

# **DISCUSSION PAPER**

## **“The Soccer Project”**

### **A World First**

#### **New and Innovative Junior Girls Development Model**

**Developed by Selwyn J. Bradley**

**Head Coach, Junior Girls  
2005 and 2006 Seasons**

**Three Kings United Soccer**

**Auckland, New Zealand**

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## About the Writer:

**Selwyn J. Bradley ACIS, CA, Dip CM, Exec MBA**

Selwyn Bradley was educated at Auckland Boys Grammar and has held a number of senior financial and general management roles. Bradley and Associates was established in 1995 by Selwyn and has been developed into one of New Zealand's leading hands-on Business and Franchise Consultancy's.

Selwyn is also a member of the following professional organisations;

- Franchise Association of New Zealand
- Institute of Chartered Accountants
- Institute of Directors
- New Zealand Institute of Management

Selwyn first experienced franchising in 1986 and since 1995 has worked with, and provided business, change management, franchise and strategic advice to, numerous individuals and organisations, both large and small, within a significant range of industry sectors.

During this time, Selwyn facilitated the largest change project in New Zealand franchising history that involved the total re-positioning of the premium Robert Harris Café Brand and Franchise over a period of some eight months to bring it in line with current commercial, retail and franchising requirements.

Selwyn's business experience has seen him involved in a wide range of industry sectors and working with business's and brands of all sizes. He also has a very good understanding of governance and its linkage to better business.

Selwyn has three children, ages ranging from 9 to 12, and has community involvement with a school Board of Trustees and is returning his vast soccer experience to the community as Head Coach, Junior Girls, Three Kings United.

## **Writers Notes:**

**It is recognised that the Development Model, and its various components are:**

- **a first in New Zealand, possibly in the World, for Junior Girls**
- **different from current practice**
- **not aligned with traditional or current thinking**
- **different from available research**

**This Discussion Paper is designed to both inform and challenge the reader, and if this is achieved then the outcomes for future development of the game for all Junior players in New Zealand and elsewhere will be positive.**

**The Research “knowledge” gained from the two years the Development Model has been in place is shared transparently to enable the reader to understand both the Development Model and its “drivers”**

**From a Project viewpoint, the focus on the “weak link”, the Girls, actually made it easier to manage as any improvement would be viewed as a success!**

**Notwithstanding this view, both the results and the outcomes from the 2006 Season have been nothing short of exceptional and could not have been achieved without the support of many people, and the writer wishes to record his appreciation to all the Coaches, Parents, Sponsors and Supporters and most of all, the 55 Girls involved - you are all truly sensational!!!**

**A special thanks to my two good friends who have travelled on this exciting pathway with the writer the past two years, Jim Puketapu whose considered opinion, organisational and political skills were so valued, and Richard Lawrence whose no-nonsense approach and challenging manner, enabled the best of decision making possible.**

**Lastly and most importantly, my lovely wife Jude, who has put up with this “Project” taking up residency at home and in our life these two years. She knows how sweet the taste of success is after all the hard work and many hours everyone has contributed.**

**Any questions are welcome and can be directed to the writer at [Bradleys@Xtra.co.nz](mailto:Bradleys@Xtra.co.nz)**

## **Background**

In July 2004, the writer was required to quickly select two Junior Girls Representative Teams from the ranks of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grades and was exposed to the complete lack of development available for Junior Girls

**This was the catalyst for what was to follow!!**

By this time his own three children, two boys and one girl, were playing or had played, in the Junior Grades at Three Kings United and had formed a good view of the development opportunities for both Boys and Girls.

From a playing perspective, the writer has played in New Zealand at Premier and social levels, including Premier level in a developing country, accordingly the understanding of the game would be considered significant.

From a coaching perspective, the writer have has coached successfully at all levels, through Premier, Youth and Juniors, with the last 8 years within both the Junior and Youth grades.

Of significance to this Discussion Paper, the past two years have been spent as Head Coach, Junior Girls at Three Kings United a large Club by New Zealand standards with approximately 700 Juniors.

Overlaying this is the writers Senior Management and Business Consulting background, from which is drawn the benefits of good planning, process and structural development, and project management

Hence with this background, the lack of real planning and structure to the development of Juniors in New Zealand, both boys and girls, was clear – sadly more so when it came to Girls where there was nothing of substance.

With a passion for soccer and with such an obvious challenge, a two year personal commitment was made to Three Kings United, in brief to:

- (a) develop and put in place a professional, robust and structured Development Model for Junior Girls, and
- (b) provide the necessary Coaching and Leadership

**What needs to be recognised is that no-one has identified what is different with the Girls and then taken the time and effort to establish a specific Development Model and provide the required game time coaching.**

The opportunity was there however there was little interest from Clubs, besides the Parents and Girls, until the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Representative team in 2005 started putting in some credible performances against good Boys only teams at Interclub Tournaments.

We were fortunate to stay under the radar initially and avoid the usual political issues however with success comes the roadblocks simply because change is different and the tall poppy syndrome kicks in.

There are a number of extremely interesting stories already coming out of the Development Program which has now reached the two year mark.

These range from plucking a Girl from a Saturday primarily boys team that was losing 10-0 regularly in 2005 and developing her into a top class player, to a little 7<sup>th</sup> Grade girl first spotted July 2004 who two years later would have to rate as best 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girl in New Zealand and who learns something new each week (she does not know it sometimes!) – her development has been in the Development Model with appropriate challenges to extend her.

We now have another 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Girl who will be even better!

The writer cannot resist the comment that it does not require the very best players to be competing in Boys only teams to challenge them and develop them, the research gathered de-bunks that theory!

**More stories will be added later .....**

## **In 2005**

The focus was primarily on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade and following evaluation sessions, a Development squad was selected for both Grades. Included were two 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls, a total of 22 Girls out of a total 66 enrolled.

It was recognised that the status of these Girls development to-date was near zero, some three years behind the Boys, so the Development Model was designed to cover the following:

### **Key Areas:**

1. Skills and Technical
2. Physical Fitness
3. How to play the Game, including Positional play
4. Tactical Elements

The desired **Outcomes** were:

- A) Competence to play Interclub tournaments versus primarily Boys only Teams
- B) Win the Girls Section of Three Kings United Interclub Tournament

To cover Key Area 1, the writer worked closely with Mark Carter, Director of Junior and Youth Coaching at TKU, and arranged for 60 minute sessions to be made available for the Girls every Monday in the Three Kings United Academy where the focus was on skills and technical.

This was a huge success as the Girls enjoyed the learning experience going through International Player Development Program (IPDP) Phase 2, being together, and having the focus on their learning needs.

To cover Key Area 2, a 90 minute session was held every Wednesday and run by the writer as sole Coach. This session was structured to improve fitness, coach how to play the game, and introduce tactical elements.

**This session had fun elements and ensured any hard work was done without it being a focus of the session.**

To cover Key Area 3, the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Representatives attended two Interclub Tournaments and both the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Representatives participated in the TKU Interclub Tournament, Girls Section, with the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade winning the Tournament undefeated.

On Saturday's, the Girls in the Development Squad would play their first game down a Grade as a Girls Team versus primarily Boys and then play another with their regular Saturday mixed Team.

The two sessions from Key Area's 1 and 2 are very complimentary and critical to player development. The reality is that there is not enough time to coach all that is required.

Players in New Zealand are not advanced technically, nor are they coached to play the game positionally or tactically – most Saturday coaches, and some Representative coaches, have no idea at to what is required

Special mention is made of the 2005 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate Team who initially struggled for consistency under pressure in their on field performance yet were good enough to sort the mental side of what was required and become a champion team by end of season.

From a coaching viewpoint, there were significant learning's here for coaches about the psych of Girls, how mentally strong they can be as individuals and more so as a team, and the writers is grateful for the learning's gained from this Team.

The success obtained in 2006 was just rewards for all!

## In 2006

The focus extended to the four Grades, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.- 123 Girls and the writers role expanded to a dual one, responsible for the development of all Junior Girls and, as Head Coach Junior Girls.

A small brains trust was established comprising Richard Lawrence, Jim Puketapu and the writer and this followed on from our 2005 end of Season review focussed on planning and resourcing for 2006.

Jim Puketapu was appointed Girls Co-ordinator and later was appointed Junior Committee Chair. The Junior Committee decided to introduce all Girls Teams (18 Teams total) into each of the four grades and pre season evaluations were conducted end of February within two weeks of Registrations.

Jim and Richard conducted the simple evaluations while the writer ensured each Girl attempted the evaluation tasks. Following evaluation assessments there was twenty three, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls, and twenty eight, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls selected – a total of 51 Girls invited into the Development Program.

Others were subsequently invited, recommended by their Saturday Coach or in some cases, parents requested attendance – this request has generally been accommodated upon the mandatory evaluation showing the Girl can manage the Program both physically and mentally.

Development Squad numbers totalled 55, 45% of all Junior Girls at TKU

Information by Grade for Development Squad participants is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u># of Players</u>	<u># in Grade</u>
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6	(17 only in the Grade!)
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	19	(29 in Grade)
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	14	(30 in Grade)
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	16	(47 in Grade)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>(123 Girls)</b>

- 45% of all Junior Girls (8 Teams plus 3 nominated “special project” players) attended a weekly 1.5 hour session
- 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade session conducted on Wednesday’s 4.00pm to 5.30pm
- 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade session conducted on Thursday’s 4.00pm to 5.30pm
- Focus was:
  - (a) Skills and Technical – majority of Girls attended the Three Kings United Academy
  - (b) Physical Fitness
  - (c) How to play the Game, including Positional play
  - (d) Tactical Elements

## **The desired Outcomes in 2006 were:**

### **Primary**

- A) Competence to play Interclub Tournaments versus primarily Boys only Teams
- B) The four A Representative Teams to win their respective Grade of the Girls Section of Three Kings United Interclub Tournaments
- C) To win the Girls Section of the National Small Whites Tournament

### **Secondary**

- A) Under B) above, all A Representative Teams to be undefeated
- B) Under C) above, to be undefeated, **and** win in ordinary time **and** not concede any goals– ie no extra time and no penalty shootouts

The better Girls (Team 1's) in the four Grades were appropriately challenged both at training and game time with the stated objective of these Teams becoming the best in New Zealand in 2006.

There was originally some scoffing at this objective however the Junior Girls Committee felt it was important to establish a high level goal as something for these young players to strive for.

Pre season training commenced end of March and focussed initially on fitness work and linked in with the finish of other sports such as athletics, cricket, softball and lifesaving, in March.

Most attended the Three Kings United Skills and Technical Academy on Mondays, and some of the elite players would complete two sessions as part of our program to challenge them.

The writer managed the Development Squad session for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade on Wednesdays (4 Saturday Teams) and for the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> on Thursdays (4 Saturday Teams).

From a Coach Education Model viewpoint these sessions are quite unique as:

- (a) the Saturday Coach for each Team attended the relevant afternoon session and assisted their Team to carry out the Development Squad training under the writers direction as Head Coach and,
- (b) other Saturday Teams and Coaches outside of the Development Squad could attend so that both the Coach and their players (and Parents / Caregivers) could participate and experience the structure, environment and culture – the feedback from both coaches, girls and parents has been extremely positive

From this we have created a positive, focused and fun learning environment – no egos or politics were allowed on the training pitch!

Key Area's 3 and 4 are the outcome of the Development Model and these were first evident at the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Manurewa Tournament held in May 2006 when in Game 4 the Three Kings United A Representative 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys and Girls played each other – Shoreline was 0-0 at half time and 1-0 at fulltime to the Boys.

The two well attended Three Kings United Interclub Tournaments in August 2006 were a major showcase for these Girls in 2006 as they were in their own Girls only Section.

These Tournaments were the ideal planned lead-in to the pen-ultimate Tournament for Juniors in New Zealand – the National 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Small Whites Tournament - where the TKU Death by Chocolate Girls played to a level not previously seen in Junior Girls soccer in New Zealand.

Further to this the Girls achieved another first – competing in their own section in the National 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Small Whites Tournament held end of September 2006 – these Tournaments and the results are commented on later such was their success.

## **Other Items of Importance arising from the Model:**

1. We now have a thriving Soccer Family – new friends made, life skills learnt, parental / caregiver involvement, goals / objectives set and met, individual and team achievements in a supportive environment
2. There are no parameters to coaching activities, be firm and clear, praise and scold, most of all challenge yet have fun and enjoy
3. Train and Play together – creates a bond of understanding, one example – this years 9<sup>th</sup> Grade representatives who were coached last year alongside the 2005 9<sup>th</sup> Grade know each other well so the 2006 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls were able to play up a Grade for the 2006 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Premiers, contribute and fit in seamlessly
4. Coach a new task each week or re-visit a previous one
5. Positional play is coached to the Development squad teams across the four grades and the Team benefits have been quickly grasped even by the 5 and 6 year olds. This covers both the individual and the team responsibilities applicable to a particular position.
6. Girls are coached to play a position(s) that is considered to be their strength as a first step
7. Tactical elements are introduced to complete the player development – this stimulated the mental side for the Girls hugely
8. The top elite players are challenged – two Academy Sessions, playing up a grade on Saturday (Boys and Girls), additional coaching points etc
9. Structure and consistency of approach to the coaching and discipline is important
10. Respect for each player is important as are communications with players and parents / caregivers (this is a hard area to manage)
11. Sideline coaching at game time is critical to development – this is considered part of the coaching process and provides a valuable “on the job” coaching opportunity
12. Successful playing structures have been established for 5, 7 and 9 a side Games and this is covered in more detail in a later section
13. Being available to discuss their child, including queries or complaints with you is important to parents / caregivers

14. Observation of both players and coaches of teams outside of those from Development Squad was done on a regular basis at game time on Saturdays throughout the Season
15. Through the network that was developed, some Girls have been able to play up a Grade (or two) with both Boys and Girls, on larger fields
16. The A Representative Teams were managed to ensure peak performance at selected tournaments – this may mean Saturday games are used to experiment with player positions, game strategies and tactics, player and team balance
17. The Development Model has established the opposite from generally held views including the United Soccer, Horst Wein, Burnaby Soccer and other available research. I do not intend to comment on these views or critique this research other than noting there is little research focussed on Junior Girls and nothing recent

**For consideration the following points are noted:**

- a. The perception that the Girls are weaker players is wrong, physically and mentally they are different
- b. Coaching how to actually play the full game is critical, not just technical and skills and small sided game scenario's – we have achieved great balance with this in 2006
- c. The Girls have more enjoyment, learn more and play better together
- d. The Girls enjoy playing on larger fields with more players:
  - i. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade quarter size - 7 a side
  - ii. 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade half size – 9 a side with GK

One key reason – more time and space to think, create and execute

- e. The A Representative Girls can compete against the best Boys Club Representative sides in New Zealand

Because of the general perception that Girls could not compete as a Team in Interclub Tournaments against Boys Representative Teams, in 2005 the Three Kings United 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate A Representative Girls were not given the opportunity to enter a single Tournament – a decision that has been detrimental to their immediate development

- f. The Girls tested well under the Small Whites Testing model and disproportionately won more Awards

- g. You can coach for any task, position, playing model and tactic – the Girls are like sponges and thrive on the challenge (It may take time as the development base was Zero)
- h. Although it was not the writers proposal, the Girls Only Teams training then playing together game time Saturday has worked – even the bottom placed Teams are learning – the Girls have to participate as there is no Development or Representative Boy to hog all the ball! More on this subject later as has been a rod on the writers back in 2006.
- i. In addition, in the Three Kings United Internal Tournament against Boys only Teams, besides the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls top teams making Finals, we had the amazing result of the bottom placed 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Teams making it to the Bronze Final of their respective Grade!
- j. Player numbers have increased due to the Model offering a focus on the Girls – don't forget 45% of Junior Girls are in the Development Program!

## **Tournament Results**

These Results for the Girls Representative teams were absolutely outstanding and confirmed the Development Program and Structure was meeting the high standards of expectations.

### **Three Kings United Internal Tournaments (Versus Boys Only Teams)**

#### **Development Squad Teams**

6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 1 Swallows	Finalists Silver Section
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 1 Meerkats	Winner Silver Section Final
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 1 Olympique	Finalists Silver Section
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 1 USA	With 6 Players Beat Germany Drew with Italy, Tournament Runner up

#### **Non Development Squad Teams**

8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 4 Marseille	Finalist Bronze Section
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Team 6 Uruguay	Finalist Bronze Section

### **External Tournaments**

A focused and selected Representative Schedule was implemented for all the A Representative Teams (6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade) and all teams competed competently against the Boys only Teams.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade A Representative Teams both won against Interclub Boys Teams, and the 8<sup>th</sup> A Representative Team went to a penalty shootout in Game 4 at Manurewa.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate A Representatives Team also made the Consolation Final in the mud and rain at Clendon, and without their specialist goalkeeper.

## **Three Kings United Invitational Tournaments**

This was the first Season where there were separate Girls Sections to all grades of these Tournaments. A lot of hard work was done to promote the Girls Sections across the Federations in New Zealand and to individual Clubs however it was evident that the vast majority of Clubs, including some Clubs with large junior player numbers, do not encourage or cater for Girl players.

The growth of Teams entered, although from a small base, is considered significant and feedback received is that the profile generated by the Three Kings United Teams coached from the Development Model has been a valuable best promotional "tool".

### **The following table shows the comparison 2005 v 2006**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of Teams</b>		<b>Est. 2007</b>
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	
6 <sup>th</sup>	0	4	8
7 <sup>th</sup>	0	8	12
8 <sup>th</sup>	2	6	12
9 <sup>th</sup>	4	9	14

We expect the number of teams to compete in 2007 to grow significantly In 2005, there was no 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Tournament entry for Girls and in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, a total of only 6 Teams entered.

**20 August 2006**     **6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls**  
**7 a Side / Size 3 Ball / No GK / ¼ Size Pitch**

### **Three Kings United Results – A Representative Teams**

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Major Final Tournament Winners and Undefeated**

Played 5 – Won 4 – Drew 1  
Scored 17 Conceded 2

It was a delight watching these young Girls compete over five games, play some excellent soccer and really enjoy themselves.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Major Final Tournament Winners and Undefeated**

Played 5 – Won 5  
Scored 18 Conceded 0

This Team is a very talented one and played exceptionally as the statistics show. This will be one team to watch in the future.

In addition the TKU B Representative team were 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Minor Final Finalists, a very good result for these Girls, most who were in their first year of Soccer, and the writer is very proud of them.

**27 August 2006**

**8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls**

**9 a Side / Size 3 Ball / With GK / ½ Size Pitch**

**Three Kings United Results – A Representative Teams**

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Major Final Tournament Winners and Undefeated**

Played 5 - Won 5

Scored 12 Conceded 0

This Team improved significantly throughout the Season and really asserted themselves in this Tournament and showed the right mental attitude. The writer was impressed by the dominating nature of this Tournament performance

**9<sup>th</sup> Grade Major Final Tournament Winners and Undefeated**

Three Kings United Death by Chocolate Girls

Played 6 - Won 5 - Drew 1

Scored 11 Conceded 0

**Major Final    TKU Death by Chocolate Girls 1    Waitakere 0**

This Team went into this Tournament as favourites following the performance of the 2005 Girls and played within their abilities to be undefeated.

Acknowledgment must be made of the progress that all Teams have made, clearly Metro had done their homework and Waitakere proved very strong with a robust physical approach to their game and were worthy finalists.

The participation by all the Girls at prize giving afterwards was exceptional, and the enthusiasm and smiles evident was great to see.

Each Girl participating in the four Tournaments received a cool Roxy fashion item sponsored by the Bone Yard Surf Shop and this capped a very enjoyable two days.

**National 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Small Whites Tournament**  
**29 Sept to 01 October 2006 (3 Days)**

**9 a Side / Size 4 Ball / With GK / ½ Size Pitch**

**Won by Three Kings United Death by Chocolate Girls**

The build up to the Three Kings United Invitational Tournament on 20<sup>th</sup> August was a good one however we knew that careful management of both individual players and the Team was critical in the intervening 5 weeks from these tournaments to the Nationals.

The key issue was the non availability of four A Representative players in particular Sam Hayr who has been our key defensive player the past two years. The decision to draft in two 9<sup>th</sup> Grade B Representative players and two 8<sup>th</sup> Grade A Representative players was the right one – positional cover was an important criteria in the individual player decision.

The inclusion of the two 8<sup>th</sup> Grade players was taken under advice, both players are exceptional however have quite different talents, one strong and with a silky skill base, the other physically very robust with amazing speed.

The following was the lead up program and games were played with a Size 4 Ball on half size pitches except for the game versus the Central 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Premiers which was on a full size pitch.

1. v Central 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Premiers – 9 a side / 2 \* 25 min halves  
Won 2 – 0 by TKU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate Girls
2. v TKU 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Premiers Girls / Boys – 9 a side / 3 \* 20 min halves  
Draw 3 – 3
3. v Central 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Premiers – 11 a side / full side pitch  
Won 2 – 1 by TKU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate Girls
4. v TKU 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Premier Girls / Boys – 9 a side / 2 \* 25 min halves  
Won 1 – 0 by TKU 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Death by Chocolate Girls
5. v TKU National Boys Team B – 9 a side / 2 \* 25 min halves  
Draw 0 – 0

Games 4 and 5 were played with a six minute break between the games as a test of fitness and ability to cope with different playing styles and pace of the game. The use of substitutes and resultant player management was beneficial for both players and coaches.

Importantly on the two Wednesdays prior to the Nationals we focused on the mental side of the game, talking about the key scenario's we knew would arise, and our own tactics, individual and Team attitudes, with little emphasis on the physical side on those two days.

### **Round Robin Results – TKU Death by Chocolate Girls**

Game 1 v Metro	2 - 0
Game 2 v Eastern Suburbs	4 - 0
Game 3 v Bay Olympic	3 - 0
Game 4 v Hibiscus Coast	3 - 1
Game 5 v Fencibles	5 - 0

**Nationals Major Final      TKU Death by Chocolate Girls v Metro      2 - 0**

**Played 6 – Won 6  
Scored 19 Conceded 1**

We compared this to the Three Kings United 9th Grade Invitational results Played 6 - Won 5 - Drew 1 - Scored 11 Conceded 0, and there was 8 more Goals scored - Conceded 1 Goal = Goal difference 7 plus points difference in Win v Draw scenario

Goals for and against have been included for statistical purposes as particularly with the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade TKU Death by Chocolate Girls we have conducted some analysis and comparison with results from the Nationals so as to identify areas of improvement or for improvement.

### **2006 Season Summary**

The outcomes of the 2006 Season across the four Grades has been no less than exceptional, this is reflected in both the on and off field results.

Analysis shows that in winning the four Invitational Tournaments and the National Tournament that the TKU Girls A Representative teams were:

- Undefeated in the 27 Games played
- Scored 77 Goals
- Conceded only 3 Goals
- Very fit
- Extremely well drilled
- Playing with composure and confidence
- Enjoying themselves!!

## **Further analysis of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade A Representative Death by Chocolate Girls Team shows:**

- Significant evidence of improvement exists from the players having been together as a Team and part of the Development Model for two years
- The longer the Season went and the more tactical the approach, the higher the level of enjoyment and performance (Individual and Team)
- The importance of getting the simple fundamentals right ie
  - Throw In's
  - Kick Offs
  - Goal Kicks and Goalkeeper Clearance's
  - Corners

This enabled focus on other facets of the game such as Player Marking (Body Positioning with Balance), Positional Play, Playing to a Structure, Using Vision etc

- The Team had achieved great balance, from Goalkeeper to Striker
- Even with smaller player numbers to call on compared to the Boys, they were able to achieve the results at the National Tournament despite there being four players unavailable as outside Auckland in the school holidays
- They won against Interclub Boys Teams
- They have defeated Three Kings United 2006 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls Premier Soccer2 Champions
- They defeated Central United's 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Girl Premiers **and** the well performed Central United's 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Girl Premiers who competed in the Soccer2 2006 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Championship Round

The writer will have to admit the level of play, ability to play to instructions, composure shown and domination at the National Tournament by the Champion Death by Chocolate Girls Team was one step up on his own high expectations however everything actioned in the pre Tournament execution phase was perfect, in hindsight this was the best platform for the Team to perform from.

The National Tournament was extremely well constructed and managed, and the 30 Teams participating had a fantastic time over the three days – the professional nature of the 2006 Tournament has set a benchmark for all future tournaments and is it worthwhile considering more Regional and National Tournaments as a way of developing and profiling the Junior game.

## **Development Squad Session Planning (DSSP)**

This was a critical component of success and something that the writer had to be very disciplined with, noting:

- (a) the number of Coaches (4) and Players involved in each session (30 on Wednesday's and 25 on Thursday's), and
- (b) being mindful of the need for variety and fun, yet
- (c) ensuring good structure and discipline

## **Session Plan Template (SPT)**

This is shared to enable the reader to understand the practical and simple nature of Development Model activities.

### **(1) Pre 4.00pm Warm up**

Players were encouraged to warm up upon arrival and not wait for others. Simple tasks such as "happy feet", jogging with and without the ball were included. It was important for the social chit chat to occur prior to the commencement of the Session

For the 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> Grade we used "Ladders" as part of their warm up routine, this is an exercise that should be used more often as great for co-ordination.

### **(2) 4.00pm to 4.08pm Shuttles**

#### **Disc Cones**

- 5 with spacing 2m apart for 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Grade
- 6 with spacing 3m apart for 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> Grade
- 4 Rows (one for each Team)

#### **Coaches Tip**

- space each Row such that two players from each team can participate at one time
- ensure each player completes properly each shuttle

#### **Mandatory**

- # 1 - half pace – 3 times – focus on proper turning and acceleration from cone
- # 2 - full pace – 2 times – focus on agility, balance and turn

#### **Additional Options (Minimum of 2 utilised each Session)**

- # 3 - hopping -1 time – focus on timing of hop, change leg each way
- # 4 - skipping – 2 times – focus on "bounce", co-ordination of arms & legs
- # 5 - Ball dribble – 2 times – focus with foot on top of ball to stop at cone
- # 6 - Ball dribble – 2 times – focus with foot to back heel or drag back at cone
- # 7 - Piggy back – 1 time – focus on leg drive and balance
- # 8 - Backwards – 1 time – focus on balance and push off toes

### **(3) 4.08 to 4.20pm Balance / Weaving**

#### **Weave Poles**

- with spacing 2m / 3m apart
- 1 row for each Grade
- either spaced straight line or staggered left / right (favoured by the writer)

#### **Mandatory**

- # 1 - half pace – 2 times – focus on balance, use of arms, with tight pole turn
- # 2 - full pace – 2 times – focus on speed (fast – slow into pole and fast out), agility, balance and turn

#### **Additional Options (Minimum of 1 utilised each Session)**

- # 3 - hopping -1 time – focus on timing of hop, change leg each pole
- # 4 - skipping – 2 times – focus on “bounce”, co-ordination of arms & legs
- # 5 - ball dribble – 2 times – focus with strong then weak foot

### **(4) 4.20 to 4.50pm New or Re-visited Weekly Task**

A range of tasks were covered in sessions throughout the Season and a number were re-visited by the Teams either collectively or individually.

A non exhaustive list has been included for reference and it is to be noted that a number of these are focussed on areas where the Girls have lacked exposure, development or are weak.

- Inside foot – trap and pass between players (5m)
- Chesting the ball down (very simple)
- Headers (very simple defensive)
- Clearing kick (balance – arms - place foot plant – striking foot under ball – and leg swing thru)
- The high ball (get some body part underneath!!) – this is the most difficult of tasks for Junior Girls – 99% of Girls will initially shy away from the high ball and it takes both coach and player patience and perseverance to coach to competence level
- Passing between Cones 1m apart – from 5m / 10m / 15m distance
- Hill work – develop leg strength and arm drive
- Throw In's – (hands position, behind head and feet on the ground)
- 400m run with the ball (push and run - looking for touch control while moving)

## **(5) 4.50 to 5.05pm Saturday Team Coaches Time**

This time slot allowed the individual Team and assisting Coaches to spend specific time with their Saturday Team and focus on specific tasks.

This was also an important time for individual and team bonding, and development of the team spirit.

As Head Coach, I would assist in some tasks or invest some specific time with the Team 1's from each Grade. From a developmental viewpoint, the players in the Team 1's from the four grades required additional coaching in the form of expanding an existing task difficulty or introducing a new task.

In addition, there were a number of individual players across the four grades who the writer would rate as the best in New Zealand in a position for their age group, and these players needed to be communicated with such that they were challenged appropriately and so they understood specific requirements particularly at game time.

Whenever there was an upcoming Tournament, a specific lead up program would be implemented so that the conditioning, playing structures and team balance components were in place.

## **(6) 5.05 to 5.25pm Game Time**

The playing format used for Saturday games would be used and game time was usually full on – the Girls would be keen to play each other and there were no half hearted efforts.

From a Head Coach perspective, it was important to use this also as a coaching opportunity and at least 70% of the time I would be actively involved in the game, either to balance team numbers or the teams playing ability.

For example if Team One 9<sup>th</sup> Grade were playing Team Two 8<sup>th</sup> Grade then by playing for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade it would create certain playing conditions that would cause the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade team to have to think about how they could for example, get past with the writer in defence, or how to defend against body feints and other simple techniques.

For the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, for example, it would assist in discovering better field positions for receiving the ball from the defence or for the forwards to present a target for a through ball.

The message from this is that the “show and tell”, re-enactment and reinforcement by the coaches was a very powerful coaching method.

The Girls also enjoyed the challenge of taking on and beating their Coach!

## **(7) 5.25 to 5.30pm Shuttles**

These were conducted in the same format as in 2) of the SPT however at full pace for three attempts. It was considered important to ensure each player carried out this task properly and with no short cuts.

The discipline of task completion at end of session and ensuring the thinking process was active is important.

This task was completed enthusiastically and team bonding was very evident in the “loud” encouragement between team mates and the competitive nature the girls displayed.

A mention must be made of the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls (Age 5 and 6), they were invariably first to line up for shuttles and so enjoyed this task!!

As mentioned above there was significant noise throughout and often the Girls would demand re-runs and keep their parents / caregivers waiting.

### **End of Session**

Often it was obligatory for the writer at the end of the Session, and sometimes during, to be involved in fun activities such as giving piggy-back rides, spinning in circles with player after player or if the Girls felt the writer needed “discipline” then shuttles or push ups with someone on his back was the norm.

This end of session activity is in reflection, an important part of their personal experience and enjoyment at attending development squad training and I am sure for some, “payback” on the writer by being able to act out and reverse the coach / player roles.

Needless to say the attitudes and energy levels contributed to some quite amazing sessions.

## Development Squad Survey

As the new Development Model has now been implemented for two years it was considered important to capture feedback from participating Girls and Parents.

The following are the Development Squad Survey results in Summary form:

- Number of completed Surveys **48** (87% of all Development Squad Girls)  
(39% of all TKU Junior Girls)
- Ranking from **1** for Strongly Disagree, to **7** for Strongly Agree
- Median ranking therefore of **4**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Overall Rating out of 7</b>
▪ Q1 I enjoyed being part of the Development Squad	6.54
▪ Q2 Training was hard work sometimes, however we also had fun	6.48
▪ Q3 I enjoyed being coached by Selwyn	6.60
▪ Q4 My skills and technical ability improved significantly this season	6.40
▪ Q5 My fitness really improved over the season	6.44
▪ Q6 I enjoyed learning how to play the game of soccer	6.58
▪ Q7 I now understand how to play a position(s)	6.23
▪ Q8 I enjoyed playing on larger fields than we do on Saturday	6.06
▪ Q9 I enjoyed playing Interclub games or Tournaments	6.71
▪ Q10 I think I can play soccer well now	6.54

With the responses coming from the participating Girl players, the writer is obviously very happy that the individual ranking for all ten questions was over 6.0, with the overall average ranking being an outstanding **6.46**

The high ratings from each Survey question speaks volumes for how the Girls feel about what they experienced in 2006 – and this is in the writers view very powerful information when matched with their on-field performances.

## Playing Formats

The writers' opinion is that small sided games such as 3 v 3 and 4 v 4 have there place and are valuable coaching tools however he strongly opposes this becoming a standard format for Saturday game time.

Research results from the past two years of the Junior Development Model show larger rather than smaller playing formats produce better results for both the individual players and for the Team. The following table highlights these research results:

### Junior Development "Bradley" Playing Model

<b>Age during Calendar Year</b>	<b>Number of Players</b>	<b>Number of Substitutes</b>	<b>Size of Ball</b>	<b>Size of Pitch</b>	<b>Duration of Game</b>	<b>Goalkeeper Allowed</b>	<b>Basic Rules</b>
6 (6 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	7	1	3	Quarter	12 min x 2	No	No Offsides Rolling Substitution Goal kicks 8m
7 (7 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	7	1	3	Quarter	15 min x 2	No	No Offsides Rolling Substitution Goal kicks 8m
8 (8 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	9	1	3	Half	20 min x 2	Yes	Offsides Rolling Substitution Goal kicks 8m Hand/Ground
9 (9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	9	1	4	Half	24 min x 2	Yes	Offsides Rolling Substitutes Goal kicks 8m Hand/Ground
10 (10 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	9	2	4	Half	28 min x 2	Yes	Offsides Rolling Substitutions Goal kicks 5m Hand / Ground

We note some Clubs view the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade as being within the Juniors Grades and accordingly have included this Grade in the above table.

The writer has interest in the progression from Junior to Youth Grades having now had both a son and daughter experience this transition, and having watched with interest the development of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Development Squad from 2005 as it progressed into the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Soccer2 Girls Competition in 2006.

It is the writers firm view that the Soccer2 playing model for the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade at present of 7 a side, including a Goalkeeper, on half size fields does not assist sufficiently in individual player development or Team play

**It is important to re-state:**

**1) The status of the Junior Girls Development prior to 2005 was near zero**

**2) The Development Model has only been in place for two full seasons**

**Yet we have these amazing results!! – Yes even I have to admit surprise at the level of learning and success – I cannot help ask where would we be if this Model had been in place two years earlier?**

**The Development Model is not just Coaching related – the significant Planning process and the support mechanisms are all there and operate very efficiently. The strong linkage between the on-field activity and successes, and the off field activities and planning is evident and cannot be ignored.**

**We can run our own Junior Girl Tournaments, obtain our own Sponsors - \$10,000 for the Girls Section of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – why? – because we have a passion for the Sport, for the Challenge, for the buzz of taking something from nothing to excellence.**

**There is now a “culture” involving an extended Soccer family in place that is great to be part of – how we expand this is the challenge going forward.**

**The evidence of improvement is stunning, special synergies exist and the interesting observation is that the Model can work for both Boys and Girls at Junior and Youth levels.**

## **Further Challenges specifically for New Zealand Soccer**

To take the game of Soccer forward in New Zealand is of absolute importance and the writer is convinced that if we can introduce a number of key actions then the game will be fostered and participation at all levels increase, as will the area of refereeing – with that will come the benefits at the international level.

### **Suggested Key Actions**

- 1) Have a focus at age's 4 and 5 – this can be simple and relatively unstructured
- 2) Recognise that parents and kids have options with regards sports – Ballet, Dancing, Gymnastics, Netball and Swimming are the key competitive sports for Girls.

Half the potential playing participants are in general ignored – the Girls are a huge participative market yet untapped – there needs to be a co-ordinated approach from the governing body in New Zealand Soccer, through the Federations and their Clubs for this to market to be captured.

- 3) From a pure business perspective, and following on from 2) is the huge marketing opportunity that resides with this market – Girls are very cognisant of brands, and the purchasing wants and needs are actively pursued from an early age.

Think of the 8 year old girl, who really enjoys her Soccer and what is involved in getting kitted out with her friends for training and Saturday games in her:

- Roxy Beanie
- Lotto Jacket (with Paul Frank ti-shirt underneath)
- Puma Track Pants
- Adidas Gear Bag
- Adidas Shin Pads
- Nike Boots
- Nike Ball

You can replace any of the above brands dependant upon taste, or maybe more importantly Team sponsorship as there is a sense of look good / feel good, and being “cool” to be wearing the brand.

I am sure the marketing directors of the above mentioned brands will understand the message here – Soccer New Zealand needs to show leadership in taking advantage of this commercial opportunity.

- 4) Capturing coaches at all levels is important and where possible Club based coaching Managers or Directors should be qualified to offer the Small Whites coaching courses (Excluding Advanced Junior).

- 5) The registration fees charged by Clubs for Juniors should include a nominal fee of \$5 to be allocated for the coaching of first time coaches or those seeking a refresher.

The message should be that it is not a pre-requisite to have played the game before, to learn to coach soccer – amongst parents there are often a number of former rugby or league players who understand good training structures and team dynamics.

- 6) Involvement and enrolment of the Federations and their Clubs is critical to the development of the Junior game – strong leadership needs to be shown with this.

**2007**

**More to come .....**

**The writer may be contacted by email on:**

**[Bradleys@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Bradleys@xtra.co.nz)**