

# **Early History of Junior Soccer**

**By**

**John Bell**

## **Forty years with Junior Soccer in Australia - John Bell**

I arrived in South Australia in January 1961, having been recruited by the then Weapons Research Establishment (WRE), now Defence Science Technology Association, Edinburgh. Mainly in my student days I had played, coached and sometimes refereed in various competitions ranging from The Lancashire Amateur, Surrey Premier, Gloucester and the Thornton Heath and Croydon Leagues it was only weeks before I was turning out for the WRE Federation team. From there I found myself running one of the first Under 10 teams in Elizabeth and also refereeing along with Denis Moore and Bill McNichol. Sid Barrat, killed in a car crash about 1963, was the Elizabeth Association as well as Referees Appointments Secretary. From memory, the only age groups catered for then were the U10s, 12s and 14s.

In 1963 I was transferred to Woomera where, with help from a few dedicated personnel, we started Junior Soccer up there, reaching 12 teams within a year. A few years ago it was still going though I suspect that it was mainly American children who were playing. We took four teams down to Whyalla in 1964 (their Referees had gone on strike that weekend) and played two exhibition matches. This, I believe, kicked off the Whyalla Junior Association that soon became stronger than ours up at Woomera. I organised the supply of goal posts to Andamooka School. Teams from Elizabeth were hosted, including Broadmeadows, Elizabeth North and the Downs. Reciprocal and successful tours were organised, my late wife being temporary mother to lots of kids. It was pandemonium on the long trip in the old Bud Car that traveled from Woomera to Elizabeth and Adelaide. For good measure we hosted Polonia U16s and had a visit from Alan Whittle, the State Director of Coaching in 1968.

Returning to Elizabeth I helped to start St. Elizabeth, unfortunately now defunct, a composite teams from the local Catholic primary schools. With my young son starting at Blackfriars Priory School in Prospect, and with the help of a few parents, we really got the game going there. So big did it get that I believe that it led to other private schools joining in, leading to the present, mainly private school involvement in Adelaide. Yet again I was involved in refereeing, having now formally Australian qualified under the tutelage of Bill Hosie, as a Coach under Alan Whittle and Trainer under the late Medical Lecturer at Adelaide University, Dr Hardie. (We were allowed to inspect the most gruesome bone and similar injuries in the Medical School. Ugh!). I struck up a friendship with Tom McKain, the Adelaide News Soccer Writer, and wrote an article or two for his pink soccer paper each week that used to be sold through the Federation to all clubs in the 1970s.

In 1980 the Defence Department moved me to Sydney where I ended up coaching and refereeing, when required, in the Eastern Suburbs being mainly associated with the Greek St Spyridon team and Pagewood-Botany U14 teams (I also helped to float a Defence Team in the daily lunch-time soccer competition played on a small ground in the Domain.)

Back in Elizabeth I continued to coach and referee school soccer in Adelaide. Some was with the mainly private schools competition but also included coaching a West Adelaide Hellas junior team. By this time my wife, Joan (who had been secretary of the Woomera Association and Elizabeth

Downs) was cruelly struck down with Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia. A couple of years later I remarried finding that my two stepsons wanted to play the beautiful game. This led to my simultaneous involvement with Munno Para Lions, where I started their first U10 eleven and Trinity College under age teams. Once this commitment was over, with encouragement from Jimmy Johnson and Jim Main, I joined the Elizabeth and Districts Referees Association 1992 after refreshing my knowledge by completing the Amateur's Refereeing course. This year, when I stepped out on to the park, will be my 41st since my initial involvement with the fledgling Elizabeth and Districts Associations. Back home and glad to be so.

**John Bell**