

2023 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

As always, we've had a very busy winter season with a lot of activity both on and off the grass. There's too much to mention everything that happened but we'll recap some of the highlights...

Small Whites Programme

- It's our 9th year of having a dedicated Small Whites programme and the 2nd year of coaching our youngest players as a squad for Weds training with our own coaches, and by all accounts, it's working well.
- Clinton Thomas is our lead coach who puts together the weekly training sessions that he delivers with coaches Olivia, Alix & Nikkie. They, along with Emil & Liam, lead the U7/8 teams for Saturday game days.
- We continue to enjoy Saturdays in the Southern Small Whites cluster with our Franklin buddy clubs, Pukekohe AFC & Tuakau SC. This includes the 4-6yo Pods, where we've been fortunate to have Robert Smith coaching.
- Thanks to a Papakura Local Board grant, we received funding to cover a quarter of this season's coaching costs.
- We'd also like to thank the parents who jumped in to help when asked with coaching, supervising the small-sided games and packing gear away.

Weds BBQ

- Every Weds, a dedicated team of volunteers ran the fundraising bbq, which was a great way to stave off the late afternoon hunger pains and became a social hub for parents.
- This was a great initiative started by Hayley & Phil Govorko last year, and they've pulled together a dedicated crew who turn up every week without fail.
- The BBQ profit go towards prizegiving expenses, including the lovely coach & manager thank you gifts and today's sausage sizzle.
- BBQs are generally a very low profit fundraiser. Ours has been spectacularly profitable thanks to Drury Meats donating their excellent sausages for the 2nd year in a row. We'd like thank John & Jeanette Bell of Drury Meats for their generous support. They make the tastiest sausages so it's no surprise they're award winning and our members keep coming back for more.
- Our BBQ crew raised a whopping \$3,500 this season! Our sincere thanks to them for their outstanding effort: Hayley, Phil, Nina, Damien, Crystal, Jennifer & Des, what an outstanding effort.

Junior & Youth Teams

- Our membership numbers definitely took a hit over the two covid-affected seasons so it's pleasing to see things back on track with good team numbers, all led by dedicated coaches & managers, supported well by family & friends who pitch in to help and cheer us on from the side-lines.
- It's cool seeing people using the Team Reach app to keep in touch, celebrate the team achievements and help each other out, and we love seeing the photos you share of game highlights & hijinks, Player of the Day awards and people having fun
- We've had several coaches attain NZF coach qualifications so they can better lead their teams, people attend referee courses so they can better ref our game, and even a first aid course.
- It's also great to see players staying on to play as they move into the Youth age group, and we're excited for this to continue next season.

Senior Teams

- Our Senior teams train on Tues & Thurs. We have 3 Men's & 1 Women's team with players aged from 20 to late 50s who are just as enthusiastic about football as our Small Whites (although they might not have as much never-ending energy!)
- DIY Hire, Bellancas, Troopers & Green Queens offer a range of levels of play and a pathway for older youth to move into, and even parents who rediscover their love of football watching their kids
- Next year some of the U15 Gators players will make their move into the senior teams, and we'll be establishing an Over 40s Mens team again
- If any parents are keen to play, definitely do come along to senior training as there will be a suitable team who'd love to welcome you

Fantails Programme

- Lead coach Phil Greene is passionate about growing the number of girls playing football so he's the ideal coach for the girls-only sessions held on Thursdays
- Phil started our Girls Kickin' It programme last year with just a handful of players. This year, as part of the Women's World Cup legacy initiative, we became a Fantails hub. This came with NZ Football support of coaching materials, some very cool Fantails branded gear of balls, bibs & goals, and \$2000 to go towards programme development.
- Our Fantails now have 34 registered players with 15-20 on average attending each session, and numbers are growing which is fantastic, as it's all been word-of-mouth and the odd Facebook post to promote it so far.
- Coach Phil reports that the girls are all keen to continue over Term 4 and several are considering forming a girls team for next season.
- We'd like to thank Phil and the assistant coaches Cass, Nickie, Craig, Nick & Shane for delivering this energetic and engaging girls programme.

Kōtuitui Programme

- Kōtuitui is FIFA initiative that uses the Women's World Cup as a context for connecting to others in our bicultural and multicultural society.
- Designed by NZ Football & Maori Football Aotearoa, this is an integrated programme of classroom sessions delivered by the class teacher, and outdoor football sessions delivered by a football coach to Year 4-8 students.
- We're excited to announce that our club will be delivering this programme into Drury School in Term 4, with coach Kelsey Forbes. Kelsey played for Drury before moving into the Franklin Utd Women's squad. There will be bibs, cones, balls & bags provided for the coach, as well as funding to cover coach costs. The school will also receive 12 special FIFA footballs.
- Term 4 is the first implementation of the programme locally and we hope it will roll out into other local schools next year.

Franklin United

- We continue our alliance with Franklin United alongside Pukekohe & Tuakau football clubs.
- They continue to grow and strengthen their successful NRFL teams, which creates a great pathway for our players who want to move from community to competitive football.
- The Men's team this season won promotion to the NRFL Championship league, which is a fantastic result, and their squad includes an U23 reserve team.
- The Women's team remains firmly in the top third of their NRFL Championship league, supported by a Division 1 reserve team.
- They increased their Academy to 3 youth & 3 junior teams, which include a number of Drury players. They will invite aspiring players from local clubs to join their training over Term 4.

GRANTS

We've had an awesome year for grants and we truly appreciate the funds received from the organisations that have approved our applications. They see the good things happening at our club and they support our vision for growth and delivering football to our community.

Since last year's prizegiving, we've had \$86K of grants approved. There's been \$54K for training & game day resources, \$6K for admin costs and \$26K towards facilities. There's quite a bit of work involved in applying for grants but the rewards are wonderful and we simply couldn't function as well without them.

We've had consistent funding from Papakura Local Board for many years, for kit, for coach funding, for summer futsal, and we'd like to thank Chairman Brent Catchpole & the Board members for continuing to support us.

We've had significant grants approved by Trillian Trust, Grassroots Trust, Milestone Foundation, Rano Community Trust, Youthtown, One Foundation, TAB, Dragon Community Trust and Four Winds Foundation.

Smaller grants that cover our insurance, power and software subscriptions covered are just as gratefully received as they mean our cash reserves can go towards things we can't get help with.

FACILITIES

- Upgrading our facilities and equipment is an ongoing project that takes countless hours of liaison with Council & contractors, grant applications and volunteer input.
- What we need the most right now are more floodlights around the top fields so we double the lit space & can spread out for training. It's quite a juggle finding space for the increasing number of teams and this is an expensive and layered project. We've done a lot of groundwork and the next stage is liaising with Council and grant funders, which really requires a dedicated person to drive it. It isn't difficult, it just needs time & focus, and you'll be supported in the process. If anyone is interested, please get in touch.
- This summer, we'll be replacing the old lights on Field 4 with LEDs, and Council is committed to replacing the bulbs on #1 with LEDs as well.
- the master plan for grounds that include new clubrooms & changing rooms is still on the table but it will take many more years to come to fruition. In the meantime, our current clubrooms are definitely showing their age so we're undertaking a refurbishment over summer to make it more comfortable.
- We'll be replacing the kitchen, furniture and carpet, painting the interior & exterior, and painting the toilets & changing rooms. We also have our grandstand to paint & put together.
- We plan to have it all done before next winter season and we will put the call out for help with the labour as parts of the project are scheduled, and for contacts for materials & services. If you can assist, please do. Every bit of help means our funds go further and we get a better facility to enjoy. Every hour of labour means we get it done faster and our core of volunteers don't get burnt out. This is a communal space for our members and it's lovely when we can pull together to make it great.

SUMMER FOOTBALL

- You sure are a bunch of keen footballers! Enquires about summer football started in July and of course there will be some!
- The kids open fun sessions start Weds 1st Nov, 5-6pm, and will run until Xmas. No need to register or pay fees, just turn up, bring a friend, and play. It's a very relaxed format, we provide all the gear and sausage sizzle afterwards, but we do need parents to supervise the players and keep games flowing.
- We also have our Senior Summer Futsal comp starting after Labour Weekend, which we won't be advertising because thanks to returning teams and word of mouth, it's full already! We have 28 teams playing and we're looking forward to the day we have all the top fields available so we can accommodate all the teams who want to play.

Our biggest highlight of the season is seeing our club members enjoy their football.

Wednesday night at the club is buzzing with nearly all of our junior & youth teams training. The deck and chairs in front have become a social hub and it's wonderful seeing the families chatting. We definitely need a bigger carpark!

Tuesdays & Thursdays sees our Seniors & older youth teams training, and again, it's busy at the club on the deck and the grass.

And of course, all the teams are have game days on Saturday and Sunday and there's nothing like a full house of home games.

CLOSING

Congratulations of all the players who received team awards and those who received Club awards.

We'd like to thank our wonderful coaches, managers and referees who volunteer their time and energy to ensure our players get to do what they love.

We appreciate you committing to training & game days, taking time away from home & work, and remaining positive in fostering a love of football for our members.

It's especially heart warming to see young coaches giving back to the game and the clubs they came through themselves, so thank you to Olivia with the Twisters, Alix with the Lightning, Nick with the Vipers & Evan with the Volcanoes.

As a small token of appreciation, there is a gift for all of our coaches, managers, BBQ crew & committee of a club umbrella and a bottle of wine to enjoy over summer... before we see you again next season!

To our players, thank you for training hard, playing hard and being wonderful team members. Please remember to thank your family & supporters for cheering you on and assisting you to play!

As a long serving committee of footballers, we know the enormous effort you all put in and it's thanks to you that our club thrives. Well done everyone on a successful 2023 season.

Finally, we'd like to wish the U12 Tornados the best of luck as they head to the Gold Coast this week to compete in the Premier Invitational tournament with 340 teams. The team had a good season playing in the Central league, with the challenge point forging them into a stronger team, ready to take on this competitive tournament. We're sure it will be a great experience for the boys and their families that they'll really enjoy. We look forward to following their progress and catching some of the game footage.