



Marmalade and Jam

October 2009

ASSOCIATES RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Allen Park, Clements St, Swanbourne. WA 6010 Tel: 0438 849 250

Presidential Ponderings

So the playing season ends and the work in preparation for next season begins. No rest for the wicked! How did we go? Overall I think we did pretty well. Though our first grade finished 5th on the ladder, they remained competitive. We could easily have been playing in the finals, but it was not to be. Of our six senior teams; four made finals, three of those made grand finals and we end our playing season with two premiership flags in our U20's and Reserve grades.

In my last "ponderings" I anticipated some "serious finals footy". On the Saturday we saw our 3rd grade miss out on a premiership by one point and on the Sunday we saw 20s and 2nd grade win their Premiership flags. In both of these games we came up against well drilled, minor premier sides. In my view Soaks prevailed due to ticker, teamwork and sheer determination to win! For a full day, after the games, I was left in awe at the stamina and endurance of these "fine young athletes" as they attacked Mad Monday with the same belligerent, uncompromising and spirited attitude which had won them their Cups (the less said about the fate of the 20's Cup the better).

I have been particularly impressed with our third grade team performance this season. The Coaches', Managers' and the Players' commitment and attitude to training and play, has resulted in them delivering some serious competitive rugby. This is not "recreational rugby" but the real thing!

Now, this great game of ours is not a game for 15 individuals. Behind all this there is an army of Coaches, Managers, Sponsors and Volunteers. Thank you all for making this season possible you are all part of the Soaks Team!

**DAVE NEWTON
PRESIDENT**

Club Patron

Congratulations to our Premiership winning 2nd grade and Under 20s. The speed and determination of both teams blinded both Neddies and Uni—both the 2009 minor premiers. It was terrific to watch !!!!

Commiserations to the 3rds in losing the grand final. We all thought the see-saw point score would see you bring home the bacon—sadly no. Great spirit shown by all !!!!

Congrats to "Bear" and "Razza" and the under 18s for getting so close to the barrier. A great improvement and more to come. A big sorry to Bruce Hughes and the 4ths who struggled with playing half their rugby in Afghanistan and half in WA It's tough isn't it !! The 1sts have had a strange season which I shall leave to the coach to explain.

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Having only watched half the season and half the Tests, I feel half starved. It was great to get home after a fantastic holiday in Alaska, Canada and Greece.

In away it was also stimulating to step into Rugby talk particularly in regard to SOAKS. Much has been mentioned to me about the Ethos of rugby, player selection and helping players. Some of it turned out to be garbage and some food for thought! What always strikes me is the passionate interest everyone takes in the topics of the rugby day and the fact that there remain many hard working sensible volunteers in fundamental positions.

Some ideas I have heard have had a mixed reception but the views propounded have not lessened the popularity and status of the proponents. The stimulus provided by different ideas is proving an energy force of its own and will either result in an Iranian denial or a UN slap on the wrist. I look forward to seeing you all at the Presentation night for an update !!

I note with sadness the death of a founding member of the Club: Athol Gibson on 2 September, 2009. Athol played in 1948 and was Captain, and coached the team to three consecutive finals in 1949, 1950 and 1951, but did not win a premiership. He was a well-known lawyer, yachtsman and member of the turf club. He was awarded an OBE for services to charity. Vale Athol!

ARTHUR AUGUSTE

Coaches' Corner

FIRST GRADE

The season has ended and we have now had time to sit back and reflect on games past. Congratulations to our 2nd Grade and Colts winning both of their Grand Finals. Bad luck for the 3rds, beaten by the narrowest of margins by Kalamunda.

1st Grade finished the season in 5th place and, depending on who you talk to, the season was either reasonable or disappointing. I thought that, even though we performed better than we have done for the last few seasons, some results could have been better, so I was disappointed; then on going through the statistics and other things my disappointment was lessened a little. This season 38 players played 1st Grade for Associates. The fact is that as a club we might have played 38 players in 1st grade but we don't have 38 1st Grade players at Associates. This is not the players' fault as some of these guys will become regular 1st Grade players as they gain more experience.

Premier rugby is about being able to put the same team on the paddock consistently; the longer good rugby players play together the better they get as a team. As a coach I use the pre-season trial games to select the best 15 players the club has to offer. Unfortunately some players miss out and if they find it difficult to accept that then they probably will struggle to displace one of the 15 players in front of them.

Once I make my decisions on players I generally stick to it; in my mind there is no point in making changes for change sake. I know some people struggle with this philosophy and would advocate wholesale changes when a team has hit a bit of losing streak, but why would you bring in players who you have already assessed as not being as good as your original 15. As a friend of mine regularly tells me "form is temporary, class is permanent".

Then we have the luck factor, anyone who says that luck has nothing to do with winning rugby knows very little about team sports. To win a Premier competition you have to play well and be lucky. Lucky that your injury list of 1st players is small

(ours wasn't), lucky that the bounce of the ball went your way in those close matches (sometimes), lucky that the weather suited our style of play (ours wasn't, we didn't win in the rain), lucky that those 50/50 decisions went our way (sometimes). When all these little bits run your way then you make the finals and have a successful year. We didn't quite do that but we got very close!

Finally we have the experience factor, this year we had a lot of very skilful players in 1st grade; the downside was that they were very young and inexperienced. When both of our most experienced players were on the field, these guys had over 100 1st Grade games each for Associates, our average age was around 24. When only one of these guys started the average age dropped to 22; with the exception of Wests we were probably the youngest side in the competition. This lack of experience can hurt, as we experienced in our 2nd games against Nedlands and Palmyra. We could have won both games but didn't close them down when we got in front with a short time left on the clock.

One of the stats I look at when reviewing the year are the number of bonus points scored. In this era of rugby these are very important. We scored 4 or more tries in 11 of the eighteen games and received 4 bonus points for losing by 7 points or less, totalling 15 bonus points for the season second only to Palmyra. Looking at the close games, one of the factors in losing was that we allowed ourselves to be bullied by bigger packs early in the game. The lack of physicality at the breakdown in some games was evident and good sides took advantage of this. This highlighted to me that as a unit we were probably one big forward short in our pack. Tom Hocking for the full season would be nice!

I believe that this club has the player group to be a force in all grades of rugby in the Perth competition and a few things that we are doing just have to be fine tuned a little. Selective recruiting should be started in the lower grades, 18's & 20's, with a view to bringing these guys through to grade after they graduate from colts. We will have to see what comes out of the end of year review on the 7th of October.

Thanks to all who played 1st Grade, Russell and Nick it was an interesting year.

This is an excerpt from Theodore Roosevelt's famous "Man in the Arena" speech and in light of some things that happened this year is quite relevant: "It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worldly cause and who, if he fails, at least fails while bearing greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

Up Soaks

STEVE MC CULLOUGH

SECOND GRADE—PREMIERS

What a season for Soaks 2s!!! For most of the season it was a real mixed-bag, with some good wins mixed in with some ordinary losses. After Round 13 Soaks were sitting mid-table with a 7-6 win-loss record. From then on we clicked into gear and we convincingly won the following five matches to finish the home and away season in third place and secure a place in the finals. To win the Premiership we knew we then

had to win all three finals matches with no room for error. And we did it. First we beat Kalamunda 30-26 and then we knocked off Cottesloe 20-12 to get to the Grand Final.

The Grand Final against Nedlands was played at Members Equity Stadium in front of a capacity crowd (well actually a good sized crowd of raucous Soaks' supporters – thanks guys). Playing against the previously undefeated and seemingly all-powerful Nedlands, Soaks Seconds played the patterns and executed the game plan to perfection, running out deserved winners by 24-20 and being crowned Premiers for 2009.

Overall, Associates can be very pleased with Second Grade during the season – not only for winning the Premiership, but for executing an exciting brand of structured, attacking rugby. This is a very young team with an average age of 22.1 years, and to be able to learn from the early mistakes and make improvements required to reach the Grand Final is a real credit to all the players. Associates will be well served by these players for many years to come.

It's not fair to identify particular players as all players gave it everything they had, and all made significant contributions to Soaks progression to the Grand Final and to the final victory. However I will mention a few guys who impressed me.

Firstly, thanks to the two U18s players, Todd and Zulu, who stepped up when we needed help and made a big difference to our performance – you guys have big futures ahead of you. Also thanks to the many U20s and Third Grade players who helped us out throughout the season whenever we were short of players, which was often – we couldn't have done it without you.

Cheers to Bucket and Hughie who came back from their mid-season overseas trip and made themselves available to play Second Grade through to the finals – and commiserations to Hughie for missing the final with a broken hand. Also, I take my hat off to Ned, who at 31 is the grandfather of the team but played like a spring chicken.

Finally, thanks to one player who was a mountain of a man throughout the season and the finals series. As captain, Lachlan Strain was an inspirational leader to the team, by his actions where he lead from the front in each and every game, and with his wonderful pre-game and mid-game rev-up speeches. "Leadership is not about title – it's about what you do," (Robbie Deans – 2009).

Thank you to my assistant coaches Arno and Gavin and to our end-of-season manager Owen. Owen replaced Tom who returned to the field to play when rugby fever took hold of him – thanks Tom. Also thanks to the sports trainers who kept our players healthy and intact. This season has been a good team effort by all those off the field, just as it was by those who played on the field.

CONGRATULATIONS to the mighty Soaks 2s. You thoroughly deserve to be PREMIERS.

TONY ROVIRA

THIRD GRADE

This year was a mixed with boys coming up and down from the other grades, and in and out from other countries; in the end the team had approximately 30 players on the books and we produced a great and well-bonded team, on and off the field.

As you know we did not win the cup as expected from all, but we did not play our best game on the day and that is the way the cookie crumbles.

However, if this year is an indication of what the Thirds is

about, the club has a great platform.

TRAINING

As you all know the team trained hard and long, and for that we got into the Grand Final. The boys will second that the training was easy and should be harder, and discipline was almost non-existent, but with their skill and determination, we were able to get to the Grand Final..... ONLY JOKING.

THE TEAM

Fortunately and unfortunately the team was all of a great caliber and choosing who to stand out was a hard task. The team being mature and respectful accepted the decisions made as they knew they were made for the greater good of the team. The boys were rewarded with a Grand Final appearance, but fell agonisingly short by a solitary point. While everyone is disappointed I'm sure it won't take away from the huge improvement we made on last year's efforts.

The team was also full of character: IE Mossie who had met a good friend from the Navy (and you know what Navy boys are about); Ed who cut his foot when his "mates" interrupted his shower by tapping him on the shoulder (think about it); why is it that Bobby (whose girlfriend lives on the east coast) always had a smile when he had returned from the east?; Wayne Wasey's girlfriend had a party, but why was Wayne wearing her pink ballet outfit?; and Rob Vagas who forgot his wife's birthday so he could not train (how pathetic).

We have also unearthed some great new players who will hopefully hang around for some time to come: Cage whose barnstorming runs became as regular as Cashy's "shoeps" at a post match function. We also rejuvenated a few players who have had their best seasons in a long time. These are just some of the characters in the team and, believe you me, every one brought his own special touch to the team and that is why we were and will be a great team in the future.

FUTURE

Who knows what tomorrow brings but if this year is an indication, we will have a great year. Thanks must go to the tireless efforts of our coach and manager, Quany and Bert respectively, who put in countless hours to keep us fit and motivated and in the case of Bert to ensure all the little things were ALWAYS done. Many thanks also to Deb and Lesley for looking after the team sheets and admin duties all year.

CONCLUSION

The team played hard, trained hard and partied hard and it was a pleasure coaching the boys, and with the support given to me by Bert, Deb, Lesley, and the club for letting me do my stuff the way I wanted to do it (not say I would listen), but thanks again for the support from all.

QUANY AND THE 3rd GRADE TEAM

FOURTH GRADE

It was a season of so near but yet so far. Associates Fourth Grade performed admirably throughout and finished fifth – just behind Perth and Wests by a few points. All that was needed was a couple of lucky bounces of the ball in a few of the games that were lost by a point or two and the team would have had another win or two, finished third or fourth, and then who knows what might have happened in the finals.

Notwithstanding there were strong numbers for all games with players giving of their all. The culmination of the season was probably the last game when the team convincingly defeated Perth Bayswater – who finished fourth. As was said

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in the beginning 'so near but yet so far'.

Some brief points:

Ferg and Darren had a great season in the front row with occasional help from the Cold Coast wonder Cashey.

Whitey - the greatest front row cum hooker Stookey has ever shunted forward.

Val, Mick Marrinan and Stookey in the second row - more power than a nuclear reactor.

Toby B gave new meaning to the idea that 'age shall not weary them' with a glorious return to rugby.

Shane Buckland - mister versatile. A loose forward one day and a winger the next.

Shamus - a rising hooker. Keep your eyes on this bloke.

Dan Agnew - Reach for the stars.

The Hart brothers - who is the best 5/8 in the competition?

Nathan Felstead - more swerve and speed than a formula 1 car at Wanneroo.

Wales - death by a blunt instrument!

Jenko - a promising rugby career cut short. Come back Jenko.

Mick Harris - the best 1/2 to come out of the UK for many, many, many years.

Richard J - having seen him play one can clearly understand the unfortunate mantle of the most controversial non-selection for the ABs but the consolation of playing for Lithuania.

Keuni - the smiling assassin in the centres who does not need to find the gaps in the defence, he makes his own.

John Halberg - always there to support the team.

Steve Watts and Wes James - always prepared to back up Fourths even after a full game for Thirds.

Hemmi Anning and Ben Arnett - Wing, fullback or centres: who cares, just let me on.

A wonderful season of rugby with a wonderful group of players.

BRUCE HUGHES

UNDER 20S—PREMIERS

Season 2009 finished in outstanding fashion for the Colts U20 team with a Grand Final win over Uni who had gone into the Final as Minor Premiers. The team success was built on a strong and mobile forward pack able to feed a strong running backline. There were good individual performance from many players throughout the season, but in the end it was a committed team effort that defeated a better credentialed (and not to mention much larger) side in the Final. Great heart and passion for the club was epitomized in a tight grand final match won 23 to 21 points by Soaks.

Season Summary. There were a number of defining moments that lead to the success at the end which include:

- A strong pre-season that built a good foundation of fitness that was maintained throughout the year. Commitment from the players to continue to do the extra bit of conditioning that was factored into the training program came home at the end. Great work to Trotty for his support and direction.

- After a couple of early easy season wins with flattering score lines, there was a timely wake up call loss to Nedlands that highlighted that past success was no guarantee of carrying that through this season. Of particular note in this match was the work and effort required at the breakdown. From this point forward the focus and effort on this aspect at training was commendable.

- As momentum started to build through to the mid season with regular wins that saw the team hold a place in a tight top six, in the match against Arks at home the team racked up an imposing 11 tries against a side that had held the other top four

teams to tight finishes. The interplay, passing and running lines in this match set a benchmark that was not topped through the rest of the season but gave some real confidence for the second half of the season.

- In all the games against Uni there were only 1 or 2 points in them with each team winning 1 of the home and away rounds. The closeness of these matches ensured that the Soaks team remained focused on what needed to be done against a strong opposition who were easily holding their place at the top of the table.

The Soaks players' application and management of the closing stages of the season, maintaining focus and training discipline, cannot be underestimated. This was crucial as, unfortunately due to a number of teams dropping out of the competition in the second half of the season, the U20s faced a challenging run home with 2 byes in a row and then a forfeit in the last round as Perth failed to muster a team. This meant the team entered the finals without having played as a team for four weeks. All credit to the team for working through this challenging period. It required training discipline and hard work which was achieved by some strong contested trainings sessions against 2nd Grade. This was crucial as it kept up important match conditioning in the final stages of the season and allowed us to train against a physically larger opposition.

Player performances. Through the season every player contributed, so it is hard to single players out. The club and U20 awards as presented clearly highlight where the commendable performances came from so I will leave these as the due recognition for player performance. In the end it was a committed team of men who played for each other and were ably lead by Nick Doherty as Captain. "Dohers" continually "punched" above his weight to lead by physical example throughout the season.

Coaching and Management Team. I would also like to note and thank the coaching and management team of: Mark Paterson and Tim Ferguson for their commitment and contribution to the team throughout the season. This group also interacted well with Bear Brain and Razza Parkin and the U18 team group. Having a coaching group allowed us to very ably cover any gaps if individual coaches were away at any stage. I think good rapport was built with the players which allowed us all to perform as a well balanced unit. My thanks also to Martin Cowley for his assistance as Manager through the season, and to Russell Neilson for assisting in the Finals.

Sponsors. The final note is to the sponsor group of: DB Commercial, Bell Potter, Subiaco Chiropractic, Orthezian and OAM who came on board at the start of the year to provide some direct funding to the Colts group to fit the lads out in very smart Soaks Tracksuits. All this assisted to create an identifiable entity that excelled on the field in season 2009.

A most enjoyable year as a coach; well done to a great team of lads.

UP SOAKS !

BOB HUNTER

UNDER 18S

After a solid pre-season where the senior club trained together as a dedicated group, the prospects for the 18s for the 2009 season looked positive with an enthusiastic, motivated core group of players available for the 18s team.

The Soaks 18s dominated teams early in the season with superb fitness and enthusiasm as the basis of their performances. Solid performances by a number of players from the Under 18s team led to promotion to the Under 20s and 2nd grade team. Many of the boys gained valuable experience in

these higher tiers which benefited the player group as a whole for the balance of the season.

The 18s competition struggled with the loss of Rockingham B, Cottesloe and Wests Subiaco 18's sides due to lack of numbers and a number of other sides were on the verge of collapse. As a result of the fixture issues, the 18s were regularly were by schedule changes, untimely byes and a reformatted draw seeing a well-conditioned Soaks team play weaker teams in succession, whilst other teams in the competition accumulated more byes than fixtures. Substantial wins were recorded and the challenges were few and far between until the latter part of the season. At the midpoint of the season the boys were undefeated and the finals were a real prospect. Despite the distractions some great rugby was played and some excellent team play epitomized the character of a fine group.

As the conclusion of the regular season approached, a number of players became unavailable and the team required a reshuffle. Unfortunately the form team of the competition was affected by this, and the addition of season-ending injuries required a spirited influx of PSA players to fill the void. A draw against an average team and two losses against the other top three teams ensured some character-defining moments.

The Bayswater loss was heartbreaking as we had been on top of the table for the whole season and in losing the last game of the season we lost the Minor Premiership. However, a premiership would heal those wounds in the coming weeks and in qualifying second we earned a place in the Major Semi Final with the winner going straight through to the Grand Final.

Unfortunately the team once again struggled against a well organised and focused Perth Bayswater who initially won the game up front and never really allowed us into the game. The preliminary final pitted us against Kalamunda and eventuated into an epic battle. Soaks slowed glimpses of their early season form, but were pipped at the post to go down by 2 points. Despite this loss the boys showed commendable character to display a sound performance and finish the season with some enterprising rugby. Thus third is where the Soaks 18s have cement themselves for the 2009 calendar.

As coaches it was rewarding to see so many of the team grow as individuals and mature to comprehend the effort required to succeed. With a number of the players available for the Soaks 18s next year, they will be better for the experience of a tough final quarter of this season and hopefully show up fitter, stronger and hungrier for a flag that escaped them this year.

Finally our congratulations to all teams who participated in the finals campaigns across the grades and in particular the Soaks U20s, including many of the U18 players who contributed to U20s throughout the year. The Soaks Colts collectively had some great characters and it was a pleasure to interact with many who will, in good time, enjoy success in the senior grades.

BEAR & RAZZA

Club Captain

Well done to the premiership winning sides—Seconds and U20s, both were great games to watch. Bad luck to the Thirds in a really close loss to Kalamunda. This was a good season for Soaks and I'm very confident we can continue the momentum into next year.

We all need to continue the building on the spirit within the playing group and concentrate on getting fit and strong for next year where we are going to win every trophy!! And don't you worry, I'll be back next year and I plan on playing for more than 5 games...

KRIS MARTINICK

Juniors

The Associates Rugby Union Junior Club has completed another successful season with 11 teams taking the field from U7 to U16s. This engaged 220 boys and over 50 parents who coached, managed and lent general support on the field not to mention all the parents who supported off the field and from the sidelines.

The club ran several coaching courses including Kick Start, Coaching Kids Rugby programs and Coaching Development Clinic which rated a special mention from Rugby WA with 15 coaches from Soaks attending. These programs have helped educate and strengthen the coaches within the junior ranks.

Players displayed their skills at variety of arenas playing at Britannia, Joondalup, Kalamunda, Murdoch, Guilford and Subiaco. The boys also won the opportunity to have Wallabies players Wycliff Palu and David Pocock come and run with them in a training session prior to the Wallabies test match in Perth.

Several players were selected in representative teams: Richard Hardwick, Luke Burton and Rob Tucker in the State U15s and Scott Tolmie, Nick Sardinha, Kurt Penny and Ben Enright in the U16s. Kyle Godwin was selected both in the State and the Australian Schoolboys sides. Luke Burton, Kyle Cameron, Alex Christian, Richard Hardwick, Kurt Penny have been selected to join the RugbyWA Junior Academy. Surely the next generation of 1st graders is assured with the continued success of the juniors.

UP SOAKS

PAUL CARTER

JUNIOR CO-ORDINATOR

Fletcher's corner

What an end to the 2009 season. 1st Grade belted Wanneroo 48—10 then Perth-Bayswater scoring a bonus point but missed out on the Finals by a whisker. 2nds defeated the minor premiers Nedlands in the Grand Final; following the Under 20s who also beat the minor premiers University. These results auger well for the seasons ahead, with a blend of youth and experience.

New players to 1st grade at Soaks - Ben Hales, Nathan Cummings; Michael D'Adamo, Tugia Muli, Jason Missen, John Kirkman and Zac Holmes, have matured this season; as have former juniors Hughie and Charles (Bucket) Norcross, and Alex Rovira to name a few. Congratulations to Zac Holmes on his selection to trial with the Australian 7-a-side squad and the five 14-15 year-old Soaks' juniors invited to trial with the RugbyWA Junior Academy for 2009/10: Kyle Cameron; Alex Christian; Tom Enright; Richard Hardwick and Kurt Penney.

We look forward to the return of a fit First grade Captain Kris Martinick (after knee surgery) and other established players.

See you in season 2010.

IAN CHRISTIAN

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