

KCC JUNIOR FOOTBALL REPORT 2009-10 – Jim Down

10 years ago as we celebrated the arrival of the new millennium the KCC Junior Football section was re-born. I say re-born as there had been junior football at the club previously with Mike Trayford and other footballers arranging kick-about and games for the youngsters at the club.

But in 2000 the section, as we know it now, was officially started. We had 6 to 10 regular players on a Saturday morning in those early days, and the talent of Toby Down, Dev Dillon and Humphrey Flowerdew, who have all played for the KCC senior teams, was already in evidence. Coaching was provided by myself mainly but with assistance from some of the KCC team players when required and some KCC Junior Umbro kit that had previously been supplied by Mike Trayford was again put to use.

The first visitors to KCC arrived in 2001. The Brazilian Soccer Schools in its infancy arrived in the name of Sai Kung, and KCC won the U12 mixed age group game 7-3 in a thrilling match. The KCC then became involved in organized tournaments with HK Football Academy, Sai Kung, Dragon Shooters and HKFC usually at the Australian International school, and the number of players coming to training then started to grow steadily over the years to the 150+ that we have today. The infrastructure has also gone through a certain amount of change too, from one person doing all of the coaching and admin to around 12 volunteer coaches, 6 professional BSS coaches and 2 admin staff keeping the section alive and of course support from the KCC administration and management team.

This season has been another truly exhilarating one full of success and challenges both on and off the field for the KCC Junior Football section. During the closed season last summer the KCC Junior Football coaching and administration functions were offered out to tender. Out of four possibilities Brazilian Soccer Schools were eventually awarded the contract based on proven track record and their response to our request for proposal. We have been proven right with our confidence that this season would be our most successful in terms of organization,

quality of coaching and satisfaction from players, parents and KCC team managers.

Saturday mornings at KCC is always a colorful and exciting time with all the age groups being well supported with players, coaches and team managers. The girls group and the very youngest 'minis' have again proven to be very popular and over all we were faced for the first time ever with a waiting list as we reached the maximum capacity of 150 that had been agreed.

The quality of coaching has been excellent- the Brazilian coaches really provide fun and focus on the training sessions which the volunteer coaches and team managers are able to benefit from.

As the Junior Football Manager I have probably benefitted most this year with Paul and Peter in the BSS office providing me with all the administration support that I have been looking for over the past few years. Not having to make the arrangements for the weekend training, messaging the players, managing the program and the logistics has been a huge release for me, and I am thankful for that.

The season wasn't totally stress free however, the KCC pitch condition and a unusually wet year so far in 2010 has provided the Football section with plenty of challenges. The likelihood is we will have achieved slightly less than the planned 30 weekends of football, and one of the year 2000 tournaments may not be played at all, which is a pity but not something we could do too much about.

Success on the pitch was relatively high again this season in most of the age groups.

Girls Group - The Girls had a fabulous season with a couple of memorable tournaments both in terms of fun and bringing home trophies. They entertained a number of guest teams at KCC and Andy Powner again has played a major role in ensuring the Girls Football at KCC continues to flourish. There is always fun and plenty of excitement in the Girls training group, and BSS coach Jason Li ensures that with the fun the girls are all developing their skills to their full potential.

Players such as Molly Smith, Lydia Powner, Grace White, Grace Scanlon Kirsty Soutar and Rosie Down have gained recognition in matches this season.

KCC 2001s (U9's) - The 2001's had a promising first year of tournament football. The A team were relegated in their first tournament but came very close to jumping back into Cup football with 4 consecutive semi-final appearances, loosing on penalties in 2 of those semi's. The experienced core of Max Loiterton, Seb Lee, Harry Laxton, Daniel Gough, Peter Rossi and Tom Cossart have played well throughout the year and have been supported by some promising youngsters from the 2002 age group including Suvir Sujanani, Luke Praetorius, Alex Plumbridge and James Ware. This auger's well for next season when the 2002s will make their debut in the HKJFL. In addition to the youngsters, the 2001s have also become the beneficiaries of the growing strength of Andy Powner's girls program. During the year Molly Smith and Grace White firmly established themselves as key players in the A team and going forward competitive mixed teams will hopefully become a defining feature of KCC junior football.

The 2001 B team have offered the experience of tournament football to a number of enthusiastic boys and, increasingly, girls from Andy's program. The B's have been very well led by the ebullient Vivek Nainani with great support from Tarun Panjabi, Sahil Daswani and Vaibhav Jain. There have also been pleasing contributions from 2002s including Jamie Cheng, Ryan Van Beers, Jack Davies, Archie White and Tanush Narwani. The Bs have also seen a number of girls making their debuts including Olivia Longbottom, Keely Shirley, Emily Cameron, Isobel Richardson, Phoebe Stanyard, Yasmin Cooke, Shivahn Bulman-Garvie and Rosie Down. Rosie became the first girl to score for KCC in a HKJFL tournament when she popped one in against Dragon Shooters in March 2010. In the last 2001 tournament of the year, KCC entered its first ever all-girls team, a first for any club or team in the history of the HKJFL. Sadly we did have one serious injury when the very promising Anna Wiedemann fractured her ankle when making her debut for KCC. We look forward to seeing Anna back next season.

Coaches Rich Lee and James Gough would like to thank all the parents and players for their support during the season and look forward to seeing everyone back again next year.

KCC 2000 (U10's) - The Y2000 boy's had a relatively good season -with space to improve. They started out in the Plate competition for the 1st HKJFL competition and wiped out the competition by winning the plate and not conceding a single goal.

They went into the 2nd competition over confident, however they were playing with half strength squad in the 2nd competition thanks mainly to the ESF School Soccer competition and got knocked out early and went back to the plate for the 3rd competition at HKFC. They played like a team, passing the ball creating space, getting into space; they didn't concede a goal until the final of the plate were they were very unlucky not to win the plate. They hit the cross bar, post on several occasions only to finally loose in penalties.

The 4th competition at KCC - the boys played well after a long break they lost in the qtr finals, but won the playoff game to stay in the cup competition. The 5th competition, also at KCC - the boys played very well they were very unlucky to loose in a penalty shootout, in the cup semi-finals, they had many shots at goal, but the goal post just wasn't in their favour that day, they all played exceptionally well that day. The 6th and final match at KCC - this was RAINED OUT - and till today the boy's ask if they match will be rescheduled.

KCC 1999s (U11's) - The 1999 age group provides the largest contingent of players of any of the age groups. With somewhere around 28 players available for selection there is always a difficult decision to be made on who to take and who not to take to the tournaments.

The plan has always been to play a definite first team and second team squad to ensure that the teams remain balanced in ability so that players develop together. There have been a number of players who have played in both the first team and the second as they have shown good potential to compete at the higher level.

In the main the first team has been very competitive this season- the team is brimming with very athletic and strong players, but they have arguably underachieved by not winning the cup. They came close a couple of times though- being beaten in the semi final by Tai Tam Tigers on both occasions, a team that they had previously beaten in the earlier stages of the competition. So the ability is there, it may just be the psychology that we need to work on! Players to watch next season are Sam Down, Hugh Longbottom, Marcus Jerdan, Aaron Stanyard, Ollie Laxton, Ashwin Mahtani and Kyle Kitney.

The second team just got better and better. They eventually won the plate on a thrilling day and the victory was thoroughly deserved. Ravi Panjabi did a great job with motivating the players to work hard together throughout the season, and to see the faces of the players when they lifted the trophy was a magical moment. Kyle Van Beers, Akash Panjabi, Tim Rzesniowiecki, Ansh Shah and Rahul Mirchandani all have made strong improvements this season.

Some of the KCC 1999 players also had a taste of 11 aside on a full sized pitch as we joined forces with BSS to play against FCB Escola a couple of times, and 3 players joined the HKJFL select team to play FCB Escola in another 11 aside game. So they have had some great experience this season.

KCC 1998's (U12's) - The 98's first team had another great season and demonstrated that when they concentrate they can beat any team in Hong Kong of their own age. They had a notable cup win in one of the HKJFL tournaments, and finished runners up twice. They also made it to 3 of the other cup semi finals.

The second team also provided keen opposition in most of the games they played in, and over all enjoyed great team spirit.

The 98s also managed to win the Plate in the first ever IP Global HKJFL 5 aside competition at HKFC. This was an invitational event with all the strongest teams from HKJFL and other local clubs making up the 16 team tournament. The 98's were also selected as the KCC representative side in the first ever appearance of HKJFL teams at the

IP Global HKFC soccer 7's. KCC scored a notable victory against HKFC 98's, winning 2-1 after going a goal down.

This is the last season for many of these players playing 7-side tournaments in HKJFL- now they progress to the full sized pitch and 11 a-side teams.

Players deserving a mention for their consistent performances and determined attitude are Jake Smith, Ollie Laxton, George Thubron, Sam Down, Adrian Gough, Macoy Cavanaugh, Jay Cooke and Rahul Balani, from the first team and Aditya Jain, Sid Balani, Aidan Shirley, Bailey Ward, Rohil Bhardwaj and Andrew Whitmarsh from the second team.

KCC 1997's (U13's) - The 97's had a very tough campaign in the HKJFL and struggled early on to find form. Supported by a number of the 98 players, the team took a while to adapt to the larger pitch and ball size, but they never let their heads drop and did manage a couple of wins in the end.

There were notable performances from Krishna Nainani, Mervyn McKinley, Neal Sajnani, Anthony Wilson, and Alex Tonks throughout the season. All of those players also played in the 96 squad, and certainly contributed well to both teams. They will have learned a lot this season and we look forward to a competitive campaign next season.

KCC 1996's (U14's) - The 96's finished in the top four of the HKJFL 1996 league, a very encouraging performance. Along the way they managed to defeat all of the "big" teams including HKFC1, HKFC2 and HKFA, and the players have all shown an excellent attitude in matches, both in terms of cooperation and discipline - not one yellow card!

Barton Leung, Daniel Palmes and David Cheng have shone in the goal-scoring department, with each scoring more than 5 and Barton getting into double figures. Eight of the players have played in every single match this season, and the continuity in the team has contributed greatly to our success.

There has been a marked improvement over last season - the defence in particular has been outstanding, as shown by the fact that the majority of the end of season awards went to defenders. Jon McKinley has commented that it has been a pleasure to work with these guys and to see them mature as footballers.