



Dubbo Bulls 2023 Annual Report

The 2023 season was a year of firsts for the Bulls FC as it saw the ringing in of many changes. With so much going on during the year, it's been hard to communicate to everyone what we were doing and why. This is something we will look to do better in 2024 and hopefully this report will be informative for the members.

The club has seen huge growth in recent years. Coupled with the increasing complexity of running a not-for-profit sporting organisation in today's environment, change has been forced upon us and we have been scrambling to make the necessary adjustments to meet the club's needs.

The club has been built on a strong family culture and as the club grows, those charged with running the club will need the open, honest but constructive feedback from club members more than ever to help steer the culture and direction as the club grows. It's not possible for the committee to predict every individual response to change and we won't always get it right. However, if those with ideas or feedback choose to express them with respect, humility and understanding, the people volunteering their time to run the club will listen and where appropriate adjust accordingly. The committee is approachable and as President I have a general open-door policy. I would love for any members to contact me with feedback and input. Despite the changes and growing pains, 2023 was a successful year on and off the field and there are many things to celebrate.

Sponsorship

The club was once again supported by its generous sponsors in 2023 with many returning sponsors and a few much-needed new sponsorship relationships which are crucial to enabling the growth of the club. A large group of two-year sponsorship agreements came to an end with the close of the 2023 season. Our major senior sponsorship relationship with The Western Star went from strength to strength in 2023 with the two parties entering into a new 5 year agreement.

New sponsorship agreements have just been inked for 2024-25 including the addition of two priority junior sponsors to help us manage the ongoing growth in our juniors. We look forward to working with Bourke Street Butcher and Mastronardi Legal. Increased playing numbers and the recent work done on expanding our brand awareness is enabling the club to offer our sponsors more value and subsequently an opportunity to increase our sponsorship revenue moving forward.

A huge thankyou to all our sponsors, without you the club does not exist. A reminder to all members that our sponsors are promoted on our website, please support these businesses when you can.

Juniors

In 2023 the Bulls FC entered 17 teams into the local competition from under 5s to under 11s. This includes the addition of a totally new U14s mixed team who played finals in 2023. This represented the first year a junior Bulls FC team played for points and on the full-size field. The total number of registered junior players in 2023 was 156. To put that into perspective, the first junior Bulls team of 6 kids was entered in 2018.

A huge thanks to the coach's that generously volunteered their time to work with the kids this year. It's an often underappreciated role but a really crucial one, so thanks again.

In 2023 we held three major junior events being:

1. Season launch – Where the club put on a BBQ and jumping castle and the kids were handed their kits for the year.
2. Gala Day – Where the club provided lunch, drinks and a treat to make the day extra special for the kids, Boris the Bull also made an appearance.
3. Presentation day – Held at Barden Park, where the club provided lunch to all kids, parents and families, ran activities and handed out all of the awards for the year, with every kid receiving a trophy. Some great feedback received about these events and by all accounts the kids really enjoyed them as well!

Investment

We invested in some new equipment to cater for the continued growth of our junior contingent, including balls, nets, cones and bibs etc. Junior Bulls were clad in their striking orange training shirts in 2023, featuring the fantastic artwork of renowned local indigenous artist Nathan Peckham. This year we also invested in professional team photos and presented photo cards to each child at presentation day. Coach's hoodies were supplied to the junior coach's as a bit of a thankyou to them but also to enhance the visual representation of our club at Saturday morning football.

Improvements

Throughout the 2022 and 2023 season we received feedback from parents and members regarding our junior contingent, what type of environment the club was providing for them and how the club was managing the kids' development. The feedback has been largely positive. Input varied significantly from parents whose focus was solely on participation and a fun inclusive experience for their child, through to parents and children who are also passionate about developing their game and want to work towards playing at higher levels. We listened and as a result have been making changes. First and foremost, our junior club culture is built on strong fundamentals of fun, participation, team spirit and inclusiveness. We have worked hard to ensure that the kids' experience is enjoyable and have also started introducing things to ensure that the kids that want to be challenged have that opportunity also. Our aim is to deliver fulfillment for all.

In 2023 the following new initiatives were introduced:

1. Coaching guidelines

For the first time in 2023 we introduced basic coaching guidelines to ensure support for coaches is there and a basic level of coaching exists for the kids. We decided that introducing this from U8s up was appropriate as this is when the kids start playing on the bigger field, with proper goals, goal keepers, referees etc. Also, it's at this age that kids start working towards representative soccer. We will look to add to and improve these guidelines next year and beyond.

2. Individual awards for U8s and up:

- Best and Fairest
- Bull Award
- Most Improved

3. Rep prep sessions

This year the DDFA decided to run representative trials for the 2024 season much earlier than usual and there wasn't much notice given for trial dates. We were still able to pull together some targeted training sessions at short notice with the aim of getting kids ready for these trials. We capped the number of invitees due to available resources (31 was still a big number to manage) but also to ensure the kids participating were at a similar skill level. This saw current rep players, and players deemed by their coach to be on the fringe of selection, convene for some higher intensity training. The sessions were run by club Premier league coaches and players. A huge thanks to those who gave their time to make this happen.

We received a stack of great feedback about these sessions. 31 kids from under 8s to under 11s attended, 26 of those participated in Dubbo Devils WYL (Western Youth League) trials and from that 20 were selected to play rep next year. We encourage all aspiring rep players who weren't selected for these sessions to keep working hard on their game at home and to talk to their coach regarding which areas of development they need to focus on.

4. Structural changes to the management of our Juniors to come into effect for 2024

- New positions created to cater for the ongoing growth of our juniors and to also ensure the kids receive the support and development opportunities they deserve.
 - Junior Social Activities Coordinator
 - Junior Development Coordinator

5. Junior to Senior Club Connection/pathway development

In addition to the practical training development work carried out we also looked to promote the cultural development of the club as the Juniors become the biggest playing cohort. In 2023 we took opportunities to get groups of junior players interacting with the senior teams and players, in particular the Premier league team. Kids were invited into the changerooms pre and post games to see warm ups, game prep and to get to know some of the players. We also arranged for junior Bulls to run out with senior players in premier league games and the 1s and 2nd grade men's grand finals.

6. Junior Skills Development Program to launch in 2024

- There will be player development sessions held for all aspiring rep players from U8s to U12s, run by premier league players and coaches. These will be held at the start of the season and are open to all junior Bulls FC players.
- We will be running our Junior "Rep Prep" sessions again just before rep trials, this will be invitation only. Kids that are either playing rep already or kids on the cusp, to be selected by the U8 – U12 coaches.
- Our U15s team will have a handful of training sessions with the 1st and Premier league squad throughout the season.

DDFA Devils WYL representative season 2023

- 13 junior Bulls selected in total in under 10s, 11s and 12s boys and girls teams

DDFA selection trials for the 2024 season

- 20 junior Bulls have been selected in under 10s, 11s and 12s boys and girls teams
- 6 junior Bulls were selected in the U15s

Seniors

In 2023 the Bulls FC entered 7 senior teams into the local winter competition and a men's team in the WPL (Western Premier League). This was the most teams the club has ever entered with the inclusion of a second 3rd grade men's team, we had the largest contingent of any club in the local competition. We also entered 1 men's, 1 mixed and a record 5 women's teams into the 2023 summer competition with a bunch of first timers joining the club to try their hand a football.

Again, a big thanks to the senior coaches, in particular Nyoka Joseph who coached both first and second grade women's teams this year and by all accounts went above and beyond. Being a coach can be a thankless job, but it is so important to the club, so thank you.

2023 Senior Results

- Prems men – Regular season finished 6th and didn't make the finals
- 1st men – Regular season finished 2nd and became Premiers
- 2nd men – Regular season finished 3rd and became Premiers
- 3rd men Orange – Regular season finished 8th and didn't make the finals
- 3rd men White – Regular season finished 4th and made second week of finals
- 35s men – Regular season finished 3rd and made second week of finals
- 1st women – Regular season finished 3rd and made second week of finals
- 2nd women – Regular season finished 5th and didn't make the finals.

The grand final weekend was exciting for Bulls supporters this year and there was plenty of orange on hand to witness our 1st and 2nd grade men's teams become premiers. While the seconds boys did it in a canter, our 1st grade guys secured the win with only a minute of time remaining, a thrilling end to a really entertaining game, a game that will stick in the minds of those who saw it for a long time to come!

Senior Awards/presentation night

The committee made some changes to the awards process which it felt better reflects where the club is at now and where it is heading as it continues to grow. We invested in some new perpetual trophies, changed the individual awards to personnel etched glasses and we began tracking down and taking inventory of all of the clubs trophies from the last 20 years so that we can celebrate them more and make them available to all members new and old. In particular the juniors so they have an appreciation of what's come before them as they start to shape the clubs future.

A fantastic event was organised and run by Nat Fox and the Social Activities Team to celebrate the clubs on field achievements for 2023 with 120 people in attendance. There was also a much broader acknowledgement on the night of contributions through out the year

Main Club award winners for 2023 were

- **Club Person of the Year – Nat Fox** who's contribution to the club in 2023 was significant.
 - Nat became the leader of the newly created social activities team,
 - Recruited new team members for that team,
 - Huge input of hours in the background that most club members are unaware of,
 - Executed first class social events, which are crucial for club culture,
 - She brought a level of structure and discipline to the role that the club really needs,
 - Played 2nd grade,
 - Supported both junior and senior teams in multiple grades.

- **Aubusson's Family Award – Bon Beasley**
 - Bon played multiple grades and filled in most weeks when teams were short,
 - He was a constant presence supporting teams and the club on Sundays,
 - Got his extended family involved in the club and watching games,
 - His peers describe him as a loyal, passionate member of the club who always brings a positive attitude.

- **Supporter of the Year - Nyoka Joseph**
 - Attended a very large number of games across all grades men and women,
 - Supported junior teams also,
 - Usually took her family when supporting,
 - Travelled to watch 1st and Prems play when they were out of town.

- **Male Rookie – Prijan Singh – Men's 3rds White**
 - Prijan arrived in Australia in February this year as a 16-year-old,
 - Had only played a year and a half of futsal in his life prior to arriving,
 - Prijan's growth during the year was immense,
 - Dominated 3rd grade, was a regular in 2nd grade and played in the 2ND grade grand final,
 - He also played a handful of 1st grade games,
 - Prijan has a bright future with the club.

- **Female Rookie – Jessica Kitch**
 - Started in 2nd grade this year and ended up playing 1st grade in addition, where she had a big impact,
 - Coaches and teammates value that she always puts in 100% in games and at training and has high attendance,
 - Listens to her coaches and peers, is a great teammate,
 - Has fit into the Bulls family really well.

Innovation off the field

Bulls Store

This year we built our very own E-Store "The Bulls Store" which has enabled the club to get a return on excess apparel which would typically be a write-off. A huge thanks to Gilbird Walkeroz for dedicating his time and niche set of skills to establishing the store for the club. So far in 2023, this initiative has made the club more than \$2000 dollars and counting through selling apparel that would usually be discarded. The e-store (Bulls Store) will allow the us to add items in coming years both excess stock and new products providing a valuable ongoing revenue stream for the club.

Website

This year we rebuilt our website with the aim of making it an information hub for the members. In 2024 players and members will be able to interact with the website to obtain important information about the clubs past present and future. A Huge thanks to Rebecca Cooper for dedicating her time and skills to this project.

New club management structure

We have gone through a process of totally revamping the management structure of the Club to cater for the ongoing growth and to allow us to operate affectively in the current environment. Some key elements to this.....

- Recruiting and onboarding people with the right skillset for the roles needed to run the club efficiently. A big change from the tradition of just giving jobs out to whoever turns up to the AGM or giving roles to people not suited for them. This has enabled us to obtain significant traction already in a small space of time.
- Spreading out the work load to avoid volunteer burn out. A big issue historically with 2 to 3 people ending up doing 80% of the work. We now have more shoulders at the wheel.
- Created new positions to cover holes in the clubs management, to reduce issues, stress and prevent the clubs progress from being hindered.

Old Bulls Info and Contribution Night

In August we held an Old Bulls information session with the aim of getting feedback and ideas from old and long-term existing members. We did a presentation outlining the club's past, where we sit as an organisation today and where we want to go in the future. An open forum Q&A session was held after the presentation. Everyone got to have their say and the committee took some great ideas from that session that are currently being implemented.

Where the club is headed

The growth of the junior contingent and introduction of new members and players has meant that change is inevitable. The amount of administration and management work for those running the club has not only increased exponentially but has also become more complicated. As a committee we identified that the level of planning, management and input required to run the club previously is now inadequate to deliver. To adapt to this change the club's management structure has evolved and is becoming more intuitive, sophisticated but above all, more effective, thus allowing the Club to grow and prosper. Of course, there have been some growing pains as change can often be hard to deal with. But on the balance of the results to date and the overwhelmingly positive feedback received, it's clear that we are on the right track.

One of our key focuses is to ensure the culture and tradition of the club remains intact as we grow. The club began and has existed with a strong social and family element which we are working hard on maintaining. The culture has been built and is driven by the individuals within the club. The key to maintaining this is to ensure the ongoing involvement of the Old Bulls and for them to hand the baton over in time as the next generation comes through. To achieve this we are working on various projects such as.....

- Formation of an Old Bulls Team which will involve a subscription/membership designed to
 - Maintain the direct involvement of the Old Bulls in the club
 - Ensure they have a voice within the club and a part in its developing future and culture.
- Honouring and celebrating the achievements of the past
 - We have collected all the club's trophies and shields and will put them on permanent display in 2024, to ensure the juniors and new members are aware of our history and success,
 - We have added an awards tab to our website dedicated to displaying the club's individual and team achievements, this will be added too each year.

- **New positions and portfolios created**

- **Social Activities Coordinator** – A creative, dynamic organising type individual with an eye for detail who manages a team that organise all of the clubs senior social and formal events,
- **Junior Social Activities Coordinator** – Replicates the senior equivalent for the juniors,
- **Club Captain** – Is a voice for the players on the committee, an individual that works with the team captains to drive the culture and standards of the club. Is a go to for all things player, team and competition/rules related. Handles player related matters involving the DDFA, Referees association, suspensions, tribunals etc .
- **Junior Development Coordinator** – To deliver the junior development program mentioned above,
- **Old Bulls Team** – A bunch of members to help out where needed i.e raffles, event set up, cook a BBQ etc,
- **Sponsorship Manager** – To coordinate the sale of sponsorship packages, build relationships with sponsors and make sure their needs are met,
- **Funds and Grant Raising team** – Coordinates raffles, organizes fundraising events. Also identifies grant opportunities and prepares and submits grant applications,
- **Promotions Manager** – Coordinates a team of people who create content for various online platforms to meet the club's commitment so sponsors and the promotion of the club in the local marketplace,
- **Apparel and Merch Coordinator** – Manages the club's online E-Store, apparel and merchandise inventory and handles the distribution of products to the players and teams.
- **Club Photographer** – This position was formalised this year, giving clarity and direction to the photographer, who produced first class content of every junior and senior team in action, numerous social events and awards ceremonies. A big thanks to Ris Eagleston from Unique image photography for her commitment to this role in 2023

2024 will mark the 20-year anniversary of the clubs inception. The committee and social activities team have already begun preparing for a memorable event to celebrate the occasion. This will be held on the June long weekend, so please keep the date free. More information will be provided in coming months through our various chat groups and social media platforms.

In closing I would like to thank the committee, portfolio managers and portfolio team members whose huge commitment of time in the background is largely unseen but is the real engine room of the club. To the coaches, team managers and individuals who gave their time to the club this year. The combined contribution of thousands of hours in 2023 has achieved a lot and set the club in a really promising direction. We made a few mistakes along the way and have learnt from them, but overwhelmingly, the season has been a success and significant progress made. 2024 promises to be even bigger and brighter and we look forward to seeing you all back enjoying the Bulls family in whatever capacity you choose next year.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Henkes

President Bulls FC