

Bridging Peewee to World Cup Soccer

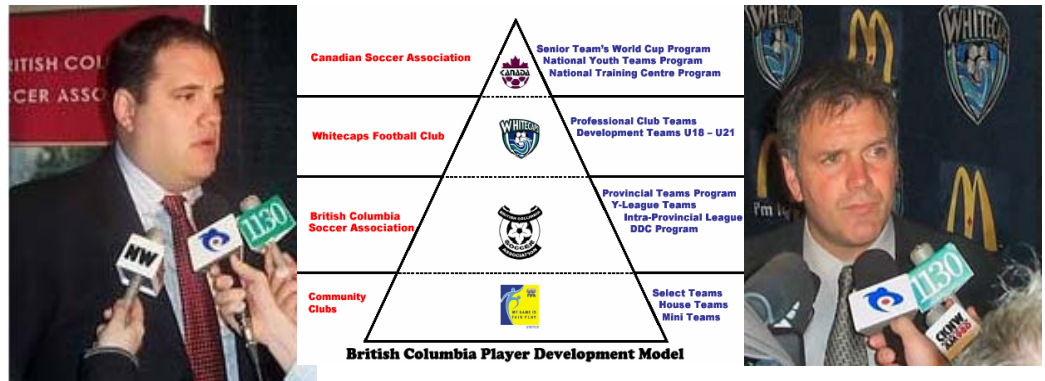


by John Bowen



On October 25, 2004, Bob Lenarduzzi, Whitecaps Football Club Director of Soccer Operations and Victor Montagliani, BC Soccer Association President announced a new partnership to enhance and streamline player development in BC. *“Both organizations understand to move soccer forward in BC and ultimately in Canada we have to come together for the good of the game and player development,”* said Bob Lenarduzzi. But what does it mean for kids in West Vancouver and other soccer clubs around the province? The editor of Sidelines interviewed Bob Lenarduzzi and Victor Montagliani in December to try to find out. *continued on p.2 – Bridging Peewee...*

WEST VANCOUVER SOCCER CLUB SIDELINES



Victor Montagliani (left) President of British Columbia Soccer Association and Bob Lenarduzzi (right) Whitecaps Director of Soccer Operations announce a new partnership in soccer a new partnership to enhance and streamline player development in BC. development in BC as illustrated by the British Columbia Player Development Model (centre) See page 2.

Inside this Issue of Sidelines...

Bridging Peewee to World Cup Soccer by John Bowen	Page 1
London Supernova Squad System by Geoffrey Painter	Page 3
Goalkeeping: Soccer's Least Favourite Position? By Clair Lawrence	Page 5
Heading the Ball by Dr. Brian Hunt	Page 6
West Vancouver's own Owen Hargreaves: Bundesliga Club Signs Local Player by Bob Moles	Page 7

Sidelines is a periodic newsletter published by and for the members of West Vancouver Soccer Club. It is a forum for the dissemination of information and exchange of ideas about soccer and matters relevant to playing the game. Opinions expressed in Sidelines are typically those of contributors or the editor. They do not necessarily reflect club policy or the views of WVSC's Board of Directors.

...Bridging Peewee (continued)

I held approximately one hour long telephone interviews with Bob Lenarduzzi (Friday December 3) and Victor Montagliani (Thursday December 9) and asked them more or less the same question; “I can see some immediate benefits of your partnership at the provincial level, for instance in improving administration and in reducing confusion over the tryouts for provincial teams, Y-League teams and IPL teams. However, what many people wonder is how BCSC-Whitecaps collaboration will effect development at the club level.”

Victor Montagliani... “What we are doing is not original. We are doing what is done in several European countries, notably Germany and Ireland. They have introduced district or regional development models. We want to do the same here. Clubs do an excellent job in developing players to a certain level, but after that there is little to challenge top players. Even at the metro level, competition is very uneven.

What is the point if being the best player in West Vancouver if you are not challenged. We want to do what the German and Irish Soccer federations are doing – providing appropriate challenges for players according for their ability and stage of development in preparation for district, provincial, national and international competition. We want to repair the disconnect between development initiatives and thereby reduce the gap between club play and top level soccer.

BC is too big for regional centres, so we will designate or establish *district development centres* or DDC’s. We are starting with eleven DDC’s. The Whitecaps will cover most of the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan. The North Shore Development Centre is another DDC.

The DDC’s will take nothing away from clubs. Clubs are still the basic units of development. The DDC will help clubs in providing a place for top players to get extra training with peers at the same development level.

Some clubs have a tendency to treat their best players as their property. This is not in the interests of the player. Young players must go where their best development opportunities exist.

Your club has a head coach. I know Jammer and he does a great job. His main contribution and that of other club head coaches is to train coaches.

Good private soccer schools provide an excellent service in improving player skills, but for every good school there are many that are not so good. It is time that BC Soccer set some standards and that is what this is all about.”

Bob Lenarduzzi... “What the merger means in practical terms is that Whitecaps will take over responsibility for player development in the Lower Mainland for all but U13 to U17 provincial teams. For those years, top rated players will play on provincial teams. We want BC teams to be competitive in national competitions. But for other years and for the months that provincial teams are not active, major responsibility for player development will be ours.

Players will be assessed and placed on provincial, Y-League or IPL teams depending on their development needs and their current abilities. There will be one process for all avenues.


Our whole objective is to make sure that we effectively cover the whole province and that no deserving player gets missed in the selection process for the next level. We will depend on soccer clubs to identify and encourage players who should move up.

The Whitecaps FC has hired top technical staff to help develop talented young players. Tony Fonseca is the Technical Director. Andrea Neil is the Girls’ Head Coach and Carlo Corazzin is the Boys’ Head Coach.

I hope that our relationship with the North Shore DDC and other DDC’s will be such that if they have a strong player who would benefit from Whitecaps training that they will call us and suggest we look at him or her.

You know, if someone had suggested a year ago that BC Soccer and Whitecaps FC would go into partnership, everybody would have laughed. I won’t pretend that it was easy to come to this agreement or that we do not have any differences. Both organizations think we do many things better than the other and it will be a few years before the big benefits of the BC Soccer – Whitecaps partnership are apparent.

It will not be easy, but working together is the right thing for soccer in British Columbia. We have a way to go, but the important thing is that we have made a start and we are working hard together in the interests of player development.

I think the growing cooperation between BC Soccer and Whitecaps will be echoed at all levels. I hope to see increasing coordination between soccer clubs and District Development Centres, like the North Shore Development Centre. It may not always be easy to reconcile differences between organizations, but it is important to make the effort. It is the right thing to do for the good of kids and the good of soccer in this province.” 

London Supernova Squad System

By Geoffrey Painter

Editor's Note: While I was following the results of the Club National Championships this fall I recognized a name associated with one of the winning teams. – the girls' U14 "London Supernova". Geoff Painter, the team manager and I were graduate students together at the University of Western Ontario almost 30 years ago.

I did a bit of research and found that The North London Club has won a number of recent Ontario and national championships and far from being over-shadowed by large Toronto area clubs, it is one of the most successful youth soccer clubs in Canada.

North London has aspects in common with West Vancouver, as does its youth soccer club and ours. .Despite lacking the advantages we on the west coast have in being able to play soccer outside in winter, North London has been very successful in being a major competitive force in Canadian youth soccer, while also providing excellent development opportunities to all its players.

I contacted Geoff Painter and asked him about the success of his club teams. Geoff attributes some success to the "Squad System" they use. I asked him to write an article on North London's use of the Squad System for this issue of Sidelines. He agreed.

Geoff Painter has coached many London teams has been a driving force in the North London Club for decades. He has five children who have all played soccer. His son Martin is Development Director of the North London Club. The subject line of Geoff's email to me contained the following quote from Bill Shankly, "Football is not a matter of life and death - it is more important than that".

Read on...



2004 National Champions - North London Supernova GU14 team

The London Supernova Under 14 Girls team that won the 2004 Canadian National Club Championship has used a squad system to develop players and form teams since they began at Under 9. The squad has grown from 30 players forming two teams in the first season, to 65 and four teams at Under 14.

The basic purpose of a squad approach is to increase the number of players being developmentally coached in a specific program and in a particular age division beyond the numbers that can be placed on one team. It is very difficult to predict at the under 9 or under 10 ages who will ultimately have the technical and athletic ability to play at a very high level as well as which players will have the desire, ambition and willingness to sacrifice the time to practice extensively and train hard. It is therefore advantageous for a coaching program that has the goal of producing high level teams to have a larger pool of players than the usual number that make up a single team. This is particularly the case if the program is orientated towards a possession style which requires players to have a very sound technical skill base. These skills – good first touch, comfort in close control, accurate short distribution and pass weighting – are learnt easiest at a young age and become increasingly difficult and time consuming to develop as players get older. Coaching thirty players the same way and having them all working at developing the same skills means that as the players get older and some

drop out, there are other suitably trained players to replace them.

In assigning players from the squad to specific teams for league competition, there is the option of balancing two or more teams, organizing them into an "A", "B", "C" structure, or blending the two. In the 2004 season we had 14 players on an "A" team that played in a regional league with extensive travelling, 30 players on two balanced "B" teams that competed against each other in the top division of the local league, and 18 players on a fourth team that competed in a lower division of the local league. Players could be routinely called up from the local league teams to the Regional league team as needs dictated. The balancing of the two "B" teams was fairly successfully done as they both won all their league games except two ties against each other, and they went to extra time in both the playoff game to decide the league championship and in the League Cup final. Rivalry between the teams was of course evident but it was generally friendly and without rancour. The coaches were significant in achieving this and it is essential in a squad system to have coaches and managers that are committed to the overall objectives.

Inter team rivalry was also reduced by the fact that we entered blended teams – with players drawn from three or in one case all four of the squad teams – in tournaments. Our general rule is to put only 14 players on a tournament team in order to maximize playing time, and as an example in one case in 2004, two players were from the Regional league team, five each from

the two “B” teams, and two from the team in a lower level league. This has a number of benefits – players who did not generally start for the Regional league team become leaders and key players on a tournament team, the two strongest players from the lowest level team have an opportunity to play with stronger players at a higher level, and players from the two “B” teams are blended cutting down on inter team rivalries.

It is important in a squad system that all players are comfortable with and get to know each other.

We used practice sessions for this and had one practice session weekly for sixty players. Running such a session successfully is a coaching challenge and meeting it requires a very good training facility (we had two full fields, a running track and a separate training area with a hill), a minimum of four coaches (we generally had five as well as a trainer), and a clear overall authority structure with one person in charge. Planning the session is this person’s responsibility and there can be no winging it or making it up as you go along when there are sixty players present.

The most difficult challenge in running a system like ours is not balancing teams, organizing practices or developing a mutually supportive team of coaches and managers. All of these are important but it is the cultivation of support for and commitment to the squad approach from players and parents that demands the most care and attention. Players and parents need to be convinced that this approach is in their interest and that it can work successfully for them. Dealing with the concerns, anxieties and egos of players and parents is a time consuming and demanding task. To do this well, it is essential that the person in charge of the squad does not have a child or relative on any of the teams, and that they do not play favourites. They must be seen as neutral and committed to the overall development of teams and players, not just the strongest ones or the “A” team.

For the system to work, it must be believed that the placement of players on teams is based on merit and what is best for the player. Coaches need to resist the temptation of judging players


on what they achieved in the previous season and need to be constantly on the lookout for the player that is going through a period of fat improvement. This can be difficult to pick up especially if it occurs over the winter. The reasons may be physical, attitudinal or simply a result of learning things later rather than sooner. In our case, parents have clearly seen that from one season to another there is substantial movement of players from for example “A” team to “B” team and vice versa, and so they understand that being placed on a “B” team is not a lifetime sentence. Equally, they have seen that it is preferable in terms of playing time and developmental opportunity to be a leading player on a “B” team who may be called up to an “A” team when needed, than it is to be the seventeenth or eighteenth player on the “A” team with limited playing time. The squad system allows us to keep the number of players per team down this increasing playing time for all players. We can only do this because we have available players, used to playing the same way, regularly available for call up.

All our teams do play the same basic positional system, with a straight back four and a diamond shaped midfield. They receive the same handouts, attend the same positional training sessions, and are taught to play the same possession style. We do not believe that players should be exposed to high level competition until they have gained sufficient technical proficiency and so we resist the idea that teams should play against the strongest opposition they can find. For us it is preferable for teams to play against weaker opposition as they learn the technical and positional requirements for higher level play. For example it is folly to try to teach players to play out from the back in games against very fast and fit forwards who close them down quickly. They will cough the ball up, be scored against and will lose confidence in their ability to do it, probably resorting to hoofing the ball down the field whenever they can. Playing the ball out needs to be learnt gradually and against opposing teams that push your team to your technical limit but not beyond it. A squad system allows individual players, who are developing at different rates, to

be moved up to a higher level of competition when they are ready. One central defender from a “B” team may be becoming technically proficient at a faster rate than the other. It is this one then that is called up and given the opportunity to play at a higher level against better opposition.

As with all organizational mechanisms there is an optimum size at which a system works best. Our experience is that a squad of 45 with one “A” team and two balanced “B” teams is the most effective. For 2005 however, because we will have teams in a provincial as well as a regional league we will run two groups within one squad - thirty players playing on the regional and provincial league teams and thirty playing in the local league. We also plan on running a third group of thirty 1991 birth year players who will form two balanced teams from which we will create one team for Provincial championship competition. Our total squad for 2005 will therefore be one of ninety players.

The administrative support for this needs to be of a high level, and we have committed people working as squad treasurer, fund raiser, social convener, tournament co-ordinator as well as the usual team managers and coaches. The success that Supernova teams have had on the playing field is in part due to the quality of personnel engaged in these important ancillary functions.

Our home Club, North London Soccer Club, has been very supportive of the squad system and its three National Club Champions – London Shooting Stars U15 Girls 2000, London Dynamite U14 Boys 2003 and London Supernova U14 Girls 2004, have all used a squad approach. It is now being developed in our younger teams as well and we have high hopes of further success as a result. 

Goalkeeping: Soccer's Least Favourite Position?

By Claire Lawrence



Editor's Note: Claire Lawrence loves goalkeeping so much that she gives up her own time to come to WVSC's GUI14 metro team practices to train the team's two goalkeepers. I watched her and noticed not just the moves she was showing the girls, but the infectious enthusiasm she shared. I asked her to 1. tell me how she came to be a goalkeeper and 2. write an article for Sidelines that might influence other young players to become goalies. As to how and why she became a goalkeeper, Claire answered,


"I started playing in goal just before my first competitive year of metro soccer. The main reason....no one else wanted to, and I seemed to have a natural knack for the position. It wasn't until my U14 B.C. team year that I really trained hard and became comfortable in the position. Since then, I've focused on nothing else but goalkeeping. Making that game-winning save is one of the most satisfying feelings for me, and it always pulled me through the most gruesome training drills. Goalkeepers really do have the potential to change a game and a team, and I like facing that responsibility before and during a match."

Here is Claire's article.....

It's no real wonder why children, from a very early age, view the goalkeeping position in soccer with negativity and little enthusiasm. Just think back, soccer moms and dads, to those cold and rainy soccer games where you cheered on a mass of 10-year-old soccer players as they moved around the gravel pitch in one chasing conglomerate. They were chased and in happy pursuit while you were warm and Gortex-clad with golf umbrellas and a cup of coffee in hand. What of the poor goalkeepers at the opposing end of the field? They were bravely enduring the elements, perhaps making daring saves with grazed knees, or simply amusing themselves by sketching drawings in the gravel with their muddied boots. Realistically speaking, goalkeeping is no easy position - it can be boring and unglamorous, the young net minders often taking blame for a given up goal and/or game.

So why is it that so many young soccer players find themselves between the posts every weekend trying to keep the opposition's score to a minimum? For UBC Thunderbird nominated "athlete of the year" Sian Bagshawe, goalkeeping was a position not immediately appealing, but something accepted - even loved - over time. While Sian admits that her first experiences in net were simply the result of the coach giving the position

to the person least likely to complain, his daughter, it didn't take long until the highlights of the position became more pronounced. For Sian today - and indeed most goalies - the challenge of facing high-pressure situations provides an adrenaline rush that only goalies can relate to. Furthermore, the potential to make game-altering saves at the delight of teammates can be an altogether rewarding and gratifying experience. After all, the "TSN turning point" of soccer almost always involves two players - the attacker and the goalie - so why not be a hero and make the highlight reel?

Currently, in elite levels of soccer, the competition among keepers is growing fiercer everyday. More and more, young ladies are embracing the challenge of goalkeeping with previously unrivalled conviction and determination. And although the competitors realize that goalkeeping can be a painful position requiring incredible mental focus and a high tolerance of pain, any true goalkeeper will admit that the grazed knees, thrown-out shoulders, and broken fingers are actually seldom felt - so long as the ball is in their hands and not the back of the net. 



Claire Lawrence trains U14 metro goalies Anna Bradford and Emily Macleod

Heading the Soccer Ball

By Dr. Brian Hunt

Editor's Note: Heading is an integral part of the game of soccer. Learning to head the ball correctly is an essential part of soccer development - to use the device to advantage, but more importantly to protect the health of the player.

Much has been written about heading and there is some disagreement about at what age it is advisable for player to start heading the ball. Dr. Hunt is a local expert on the subject and wrote the following article for the benefit of parents, coaches and others involved in kids' soccer in West Vancouver. If you are interested, please look for more information and views on the subject on the internet or contact Dr. Hunt at:

Dr. Brian Hunt, Co-Director of ThinkFirst of B.C. Fax No.604-988-1172

Initiation of Heading the Ball

It is paramount that a child be instructed to head the ball in such a way as to reduce the degree of shaking and jarring of the head and brain. During the introduction of the skill of heading the ball, the parent, coach or trainer must listen carefully to a child, particularly a child who indicates that they are experiencing any degree of "unpleasantness." This is a child that should be encouraged to continue to use the body to block the soccer ball.

Do not commence teaching the skill of heading the ball until the neck muscles are strong and the coordination skills allow the child to strike the ball correctly. Obviously, the age will differ with each child, depending on their development. Always begin with a soft, small ball and keep the teaching sessions short. Follow-up with the child and parent to inquire if there were any adverse effects after practicing this new skill.

Medical Background

Cerebral concussion is a brain injury and is therefore to be avoided. A cerebral concussion may occur without loss of consciousness and without striking or hitting one's head. A cerebral concussion may occur from a

whiplash effect where the brain experiences shaking and jarring from forces applied elsewhere in the body. It is now believed that there are genetic differences in children and some children tolerate shaking and jarring of the head and brain while others do not. Some children, even with a minor blow or shaking and jarring of the head will experience symptoms of concussion. Such symptoms include headache, nausea, blurred vision and in the very young, a complaint of a "stomach upset." Listed below are the signs and symptoms of concussion:

Signs and Symptoms of Concussion:

Headache, dizziness, feeling dazed, seeing stars, sensitivity to light, ringing in ears, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, irritability, confusion and disorientation, poor balance and coordination, slow or slurred speech, poor concentration, delayed response to questions, vacant stare, deterioration in performance, unusual emotions, personality change and inappropriate behaviour.

Concussions are cumulative over time, even when proper steps are taken to fully recover from a concussion before suffering a second concussion. With each concussion, a child will become more easily symptomatic and require a longer period of time to recover. Often, unrecognized concussions, when cumulative, may lead to learning and behavioural problems.


In soccer, player contact is frequent. It is paramount that an adult on the sidelines be assigned to monitor the children, and if a collision happens and concussion might be a concern, the child should be pulled from the game and monitored for a minimum of five minutes for any development of symptoms or signs of concussion. If none of the signs or symptoms is noted, the child can return to play. If even one symptom or sign is present, the child must not be allowed to return to the game. The symptomatic child should not be in any contact sport of activity where they will be at risk of suffering another concussion, until they are completely symptom-free. Remember, superimposing one concussion upon another before full recovery from the first concussion can result in a potential of eight times the brain injury.

Once a child becomes symptomatic from a cerebral concussion, they should be assessed by a medical physician. Once cleared by the physician, the young athlete should then follow the protocol for return to sport following concussion. This protocol has six steps to follow:

SIX STEP PROTOCOL FOR RETURN TO SPORT FOLLOWING CONCUSSION	
Step 1	No activity, only complete rest until symptoms disappear. Proceed to Step
Step 2	Light aerobic exercise such as walking stationary cycling(no resistance, pool running.) Monitor for signs and symptoms. When able to carry out light aerobic exercise for 45-60 minutes without experiencing any symptoms.
Step 3	Commence specific activities relating to sport, e.g. easy drills, muscle strengthening exercises, etc.
Step 4	Non-contact training drills
Step 5	Full contact training after medical clearance
Step 6	Game Play

Each step has a minimum of one day.

**With this stepwise progression, the athlete should continue to proceed to the next level if asymptomatic at a current level. If post-concussion symptoms re-occur, the athlete should go back to a level where he remains asymptomatic.

The coaches /trainers should not allow the young athlete to return to contact sport without a signed note from the physician. If there are any problems with the recovery and return to sport with the child, a referral to a physician interested in concussion or a specialist with an expertise in the management of concussion should be advised. 

**West Vancouver's own
Owen Hargreaves:
Bundesliga Club Signs
Local Player**

By Bob Moles



Kent O'Connor, a product of West Vancouver, recently signed a professional contract with German Bundesliga club Munich 1860.

Coming from a family of athletes who have represented Canada at field hockey, fencing and swimming, Kent started playing soccer for the West Vancouver Soccer Club in 1993 at the age of 6. For 8 of his next 10 playing years, Kent was guided and coached by me when I was head coach of Kent's Pee Wee teams from U7 to U11 as well as his U12 & U13 Gold teams. I also coached him for one season with the North Shore U16 Metro team.

From the moment I saw this kid I knew he had something special. I've seen hundreds of good young players over the years but he possessed that something, a little bit extra, that something special. When Kent reached the age of 10 I was so confident about Kent's abilities that I predicted to his parents that he would go on to play for his country. I was right. Kent earned his first International start for Canada this past summer playing for the U17 national team against the USA and Mexico.

It has not all been plain sailing for Kent. During the 2002/2003 season Kent was one of the players on the North Shore U16 Metro team that I coached. At that time, it was clear that Kent's game was suffering and that his confidence was very low. By the end of the season Kent began to re-focus on the positives and recognized the strengths that he brought to the game. By also putting in a lot of good work on the training ground Kent was able to turn his game around to such an extent that he was selected for the B.C. U17 Provincial squad last season.


With the total support of his parents El & Brent, Kent has spent a major part of the last year training in Europe. Kent's Father had approached me last year and another family friend asking if they would help them in pursuing opportunities for Kent in Europe.

Kent was told by English Premier club Birmingham City F.C. that he was as good as any of the boys currently on the books and under contract. However, in order for the English clubs to offer Kent a contract it was made clear to Kent that he had to be better than what he was competing against in order to be signed as an apprentice professional. At that point it would have been very easy to throw in the towel and return home to Canada. But Kent was so determined to make it in the European soccer set up that he continued his quest and had further trials with Hibernian in the Scottish Premier League. At Hib's, Kent at last found a club that recognized his talent and retained him on a short term contract from January until the end of the season in May this year. However, as is the case from time to time in British football, a change of management in the club saw Kent and few other youth players being released.

Again, showing his resilience and sheer determination, Kent picked himself up and underwent further trials with Sporting Lisbon in Portugal and Munich 1860 of the Bundesliga in Germany. It was in Germany that Kent finally found the club where he truly wanted to be and signed a 2.5 year deal with a further 2 year option.

I am absolutely delighted for Kent. He thoroughly deserves this opportunity. He has been totally focused and has

dedicated himself to his goal of becoming a professional soccer player. It is not just about how good a player is technically that ensures he/she becomes a professional. Clubs are also looking for attitude, self-discipline, a will to succeed, commitment and an overall mental strength. I recognized these qualities at an early age, in Kent. He never went to bed later than 9:00 EVER!! He ate the right food and watched his diet. He trained hard but enjoyed it."

Kent O'Connor's determination and achievement are a great example of what can be achieved by our local boys and girls. West Vancouver Soccer Club and indeed the community are very proud to see one of "our own" kids make it in the European professional game. Let's hope Kent is not the last. 



Kent in March 2000, as captain of the WV U13 Gold team, receiving the winner's pennant and trophy for the Inter-District Cup



Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah and a Successful New Year



WEST VANCOUVER SOCCER CLUB
P.O. Box 91172
West Vancouver, B.C. V7V 3N8

