Force Three.

As well as the challenge of developing a new generation of elite players, there is an even more desperate need for us to discover (or rediscover) soccer as a spectator sport.

This new national league must somehow evolve as a competition from which the public, especially kids, learn the art of soccer spectating and fandom. As much as clever-dick kids with Maradona turns, we need those thousands of recreational players out there need learning to become, er, recreational spectators.

Like a plant that needs to be watered every week, kids particularly need the drip-feed joy-and-despair experience of learning to follow a team, week-in, week-out. We need to develop more core spectators. Fans, for want of a better word. The challenge is to address our consumption of soccer, as much as its production.

It’s common these days for soccer to be labelled a minority sport, particularly by television moguls. That’s usually just after paying homage to rugby as “our national game”. Certainly rugby is just that, among my generation.

But given the uptake on the recreational playing front, it need not be for the next generation if we can plant the seeds of soccer as a spectator sport.

Future commercial trends will be dictated by the youth culture of the day. That in turn has significance for advertisers, which could just have enormous significance for soccer coffers. It would certainly help meet that other key football

challenge: getting money into the game.

Sadly, these days few kids who play the game have ever watched a top adult match in the flesh. It's a bloody tragedy.

The one thing all fans like is success. Kiwis especially relate to following a successful team. (By contrast, in the UK many dyed-in-the-wool types seem to extract perverse pleasure from the torture of loyally following an unsuccessful team.)

As a result it is often said that it is good for the game as a whole when a home team wins. By far the bulk of fans go away happy and vowing to return for another dose. Perversely, for those with a real passion, the opposite is the case. It is when fans travel to away matches that the lasting bonds, friendships and a real sense of belonging is built.

There's nothing like a feeling of shared purpose among people making the extra effort to travel. It becomes a case of us-against-them. It also invariably happens that travelling fans lose their self-consciousness far more easily. Away from their own manor, they let their inhibitions go and freely chant and sing. To cite my local example, it's much like Melville United's travelling army -- historically silent at Gower Park -- did away from home on their swaggering Chatham Cup run of 2003.

There is a sense of occasion with being a travelling fan, particularly when your team wins away from home. It is the stuff traditions and legends are borne of. I mention this because it has long been a core feature of the national league in New Zealand that our geography conspires against fans making most away trips.

The 2004 league is as small as it has ever been, and from a Waikato perspective there are only two away games -- Waitakere and Auckland City -- within easy reach. For teams like Otago and Canterbury the outlook is even bleaker.

Therefore our game is robbed of one of its most infectious features -- a travelling army of fans with critical mass. That just makes it all the more important that we work on nurturing our fan base.

It may not be Man Utd v Arsenal, but when you get into the habit of following your local team, it is every bit as important.

We don't select our international footballers -- even our women -- on the basis of looking good, but on their ability to perform.

It's a shame then that the same fundamental "performance" criteria is not applied to TV punditry in our soccer.

We have a potentially useful vehicle for the game in Sky TV's weekly (Thursday) Football Central wrap of the national league and New Zealand soccer happenings.

Sure, some of it is a bit amateurish, with footage seemingly shot on Uncle Ben's home video, while the inability to do the little things right, such as name the goalscorers (most goals are anonymously presented to an accompaniment of dance music) is disappointing.

But the biggest let-down is the presence of New Zealand women's international

Maia Jackman. Good player, crap pundit. She makes April Bruce (ex TVNZ) seem like John Motson.

If there was any sort of broadcasting performance criteria, Jackman would surely be out on her ear. I can't think of anyone in any code who adds as little value to the consumption of televised sport as her.

She has no firm opinions, pathetically little background knowledge on the subject she is supposedly expert at, and all the screen charisma of a frozen mackerell (with lip gloss, mind). After my most recent viewing of Football Central, I have reached the conclusion that the fundamental problem is Jackman is just plain bored. She speaks in a boring voice, looks bored, makes boring comments and is obviously so bored that she can't even be bothered to do her homework so she could answer the patsy questions they put in front of her.

If members of the Swanz were chosen on the sort of flawed criteria that has Jackman prompting even us soccer nuts to turn the TV off, there would be all sorts of outrage. She is simply not up to the job and should be axed. Her presence is just plain embarrassing. It sends the subliminal message to viewers that it is not possible to find three people in NZ with cogent opinions on the game.

If there was another half-decent pundit in her place, it might just be possible for Fred de Jong -- who has plenty of ideas, but as an NZ Soccer board member is not quite an independent voice -- to get some sort of intelligent cross-fertilisation of ideas, or collective ferment going on the game's big issues. (Incidentally, Fred, no need to shout on the tele.)

On the Sitter! website forum Jason Pine has pinpointed a basic format problem with the show.

The highlights packages from each of the games are 'commentated' by Fred and Maia as if they were calling the games live, i.e. they are described in present, rather than past tense. Packages like these should be narrated, not commentated,

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new (but still embryonic) Sitter! website at
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and major incidents should be pre-announced and then seen on the screen. For example, the narrator would say, "Grant Young went close just before half-time with a thundering drive from 25 yards" and then we should see that thundering drive. It's not rocket science - it's the way highlights packages are done when there's no commentary to use. Watch any other similar programme and that's the way it's done. The way Football Central does it just adds to it's mediocrity - "Jordan's through on goal - he could score here - oh, it's just past the post..." We all know what's going to happen, and we know that you know too, so please please please don't treat us like idiots.

I can't get over how boring most national league programmes are. Under the new league, clubs must publish a (minimum) 16-page programme. It's an outlet for the game to indulge itself in its own publicity you might think. Perhaps some really insightful comment from people close to the action. No. it's mainly platitudes, dross, emptiness. One of the exceptions has been Auckland City's programme. They've run Barry Smith's informative (and very good) series on the history of the national league and another series on punter's all-time best national league teams. They've got colour poster pullouts for those so inclined, and all in all, it's a tidy package.

The most significant thing said at the New Zealand Soccer- NZ Soccer Media Awards Dinner on November 25 came from retiring chief executive Bill MacGowan. He explained for the benefit of those not already aware the real power behind the throne in soccer with his references to "the stool".

The three "legs" of the stool were MacGowan, West Auckland football godfather Rex Dawkins and NZ Herald soccer reporter Terry Maddaford. Others may elect board members and chairman, but as MacGowan explained, "the stool" made the real decisions.

MacGowan also made an unfunny crack about the media being "arseholes", but in light of the "stool" revelation – and cosy Radio Sport links through media liaison man Andrew Dewhurst -- followers could be excused for thinking MacGowan had a dream ride with the media and didn't even realise it.

MacGowan did tidy up a lot of mess when he returned to the game, and brought much-needed financial rigour to New Zealand Soccer.

But typically he did it in such a dictatorial fashion, disenfranchising the lower levels of the game rather than empowering them. He really needed to be subjected to a bit more scrutiny.

It remains to be seen how we will remember him. Under his helmsmanship we hardly ever saw the All Whites play at home -- because he wasn't prepared to take the financial risks. For all his playing, administering and coaching background in soccer, I was left with the impression that MacGowan lacked a "feel" for the game. An able administrator, he could not be mistaken for a visionary. Too often he seemed to operate in a vacuum where he had the final say.

Financially the game is in far better shape, but in terms of our international standing, we're a mess, with our age group (with the exception of U23s) and All Whites teams languishing in the also ran category in Oceania. We seldom saw the All Whites play in New Zealand. You get the impression Bill never fancied the associated bills.

I felt sorry for Terry Maddaford when he was publicly "outed" as a leg of "the stool". Terry has been in the game a long time, and is the Kiwi journalist with the best appreciation of Oceania soccer politics, but in my view it's not a good look for a member of the fourth estate to be so closely aligned with the hierarchy.

However it turned out to be his night, and he was named as soccer writer of the year for the first time.

Terry is also reporting for the new tabloid-style Herald on Sunday (their staff are forbidden from calling it a tabloid; "compact" is the code-word) which is being circulated in the Herald's core circulation area of the northern half of the North Island.

No offence to Terry, but I'm disappointed he's doing the soccer beat. With a new paper, I'd hoped for a fresh perspective in the north. I think there's an urgent need for an alternate voice for soccer in one of the game's key catchment areas.

Terry is very experienced, but has an outlet Monday to Saturday to work the round. It would be nice if there was someone different on a Sunday, not just for us readers, who may appreciate somebody attacking issues from a slightly different perspective, but also from the journalism perspective of a bit of competition and rivalry on the beat to break stories.

Couple of other comments on the awards evening. The evening was again very professional, with audio-visual stuff and all the beat box music at the right cues. But for all that, I found it a glib event. Andrew Clay read all the winners' details as fast as he could, in the same monotone. There was just too much insincerity for my liking. Vaughan Coveny won the International Player of the Year award, but how astonishing Che Bunce never even made the final three. Everyone who was at Adelaide seems to think he was New Zealand's best player there. (The award was selected by NZS coaching staff).

A word also about Tony Lochhead. He was named International Young Player. This used to be exclusively the domain of Players Under 21. Lochhead was 22.

I've been elected president of the Melville United club. I've recently stopped working as a sports journalist and decided it was time to roll my sleeves up and actually do something rather than forever being an expert on the sideline. I've also been doing media liaison work for Waikato FC and editing their home programme. This has impacted on projects such as Sitter! and developing the Sitter! website. These things can't be helped. -- **Bruce Holloway**

Our worst international programme?



The programme for the Chile-New Zealand Under 20 match at North Harbour Stadium on September 27 can safely be regarded as a collector's item, in that it is quite possibly the smallest international soccer programme ever produced. It consisted of one piece of A5 (!) paper folded in half, and would fit in your wallet, let alone your pocket. But was it also New Zealand's worst international programme? (At a time when NZ Soccer is insisting on quality standards at club level). You can't be too hasty in attributing labels to these things. RON ANORAK tabbed the form on three contenders for New Zealand's Worst International Programme.

New Zealand v Vanuatu, 1994 World Cup Qualifying, Oceania Qualifying Round (Group 2) Mt Smart, July 1, 1992.

This is a simple sheet of photocopied goldcrest yellow A4 paper folded in half. The cover had a "Winfield International Soccer" logo, but otherwise looked like it had been typed on an Imperial 66 (ask your Dad). The back cover has the same Winfield graphic, but on an inexplicably rakish angle.

The inside is a plain but legible list of players from both countries, with Chris "Zorocich" the only spelling mistake. There was no indication of who the captains were, or what clubs they came from. First names could not be provided for the officials, though we did learn they were all from Australia.

No effort was made to put the importance of the match in any perspective, provide details of any following matches, or say anything about any of the players.

In the programme's defence, desktop publishing was not the state-of-the-art industry it is now and a match set for a Wednesday, 2.30pm kick-off was never going to pull the punters in Auckland.

But all in all, a pretty lumpen effort. It's hard to imagine it would be possible to do less and still call it a programme.

Ineptitude rating (out of 10): 8

All Whites v Papua New Guinea & Fiji, North Harbour Stadium June 11, June 18, 1997.

This is a glossy 80gsm 12-page black and white effort for an Oceania qualifying tournament (not that the programme actually bothers to tell us that) that looks like it was put together by somebody on LSD.

A mish-mash of blurred and distorted graphics made many of the pages totally illegible, while underset leading with the text made it an even bigger strain on the eyes. Which is not much use for people who want to actually read the programme, rather than use it as a sunshade. It features arguably the ugliest cover ever dreamt up for a soccer programme.

Somehow team numbers for the All Whites (home team, remember) got omitted. This is the most basic information punter's seek from a programme to save them guessing. ("Who is the bloke with his hands on his hips? Oh, that's Rufer?")

The programme did attempt to give snippets of information. So we learn that Chris Jackson "digs the Simpsons" and Nik Viljoen "eats barbeque chicken" (this in 20-point print) but not what clubs they play for. On the positive side, it let us know NZ captain and vice-captain.

Unlike the other two finalists, they wanted money for this programme. It cost \$1. The only editorial was trite blumph from SNZ chairman Jock Irvine. With seemingly a decent budget to expend on a programme, to come up with this tosh was a tragedy. At a time when thousands were "returning to the game" to have a look at the return of Rufer, this was a shabby, shoddy product, and a lost opportunity.

Ineptitude rating: 9

NZ Under 20s v Chile U20s, North Harbour Stadium, September 29, 2004.

Apart from the postage-stamp size, the feature of this programme has to be the amateur-night cover. It looks like it's been printed on an old Commodore 64 dot matrix job. The major print says "South American Soccer is showcased at North Harbour tonight."

In actual fact it was New Zealand international soccer that should have been the thing that was being showcased. There are numerous outlets to see South American soccer these days. But home international at any level are a rarity.

Inside there's a blurred photo of Bill MacGowan -- whose designation is never stated -- who in 124 words at least puts the match into context by explaining they couldn't afford to bring back overseas players for the match.

There is a draw for the first round of the New Zealand Football Championship. This no doubt is there to help promote a new competition. But within the context of an international programme it would have been more fitting to outline to the public the logistics of the Under 20s qualifying campaign next year.

On the player listings there is only one spelling error: Steven "Gully" (should be Gulley), though Elliott Stead is listed as Stead Elliott.

But who are these players? What clubs are they from? Nothing. The back page is either for sponsor ads -- or the bottom line in one of those eye tests.

If you can, get hold of one of these. They will become collector's items, with great curiosity value.

Ineptitude rating: 7

You know you're showing the signs of being (well) over 40 when...

1. You leave finely-balanced football matches before the end to "beat the rush".
2. You get more excited about having a roast on a Sunday than going to a national league match.
3. You stop dreaming of becoming a professional footballer and start dreaming of having a son who might instead.
4. Before throwing the Herald away in disgust at the lack of local football news, you have a quick peek through the property section.
5. All of a sudden, Wynton is not 40, he's ONLY 40.
6. The benefits of a superannuation scheme become clear.
7. Before going to an away match, you ask what the parking is like.
8. Rather than throw your old trainers out, you keep them because they'll be all right for doing the lawns.
9. You buy your first ever T-shirt without anything written on it.
10. You find yourself saying things like "I remember when they played at Newmarket Park" and "Of course, in my day...."
11. You start to worry about your Mum's health.
12. Some of your best friends are referees.
13. You have more disposable income, but everything you want to buy costs between \$200 and \$800.
14. You start listening to jazz.

15. You don't go in for a drink afterwards, because you want to get home and catch the news on the tele.

16. Everything Phil Gifford says on Radio Sport, you suspect you've heard before. And you start to wonder if Brendan Telfer might have a point after all.

17. The fridge is always full.

18. You can name every one of the bland MOR songs that Jeremy Ruane plays on the tannoy at North Harbour Stadium.

19. You find the wine at Kiwitea St more appealing than the beer.

20. You spend more time on the physio bench than the sub's one.

21. You can remember Keith Nelson scoring a goal just like it.

22. You can't actually remember the last time Spurs won the league, but you've spent 40 years making jokes about how long ago it was.

23. You miss the Premier League highlights on tele because you've become engrossed in a documentary on the History Channel.

24. You stop at a pub before the match and admire their hanging baskets.

25. You don't stop at a pub on the way to the match.

26. The noise from Bloc 5 annoys you.

27. You find yourself saying "is it cold here, or is it just me?"

28. You still think of Bill MacGowan as a right back.

29. You don't think it's right that referees aren't dressed in black.

30. You come face to face with your own mortality for the first time, and the indestructibility of youth gives way to a realisation that you are but passing through this life and perhaps you need to grow up and do something more worthy than piss around with a fanzine.

"The Jimmy Greaves of NZ soccer"

Don Service examines the John Wrathall legend

How to start, in writing about John Wrathall, who was such a legend in Auckland soccer, yet probably not very well known south of the Bombay hills?

The obituaries in the newspapers in October 1975 probably summarised his career better than I can.

From the NZ Herald: "John Wrathall, probably the finest scorer of goals ever produced in New Zealand soccer, collapsed and died while playing in a tennis match in Eastcote, London, on Sunday... He was 38... An example of his splendid shooting powers was shown in successive Chatham Cup games in 1965. In one game he scored all five goals for Eastern Suburbs and in the next he crashed home six of his sides seven goals.

"Tennis was his second great sporting love. He won the national boys singles in 1954 and the boys doubles in 1955. One wonders what heights he

might have achieved if his talents had been fostered in a more demanding soccer background."

A similar sentiment had been expressed 10 years or so earlier by Billy Walsh, the former Irish international who played, coached and did selection duties in Auckland, while John Staines, another Suburbs team mate who captained New Zealand in 1973 through he was perhaps the Jimmy Greaves of New Zealand soccer.

From Alan Sefton in The Auckland Star: "He had started out in junior soccer in 1946 and scored an amazing 428 goals before moving up to the senior ranks in 1953. He went on the score more than 1000 goals, played more than 400 first-team games for his only club, Eastern Suburbs, represented Auckland on 40 occasions and played five times for New Zealand.

"A chunky figure even when fully fit, his last years in top soccer always



meant a determined effort on his part to keep down to his 12 stone, 12 pounds playing weight. Right to the time of his retirement, Wrathall never lost that amazing acceleration over the first 10 yards, not that almost magical goal knack."

Charlie Dempsey, who coached Suburbs for 2-3 years in the early 1960s, says in his autobiography: "Wrathall had that special something, the class or style you recognised in those famous players like Stanley Matthews, Tom Finney, Tom Lawton – when Wrathall got the ball you knew something was bound to happen. Everyone sat up in their seats... he never got his name taken, never deliberately fouled in my memory.

"He was a lazy trainer, and would put weight on faster than any other player I knew, but you only needed to put the ball at his feet and he was away; the next thing you would see would be the ball in the back of the net.

"I was keen on the players building up stamina with some distance running. They would run along the Auckland waterfront, up the hill at Okahu Bay and along the St Heliers ridge back to the ground. To see they all did the whole route I would drive along the course. I didn't learn until afterwards, but several times Wrathall sneaked into the back seat of my car while I was out checking

numbers at the halfway mark and lay down behind the back seat... Back at the ground he would ease out, join the players and do a circuit of the ground."

Wrathall played in four Chatham Cup finals, for a loss in 1955 and wins in 1965, 1968 and 1969. In the 1968 final Soccer News said "the veteran John Wrathall was just what his reputation suggested, an opportunist who could not be given an inch to move in". He scored the only two goals of the match against Technical (Christchurch).

With the second goal "he demolished the defence. He sent two defenders sprawling, and in crashing through the second tackle, he tripped and slightly overran the ball. He reached back and hooked the ball home with his right foot".

In theory he should have played a lot more games for both Auckland and New Zealand, but apparently business commitments and/or fitness difficulties as he got older worked against this. For example, he played in hardly any of those very numerous games Auckland played against visiting national sides, and British and Continental club sides throughout the sixties, although he is listed in the AFA centennial history as having played his first representative game in 1954 and the last in 1970.

He toured with New Zealand to Tahiti in 1960 and played in all three games, but scored only two of the 15

***When Wrathall
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goals. However in the test against Deportivo Saprissa (Costa Rica) before 11,000 people at Carlaw Park in 1959, he brought the house down with two goals which helped to turn a 0-2 half time deficit into a 3-2 win. The two goals were very similar – long, soaring angled free kicks from about 40 yards.

The other goal was scored by Irishman Jim Bell, who retired from lower grade play in Auckland only several years ago – he played into his 60s. When he came up unheralded from Wellington to Auckland in 1960 he gave the Onehunga secretary quite a surprise when he rang up and asked if he could play for the club.

Carlaw Park is now abandoned and there is talk of removing the old 1920s grandstand to some ground out of Auckland. Not far from the central city, it is valuable land, ripe for development, but the task of demolishing the huge mass of the concrete terraces would be a big one. Those terraces were built in 1954, and the first time they were completely filled was for a soccer test in 1955 against a Hong Kong team, when 17,000 were present.

Wrathall continued to play for his beloved Suburbs. A match programme from October 2 1965, with one match still to go, shows Wrathall leading the goalscorers with 44, followed by Trevor Pugh, also of Suburbs, with 27, then Tom Patterson (North Shore) 25, and

Ray Mears (Suburbs), Bert Ormond (Blockhouse Bay) and Tom McKinlay (Mt Wellington) all on 20. No wonder Suburbs won the inaugural Northern League championship that year.

Wrathall even played in the first two seasons of the national league. According to the NZ Truth Book of Soccer “he played 15 games (including 12 as a substitute, sometimes coming on late in the second half) and scoring 14 goals.” What a pity the league didn’t start years earlier, in his heyday.

***Wrathall even
played in the first
two seasons of the
national league***

But his 1000th goal was in a league game at Newmarket Park, the third in his hat trick against Mt Albert Ponsonby in 1971.

Wrathall was famous for the power in his long shots, but no doubt because of his heavy build, some of them sailed over the bar. And there was a fault I never saw mentioned in print, which I can only say I saw occur a fair number of times. He would beat a couple of men with the ball at toe, but then push the ball a little too far ahead to be easily robbed by the next opponent in his path. But these are minor quibbles.

Here are a couple of remarks overheard from spectators at games.

From a North Shore supporter when a Shore player carelessly passed the ball straight to Wrathall’s feet: “Oh God, don’t give it to that joker.”

And on another occasion: “I wouldn’t have come along if I’d known Wrathall wasn’t playing.”

Programme of the Year

Lower Hutt City have won the New Zealand Soccer Media Association Programme of the Year award for the second successive year with their "Club Call".

The 2004 award, sponsored by Sitter! fanzine, was judged by NZ Truth football columnist Simon Kay, with other finalists being Three Kings and Waterside Karori.

Kay described Lower Hutt's programme as "a colourful publication that doesn't just restrict itself to in-depth information about the top side but covers all the club's senior teams and much more.

"It's obvious editor Graham Watson and his team put a huge amount of work into a programme that ranges from 24 to 32 pages. There's no doubt that members and visitors reading Lower Hutt City's Club Call would be well informed and entertained about all the happenings at senior level."

Lower Hutt's colour cover and variation of photos also meant the programme doesn't look the same from week to week – something that has since emerged as a tragic weakness of national league programmes.

Lower Hutt had team lists which included seniors and reserves, plus match officials, and sometimes team photos and a brief history of the opponents.

They offered comprehensive wrap-ups, tables and the draw for senior teams at all levels, with much light-hearted humour in the lower division contributions and benefited from Jason Pine's column, 'Piney's Piece'."

However Kay did have one quibble with the Hutt programme.

"Lower Hutt's use of nicknames and/or first names would make it hard to follow for club members or visitors unfamiliar with the first team or for those reading the programme years from now."

Kay described the Three Kings entry (16 pages) as "a comprehensive combination of

facts and pictures that makes the club's premier women perhaps the best covered team in the country."

It was "the Jeremy Ruane show, with blow-by-blow match reports which include the interesting technique of thumbnail photos (taken by Jeremy) placed alongside an account of the incident (written by Jeremy). The stories contain a startling array of facts unmatched by any of the other entries."

However, this is effectively the programme of a single team (the premier women) rather than an entire club (which is one of the largest in the country)."

Presentation was the strength of the Waterside Karori programme with a simple, tidy and easy-to-follow layout.

Waterside's strengths included team lists for seniors and reserves, plus historic results against the day's opponents going back up to 20 years.

"A good mix of the informative and light-hearted from all senior levels of the club in a well laid out programme. I'd be curious to know how well Waterside's name and shame page for those with unpaid fines works."

Kay said illustrations were the biggest weakness of all programmes entered. Napier had none inside except for player profile mug shots. Lower Hutt had photos on the cover and middle pages only, albeit in full colour.

"Of the photos used by Waterside and Three Kings, some were blurry and many were so small, even the players would have trouble recognising themselves. Three Kings were the best in this category with the good photos taken by Graham Hughes that were used larger than the rest." "Programme editors perhaps underestimate the effectiveness and impact of an eye-catching photo that is used BIG."

Earlier this year Roger Wilkinson returned to New Zealand to run courses on behalf of Premier Skills Coaching, an English soccer training company based in the Midlands, and NASCAT, the New Zealand soccer coaches association. Here he offers a summary of his experiences and his views on the game here in...

The New Zealand game has gone backwards

John Cartwright and I returned to New Zealand (and Australia) to introduce the "Practice Play" coaching programme, under invitation from New Zealand and Adelaide coaching associations.

Premier Skills has been very successful in training grassroots coaches in the UK as well as working in partnership with a number of league clubs. We believe in the "practice play" philosophy which in simple terms means we work solely through realistic game situations. No drills and lines of players waiting for their turn!

We have a commitment to skill acquisition and we work with young players to govern and be clever with the ball, to run with the ball, dribble, twist, turn and screen the ball first and then join in with other players.

From day one our kids make decisions on time and space. We have a pre determined game-style so that the

grassroots coach knows why they are putting on the session and how it fits into a long term coaching programme.

All of our work is connected through

age and ability bands and we have assessment tools to measure improvement so the coach and the player know how to progress. We have a strong commitment to coach education and now after two years we have over 30 coaches working for us and will be recruiting another 10 in the next 12 months.

Most of our coaches are ex pros who have a strong professional playing and

coaching background and its our belief that you can't have clever innovative players if you don't have clever innovative coaches. All these coaches, although they have been through the FA system, believe emphatically in the "Practice Play" philosophy.

This year 2 of the NASCAT. (National Association of Soccer Coaches and Teachers) coaches John Pearce and



John White completed our Level 1 badge in the UK and felt it was a programme desperately needed in New Zealand

In April of this year we ran courses in Auckland and Wellington and delivered a workshop in Hamilton. The response was very positive and we will be returning in January to run other courses and mentor our first group of coach educators both in New Zealand and in Australia.

It was an interesting experience coming back to New Zealand this time. My impression, after talking to soccer people at all levels, was that the New Zealand game had gone backwards quite considerably.

I know that sounds harsh but at "supposed" elite level our international results have never been poorer. Our under 17s are fifth in Oceania, our Under 20s are third, the Under 23s were very lucky to beat Vanuatu in the Olympics and the All Whites result speaks for itself.

I can't help feeling that Mick Waitt was set up. How Bill MacGowan could claim that group games were to be used as warm up games shows how out of touch he is with international competition.

There are a number of other uncomfortable questions that need answering about the World Cup debacle. If they were short of warm up games why didn't they play a Central League representative X1 and the Northern League equivalent as we did in 82? Whose decision was it to drop so many

players who got us to the Confederation cup finals a few months before? It's not as if the younger players brought in had been particularly successful at their own age group level.

Why did Paul Smalley and Ricki Herbert play active roles with the team at the Confederations Cup and then disengage themselves to the roles of observers for the World Cup?

What was the point of going through the earlier tournament and not to use that experience in a hands-on capacity at the more prestigious tournament?

It was also very interesting to hear the "spin" that was coming forth about the Federation structure that governs the New Zealand game.

A quick anecdotal audit shows that they aren't working. Three out of the seven are still either structurally or financially incompetent and the Canterbury Federation only made a profit with the help of sponsorship.

As has been shown in the UK with league clubs, if you rely on outside

money to break even then you're a bad risk and vulnerable.

Just as importantly the New Zealand clubs generally were weaker in organisation than five years ago. Playing standards are poorer (those are local supporters words not mine), there is a lack of finance, administration, and facilities have not moved on as quickly as they should have.

There is an apathy at club board level

The last thing New Zealand needed was a watered-down English coach education system! Why? Because it doesn't work in England!

as they don't feel part of the national game big picture. This of course is partly their own fault as they allowed New Zealand Soccer and the Federations to disenfranchise them.

NZS has quite wrongly re-defined the clubs outside the national league as "social clubs". This was a cynical move and totally wrong. These clubs are the "cradle of the game".

In a perfect "soccer world" the governing body should be facilitating well run, vibrant local clubs who engage with the local community linking with local schools, polytechnics and universities to produce a large base of local players, referees, administrators and supporters.

These clubs should have an ongoing facilities policy that improves facilities on a year by year basis. They should be financially sustainable with forward planning that dovetails with national targets. More importantly, NZS should be actively facilitating finance into the clubs to encourage this development.

There should only be three federations - North, Central and South - with about five or six local associations in each. Each association would meet criteria agreed by the national body and local clubs to promote good practice at local level and provide a conduit to the national body.

Each federation has its own AGM from which three members are appointed to the NZS board. These members would have served an apprenticeship and would have underpinning knowledge as administrators.

At the moment I can't recognise anyone on the NZS board who has given any time or gained any recent administrative experience at club or association level. I believe this weakens the board and they become over-reliant on the CEO.

Despite the accolades from John Morris upon the announcement of his resignation, I think Bill MacGowan has realised that the model he's developed is not working, and cannot work, and he's decided to cut his losses.

If the board had been operating with and advising the CEO as part of a team this probably would not have happened. There will have to be a radical change at the top if New Zealand soccer is to reach previous levels.

Finally and briefly, two aspects of the game really seemed to be counter-productive and highly unpopular with the soccer fraternity.

Firstly the scrapping of the junior rep programme. Those representative tournaments were highly successful in bringing players through; and exposed a

Every team has to play 4-3-3 and each player is groomed from an early age to specialise in one position. Recognise the trend? It doesn't work without underpinning a base of skills acquisition which allows players to rotate and play out of position with skill and effectiveness.

fair percentage of junior players throughout the land to high level competition and training.

For example in Force 3 there were always at least four groups of players at each age group in the rep programme namely, Waikato, Western Bay of Plenty, Eastern Bay of Plenty and Roturua, in all around 72 players out of about 2000 playing junior football in that age group.

Now they've reduced it to one team per federation so we've gone from 72 to 18 players and training has become a logistical nightmare. Enough said. How can it possibly be defended?

Secondly the exclusivity of the New Zealand coach education programme. The last thing New Zealand needed was a watered-down English coach education system! Why? Because it doesn't work in England!

That is why Trevor Brooking is busy dismantling the system. As an international player he knows the standards needed at international level, and the standards over here are not good enough.

The age group national teams lack flair and competitiveness. Recently England U20s lost 8-1 -- yes 8-1 -- to Argentina.

Every team has to play 4-3-3 and each player is groomed from an early age to specialise in one position. Recognise the trend? It doesn't work without underpinning a base of skills acquisition which allows players to rotate and play out of position with skill and effectiveness.

We had a great coach education programme introduced by Barrie Truman and nurtured by Allan Jones and supported by all senior coaches. It was

inclusive and the highlight of the season was to get together two or three times a year to upskill and gain new ideas.

The coach education courses were well thought out and innovative. They focused on excellent coaching practice. Practical player development and game understanding was central to all the work.

It was never a case of manufacturing courses as a money making exercise. The courses met the special needs of the New Zealand game, ie goalkeeper coaching was included in all courses because the junior, high school and club coach in the main, did not have the luxury of a specialist goalkeeper coach.

Everyone felt part of a fraternity and coaches of all levels from All White coaches Adshead and Fallon to local school first eleven coaches shared sessions and practices.

That doesn't seem to happen now and believe me the game can't move on until we move back to a system based on long term coach development at all levels that is motivational and inclusive.

The highlights of my visit were the number of good grassroots coaches and administrators who were hanging on in. The New Zealand system has to change to re-engage workers in the game and to meet the new challenges of the modern game, but I believe it will be a long term process.

Time will tell. Premier Skills is determined to make a long term contribution.

I personally, despite working abroad at this time, have committed the company to supporting the New Zealand game. Hopefully our contribution can make a difference.

This is a football club, not a business

By David Cross

It was interesting today to have a bit of a mini gathering of the Kingz fan base, and particularly some of the more active among that base.

I wasn't surprised to find that the feeling is overwhelming that the impending replacement of the Kingz name is incredibly disappointing.

This is a football club, not a business. Sure, the five years we have had have had ups and downs, but that is what builds loyalty, staying power and history among a fan base. A pride and a sense of belonging.

Turn the club around and the 3 or 400 at the last few Kingz games will have swollen to 5000 claiming they were there all along.

It's no new phenomenon, everyone had followed the Warriors through thick and thin once they started winning again, yet the crowd numbers prove this wasn't exactly the case. This is a football club, not a business.

Did Brian Katzen at any point consider rebranding Swansea when they were on the verge of being

chucked from the Football league ? My own beloved Ipswich were relegated from the Premier League and as financially dodgy as the Kingz, but at no point did someone say, "I know, let's call ourselves the Suffolk Horses, that should help people forget the past".

This is a football club, not a business. The numbers and the length of history of these clubs is of course on a different scale, but to change the name wipes out the five years that a lot of people have invested in the club. It's not a great name, but it's our name. It's the name of our club.

All over New Zealand kids and adults still wear the shirt, not necessarily with Pride, but with loyalty and affection (and in some cases because they are too young to know better). This is a football club, not a business.

It all smacks of a "we bought it, we'll do what we like" attitude, rather than the all encompassing and encouraging words that have been presented in some forums.

When it goes wrong, and it will (just



Kingz fan David Cross

follow the Warriors and the Breakers histories) the people being disenfranchised are the people the club will need in their corner.

The supporters of this club got more column inches than any press release ever got, and those are the people that decisions like this already look like driving away. Instead of listening to these people, the public view seems to be based on people who won't be there in August when it's hosing down with rain and 10 degrees. They won't be there when you've lost three in a row and face Perth Glory at home.

They weren't there under the existing name, and they won't be there

by another name unless you are winning. They'll just be able to avoid a little ribbing about the sport while they discuss the weekends Rugby results they watched on TV while the real support were at the match.

These people are no different to the rest of the New Zealand's sports public. Win and they'll have been fans for life, lose and your stadium will be empty. The name won't really make any difference to them, but it means a hell of a lot to some others, and those people should mean more to those that own this club.

Look up the MK Dons history if you want to see a cautionary tale.

Fan fare



FOR PETE'S SAKE: The Peter Halstead Fan Club, Memorial Park, Palmerston North.

One of the more encouraging aspects of the revived national league has been the emergence of pockets of "out there" supporters on the terraces.

Too often in New Zealand soccer matches have been characterised by a deathly hush over the crowd at kick-off. But in the fine tradition of Bloc 5, national league fans are

becoming more visible and audible.

Watching as a member of an extroverted group can be spiritually uplifting.

In the old days crowds could lift teams by getting behind them. But so often in this day and age it is left to the team to lift the crowd (and the general standard of play conspires against that happening).



Lutz Phans: They might occasionally be accused of face-fixing, but behind the masks they really know how to make a keeper feel part of the team in Dunedin.

So all power to the likes of the exuberant scarfies in Dunedin, The Peter Halstead Fan Club in Palmerston North and the exotically named 248 Service Crew at Kiwitea St, Auckland.

The "Crew" are named after the bus number that gets them to Freyberg Field and have introduced some Auckland-esque chants (which don't travel well) such as *"If you're proud to be a Jafa, clap your hands"*.

But honour for the most eccentric fan has to go to Kiwitea St's Bucket Man (Mike Vessey), who resides in the house behind the goal and continually bangs on his bucket. Auckland's Blue colours have only slightly thrown him after years of shouting "yellow, yellow".

He's been a fixture there for years, and is considered barking mad, even by fellow Auckland City enthusiasts.



LEFT: The 248 Service Crew: Mike, Ric le Roc, Wombat, Timbo, and Dino Soprano

The following article by ROGER MORONEY was written for Napier's Under 19 Championship programme at Labour Weekend. Reprinted with permission of one of Napier's great beer drinkers...

Sportsmanship, winning and paper bags

Making the final of any competition is a fine achievement and leaves the competitor, or competitors, feeling motivated and charged.

Which explains why I have never exactly exhibited a look of motivation or of being highly charged. In my sporting years at school I don't ever recall any team I was in making the final of anything... although the word 'final' can also mean 'last'.

In which case I made many finals.

Unfortunately, the only chance I ever had of making a final of sorts was when intermediate school age kids were chosen to play in a tournament at Nelson Park (in the days Napier City Rovers were based there) for what was to be a series of trials.

Something to do with selecting a Hawke's Bay youth side...under 12s or something. I tasted about seven or eight minutes of turf time and touched the ball probably twice. Neither touch was memorable... although one of the opposition kids thought my second touch was well-timed as it sparked him into a great run down the left.

I think the ref, and the selection blokes doing the spotting from the sideline, worked out from the state of my boots that I was not really a goer. They were rugby boots.

Because I was crap at rugby I'd taken up soccer, and as things transpired it was proved that if I possessed nothing else at least I possessed consistency. That attempt at making an age group team was effectively my shot at a final.

And had I made that team, who knows?

Maybe we could have got into a final against some team from New Plymouth, or Wellington or Taihape...whatever. 26

"How'd you go mate?" my father asked as I cycled down the path, my barely scuffed boots strapped to the carrier, wrapped in a heavy paper bag mum had given me for the purpose of transporting them.

"We don't find out for about a week... but I think I did okay," I lied.

"Oh well, you gave it a go...did ya best," the old man murmured before going back inside.

Indeed I had. I'd given it a go and I'd done the best with the dodgy skills ('skills' being a loose term) nature had provided me with. That's all a kid can do.

The slightly bigger kids here for the under-19 youth tournament this long weekend will also be giving it their best shot. They have already achieved much by reaching the position of representation they have... and from here they look to move up another notch in the 'finals' game.

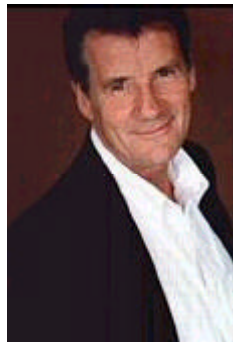
As grand finalists.

Two teams will get there, in the way Napier City Rovers and Manawatu did last year, but every member of every last team will go away secure in the knowledge that they wore their colours well, gave it a go and did their best.

And that's the way it should be... but a few words of advice, lads.

Don't wrap your smashing new colourful \$350 boots in a brown paper bag. It really does make you look like a bit of a dork.

Seperated at birth....



Graham Seatter



Michael Palin

One of these men is a former member of Monty Python, an inventive genius, and astonishingly versatile, having roamed from Pole to Pole, explored the Sahara, and circled the globe in 80 Days. The other is a former trainer of Olympic walker Craig Barrett and has himself now walked into the CEO job at New Zealand Soccer.

Have you ever noticed how tamely the New Zealand media treats a rugby "hooligan" story?

MAN COPS BIG FINE DEFENDING ALL BLACKS

Ashburton, Oct 12 - Defending the reputation of the All Blacks cost Rakaia man Brendan John Tozer \$730 yesterday.

Tozer, 26, a meatworker, was appearing before Ashburton District Court Judge David Saunders after an altercation with visiting English rugby fans in Wellington on August 15. Tozer's rugby team was on an end-of-season trip to the capital.

He pleaded guilty to assaulting Corrie Taylor, a staff member at the backpackers where both groups were staying the night the All Blacks played South Africa.

Judge Saunders fined Tozer \$600 and ordered him to pay court costs of

\$130.

Police prosecutor Geoff McCrostie said the assault happened about 5am and the victim was punched in the head five or six times by Tozer after trying to break up a fight.

Tozer's lawyer Gretchen Hart said the incident had its origins earlier at the backpackers when the English fans maligned the All Blacks. Tozer and several others in his rugby team took exception to their remarks.

Judge Saunders told Tozer he should have turned the other cheek.

"After all, the Poms had nothing to be proud about. They came here and were beaten two-zip. That was all you needed to say."

Then consider the following exercise...

When it is soccer....

Johannesburg, Oct 11 Reuters - The poor organisational image of African soccer suffered another setback at the weekend as six deaths and a spate of violence overshadowed the latest series of World Cup qualifiers.

Three people died in a crush for tickets before Sunday's match between Guinea and Morocco in Conakry and four more were killed after Togo's win over Mali in Lome.

There were also outbreaks of spectator violence in Benin, Liberia and Malawi.

In Lome, the deaths occurred when a power cut caused panic among spectators at the end of Togo's 1-0 win. Eight people were injured, local football officials said on Monday.

The World Cup African zone group one qualifier in Monrovia between Liberia and Senegal had to be halted for 30 minutes in the second half as police tried to quell stone-throwing spectators.

But imagine if it was rugby:

Johannesburg, Oct 11 Reuters - Rugby's booming popularity in developing African nations has been underlined by some passionate displays of support during the latest series of World Cup qualifiers.

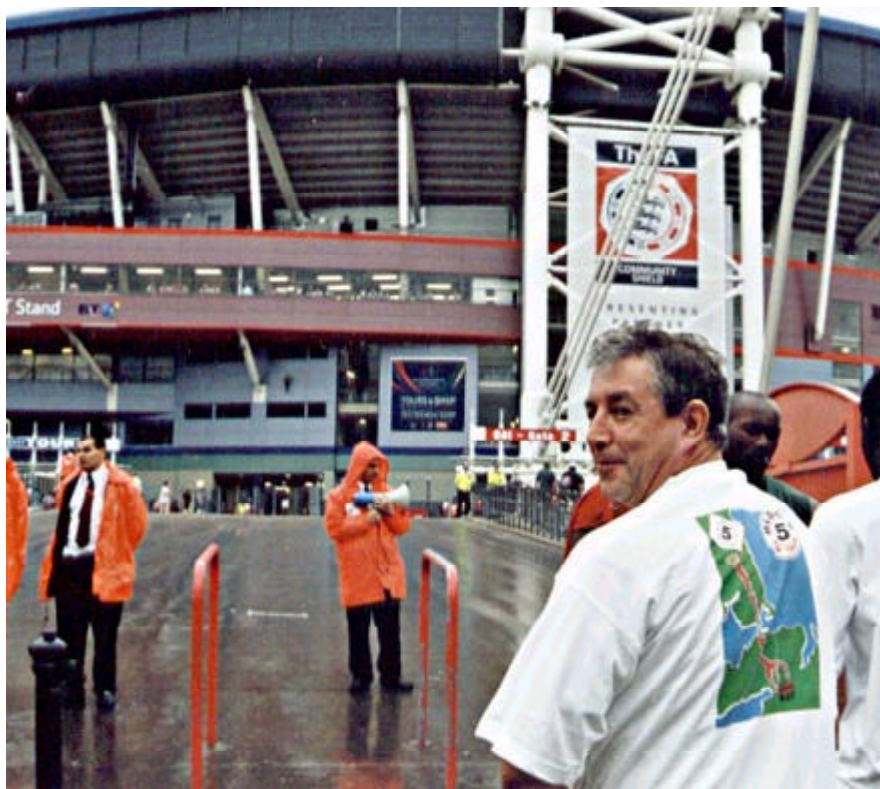
The demand for tickets was so great for Sunday's Guinea-Morocco match that three people died in a crush. And four more were killed after Togo's win over Mali when visiting fans, unfazed by the result, defended their country's honour.

There were also outbreaks of spectator support in Benin, Liberia and Malawi, but rugby was the winner on the day.

In Lome, the deaths occurred when a power cut fazed some spectators at the end of Togo's 1-0 win.

The World Cup African zone group one qualifier in Monrovia between Liberia and Senegal had to be halted for 30 minutes in the second half as police tried to quell spectators who tossed stones away so they could find somewhere to sit.

Bloc 5 makes it to the Charity Shield



This is Mark Henshaw, a chap Bloc 5 identity Andy vander Laan met in Porto. He's a Shrewsbury Town fan, and lives in Wales, poor chap. He used to hate traipsing over to Shrewsbury to watch them lose every weekend. So Big Andy made him an honorary Bloc 5 'er "for supporting a crap team beyond the call of duty".

As Andy explains: "This way he can wear the shirt at Shrewsbury Town's ground, and when its wet and dismal and they are three goals down, he can rejoice in the fact that some diehard fans at the other end of the earth are doing exactly the same thing!" Class, Andy, sheer class.

Jim McMullan Trophy

Back in 1972 three South Island football fanatics got together to attack a common problem faced by junior players and their coaches in minor associations.

They had no choice but to cope with the rigours of long trips and kids being billeted for the first time, often a long way from home.

Support networks were scarce, and coaches carried a huge burden. Their idea was to start an annual tournament in Marlborough, originally to cater for 11-year-old teams from Marlborough, Nelson, Canterbury and Mana, with players billeted, but parents encouraged to attend as well.

Today the tournament caters for 12-year-olds, and is flourishing.

It draws teams from all over the South Island, and has produced 15 All Whites, including Ryan Nelsen, Danny Halligan and Ceri Evans.

While co-founders Jimmy Lang and Gavin McPherson have since died, the third pioneer, and the man whom the tournament was named after, returns every year to Blenheim to witness the evolution of the project he kick-started 32 years ago.

Roberts has become the 2004 recipient of the Jim McMullan Trophy — a joint NZS-NZ Soccer Media Association service to soccer award.

— to Gavin Roberts, founder of the Gavin Roberts 12th Grade Tournament.

Gavin is a former Canterbury and New Zealand Junior Football Association member, and in

2004 was once again seen pacing the sidelines at the 32nd Gavin Roberts tournament at A and P Park in Blenheim.

He is the only surviving founder from the three major 12th grade tournaments that are recognised nationally.

The Weir Rosebowl, named after Tommy Weir, evolved in the 1950s in the north, while the Fred Burton Memorial Trophy — commemorating an NZJFA member who died in the Wahine disaster — continues in the Central region.

Honouring Roberts' lifelong service to soccer has also indirectly acknowledged the essential work done in minor association football not only by his peers, but by all those who have taken an active interest in grassroots football, over many decades.



Gavin Roberts

Becky Campbell CMGSPORT

Federation-watch

Nigel Ward has left Soccer2 (for personal reasons), leaving the federation temporarily without a CEO.

"The Soccer 2 Board are currently assessing the situation and will move quickly to find a suitable replacement in the new year- until then there maybe some delays in administration and return of phone calls as the office has minimal staff," the federation said in a press statement.

"The Board asks that clubs only contact the office when there is no alternative. The Board's priority is to minimise the impact of the disruption on the 2005 season. Soccer NZ is aware of the situation and is assisting in administrative matters. Soccer2 appreciates the support of the national body."

Our thought: Have you ever heard of a club contacting their federation in circumstances other than there being no alternative?

Ward replaced Simon Bilton, who resigned in 2002 at which time a review found correspondence and financial records were incomplete, the financial situation was inconsistent to that reported to the board and there were a host of unresolved issues arising actions not progressed as far as was reported to the board.

All Whites scarves



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Talking bollocks

The nonsense that gets written about soccer

NZS press release, December 15:

MILICICH STRENGTHENS ATTACK

Waitakere United has secured the services of former NZ U17, U20 and Olympic squad striker Allan Pearce in the transfer window. Pearce has most recently been playing in England with Lincoln City but became available at the start of this season.

In actual fact Pearce was most recently playing with Bradford Park Avenue. Pearce played seven (+5 subs) league games for Bradford after being released from Lincoln in May.

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

Sitter! can be purchased at the following outlets:

The Soccer Locker, Howick; Soccer Scene, Pt Chevalier;
Accent Magazines, Hamilton & Hamilton Airport Shoppe
Magnetix, Wellington
Canterbury Mags, Armagh Bookshop, Edgeware Books (all Christchurch)
and... Mr Gordon's Laundry Service 115 Valley Rd, Mt Eden

Bargains for Kiwi collectors

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.

Programmes scene

The best bits from programmes around New Zealand

Declan and I were recently emailed requesting we join a group of coaches trying to get Soccer NZ to change their policy on team naming and Media releasing on the Wednesday before the weekends games.

Some coaches apparently are having trouble motivating players that are not named in the playing XI for that particular game. Our call is we have no problem motivating our group. I don't know, but perhaps some squads have too many players of the same type. Needless to say we won't be supporting that stance, the more media the game can achieve the better as far as we are concerned.

Having said that the presentation of Sky's 'Football Central' isn't really doing the game much good is it? Oh well at least the boys get to see themselves on TV. Although LJ's surname has been pronounced six different ways and our number 10 is called "Garden" apparently. At least they get Utting and Bunce correct. Is it Frank or Che?

-- Waikato FC football manager James Pamment, Waikato FC v Napier City, November 20.

Tonight is more than a game of football. YoungHeart Manawatu has a point to prove. In the first game of the season we got spanked 4 zip by Waikato... tonight the tables will be turned. Tonight YoungHeart Manawatu show how far they have come since that first game....

These are OUR three points Waikato, and you're not having them!

-- "Palmy Army Report", Manawatu v Waikato FC, December 17. it's always courtign fate to write stuff like this. As it happened, Waikato won 1-0, putting them in the curious position of having won more matches in Palmerston North this season than they have in Hamilton.

Well, it seems so much has been said about our early season performances, it's difficult to add anything else. So I won't. But you can be sure that we will be a completely different team in the coming weeks.

Wellington captain Andy Hedge, Team Wellington v Manawatu, November 19. At the time of writing, Wellington were second from bottom in the table. They went into the Christmas break bottom of the league, with one win from 11 games. So, not completely different. It's difficult to add anything else.

Schoolboys

Nick Guoth is a Kiwi who was manager of the Australian Schoolboys team which played a two-test series against New Zealand in Chiritchurch. here he gives his views on the...

Trans-Tasman series

In three days around the end of September last year, the Australian Schoolboys soccer team won a two Test series against their New Zealand counterparts in Christchurch. It was the continuation of a series that has been running for around a decade on a supposedly continuous basis. There has been evidence of games between the two nations going back nearly some 80 years.

These matches, being played at English Park, the home of Mainland Soccer, were quite different in all respects. The first being a dire struggle that nearly ended in a draw, and the second a one-sided affair where the score line of 7-1 gave away most of the story.

Prior to the event, both teams were decimated in one way or another; the New Zealanders more than the Australians. They Chilean Under 20s team was visiting the Antipodes and a number of key players were drafted into the New Zealand Under 20s side not long prior to the timing of this Test series. There was much discussion about this, especially as NZ Soccer knew all about the proposed matches against Australia at Schoolboys level and their decision to hold the Chilean games in competition to the games in Christchurch appears to show their lack of interest in supporting schools soccer in New Zealand.

In fact, questions about the timing of the tour, existed on both sides of the Tasman. In Australia, the Under 15 and Under 16 National Talent Identification Championships were also being held at the same time, thus precluding a couple of

promising young players from participating in the tour.

Still, the event was set to be a success, and that it was, at least for the Australians. A team of sixteen players together with three officials made the trip across the water to Christchurch. They had not played together as a team, nor trained together. Half were from the New South Wales team that easily won the National Schools Championships in Adelaide, and that would make things a bit easier.

The New Zealand schools championships were a little more complicated, and thus the wider spread of players from around the country. Alike the Australians, they arrived in Christchurch blank in their preparation towards the Test series.

A number of warm-up matches were held in different places. The New Zealanders played on Saturday and Monday night, their second being against the Canterbury United team that is currently contesting in the National League. The results were not positive. They lost a key defender to a shoulder injury on the Saturday and suffered a 3-0 loss where they weren't in the game against Canterbury. Still, they did have the advantage over the Australians by playing on the ground of the Test matches and at the same time as the First Test. This was to be significant. The Australians participated in a couple of games against local select teams, which they disposed of to the tune of 9-0 and 3-0.

Then to the First Test... and controversy

- everywhere. First off, the ground. The lighting is not up to standard - period. Unless there was a bank or two of lights not turned on, the amount of the ground, and in key areas like the centre circle and the goal area, were grey at best. You could view two lovely wide stripes down the field of light. The matter was discussed with the local referees and they agreed that the quality left a little to be desired. There is question as to whether the lights may have played a part in the solitary goal from this Test.

Next we had the fact that the "local rules" in relation to the number of substitutes had not been confirmed and when the Australians attempted to make a fourth change late in the match, they were denied. A somewhat pedantic denial especially considering that the match was most likely not being played under FIFA rules. If it was, one may ask why the ground announcer was continuously asking the crowd to get behind the New Zealanders during the play of the game. In the game, the Australians made three substitutions, whilst the New Zealand coach only saw fit to make two.

Finally, there was the penalty, or, was it a penalty? In the final few minutes, a rather rash tackle by an Australian defender saw him win the ball and the New Zealand attacker go down. Whilst video evidence still remains to be found, the local newspaper attacked the decision stating that the New Zealand team was robbed of a decision and thus possibly a tie in the first Test. Coach Jacques Vercauteren was adamant that the decision hadn't gone his way.

So, onto the Second Test, less than 48 hours later, and this time in the middle of the day. Both coaches made a number of alterations to their sides, none of which were injury related. The Australians poured their First Test bench into the starting line-up whilst the Vercauteren made a couple of fine tuning changes.

The score line in the Second Test was rather definitive of the game itself, yet the

main talking point was the International hatrick of Dario Vidosic, who was one of the two Australians unable to take the field in the First Test. His three goals were just part of the demolishing that the locals had in the 7-1 loss.

Compared to the First Test, this match was as different as dirt and water. The early game was a drawn-out affair with neither side really dominating, whilst the latter was free-flowing and mainly one-way traffic. The home team's lone goal came in the 92nd minute when, some may say, the Australians were quite reasonably tiring.

To say the game was all over by the break was an understatement. The New Zealanders were desperate in their attack and struggled to break through the strong Australian defence. Substitutions were made willy-nilly throughout the second stanza and the New Zealanders were looking for that spark to give them a brave chance of salvaging something, whilst the Australians were trying to shore up their game and make sure the Trans Tasman Trophy would return home to Australia.

In the end it was inevitable with just a solitary consolation to Craig Henderson in time added-on.

Thus another series between the two nations spanning the Tasman has taken place. The Australians have taken the prize, and the New Zealanders will look forward to revenge in 12 months time. They will be travelling to Canada late in 2005 and, upon return, will make a side-trip to Australia. Until then, there is a lot of work to be done.

The New Zealand squad was: Chris Campbell, Alex Coles, Callum Fry, Chris Chang, Keiran Koia (Capt.), Nick Dale, Aaron Scott, Campbell Parkin, Jeremy Brockie, Richard Clements, Byron Paulus, Daniel Moir, Henrik Plaumann, Criag Henderson, David Samson, Grant Stephens, Shaun van Rooyen, Mario Kovac. Coach: Jacques Vercauteren, Co-Coach: Barrie Truman, Goalkeeper Coach: Mark Oates, Physiotherapist: Adam Letts, Team Manager: Tony Ambrose.

Goalnet (internet) mailing list Posting of the Month

Gordon Glen Watson, December 20.... (Gordon wins a 1994 Miramar Rangers Superclub sticker). Join by sending a blank email to goalnet subscribe@yahoogroups.com

I think the standard of the NZFC has improved on the STNL but only insofar as driving the standard of Auckland football through the roof.

On Thursday night Craig Alexander and Allan Jones were kind enough to allow me to watch Auckland train and I saw a 30 minute 11 v 11 training match that was of high intensity, good skill, fast pace. I seriously doubt that Manawatu, Waikato, Otago, Wellington, could generate such standards within their training sessions.

One team had Brad Scott and Glenn Eie up front, the other had Reg Davani and Grant Young. Heath McCormack was sitting it out on the sidelines and, I understand, now withdrawn from the squad. Imagine! Leaving out a good, solid, striker like that. Liam Mulrooney and Jonathon Smith faced off against Paul Seaman and another Englishman in a physical midfield battle. I mean that's quality. With Auckland's standards getting better and better, the gap between Napier, Manawatu, Wellington, and the rest, has widened. There is no doubt about this you only need to look at the NZFC table for proof of that.

Pre-season, I suggested that this wouldn't transpire, but sadly on this count I think I've been proved wrong. Only Otago with Johann Koustaal's 'cut your cloth according to what you've got' approach has managed to make an inroad into the big two's dominance.

I think the premise of the NZFC to raise the bar is, basically, correct. But I suspect it won't work because as time rolls on, it could become more and more obvious that the NZFC is, basically, just a reworked version of the STNL.

Remember, the constituent parts of this latest installment of the National League are, in sum, more or less the same as before. The NZFC faces a sort of race against time to lift playing standards versus a dawning realisation on the part of sponsors and television that the Kiwi football product still has aesthetic issues to address that show the standard in sobering light.

Auckland City: By far and away loaded with top notch quality and one of the two major favourites to win the whole competition.

Waitakere Utd: Seem to be wobbling now that injuries and suspensions have crept in. Otago are hot on their heels, but when they have a full complement to choose from, and the electric Keryn Jordan, they are a juggernaut.

Otago Utd: No better than Dunedin Technical or Caversham, but they have a game plan they believe in and it's served them well. Player for player not really a top three side. But well done them, because they've played it smart thus far.

Canterbury: Lurch from good to bad from week to week and this struggle for consistency has hampered their campaign. They look good in midfield and in flashes up front but struggle at the back when Sigmund is injured or off form. Strangely, I fancy Canty

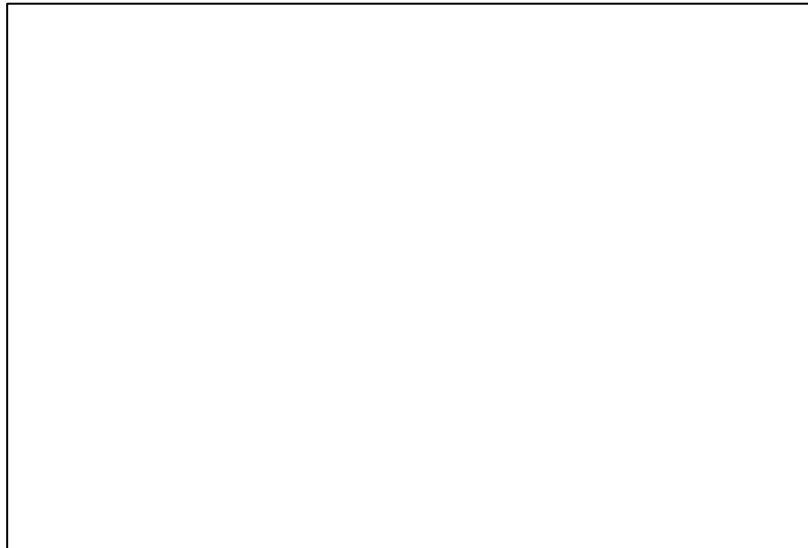
to be able to beat the AKLD sides in a one-off. Otago are married to a formula that means if they go a goal down it's very difficult to get back. Cauty, like Manawatu, play more of an attacking, off the cuff, passing game, and in a one off, more likely to cause Auckland teams a problem.

YH Manawatu: Never has YHM looked such a distant outside chance for the playoffs. As I said above, if they did scrape into the top three, then they could do some damage. But looking at it, they simply don't have the depth or experience to become NZ champions.

Waikato: Declan has ditched the 4-3-3 NZS philosophy for a more practical approach, i.e. defend, get some points together anyway you can! And fair enough, after nine games it looked like WFC were headed for bottom place. Utting has been supplanted and another goalkeeper added and, as if by magic, Waikato has 4 points out of 6. The damage might already have been done early season for a playoff spot, but if they do scrape it, well, I've seen these players play out of the skin before...!

Wellington: Big question marks over Mick Waitt and why he can't get the best out of his men. Perhaps the United Wellington concept, like the Waikato, doesn't really extend beyond club parochialism as we might first think. Maybe the team is too old? Who knows. Either way they are being left behind in the NZFC and quite against the performances and dominance of Miramar in recent times.

Napier: In essence, Napier are still the Napier of the old STNL. It's like spotting a kindly old uncle at a shopping mall on Xmas Eve. You make to go say hello, but he gets swept away by the more cognisant, younger, fast paced shoppers. And they've added Perry Cotton to their playing squad. So....brilliant.





In off the post

Dear Sir,

Over the past months of the winter soccer season, I have watched on average two games each weekend in the northern premier league. Whilst there were some bad games, there was also some very good entertaining football. Far better than the rubbish that has been served up in the two games that I have watched in the opening rounds of the new NZFC franchise league.

What has happened to all the rules and regulations as laid down in the National League Manual 2004-05? I believe one reason there was no application from the North Harbour area is because they were perfectly honest in that they could neither meet the criteria or raise the finance and so go into debt.

We were supposed to be getting good TV and radio coverage, but we seem to be afflicted with Radio Sport announcers who hate soccer or do not know that there is such a popular game.

Today they were not aware that one game started at 14.00 hours and announced that it kicked off at 16.00 hours, when the first half was well and truly over.

Perhaps this may not be Radio Sport's fault as I believe that NZ Soccer is sometimes very remiss in getting information across.

With 28 players in each squad, this leaves at least 14 players kicking their heels and not a ball. I wonder how long they will put up with this situation?

This new league is just a collection of 224 players divided into eight teams, with very little interest to myself and like people, who like to follow good club-based football.

Alan Carrick, Takapuna

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