

The Spartans Youth News - Summer 2020

Live Together Play Together Win Together



Chairman's Welcome

Since our last Newsletter COVID 19 has changed everything we do personally and linked to Spartans Youth Football. I would like to take this opportunity to give a heartfelt thank you, thank you and thank you again for the way all of you have stepped up to the challenges we have faced to date and still yet to come.

The coaches and volunteers have been incredibly supportive and innovative in keeping our Youth Section members active through all sorts of interactive sessions and use of social media. Our Youth Section players have been magnificent by joining in these activities and in some cases using this time to think of others by fundraising for those in need. Our parents/guardians have played a huge part in supporting our efforts by adhering to and following our guidelines. Importantly, by many continuing to pay subscriptions since March we have been able to use our COVID 19 fund and donate £8000 to the Spartans Academy which has supported their food distribution efforts. We will continue to work with the Academy to support these initiatives going forward. I am also aware that many of you have been supporting the Academy by volunteering to help deliver food parcels etc.

The Academy needs volunteers to support their food distribution over the summer, if you can help please contact douglassamuel@spartanscfa.com.

I would also like to take this opportunity to let you all know that the Youth Section Management Committee have been working tirelessly in the background and their efforts are greatly appreciated. I would like to give special mention to our Club Manager, Carolyn Embleton, who has really stepped up to the mark in these unprecedented times, my thanks go to you all on behalf of the membership.

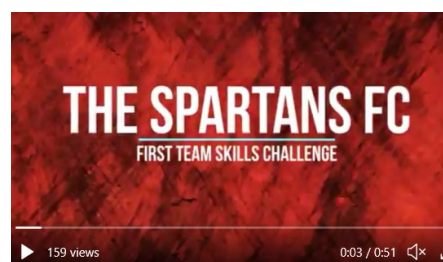
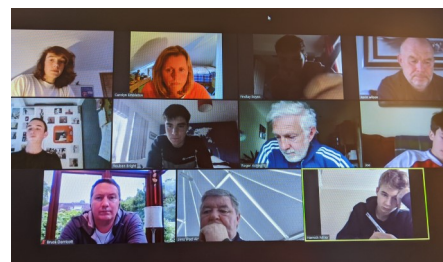
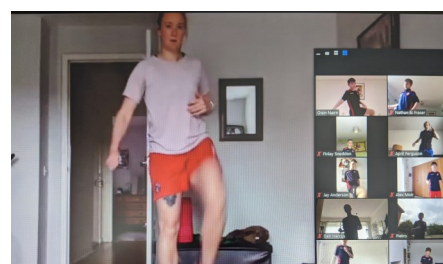
What I ask is for everyone to stick with us a bit longer, remain patient and we will get there, again many thanks for your understanding and help to date.

Finally, I am proud to be part of the Spartans family and know by your actions and feedback many of you are too, remember, "Together we are Stronger".

Take care and stay safe.

Les Atkinson

Live Together Play Together Win Together



Informal Activities

Teqball and Football Tennis courts now available to book at SCFA. Full guidelines available on SCFA Facebook and Twitter @Spartans_CFA. To book please call, 0131 552 7854

Working Together Towards a Return to Football

Like everyone else we are looking forward to getting back to the Academy to meet our friends, get "kicking a baw about again" and eventually returning to organised football as soon as it is practicable to do. However, we are very mindful of our duty of care to all of our members and volunteers and with this in mind, we will only return when it is 100% safe to do so.

The Youth Section Management Committee will continue to follow the Scottish Government directives, SFA guidelines and will collaborate closely with Dougie and Debbi of the SCFA. The SCFA are preparing intricate plans to ensure the safe reopening of the facilities. There are a great deal of additional procedures that need to be prepared and executed prior to a safe phased return to football.

We will keep you updated via your team Head Coach throughout.



The Spartans Community Football Academy

Over the last few weeks The Spartans Community Academy has transformed into a food distribution hub for the local community. A typical day sees the Academy distribute c1,000 packed lunches, 40 ready meals, 20 family food parcels.

In what has been the most turbulent and challenging time, working with local partners and through the support of so many others, the Academy has played a vital part in creating a bridge of support for local families and continues to do so. A truly inspirational journey.

Youth Section COVID-19 Fund

Since the end of March many parents have very generously continued to pay their regular subscriptions to the tune of £21,000. These subscriptions have been set aside to support our COVID-19 fund. To date the club has donated £8,000 to the Academy to support their food distribution activities for the month of April and we continue to work closely with them to look at how we can support initiatives that will benefit the local community. We will provide further updates on this.

Keeping Active & Engaged , Stuart Gray

It's certainly been a challenging and difficult time for everyone over the last 3 months with COVID-19 having an impact on everyone's life.

We have been proud of all the effort & commitment of the Spartans FC Youth volunteers and players in that time in a world where Zoom became an everyday part of life for us all. Each team has been pro-active in finding the best ways to keep fit and stay in touch with their players, based on what's right for them. In the teams update section of this newsletter you will get a flavour of what has been going on.

The Youth Section has made available to all 11 Aside Players 2 x High Intensity Fitness classes a week. For our Small Sided Teams we have offered a weekly Ball Mastery Class with Nic Sturrock. We are delighted to be working in partnership with the SCFA on these very well received sessions.



We have been keeping in touch regularly with our coaches and volunteers and have offered some in-service Zoom sessions to them including a Sports Psychologists guide to preparing and supporting coaches and players for the return to football. Many coaches have taken this time to complete some of their SFA Coaching badges and other courses.

Community Club Visit to Rwanda, Feb 2020

In January, 2011s coach Carey McEvoy travelled to Rwanda to represent the Spartans FC Youth on a coaching trip organised by the SFA, Hearts and fellow grassroots clubs.

An intensive 8 days were spent coaching a range of kids and youths, from disabled 4 year olds to a club playing in the national 2nd division. And not a flat piece of grass to be seen – one of the most uplifting aspects of the trip was the locals' willingness to play on whatever surface is available.

The other purpose of the trip was to visit and participate in a variety of outreach projects, from street children to the disabled school. The 8 clubs represented also donated a mountain of kit, boots and equipment, which was very much needed.

Rwanda is probably best known for the genocide in 1994, when almost 1m people from the Tutsi tribe were killed in 100 days by the majority Hutu tribe, a slaughter that was fully sanctioned and orchestrated by the government at the time.

The clubs involved are now planning to set up a registered charity, in order to make the trip an annual event and to support the kids in Rwanda with funds as well as the kit/equipment and coaching support. Ex-Spartans Jack Beasley and Kari Spence were also involved, Jack delivering SFA coaching courses and Kari already living there, is running a school project.

Carey's verdict? "It was an incredibly humbling experience, I'd very much encourage other Spartans coaches to do it if they can."

Partners clubs



24 Years and Counting

It's just a year until the 25th Birthday of our Club. Carlo De Angelis is one of our Development Squad coaches, but he is also the founder of our club. Here's our story.

Floras Soccer School

The seed of the idea for a football club in Comely Bank was sewn in my head by 2 other grassroots clubs. I had introduced myself to a group of parents and children from James Gillespie's Primary School who played football at the Meadows on Saturday mornings and my 6 year old son Mikey went along to Dunedin Boys Club at Wardie on Sunday mornings. Gillespie's was an informal affair with jerseys for goals whereas Dunedin was more structured with proper 7-a-side goals. If Mikey was good enough, he would not have been able to play for the school team for several years, so I thought why not give him and his chums the opportunity to enjoy football before that time. In May 1996 Floras Soccer School met for the first time at Inverleith Park. The event, was a success and it was easy to keep the football going on a weekly basis. Initially the target was to provide footballers for the primary school football system. Floras Soccer School became very popular in its own right and at the start of the next school year a new intake of children were welcomed.



Over this period of exponential growth I was able to secure some funds by writing begging letters to a variety of businesses. Private individuals also liked what they saw and help with donations. Having children from many schools allowed me to apply for grants from the Lottery's Awards For All. In all I managed to secure three sums of £1,000, which allowed us to buy 7-a-side goals and send David Grieve, Les Atkinson, Ian Cameron and myself to the Inverclyde National Sports Centre at Largs to do our SFA Working with Children Licence Diplomas. This is worth mentioning as even from the beginning I appreciated the value of having well qualified, knowledgeable coaches to support the parent volunteers.

Through the efforts of Alan Lodge we developed a strong association with Sunderland AF. We travelled south to take in first team games and they sent their community coaches north to do vacation programs with our children. Our pavilion became nicknamed the Pavilion of Light, within which we proudly displayed a signed first team jersey and St Andrews cross with a central Sunderland crest.

In the early days we did not enter the local leagues, the children played purely for fun though we did organise football festivals. This approach was limited so we did eventually play, first soccer sevens then 11-a-side. It is a matter of personal pride that having started the club for my son, he took the first kick off in our first official match and indeed scored Inverleith Star's first seven goals. Some positive press coverage meant that scouts started to watch our games. John Richie from the SFA is quoted, 'if the SFA had a blueprint for grassroots football we would be it'.



U10s Floras v Liberton, June 01



Carlo bottom right, next to Les!

Inverleith Star



In subsequent years the club became open, changing its name to Inverleith Star. The club's home bounced between Inverleith Park and Broughton High School

but it was obvious that in order to progress we needed a degree of autonomy, control over our own fate. With the help of Roman Winkler from Edinburgh Leisure I managed to secure tenure at Inverleith Park with use of a section of the pavilion there. Roman sanctioned the customising of the north end of the pavilion for our needs and Tony McKinley, his dad and son Jack ripped out the benches and installed racks to store our goals and a kitchen area so we could sell teas and coffees to raise funds. Tony's efforts were mirrored by the ever increasing number of parents who gave up their time to push on the development of the club. Honourable mentions include David Grieve, Les Atkinson, Jeanette Veitch, Fraser Gerraty, Ken Mackenzie, Ron Todd, Tom Christie, Ian Haeburn-Little, John Player, Stuart Lockhart, Derek McKinley and Roger Oglesby. Apologies to any of the founders I have forgotten.



Spartans U8s (2000), Jan 08

Inverleith Spartans

We had become saturated, our waiting list matched our membership list. Our oldest children needed an avenue into which to progress. I started to look around to see if there was a good amateur team that would be interested in our stronger older players. Craig Graham's son Andrew played for my team, he enjoyed the experience so on his word his dad approached our committee regarding an amalgamation between Inverleith Star and Spartans. The rest as they say is history.

Team News

Welcome to the 2013 Squad

In February our 2013 squad came together for the first time with our experienced Head Coach, Chris Sim, guiding them in their first year. Sadly it has been a bit of a bumpy start, first due to some bad weather and then COVID-19 stopping play. The 2013s are taking part in our online coaching program just now and we look forward to seeing them again soon.



A Second Season for the 2012s, Richard & James

5's preparation through the winter went really well. Introduction of goalies has been great and we have some really keen keepers in our squad. We started captains awards to encourage effort, sportsmanship and good behaviour which has gone down really well with the players.

During lockdown, we have been providing a simple 3 task training.pdf for the players to follow which includes a warm up, a skill they've to practice and something fun to do like the 'keepie-uppie' challenge; coach Mark managed an impressive 132 which inspired the boys and other coaches to have a go. The highlight has been the passing the ball film where each player passes a ball to each other using mobile phone footage, it was a great success and gave the team a bit of a moral boost. We are also looking to host a Zoom quiz for the team and parents soon.

2011s, Carey McEvoy

The 2011s managed to stream into 4 squads and play 7s for a month before lockdown – a big step up from 5s and something that we'd all been looking forward to. All 4 teams did very well and can't wait to get back playing (and training).



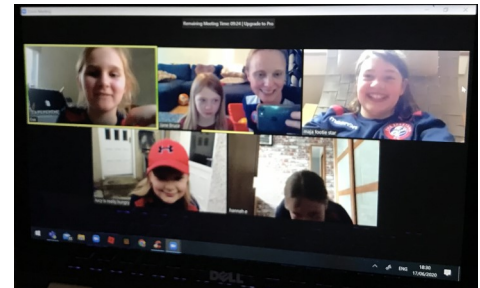
Since lockdown the kids have been busy with a weekly skills challenge, mastering their tool-box moves and targeting 15 keepie-uppies. Adding one more each week, at the time of writing more than half the squad had reached 12 and counting.



Girls U11 Marshall & Clelland, Jane Bruce

The teams have been keeping up their skills with a weekly zoom session in their kitchens/gardens/bedrooms. The girls practice new skills each week and finish off with some quality chat time.

The girls have also done brilliantly taking part in weekly fitness with Orsi, biking and running all round Edinburgh as part of the challenge to complete 5000km as part of the Girls Academy fundraiser for The SCFA activities.



2010s Developments, Paul Adam

The year started with a few changes, as 3 of our players had taken up opportunities in Pro Youth. This enabled us to recognise the real progress the kids have been making and it was really pleasing to see Callum C joining Pele Gold and Oscar joining Maradona squads. In addition, the 2010 squad welcomed 3 new faces, Struan, Rocco and William.

The new look squads had a very busy fixtures list at the start of the year with friendly matches against Spartans 2009, 2011 & 2012, as well as some Pro Youth matches with Hibs and Hamilton.

When the time is right we will be ready to get back to having fun at Ainslie Park, however, COVID-19 has not stopped the 2010 squad from developing their game and having fun! The squad continue to train using Zoom sessions. These fun sessions have proven to be an excellent way for the kids to keep in touch socially, as well as keep fit and work on their technique. It has been great to see coaches, parents and players embrace the new way of training and come up with some great ideas for training drills and football challenges!



Team News

Spartans Youth U13s (2007), Gordon Whittaker

A great first season at 11 aside for our Youth team, who were competing at the top of the Division 1 league and had a few semi-finals of cup games still to play when the season came to a crashing end due to Covid.

We had a fun night with all the players and parents to look back and reflect at our Zoom Player Awards night, Marvin Bartley kindly joined us and spoke to the boys about his own career and provided some great advice. We are looking forward to him coming to the Academy to deliver a coaching session with the boys when we are back to normal. The players chose Archie Smith as their player of the year and voted Finlay Thomson for goal of the season. The moment of the season was down to the coaches pick and we all went for 3 goal celebration involving all players joining in! - looking forward to making more memories like that in the future.

Spartans Whites U13s, Peter Wyllie

A good first season at 11 aside for our Whites team, who were competing in Division 2. Ziggy Gordon from the Central Coast Mariners joined the 2007 Whites team for a Zoom call all the way from New South Wales!

The call started with Calan giving Ziggy an overview of Spartans, before Pietro gave a presentation of Ziggy's football journey from Clyde Youths to the A-League, via Scotland u19s, the Scottish Premiership, and the Ekstraklasa in Poland. Ziggy then gave a fascinating insight to his life as a youth footballer talking about his love of the game, his dedication to practicing and playing, the sacrifices he made, and the way that he has always set himself new challenges. He gave the players a number of pointers about what is required to improve as a footballer, with enjoyment and effort a consistent theme.

The players really enjoyed the call with Ziggy, and appreciated the chance to speak directly to a professional footballer. After the call we hear several players grabbed a ball and went straight outside to practice so the messages definitely hit home!

For both teams, well done to so many of the boys who have been putting in the efforts joining fitness classes, plus lots of running and cycling. Well done to all the parents for their support. It is a challenging time, but we will all be more resilient and mentally stronger from this experience.



2008 Reds Award Night

There was great excitement, not only in the houses of the 2008 Reds players but also across the whole of Spartans and Edinburgh as word got out that David Beckham had recorded a special message for their team awards night.

It didn't end there, with Scott Brown - Celtic and former Scotland Captain and Jamie MacDonald - Hearts FC legend also sending messages to the players. A night to remember as their small sided journey comes to an end and they get ready to start their first 11aside season.



Spartans Youth 2006, Nigel Miller

We were on a good run when lockdown was triggered and were hovering in mid-table in Division 1. After many postponements due to winter weather in Blairgowrie, we exited the Scottish Cup at the 5th round playing in Forfar but enjoyed matches in Greenock and Airdrie on the way.

Throughout the season we've had tremendous support from parents and we've had the boost of high quality action photos taken by Fred Palmer (www.39designphotography.co.uk/), who allows us to share these on social media (see Twitter @SpartansYouth06) and with our opponents. This has been a big help in building relationships with other clubs and I'd recommend this for every squad if they have a talented parent.

During lockdown, the boys have had access to 3 Zoom fitness sessions each week. We've encouraged the boys to record cycling and running activity on Strava. One lad has run over 300km and cycled 100km in the first 90 days, so might return to training even fitter than he was before. We've run quizzes and had special rounds about our matches/opponents and also had question about each boy or his family.

We are expecting every boy to return to our squad, fit and ready to play and with the move to U15s, the boys have been doing a lot of growing, so next season we should be even more competitive than we were last season.

Team News



The Girls Academy News, Daniel Blyth

The start of the season saw Spartans Girls register a team at every age group, meaning that we were only 1 of 3 teams in Edinburgh to offer a full pathway within the girls game.

Before lockdown was announced the Girls season had only just started and they had completed their first round of games. Despite the break the players have been keeping very active so they will hit the ground running on return:

- The under 17s have been participating in weekly football sessions with Nichola Sturrock and David Service.
- The whole girls section took part in some weekly football sessions carried out by Football Buzz.
- Teams have been having their own weekly catch ups. This ranges from strength and conditioning classes, to football classes and also quiz nights to keep everyone involved.
- OJay Fitness and Sports Massage Therapy (Orsi) has been providing weekly strength and condition classes for all the girls academy with on average 35 girls a week attending including players from our under 9s up to the Women's first team.

It's not just the players who are working hard, the coaches have been busy too. Daniel Blyth Under 17s and Scott Noble 1st Team coaches started their UEFA B Licence and many others have taken their first step on the coaching ladder too.

Our final piece of good news is that just before lockdown we managed to secure a sponsor for the Girls Academy. We are delighted to announce that FNZ (Edinburgh Based fintech firm) will be sponsoring the girls and providing all the players with new training kit.

Spartans Reds 2004, Grant Laing

We have been doing weekly Zoom catch ups with the boys and had our Awards' Night. We have been encouraging the guys to send in videos of what they have been up to during lockdown. Prior to the season end we were top of Division 2, 13 points in the clear after 13 games, losing only 2. Looking forward to getting back.



Spartans 2005 Locomotives, Keith Chalmers

We were delighted to be the top youth team at the quiz night hosted by Spartans FC. With players, coaches, parents and a guest taking part in the team.

The Annual Spartans FC Quiz Night is a great evening out and saw a number of Youth Section teams joining adult section teams. Hopefully COVID-19 does not get in the way of the 2021 edition. Start recruiting your Scottish football experts now!



Spartans Reds 03's Fundraising Efforts, Kevin Wilson

The squad came together to run 250km over a two week period. Their mission was to raise funds to send to NHS Frontline staff & the Spartans Academy food programme.

The squad are a great bunch of lads and they just wanted to do their bit to help in what is very testing times. Their competitive side also kicked in and the boys were recording some really decent distances and times in their runs.

As the days went by it was clear the boys were going to smash their initial target of 250km, so they approached the coaches to say they wanted to increase their target to 500km in the two week period. In the end the boys registered an impressive 635km.

The coaches had no doubt the boys would achieve the target they had set themselves, but they way surpassed the coaches expectations.

An amazing £2600 was raised. 50% went to The Spartans Community Academy and 50% went directly to the ICU staff at the Western General hospital.