

## BYE-BYE STEF, YOU ARE LEAVING A REMARKABLE TEAM

By John Wainwright

**T**he Strikers just earned another valuable away point at Wollongong, and their success this season is due to a remarkable team.

How long is it since a team of 'no hoppers' from Brisbane surprised the southern pundits by sitting pretty in the top six approaching the half way point of the season?

That's right - two seasons.

Congratulations to the players, and to the coaches, and congratulations to the Strikers team.

But his value on field, and his contract to continue playing throughout the season for the Strikers, might induce you to expect that he would be forced to see the season out with the Strikers.

It came as no surprise to any of us that he was released immediately, and wished 'bon voyage and good luck for a career in football in Europe', by the Strikers Board.

Because the evidence is that Dr Jones sees the club as a **springboard for Queenslanders** into the football world at the highest levels.

Those fans who hold dearly the wish to see the Strikers as successful as possible on the field have groaned at the series of departures of talented Queenslanders from the ranks of the Brisbane Strikers. That's understandable, isn't it?

But we are still fourth in the league: still up there with the best, giant killers again, surprising the pundits again.

What about when the new league comes in? Will the Strikers still be able to afford to play young Queenslanders in a league characterised by higher standard football?

Heart says yes, but head says no. At this point the introduction of a youth team is not only in character for the good doctor, also a smart strategy for a club that wants to represent Queensland in the national

## MAN OF THE MATCH

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league. The Strikers will continue to have the ability to launch young Queenslanders into their careers, and will maybe have the capacity to both retain some of them through its inclusion in a more competitive league, as well as achieve the heady success we want.

On that basis then; if that is the current philosophy and the future strategy; how is the club run?

It's run on the principle that people are willing to help the club. In that way, the funds available are used to maximum benefit. One of the greatest honours on presentation night is the **'Volunteer of the Year'** award.

This season Stuey will have to choose from an array of professionals who service the players' and coaches' physical, medical and spiritual needs; a loyal team of helpers on the gates and in the booths around the ground, team managers, office staff, ball boys, cleaners and groundsman (including Dr Jones) and others who receive nothing other than perhaps an honourarium

for their services.

When I turned up at the Knights match, I asked Charles if I could help, and a few of you bought your tickets from me at that game.

Charles is a volunteer who can claim to have worked the gates at every Brisbane United and Brisbane Strikers home game.

I am a new kind of volunteer - one which Strikers Director Jacqui Wright has named 'supporters'. The difference is that I have no obligation to help while the game is in progress (except perhaps the first ten minutes).

They are proud titles - 'volunteer' and 'supporter'.

The club needs more of each category. If you want to move up from spectator to supporter, or even to volunteer, it's easy.

Just go and see someone in the club house after the game, and say you want to put your name down.

**Join the Strikers remarkable team.**

## Free STRIKERS GAIN A WINNER IN MOON

Kick By Steve Pitman

Few followers of Queensland Premier League football will be surprised that new Brisbane Strikers midfielder, Warren Moon, already looks the part in the NSL.

That is because 21 year-old Moon had already emerged as perhaps the outstanding raw talent in a Queensland Lions team which won the last two premierships.

According to Moon, the experience of playing in a winning side at Lions greatly helped his development as a footballer.

"For me personally, it has done me the world of good", he said last week. "To play for a club with a winning attitude, and go out believing you can win every game - it definitely gives you confidence in trying things".

Moon also credits his coach at Lions, Miron Bleiberg. "He allowed me to play and express myself on the field", Moon explained.

While he was aware of the frosty relationship between the Lions and Strikers at board level, Moon said this had not influenced him at all when asked by Strikers coach Stuart McLaren a few months ago to sign with the Strikers. "No", he said. "What happens there is between the people running the club. The players don't see it that way. I looked at it as an opportunity".

It was an opportunity he was not about to pass up, having trialed impressively over the past two years with Adelaide City under Zoran Matic, and the Brisbane Strikers under John Kosmina, only to see his efforts brought undone on both occasions when he tore an adductor (groin) muscle and spent months in rehabilitation.

Now, having signed with the Strikers, Moon is enjoying the experience of training and playing at a higher level.

"I love the sessions with Stuey (McLaren) and Luce (Trani)", he said. "They are so game oriented, and always good fun. As a player, it (training in game situations) is exactly what you want to do, and Stuey is so calm and knowledgeable and laid back. Being a player himself, he understands the players".



Warren Moon

A couple of appearances as a substitute eased Moon into the NSL before he got his first starting role in a home match against Newcastle United seven weeks ago. In what surely amounted to a vote of confidence by McLaren and Trani, he was given a key role when the team's

formation was modified for that game from 3-5-2 to 3-4-1-2. Moon became the "1" in the new formation.

"They stuck me in behind the strikers as an attacking midfielder, to try to get a link between the midfielders and the strikers", he explained. But, Moon said, the role certainly doesn't exempt him from defending. "Usually, I 'sit' on the (opposition's) deep-lying midfielder and stop him from playing. It worked well in the Newcastle game (won 2-1 by Brisbane), when he hardly got a kick, so I was really pleased about that".

Moon said that the main differences he had noticed in stepping up to NSL level were the extra pace and awareness of the players. He feels he has to not only be quicker across the ground, but between the ears as well. But he is relishing the experience of playing on better pitches and before bigger crowds.

While Moon harbours ambitions to eventually play football in England (his birthplace), his feet remain firmly on the ground for the present. Injury rehabilitation aside, Moon has played two years of continuous football and feels he will need to rest some niggling injuries by the end of the season.

"I just want to get better and be an established NSL player. Next year I should be a far better player. Right now, it's more about getting through this season and doing the best that I can with the shape I'm in," he said.

Moon's aims for the rest of this season, though, will be music to the ears of Strikers fans. "Having come from a club where we lost only two games in two years, I want to finish in the top six and then go on and win the grand final", he said. "You've got to have a winning attitude. We're a good group and I don't see why we can't do it".

## RETURN OF THE KINGZ

Over the years, trans-Tasman rivalry in football has been fierce, and it was perhaps no great surprise when New Zealand defeated Australia at Suncorp Stadium 1-0 in the final of the 1998 Oceania Nations Cup, the qualifiers for the 1999 Confederations Cup.

Just a year later, New Zealand football would be celebrating again with the introduction of the Football Kingz, becoming the second team to join an Australian professional sporting league, four years after the Warriors joined the National Rugby League.

The first Kingz outfit was coached by the New Zealand equivalent of Frank Farina, an ambassador of the game who had played in Europe, and who was now returning in the twilight of his career to help football in his area. That gentleman was Wynton Rufer.

In their four seasons in the league, despite helping to boost the popularity of football amongst New Zealand's kids, the Kingz have yet to make the finals, and in recent years have looked more likely to obtain a wooden spoon than a piece of silverware.

To make matters worse, they've found themselves dragged into the dilemmas of the now-defunct Soccer Australia's inefficient management, whilst New Zealand Football has managed itself excellently, consistently returning a profit and opening up the opportunities that could've seen them strongly challenge Soccer Australia, if not for the Lowy reform.

However, to their credit, they have always endeavoured to bring the best emerging New Zealand football talent to a larger audience, and just as in 1998, the New Zealand team defeated Australia at the 2002 Oceania Nations Cup 1-0 to advance to this year's Confederations Cup, held in France.

With their relationship with Chelsea growing, the Kingz have received the services of two Norwegian players this season : Aleksander Midtsian and Espen Schjerran, both eager to impress NSL crowds here as much as European scouts back home.

The lynchpin for the Kingz will be Here-maia Ngata, a club stalwart (and one of the few remaining personnel from the inaugural 1999 team).

With over 100 games experience,

By Adam Coleman

Ngata has been a thorn in previous Strikers' sides, and could be the key to a good result tonight.

Given New Zealand's national team successes despite its club's failures, the usefulness of the Kingz will surely come under the microscope once the new

Strikers Vs Kingz				
	P	W	D	L
<b>Overall</b>	8	4	1	3
<b>Home</b>	4	2	1	1
	GF	GA	Pts	
<b>Overall</b>	14	11	13	
<b>Home</b>	6	5	7	

NSL Taskforce decides whether the new national league will have representation from New Zealand.

Whilst the olive branch given to the Kingz back in 1999 was taken and invested quite heavily, recent events may have New Zealand Football questioning how best to compete against the local players in Oceania.

Another element that will have to be analyzed is where to base the team. Although they are based in Auckland, they are not currently being embraced by the city's sporting fans. Meanwhile, Wellington has shown great support in years past, with the two highest crowds in Kingz history (both over ten thousand) and being the host city in the 2002 World Cup Qualifier Series versus Australia.

With the on-field results and some off-field controversies of this season playing heavily on the entire club, the Kingz enter Brisbane with a mood potentially similar to the shell-shocked Melbourne Knights, whom the Strikers defeated ten days ago.

Like the Knights, the Kingz recently endured a big loss to South Melbourne (a team that we will see in Brisbane in a few weeks' time).

Can the Kingz score an upset in Brisbane, or will our new republic overthrow New Zealand's football patriarchy?

## WEBBER STEADYING IN THE DEFENCE By Amanda Atherton

Adam Webber started out his football career, like so many, in the midfield. However, Gary Phillips at the QAS spotted something that others seem to have overlooked. Webber was a tough, physical player and seemed suited to the defensive line. It was this move, from right wing to right back, that was to grab the attention of the then Strikers coach John Kosmina.

There to help him in his first season at the Strikers, were a group of young men only recently out of the QAS themselves. Jade North and Wayne Srhoj had already been picked up from the QAS the previous year, with Jon McKain being brought up at the same time as Webber. "It really did help to know a few people in the squad, help you out with what was expected and what you were going to face." Webber said

Having played at Beenleigh, Mt Gravatt and Rochedale before the QAS, provided a great grounding for the Brisbane born and bred, Webber. It was here that he played tough games in the midfield for the youth and reserves before being noticed for the QAS. He played at U15 level with Jon McKain and Jade North at Mt Gravatt and they were together in the same age groups for representative and state football.

"One of the best experiences so far has been to go into camp with the Joeys, just prior to the World Youth Cup (of 1999)" said Webber. "But I didn't get picked in the squad and that is something I would still like to achieve".

At 17 years old Webber joined the Strikers playing against the soon to be champions, Wollongong Wolves. "It was a big jump from the QAS" he explained. "The speed and physical nature of the game at this level was a big test for me. And it was a tough first season while I found my feet."

Coming into the team mainly as a substitute, Webber was encouraged to push forward from the right back position. "I was always being told to get forward and support the midfield and the strikers when we played a 4-4-2 system" stated Webber. This meant that often he would get caught out of position and have to work twice as hard to track back.

"I am enjoying playing in the 3-5-2 system of this year" explained Webber. "It

is working a lot better, and I do prefer just defending instead of having to run up and down the sideline for 90 minutes as well".

For the first 8 games of this season, Webber sat dutifully on the bench, waiting. Then Stuart McLaren saw red and he finally got a chance to stake a claim for a starting place. "I came on in the 70<sup>th</sup> minute or so against Marconi, so I had about a week to be ready and be able to fit into the back line" said Webber. "Doddsy and Josh have done brilliantly in their first season in the NSL." stated Webber. "I thought I might struggle with match fitness, but we seemed to have gelled well together."

Playing against Parramatta recently Webber found himself marking up against a "great mate" in Fernando. "It was good to have a bit of a chat with him while we were playing, but I did manage to get into him once or twice." he said.

In the off season of 2002, he spent time with Fernando and Michael Baird, relaxing, playing indoor soccer and generally enjoying the sights of Brazil. Sticking most in his memory is how important football was to all the young kids.

"They would play in the back streets with a can or a bit of paper, dreaming of becoming the next Ronaldo or Rivaldo, just to get out of the slums" explained Webber. "It makes you think about how lucky you are to be playing football and getting paid for it".

Like most young footballers, Webber is looking in the long term to bigger and better challenges. "I would like to try and play overseas, someday" he said. "But in the short term I want to cement a regular starting spot."



Adam Webber

By Steve Pitman

The Brisbane Strikers return to Perry Park tonight to play the second of a sequence of three games in eight days that could do much to determine the tone of the rest of their season.

Nearing the mid-point of the season, Stuart McLaren's team has eighteen NSL points and is close to achieving a target that it set for itself two months ago. And McLaren indicated earlier this week that a favourable result in tonight's encounter with the bottom-of-the-table Football Kingz might even encourage an upward revision of the team's ambitions.

"Once we got off to a good start in the first few weeks of the season, we set ourselves a few targets, and we agreed that a benchmark of twenty points by the half-way mark of the season was reasonable", McLaren said.

"If we get to 21 points tonight, obviously we'll be over half way to the 36 we felt would be good enough to finish in the top six. But if we can reach or go beyond 20 we can start challenging the players to do even better. The top six is still the aim, but maybe we can even get in between the likes of Parramatta, Perth Glory and South Melbourne".

For now, however, the hard work is still to be done, and McLaren was not about to underestimate the Kingz, despite their lowly position. In fact, he thought they might pose more of an attacking threat than Brisbane's previous home opponents, the Melbourne Knights.

until ten minutes in the second half for Adelaide to get in front. When teams have their backs to the wall they can be difficult. We will need to be sensible in our approach - the first goal could be make or break. If they get the first goal their confidence will lift, but obviously if we get the first goal it will have a negative effect on their confidence.

"It will be a test of our professionalism, but so far the players have passed every test with flying colours. The game against the Melbourne Knights (who were also lowly placed) was not our most fluent performance, but they stuck to the task and got the result in the end. We will have to repeat that. But the Kingz will come here to play a bit, unlike the Knights who came to defend and get a point".

When asked if there were any particular Kingz players his team would need to watch closely, McLaren answered "Yes, Harry Ngata is the obvious one and Chris Jackson in the midfield is a very experienced player. And Jeff Campbell can whip in a dangerous ball from the wide left position".

McLaren is keeping a watchful eye on how his players deal physically with this week's crowded match schedule and is willing to rotate his squad if need be. But he will not be taking unnecessary liberties. "We're probably in a good position with Luke Morley (who missed last weekend's 1-1 draw with the Wollongong Wolves) available again, and with everybody else free of suspensions and injury. I will put out our best team for both matches this week - I think I



would be naive not to - from the players who are sharp and fresh".

If McLaren makes any changes to the team which travelled to Wollongong, those changes are most likely to involve tinkering with his midfield and attack. "The defence picks itself, really", McLaren said. "We just need to make decisions on the best set-up in the middle of the park, up front and on the right-hand side".

That means Karl Dodd, Josh McCloughan and Adam Webber will almost certainly form the Brisbane back three, with McLaren pondering a myriad of midfield options made possible by his versatile squad. Those options include using Steve Fitzsimmons or Joshua Rose wide on the right and moving David Pilic closer to the middle of the engine room. It is also possible McLaren could play the midfield holding role, with Peter Grierson further forward if Warren Moon's troublesome groin injury needs resting.

Up front, McLaren will choose between Royce Brownlie, Rose, Morley, himself and youngster Matthew Hilton. Hilton got his debut against the Wolves and impressed his coach.

"I was very pleased with Matt's contribution", McLaren said. "I explained to him before the match that there was no pressure on him as far as playing with his back to the goal, which is not his real strength. Just to play the ball simply. But his use of the ball when going forward is very clever, and he sees things that some other players don't seem to see. I was very impressed with his effort".

## JUNIOR MASCOTS

Tonight's mascots are from Ipswich City Soccer Club, proudly known as the Bulls. Ipswich City boasts 49 junior teams, ranging from Under 6 - 17s, and three senior sides and a women's side. Throughout the club we have some 92 girls / women's players. In the past 2 seasons the club has had 16 players represent the Brisbane Southern Districts Representative team. And also have two Queensland representatives, with a girls player in the Brisbane Tornadoes Development squad.



Representing the Bulls today are - Jarrod Brown (U8); Colby Cooke (U8); Matthew Guest (U8); Shaye Lund (U8); Brent Potbury (U8); Matthew Miller (U10); Lachlan Brown (U12); Luke Harm (U12)

The Under 8 players are members of the Chelsea side, coached by David Guest of which have been undefeated for the past two seasons. Our other players represented, are all local junior players since Under 7s.

For further information on the Bulls throughout the 2004 soccer season visit our web-site - [www.ipswichcitysoccer.org.au](http://www.ipswichcitysoccer.org.au)



[www.go.to/bssa](http://www.go.to/bssa)

said. "In their game on Saturday night against Adelaide United it took

