

Korfball New Zealand
Annual Report for the year to 30 June 2003
Chairman's Report

In many ways this has been an excellent year for Korfball New Zealand. In one respect, however, we suffered a sad blow.

Kim Bennett

Kim Bennett died suddenly and totally unexpectedly on 11 April 2003. Kim played a big role in the development of Korfball New Zealand. Before we were even formed as an organisation, Kim gave those of us who were starting to develop the game in Christchurch a tremendous incentive by preparing a group of her Westland High School students for us to play against. This team came across the Southern Alps on the Saturday in September 1997 that we organised our first tournament, we visited them a couple of times in the subsequent months and under Kim's great inspiration, they were sufficiently motivated to tour Australia in October 1999.

As reported last year, Kim continued to promote korfball in Hokitika, working with a group of year seven and eight children during 2002 for participation in two interchanges with their Christchurch counterparts.

Asia Oceania Youth Korfball Championships 2003

Kim's legacy to Korfball New Zealand continues to provide us with positive benefit. This was nowhere more evident than in the achievement of the New Zealand Under 23 team at the Asia Oceania Youth Korfball Championships in January 2003. No less than half the members of this squad were recruited, either directly or indirectly, through the initial Westland High School team established by Kim. At this event in January, for the first time New Zealand was represented at an international korfball tournament. Simply attending the event was a massive and important step for our organisation – providing the members of the squad with experience of our sport at a considerably higher level than they have previously enjoyed, and giving them the motivation to dedicate themselves yet harder to improving their technical skills. The performance of the team brought them great credit. For any nation in any sport, winning the first ever international match is a rare claim. That we ultimately failed by one goal to qualify from Asia-Oceania to the World Youth Championships in 2004 was a shame, but the improvement of the players through the tournament and the favourable impression they made is something everyone associated with the squad can take great pride in. Particular acknowledgement should be given to manager Marion Savage, my co-coaches Pete Gill and Ewout van Bruchem, our Australian coach Phil Sibbons and the players: Leigh McLellan (captain), Gabrielle Podvoiskis, Rose Podvoiskis, Loralee Pope, Jeni Savage, Brendon Breeze, Jay Erkkila, Nick Muir, Benn Mathieson and Paul Toes.

Asia Oceania Korfball Championships 2004

We all learnt some important lessons from the preparation and performance of this squad – lessons that we now have good opportunities to build on. Our first opportunity will be the Asia Oceania Korfball Championships for senior teams that we are scheduled to host in Christchurch in July 2004. Preparation of a squad for this event is already under way and, so long as those involved can collectively harness and stimulate their own and each other's motivation, I expect to see another big step forward for our technical levels as a result of this tournament.

Aside from preparation of the squad, however, these championships present a considerable organisational challenge – one that I believe we can rise to, so long as we are prepared for a concerted and focused effort. In addition to providing our best players with access to korfball at a higher level, hosting this tournament will be important to us in raising the profile of our sport – which is something we must capitalise on.

Regular Competition

Our Tuesday evening competition has again been ably administered by a sub-committee of Liesbeth and Ewout van Bruchem, Ngaire Smith and Ditte Power. When the Under 23 squad returned from Victoria and evaluated their experience, one of the decisions they collectively made was to work as hard as possible to maintain the highest achievable level of korfball in our own regular competition. This was added impetus for the re-organisation of the competition we had planned at the end of 2002, which we undertook creating an 'A grade' and 'social grade' as a consequence. This has largely been a success, as testified by the close nature of most of the A grade matches – particularly in the second half of the competition when we rationalised to four teams. For players in the social grade, however, I do not believe the experience of our sport has been enhanced, and the numbers dropped accordingly. We need to work harder on this. We need to increase the numbers playing in our competition at both levels, which we should do through strengthening the club system we have started. The clubs need to improve their organisational capability so that they are each running at least two and preferably three teams in our competitions next winter. On the court it is inherent to the nature of korfball that the best organised team is usually the most successful. Organisational strength off the court will also be critical to growing our sport in the future. In the case of our competition, this is something that must be developed and grown by each of the clubs – attempting to impose it will not work: rather, those who are prepared to take responsibility for running viable, meaningful, self-sustaining korfball clubs must come forward.

Referees

Another important achievement in respect to our competition this year has been the progress we have made with refereeing. This has been a prime example of the benefits of good organisation, with credit to my fellow members of the refereeing committee Ian Harding and Rose Podvoiskis. Of course, our referees are not perfect, and never will be,

but the introduction of a more formal accreditation process has enabled us to improve the consistency of our referees. This has made them and the players more confident in the standards of officiating and therefore provided all with a more enjoyable experience of korfball. With this improved confidence we will shortly be able to nominate our most dedicated referees onto the International Korfball Federation international refereeing list, which will be a positive development for the individuals concerned and should also bring numerous other benefits back to Korfball New Zealand.

Junior Korfball

We have continued to pursue a junior development programme. Those principally involved in this have been John Mathieson, Serena Lewis, Ewout van Bruchem, Leigh McLellan, Gabrielle Podvoiskis, Rose Podvoiskis, Loralee Pope and Jay Erkkila. In the year under review this mainly featured an interchange between our Christchurch based juniors and a group of Hokitika children. Good progress was demonstrated by the young players involved, some of whom have already graduated to our adult competition, following the juniors we have brought through in the previous two or three years who now represent a significant proportion of our players. With the loss of Kim Bennett it is likely to be difficult to maintain this link to Hokitika in the future. However, we have developed an excellent relationship with a number of schools in Christchurch, focusing initially on children at year seven and eight. We need to build on these links, particularly as St Andrews College, which ought to become a very important partnership for us. If we can link the schools we are fostering ties with to the developing clubs and introduce a junior korfball competition, we will make good progress in this area. Whether we can maintain korfball in Hokitika will depend on the organisational ability of those on the West Coast and their motivation to continue the work that Kim began.

Korfball in Schools

Linked to our development of a junior programme has been another emerging theme this year – the potential of korfball in schools. I believe we are finally developing a greater capacity to present korfball to teachers in a way that will help them to understand how well suited it is to teaching various values. With more teachers on our side we will have far greater potential than we have at present. The firm establishment of korfball in schools is an important objective and one that I believe we have gradually moved closer towards this year – progress that I hope we will be able to still more positively report on next year.

Korfball in New Centres

Developing korfball in new centres is again an area of potential that we are yet to realise. There are prospects during the 2003-04 year for more positive progress. These include different possibilities in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Dunedin. Each of these will need considerable effort to bring to fruition. Hopefully, by this time next year we will have progress to report.

Social Development

Having just attended the 2003 Korfball World Championships, there is one area that I believe we need to work harder on. To date we have not consciously developed the social side of our sport. In most other korfball countries, particularly the strongest countries, the social side of korfball is strongly emphasised and valued. While this includes congregating after the game for a drink, it goes much further than that to encompass a wide and deep network of friendships, marriages and families for whom membership of their korfball club and the wider korfball community is a cherished and sustaining factor in their lives. For many of these people involvement in korfball is a lifestyle to a much greater degree than is the case for us and, in my opinion, more profoundly than is the case for most involved in established club-based sports in New Zealand. The benefits of this to the sport itself are immense. It is the lifeblood of korfball and the means by which the sport in most successful korfball countries has developed the type of strong organisational structures that I have referred to elsewhere in this report. This is not something we are going to be able to replicate overnight. However, I believe we must consciously take small steps towards it, if by nothing else than organising more frequent social events, such as the recent end of season prize-giving, that will appeal to as many people as possible associated with korfball.

Quality and Quantity

Another clear lesson reinforced at the World Championships was the importance of regular high level internal and international competition for those nations that aspire to high placings in world and continental tournaments. As mentioned already in this report, we have made positive steps in this direction in our own competition. While we are nowhere near the top in world korfball at present, achieving such a status is not impossible. The Czech Republic is clearly in the top three and has reached this place only 15 years after the establishment of korfball in that country. It is no coincidence that the Czech Republic also sits third in the world in the number of registered korfball players. It makes sense that quality and quantity go together. The more players we have the better the competition and the higher the level at the top. This is an important issue that we must put our minds to – quantity of players and quality of play reinforce each other: achieving each must be our top equal priority.

Fund Raising

For some of us it seems that korfball is plain and simply a fund-raising exercise. All the achievements, projects and developments I have referred to have been dependent on financial resources. With more money we would be able to achieve yet more in our sport. I have spent much of this report referring to the need for strong organisation – capable, willing people who are prepared to make a commitment. We also, of course, need money. During the financial year under review we have been very fortunate to receive significant assistance from the International Korfball Federation, the Community Trust, the Southern Trust and the Canterbury Foundation. The accompanying financial statements show how we have used this assistance, along with the modest profits achieved from running our

competition, to promote and develop our sport. Since we are not here to achieve an overall profit, the statements demonstrate that we are making progress and, I believe, are a good result. Next year, however, I believe that we can access yet more funding and certainly need to if we are to deliver on the opportunities I have outlined.

Acknowledgements

It remains for me to acknowledge the members of the committee that have not already been mentioned in this report. Neil Macbeth and Carol Bathurst have both put considerable application and energy, in numerous ways, into keeping our organisation moving forwards. For the record, the other committee members have been Ian Harding (Treasurer), Ewout and Liesbeth van Bruchem, Gabrielle Podvoiskis, Lorelee Pope, Jay Erkkila and Leigh McLellan – the latter of whom was co-opted during the course of the year. For those on the committee and those outside who have put their time and inspiration into Korfbal New Zealand this year, on behalf of us all – thank you. I hope your involvement has been rewarding in itself. I hope we can continue to enjoy working together to achieve positive goals in the areas I have mentioned and in others that we are not yet able to predict.

Rob Smith
Chairman, Korfbal NZ
15 November 2003