

An extract from John Gales Speech from the 25th Anniversary Dinner

Written by Publicity Officer

Friday, 26 September 2008 11:16 - Last Updated Sunday, 16 November 2008 08:31

BRADBURY AMBARVALE SOCCER CLUB

25TH ANNIVERSARY

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS, OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER.

I particularly extend a warm welcome to our guest of honour, the secretary of Macarthur District Soccer Football Association, Kerrie Brown, who by the way, was also a past committee member of this club. I welcome all those ex committee members, coaches, managers and others here tonight who, over the last 25 years, have made this club one of the most respected in the Macarthur Association.

I should tell you that what I am about to impart to you on the history of our club, are details from my memory. As I am getting old, some facts may be wrong, so I apologise in advance, if that is the case. But I think we have enough old hands here tonight though, to correct any of my mistakes.

As you all know, our club came into being in 1980. Prior to that, there were a number of meetings; I remember attending a couple at Kevin Casserley's house, to discuss the details of starting a new soccer club in the Bradbury area. Rod Blackwell, Kevin Casserly, and Bob Spies were elected as the foundation president, secretary and treasurer. Others were also elected to the foundation committee, but I can't recall who they were.

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It was this foundation committee's task to register the club, prepare by laws, decide on playing strips, determine match fees, obtain grounds and figure out the other hundred and one things necessary, to start a soccer club. I was privileged to be the second president elected, after Rod Blackwell stepped down, and there have been many dedicated and competent people elected since then to hold various positions on the committee. Some of those people are here tonight.

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I believe that originally, the club was to be called Bradbury soccer club, as most of those interested in starting the club were from Bradbury. But when, after negotiations with Council, the committee was informed that the club was being allocated soccer fields at Ambarvale, which at that time, was just being developed, it was decided to call the new club, Bradbury Ambarvale Soccer Club.

I don't know who introduced the Bear to the club, but for as long as I can remember; we have always been the Bradbury Bears and always had the bear as our logo. I can't recall how many teams we started with in 1980, but I believe there were at least, two under six teams, an under eleven team and I think an under 13 team. There may have been more, but I am not sure. Maybe the people here tonight who were past committee members could enlighten us of the number and age groups of the teams we started with.

There was no Macarthur District Soccer Football Association in those early days. Our club was part of the Southern Districts Association and we were required to play over a large area, including Holsworthy, Bonnyrigg and I think even Fairfield. The players had to do quite a bit of travelling to get to their games.

As there were delays in getting our new fields ready at Ambarvale, Campbelltown Council allotted Manooka Reserve to our club. Manooka Reserve is located on the corner of The Parkway and St John's Road at Bradbury (behind the service station). Facilities there were literally non-existent, and are the same today, just one field. No canteen, no toilets, no change rooms, no lights, nothing. The facilities we have now are a vast improvement to those we had at our first grounds.

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The problem with Manooka Reserve was if you took a corner kick from one corner of the field, we had to get one of the kids to hold the ball while it was kicked; otherwise the ball would roll diagonally across the field. Also, the field was right on the main road (The Parkway) and balls would often be kicked onto the road. Many soccer balls died a painful death under the wheels of local resident's cars. The fact that the balls were always going onto the road was of course, a safety hazard for the players, when they had to retrieve them. We often had to place parents along the road to act as ball boys.

Our new grounds at Ambarvale were still not ready and as Manooka Reserve was considered inappropriate, Campbelltown Council allocated another ground to us at Airds, called Merino Reserve. This ground was located behind the Reiby Youth Correctional Centre. This ground at least had two fields, which was good, because at this stage, we had started registering all age players, so the extra field was very handy. But still, no amenities. No toilets, change rooms, storage or lights.

The trouble with Merino Reserve was that the field was closely surrounded by houses, and the ball was often kicked over fences. The residents in the area did not like us playing at the ground each weekend, so they would often refuse to give back the balls that went over fences. It cost the club quite a lot for balls while we were at Merino Reserve.

While we were located at Manooka Reserve and Merino Reserve we ran a canteen from a tent. The brave ladies who manned the canteen were often required to "batten down the hatches", so to speak, whenever we had a windy day. We did get to improve the facilities for a time, when we acquired a caravan which had been converted into a canteen. This was lent to us by the local pigeon club, but unfortunately we only had the canteen for a few years and when the pigeon club wanted their caravan back we had to revert back to a tent canteen.

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We were at Merino Reserve for a number of years when council finally decided to build an amenities block at the field. That is, toilets. No canteen or change rooms in those days. Council started building the toilet block, but apparently every time they laid bricks and left for the day, they returned the next day to find most of the bricks had been stolen and the workmen had to re do the work. The toilet block was finally completed, as was a few very nice bar-b-q's in the houses surrounding the ground.

Another interesting thing in those early days was that mini soccer had not been introduced. My son played in one of the under six teams and they played on a full size soccer field with eleven players. There were no mini fields. It was actually quite funny seeing an under six goalkeeper defending a full sized goal. But the kids enjoyed it, and so did the parents, despite our somewhat inadequate facilities.

After further negotiations with council, and due to the complaints from the local neighbourhood about balls bouncing off their roofs at Merino Reserve, Campbelltown Council finally allowed us to move to our new, promised grounds at Ambarvale, where we are today. We did not have any facilities there either, at first, just the basic grounds. We still had to operate the canteen out of the tent, which was set up on the hill between the two grounds. Again, when it was a windy day, we had to hold down the tent to stop it from blowing away.

Getting our present grounds was not an easy task. From the beginning, there was constant lobbying by our club with council until we finally moved to the promised grounds at Ambarvale. Of course, we now have a proper soccer complex, with full size and mini fields, canteen, toilets, change rooms and lights, boy, what we would have given for those facilities twenty five years

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ago.

In those early days, both at Manooka Reserve and Merino, we had no lights of course, so all the training had to be done before dark. Luckily we didn't have too many teams so we managed to cope. Those of you who are members of the Bradbury Ambarvale Soccer Club now, probably had no idea or knowledge of just what it took to establish this club or the lack of facilities we had to endure. Most of you joined the club as it is today, a well-run well-equipped soccer club.

It took many dedicated people, working long hours, to get our club where it is today. Some of those people are here tonight. It is to them, and others, like them, who cannot be here tonight, that we should thank for their help in giving us this great club we call the Bradbury Ambarvale Soccer Club.

I think we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

On behalf of the current committee of the Bradbury Ambarvale Soccer Club, and the players, members, coaches and managers, I would like to sincerely thank the past committee members, players, coaches, managers, sponsors and helpers, here tonight, and those who were unable to be here, for their efforts in the past in establishing this great club and running it so efficiently over the last 25 years.

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It is a great honour for me to be a life member of this club and to also have the opportunity to be president again (for the second time). I sincerely hope that the Bradbury Ambarvale Soccer Club will continue to prosper in the years to come.

I look forward to attending the club's 50th anniversary.

Up the bears ...

Thank you