



AGM 28th November 2023

Club President Report

Introduction

This year the Bluetongues grew as a Club, enjoyed new levels of on-field success, rode the Matildas wave, strengthened as a community and had maximum fun on and off the field. Highlights of the year are below.

Junior Club

Mini Roos (u8-u11)

The Junior Club fielded ten teams (twice as many as 2022):

- U8 boys
- U9 girls
- U9 boys x 2
- U10 girls
- U10 boys
- U11 girls
- U12 boys
- U13 boys
- U14 boys

All of these teams did themselves, their families and the Club proud.

The u8 boys were coached by Chris Binney and Jarrod Agatanovic. Phoenix Iyer was the Assistant Coach. This was the team's first year playing competition. They had focussed on building their understanding of the game and their skills, and were competitive on the field. Their improvement in just one season was measurable. We look forward to seeing how this cohort of players moves through the ranks in the years to come.

The u9 boys blue team was coached by Ben Macqueen and managed by Nikki Kopfler. The u9 boys yellow team was coached by Sarah Melas, Dimitri Sklavos and John Tranfield for the first half of the season, with John taking over for the second half with help from Ian Holliday, who also managed the team. These two teams had mixed results this year but had some good wins and were much improved after a season playing together. Next year the plan is to train as one squad rather than two separate teams and the coaches are talking in the off-season about the best approach to team selection.

The u9 girls team were a new team that transferred over from Yarra Jets, coached by Mike Evans and managed by Cecelia Gullone. They took to the Bluetongues colours and ethos like ducks to water and quickly integrated into the Club. The girls operate very well as a team, under the skillful tutelage of Mike, and enjoyed great on-field success and strong team spirit off the field. We look forward to seeing them grow in u10s next year.

The u10 girls were coached by Rick Horvat and Sam Hill, and managed by Sam as well. This team came together from a couple of age groups, including some players new to football. The team had a focus on fun and enjoyment of the game, and this paid dividends on the field with great team spirit translating into very competitive performances.

The u10 boys team was coached by Duncan Winton and managed by Fiona Smeaton, with Ollie Crosthwaite as assistant coach. This team were in a very competitive league and were pushed every week. It was a great learning environment and the coaches were very happy with the team's attitude and improvement. Under Duncan's guidance we see things falling further into place for this team next year.

The u11 girls team was coached by Juan Taddei and Adi Kerr, with Adi also team manager. Jaida Sacco was the Assistant Coach. This close knit team had another incredible year, stepping up a grade to Wallabies in the middle of the season. This is only the second Bluetongues team to be elevated to Wallabies and the girls did themselves proud, continuing to be competitive and successful. This team have grit, a fantastic team culture created by the coaches and supported by the parents, and are already very focussed on next year.

Juniors (u12 and above)

The u12 boys team was coached by Rob Dalton, with assistance from one of our senior men's players Michael Milios. The team was managed by Peter Vouthas. This team had a mix of experienced players and players brand new to football this year, and so were learning the game, developing their skills and settling into their rhythm as a team. They showed great tenacity and fought for every goal, and managed a couple of well deserved wins.

The u13 boys team was coached by Mark Roby and Dugald Christie-Johnston and managed by Kelly Christie-Johnston. This team were again in the Wallabies league, and enjoyed success on the field in a very tough competition. Some players from this team have graduated to NPL Clubs next year. Congratulations to those players on their hard work and we wish them every success in their football journey.

The u14 boys team was coached by Steve Picken and Frank Buchanan, and managed by Sandi Nicholson and Marcus McKay. Stav Sakellaris was again a great back up for the coaches throughout the season. This team had a mixed year in terms of on-field results, with some hard fought wins and close losses. This team have traveled through the age ranks together and enjoy a very fun and supportive team culture.

A huge thanks to the coaches of these teams. We are so lucky that you have invested your time, and that have been willing to learn and grow along the way. We're very excited that many of you are staying on next year. And to those that are moving on next year - we are extremely grateful for what you've given us over the years.

I'd also like to call our Michael Milios who helped coached the u12 boys, and Tony Sango our Senior Men's goalkeeper who donated his time to provide some specialist goalkeeper training to some of our juniors. Our juniors look up to the seniors and we look forward to more connections being made next year.

Thank you to the team managers and other parent helpers. All of these teams were run in a way that reflect the values of our Club ("community" and "developing our people") and it showed in the fun that the kids had and how much they grew in confidence. Thank you very much also to Jess Hughes for editing and publishing our weekend wrap every Sunday night, and to Sarah Moody for once again organising the medals and trophies for the end of the year.

Development Squad

In 2023 we shifted the Development Squad to Friday afternoons, with 50+ kids enrolled by the end of the season. The squad was allocated into four groups each week, with a mix of parent and junior coaches.

The groups were great fun, with the best measure of success the consistent levels of attendance and enthusiasm, including on the numerous cold and wet days.

The coaching aspect of the Development Squad program was also successful, particularly the growth in our early-career coaches who helped run the sessions, including Beau, Frankie, Rani, Sienna, Tallulah and Ema. We are very proud of this coaching model and the willingness of our young coaches to learn, and to contribute to our Club.

Massive thanks aswell to Arthor Mellors and Ryan Jenkins, the two parent coaches that helped out every week. We appreciate you juggling your jobs and other commitments to make it down to Alphington Park to coach on a Friday afternoon.

Senior Club

Senior Women

The Senior Women were coached by Chris Natsis. This team were promoted to State League 3 this year. It was a challenging year for the team as they acclimatised to the higher grade, with mixed results on the field. But as ever, the team continued to have fun and are looking forward to next year. Our junior girls look up to this team, and we hope that our women's and girls football can continue to grow at the Bluetongues off the back of the Matilda's success. Off the field the women's and men's senior teams were a lot more coordinated this year with collaborative social and fundraising events and we're looking forward to more of that next year.

Senior Men

The Senior Men were coached by Chris Natsis and the Reserves were coached by Neil Coyle. The two teams had mixed success this year, but demonstrated a positive approach to the game and ended the season on the right trajectory for next year. The squad really came together as a group and have a culture of looking out for each other.

A hug thanks to Chris who has now left the Club. Not only have we benefited from Chris' deep football knowledge and passion, but he also leaves a legacy of a strong team culture. Chris' high standards on and off the field have been of benefit to the Club, particularly his focus on bringing the senior men's and women's teams closer together in the spirit of community. Neil is also leaving the Club next year to focus on family commitments. Neil only coached with the Club for one year but we appreciated Neil's positive leadership and his collaboration with Chris.

Veterans

The Club fielded three veterans teams this year – one o45 team and two o55 teams. Adi Kerr, Mark Lister, Elias Tsigaras and Nigel Odell continued to play key organising roles with these teams. The Veterans part of the Club is known for their emphasis on having fun, staying healthy and being a part of a community. Next year one of the o55 teams will graduate into the o60 category and we're very proud to have such an active group of players that stick with the sport and with our Club.

Coaching program

In 2023, we had a total of 31 coaches including seven female coaches.

We benefited from being a part of Football Victoria's Community Club Coaching (CCC) program, which included some workshops and entry-level qualifications for some of our coaches. We are also a part of Melbourne Victory's community program, and enjoyed some sessions taken by Melbourne Victory coaches.

Next year we have some new parents lined up to become coaches as well as some of our junior players who are keen to get started in their coaching career. If you have any interest in becoming a coach, please reach out. No experience is necessary, and we provide access to training opportunities as well as support within the Club. We would especially like to see some more women and girls coaching.

Sponsors and uniforms

This has been the second full year of our current sponsorship deals. We're proud to partner with the following local companies:

- Nelson Alexander
- Pasta Poetry
- Grange Meat Co
- Little Bertha
- Melbourne Farmers Market
- Kissaten

We're also grateful for the support of Gridlock Coffee, Bendigo Bank, Victorian Government's Change our Game program and Mountain Shade Marquees.

We are very lucky to partner with Macron for our uniforms.

Thanks to all those who returned their kits for the end of season stocktake. The stocktake has been undertaken and our top-up order for next year will be placed with Macron at the start of December. This is the second year that we have run the kit return system, which is standard practice in many community sporting Clubs, and is important in getting the most out of the uniforms and minimising registration fees over the life of the current strip with the current sponsors.

Committee

This year the Committee had six members, with three assigned specific roles:

- Kelly Crosthwaite (President)
- Betty Kominakis (Secretary)
- Hugh Hogan (Treasurer)
- Samantha Price
- Mark Knowles
- Juan Taddei

A huge vote of thanks for this group who supported me as President for putting in their time, with everyone on the Committee also having other roles within the Club.

There are two Committee members for whom the AGM is their last meeting. We acknowledge the contribution of these members.

Sam Price – Sam stepped on to the Committee this year and brought with her invaluable perspectives and public administration experience. Sam has been central to ensuring that the Committee is objective and fair in its dealings, and has played the important role of Child Safety Officer.

Betty Kominakis – Betty was one of our senior women’s players and stepped into the role of Club Secretary. Betty has been a tireless worker this year, instrumental in managing all the senior teams, helping run the canteen and being the driving force behind the social and fundraising events for the senior teams. Betty is leaving the Club next year but leaves us in a much better position and we’re very grateful for the energy and time that Betty gave this year.

Strategic overview of finances

The details of our finances are outlined in the financial statement.

Overall, the Club is in a solid position, finishing the year with enough cash to cover our major cost in between seasons being the uniform order. This leaves us in an overall positive position based on our projected registrations next year and the budget we have prepared.

There are a couple of things worth calling out.

- This year the Club continued to invest in equipment as our junior Club grew from five to ten teams, with further growth planned next year.
- Our three year uniform strategy is paying dividends, and has allowed us to maintain all junior fees at the same level for next year. We will be redesigning the playing strip after the end of 2024 in readiness for the 2025 season. Stay tuned for more on that next year.
- The Roj Peine Memorial Fireworks night was a huge success as a community event (which is our primary reason for running it) as well as a successful fundraiser. It was touch and go on the day as to whether the event would go ahead, but thankfully the rain cleared and the wind dropped just in time for the fireworks to light. The fireworks night was once again a demonstration of the amazing Alphington community spirit, and the incredible work of our army of volunteers. Heartfelt thanks goes to Adi Kerr for being the powerhouse leading the event again, and to everyone that pitched in on the day and leading up to it.
- This year we continued to improve our systems in the canteen, with big thanks to all of our Blue Tongs volunteers, especially Kate Johnson, Betty Kominakis and Hilton Menz.
- We are close to having our liquor licence application considered by the regulator, and so hopefully will be able to serve drinks for the senior and veterans parts of the Club next year (we won’t be serving alcohol at junior games obviously), which will add to our income streams.

The year ahead – 2024

Next year we're hoping to register the following teams based on 2023 registrations:

- Development squad
- U8 boys (up to two teams)
- U9 boys
- U10 boys (two teams)
- U9 girls
- U10 girls
- U11 girls
- U12 girls
- U13 boys
- U14 boys
- U15 boys
- Senior Men
- Senior Men's Reserves
- Senior Women
- Veterans o45
- Veterans o55
- Veterans o60
- Soccer Mums

The Committee has set next year's fees, with no change to mini roos, junior or veterans fees. Seniors fees will increase slightly, in line with our objective of each part of the Club being independently financially sustainable.

The new Committee elected at the AGM will determine the 2024 calendar of events.

The Club's [Strategic Plan](#) is on our website. I encourage you to read it (it is only four pages long!), and if you do you will see that we listed 12 things we wanted to achieve by the end of 2023. As season 2023 draws to a close, I am very pleased to report that we have completed or made significant progress on nine of those measures. Even more importantly, we have achieved these things with a focus on our values of [#community](#) and [#developing our people](#) and I know I speak for the Committee when I say we feel privileged to be a part of the Alphington FC community and contribute to it.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the Club during 2023. This was our 20th anniversary year and, appropriately, was our biggest and brightest so far. The Club only exists because of the community that we have, and the Committee are always welcoming of new ideas and new people so please if you have thoughts about the Club and how it is run, we would love to hear from you.

Kelly Crosthwaite
President
27 November 2023