

The Spartans Youth News - Winter 2020

Live Together Play Together Win Together



Christmas Appeal



This year you can help us to help others. We are raising funds to buy gifts for local young people and to buy essentials for local food banks

Donate online at
<https://www.spartanscfa.com/donate>

Thank you X



Here for good.

25 Year Anniversary

Did we mention before that in May 2021 we will, COVID allowing, be celebrating our 25th Anniversary?

Check out the timeline on our website to see how we started and how the Spartans Family has come together:
www.spartansfcyouth.com/spartans-pathway

One 25 anniversary project that we have been working on is to put in place Club Values which will help to inform, shape and guide all our roles in the club from player, coach, volunteer to parent and supporter.

We have held many Zoom workshops which coaches, players and club leaders representing all parts of the Youth Section have taken part in. Next we gave all our Youth Section players the opportunity to contribute to and comment on what values represent how they feel and behave when they pull on their Spartans kit.

Look out for more information as we start to share our findings and what our Club Values will be and how they will be core to the next 25 years of Spartans Youth.

Chairman's Welcome

Les Atkinson

Well here we are fast approaching the Festive period already, I am not sure where the year has gone since the Summer update!

Through hard work and a collective effort within the Spartans family we have managed to keep the youth section functioning beyond expectations during this testing time. The backing of all parents/guardians by continuing payment of subs has been crucial to our ability to operate effectively, I thank you all for this. As a result we have been able to continue to support the work of the Spartans Football Community Academy. Since our last COVID 19 fund donation of £8,000 we have since passed another £1,500 to purchase school uniforms for Granton Primary School. We will continue to work with the Academy to see where else the funds raised can be used to benefit the local community.

I would like to thank all of our volunteer coaches and Youth Section members for their patience, commitment and understanding in implementing the many COVID 19 guidance directives which we have been required to put in place, I know it has not been easy! However, by continuing to follow the many SFA, SYFA and Government directives it will allow the Spartans Youth Section to play and train in a fun, safe environment. I have to give mention to The Spartans Academy Team who we are indebted to for keeping the facility open and functioning effectively as it has. In connection with this, I must take this opportunity to remind everyone that there should be no spectating at games. I know it is difficult but failure to do so could see our football at the Academy stopped, please support the YSMC by adhering to this directive.

Unfortunately due to our move on Boxing Day to level 4 restrictions it means we will have an extended Christmas break and we will keep you posted regarding a new return date. Not how we hoped to be starting the New Year but hopefully it is a temporary bump and we have better times to look forward to in 2021. Until then please continue to have patience, we will get there together.

Finally, on behalf of the YSMC I would like to wish everyone the best Xmas possible and a better and brighter 2021.

Les

Live Together Play Together Win Together

The Spartans Community Football Academy Dougie Samuel

It's been a time and year none of us will ever forget. It's also been a year when the Spartans Family has come together, looked outward and asked how can we be useful and help others in these challenging times. I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported The Academy various initiatives to help and support local families, also our local community group partners.

The kindness and generosity shown by so many people across the Spartans Family has been truly humbling. It has helped to make things that bit more bearable, life a bit easier for so many local families, many of whom have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. From parents giving up their time to collect and deliver packed lunches, to people and Teams making £ and toy donations, the depth and breadth of support has been overwhelming.

Thanks also to you all for following the COVID-19 guidelines and protocols we have put in place to create a COVID-safe space for everyone to train here and play matches. I hope it's not too long before everyone can enjoy all of our facilities on offer at the Academy once more.

On behalf of everyone at the Academy I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy and safe 2021. More than ever, do let your loved ones and friends know just how much they mean to you. Ds x



Spartans Academy YS Volunteers Nichola Sturrock

Many thanks to the volunteers from the Youth Section and Spartans SWPL players who have given great support to the Community Academy Coaching Program in recent months. Connor MacKenzie a new volunteer with the Academy and who also coaches with the U15 Whites and U11 Marshall & Clelland squads. Ronaigh Douglas, Robyn McCafferty and Brandin Sharpe who volunteered over the summer for our Holiday Hat-tricks return. Robbie Anderson returned to volunteering with us after our lengthy break. He also coaches with the U16 Colts team.

If you are over 16 and would like to find out more about volunteering with the academy please contact scottnoble@spartanscfa.com



The Spartans FC Craig Graham

Our Adult Men's and Women's teams belatedly kicked off their new seasons in October – unfortunately without crowds. Both are sitting around mid-table in what are increasingly competitive leagues.

The Men's Lowland League has some clubs with player budgets near the top of SPFL 1 as teams gamble on getting promotion to the SPFL. Our Women's team remain the only truly amateur XI in the top league with Rangers, Celtic and Glasgow City all having a number of players on full time contracts.

The increasing challenge has prompted us to change the structure of the company managing the affairs of our Adult teams plus their development squads. It is currently a member organisation and we are moving to a company with share capital to enable investment. We have a couple of long-term major investors who are being supported by a share issue across the Spartans family. It is an exciting time as we plan how to ensure we can compete at the highest level we can.

As we move forward the Youth Section will remain critical as our primary source of players into our 1st XI's. The current men's squad of 21 includes 11 players who have come through our Youth section, our Women's team also has a number doing likewise despite our Girls academy being so new.



Youth Section Updates

Development Squad Training

Small Sided Manager - Eddie Malone

The Development Squad coaches have been greatly impressed with the kids efforts over the last few weeks. The new coaches have really enjoyed working with them and we hope all the kids enjoyed getting a taste of Development Squad training.

U13-U17 Manager - Craig Dinwoodie

As part of the club player pathway some players from 13 to 16 have been receiving additional training with ex Spartans FC & current East Stirling FC player Eddie Malone. Obviously due to the coronavirus situation it has been great to get the kids back on the pitch again & we are looking forward to continuing again after the winter shut down.

New Website - www.spartansfcyouth.com

We are delighted to have a new and improved website thanks to the help of Carey McEvoy, 2011 Head Coach. Please visit our website to find out all the latest news. You will find all our Forms, Policies and Guidance notes on the "Document" page (contact your Secretary for the password). You can also find excellent Skills Videos to keep your player busy during the Christmas holidays. You'll find details of our special 25 Year Merchandise on the website too.



Welcome to the Spartans FC Youth



New Macron Match Kit

Our U13s squad wearing the new match kit. Match kit is replaced every 2 years from 7aside. We try to pass on our old kit to teams overseas and will be doing the same this year.



Great to see EZUMEZU Okigwe Youth FC from Nigeria wearing the Spartans colours.



Head Coach Update

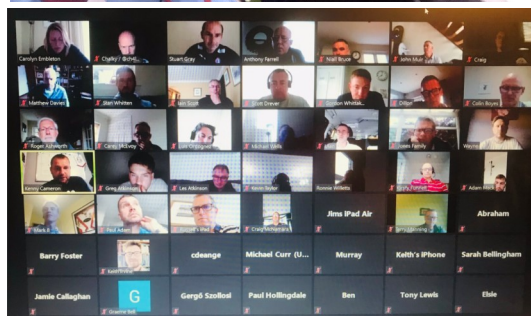
Stuart Gray

As we learn to live with the new normal, all parts of our lives have certainly been affected & football is no different. With ever changing guidance from the SFA & Scottish Government to comply with, firstly a big thank you to the Spartans Academy staff & the Youth Section Manager, who have kept everyone right over the last few months.

On the coaching front we had some coaches moving on & leaving the club, we have also recruited some new additions and we now have over 100 volunteer coaches involved with the boys & girls squads.

We continually aim to drive up our coaching standard & the restrictions have impacted our ability to run our usual coach development sessions on the pitch. Instead we have turned to Zoom to offer a number of workshops including: the Player Pathway, Sports Psychology with Rachele Nateria (Club Sports Psychologist) & an In-Service with Tosh Farrell (ex Everton FC) & Allan "Chalky" White (SFA), pictured on the right, which over 50 coaches attended.

For the future we will to continue drive standards up to make Spartans FC Youth the best it can be.



Team News



Impressive start for 2013's Football Journey

After a few months' halt to play due to Covid 19, the 2013's Squad was delighted to get back to the pitches. Through the weekly structural training plan, sessions were focused on developing techniques of ball control, proactive reaction, speed, changing space and directions.

The fun 4s games kicked off in November giving the boys lots of opportunities to play matches with opposition 2013 squads. It is very pleasing to see the boys enjoyment of the games and to see them utilising techniques and making friends with fantastic progression on good passes, movements, and working as a team.

The 2013's coaching team are working closely to ensure all weekly training sessions and fun 4 games are run efficiently, safely and joyfully. The parents have given great positive feedback that they can see a big difference through Fun 4's games particularly the proactive attitude, encouraging approach and fun atmosphere. The boys have demonstrated the skills of excellent coordination and awareness of games. Looking forward to more in 2021.



Spartans 2011s - Carey McEvoy

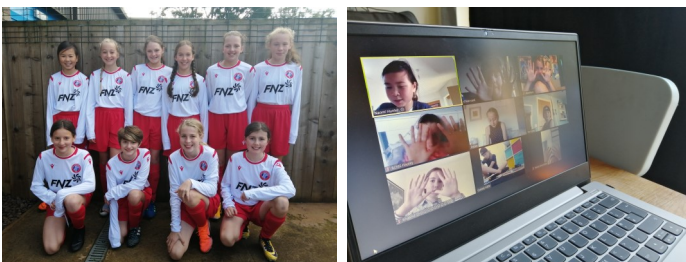
The 2011s had an eventful and enjoyable first year in 7-aside, despite the best efforts of Covid to disrupt us. We also achieved a whole squad's worth of personal keepie uppie records in the summer...

In September the kids embarked on a 5km walk for the Virtual Kiltwalk – great fun on the day, and raising over £12,000 for the team. They donated £1,500 of that to the Academy to buy winter coats for local kids, and to fund the FootTea Christmas party.

Lastly, we say goodbye and a huge good luck to Connor Miles and Johnny Hirst, who have signed for Rangers and Hearts. Connor joins old team mate Otis Henderson at Rangers.

Hard working kids who right from the start as 6 year olds would always look a coach in the eye and really concentrate on what we were trying to get across to them. Totally deserved.

Good luck guys!



GU11 Beveridge - Fiona Brien

The girls kept motivated during lockdown by setting each other weekly skill challenge videos, taking part in Orsi's weekly fitness zoom session, recording their run challenges from Gary on Strava, occasional Inverleith Park kick abouts and they managed to squeeze in a 2hr zoom quiz with 100 questions (led by the girls)!!!

They were delighted to get back to training at Ainslie Park and are looking forward to the challenge of U13s football in new 2021 season.



Connor & Miles standing side by side on the right of the above photo when Fun 4s first started, below present day.



Team News

Spartans 2010 - Paul Adam

After what seemed a huge lay-off due to COVID-19 lockdown, it was great for the kids and coaches to be back together on the football pitch in July.

Many of the kids had been keeping themselves active during lockdown by taking part in the remote Zoom training sessions and have shown real positivity and energy to quickly get back to performing at high levels in our training and matches.

Getting back to "normal" has meant a lot of extra work for the coaching team to ensure that everyone is kept safe during these unusual times and I'd like to say thanks to the coaches for carrying out the additional necessary duties each week, without too much of a drama :-)

The squad has had a few changes in personnel since the summer. Ben H has taken the opportunity to move onto Hearts Youth and Harvey decided to make his commute easier, by signing up with his local team in Fife, Bayside. The coaches and players were sad to see both Ben and Harvey move on and wish them well for the future. We will bring the squad back up to its full size by recruiting some new blood and I am pleased to say that Lewis B has already joined the Zidane team and has settled in really well - already opening his goal-scoring account. We are also looking forward to having a second player join us from the Community football program in January.

We are all looking forward to 2021, where we will be transitioning to 3 x 9aside match squads after the summer, so look out for some friendly matches towards the Spring.



GU11 Marshall & Celland - Jane Bruce

The girls have really enjoyed their first year of 7 aside football in the U11 section. Our first focus is on having lots of fun but the squads have also been working on their competitiveness and team ethos over the past few months. We've tested ourselves with friendlies against strong opposition which has helped us once we've come to the round robin to some great victories and a tonne of goals ;-). Thanks to our coaching team which is growing all the time and to the Spartans family for keeping footie alive during a pandemic!!



Spartans 2009 - Claire Silver

The 2009 players were extremely happy to be back to regular training and games, with the new challenge of 9asides this season.

We've been strengthening the squad with some returning players and some new players from the Community Academy.

The players have a lot to learn before moving to 11asides next year, with referees now blowing the whistle for offside! Everyone is enjoying the new challenge and enjoying their football.



Spartans 2008

The squad goalies recently enjoyed some special training when Raith Rovers & Hearts legend Jamie Macdonald came along to deliver a coaching session. The boys loved it.

Huge congratulations to Donald Park on his award. Parky is one of Scotland's top Youth Coaches and he currently works with the 2008 Reds. We are very lucky to have Parky as part of the team and involved with our club.



Team News



Spartans 2007 Youth - Gordon Whittaker

Through football at Spartans, life felt quite normal in a world where it is far from it. A real escapism for young people to the restrictions we have in our lives. Part of me can't believe it's 6 months since we started back in small groups playing small sided games.

It has been wonderful watching these boys expressing themselves, doing what they enjoy, training and playing games. I am incredibly proud of all our players and how resilient they have been through this pandemic. As their parents, you should all be beaming with pride at the young men they are turning into.

For this newsletter Finlay and Gregor have shared their own experiences of lockdown, well done both of you. Bring on 2021.

Lockdown Fitness - Finlay Thomson

When lockdown was announced I was devastated as no one was allowed to go outside, and that meant no football or meeting up with friends, so I started lockdown by doing nothing other than playing Xbox all day! But soon I realised I needed to keep my fitness as my position in the team relies on speed. So the next day I started doing 1 mile runs and built up to 2 mile runs everyday. I eventually got back to a good fitness level but not the same fitness as when I was doing sports everyday and also a match on the weekend. I was very happy with how I was doing and through my athletics club I got to do 1 on 1 sessions with my coach Stevie, if it wasn't for him and the Spartans Zoom sessions I don't think I would have gotten back to full fitness as they pushed me to my max! I started to get pains in my knees which was diagnosed as Osgood Schlatter which put a stop to my fitness again. After a few weeks rest I was so happy as I could run without having pains anymore and could enjoy training again.

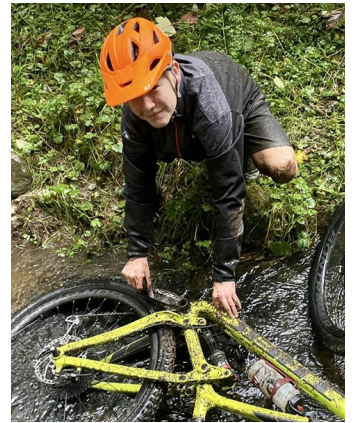
I then had to self-isolate after lockdown ended because one of my friends tested positive for COVID and I was worried I was going to lose my fitness again, but I started training even more and my Dad put up a mattress against a wall so I could practise shooting using my left foot. It has improved so much over the isolation period and now I am a lot more comfortable with my left foot in matches and training. I am still doing my running and Spartans, I was so happy when it opened up again as football is my biggest dream.

Gregor Burns

I joined Spartans this year and had a delayed start with not one but a double header break to my arm. I love to mountain bike as my other sport and race for my club West Lothian Clarion based in Linlithgow. Freya, my Border Collie was a new addition to the household during lockdown which kept me active when I was unable to ride my bike and play footie!

Now fully recovered I am really enjoying my football at Spartans.

Finlay left and Gregor right below



Above, Spartans Youth 2006 enjoying extra fitness sessions run by The Edinburgh Boxing Academy.

Below, Spartans Youth U19 in their new training tops. The start of the season has been particularly challenging for our U19s teams as their league matches have been suspended and they also have additional restrictions to comply with at training sessions to accommodate their 18 year old players.

