

6th September 2008

FINN MacCUHAL'S TAUPO – CHAMPIONS FOR A FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW

The Finn MacCuhals Taupo football team dealt comfortably with Whakatane Town at Crown Park on Saturday and then received the news from Tauranga that they had hoped for where the home team had held Matamata to a draw, thus confirming Taupo as the Waikato Bay of Plenty Federation Champions yet again.

Taupo first had to concentrate on their own performance and put in a workmanlike effort in front of a boisterous crowd and on a near-perfect pitch.

They could easily have fallen behind early on with the visitors having a couple of gilt-edged chances but once the home side took the lead in the 10th minute they were rarely troubled and in control throughout. Ben Westerman won the ball on the edge of the box and cut it back for Jesse Smith to find Chris Roberts in the box. Roberts turned on a sixpence and fired a great shot across the keeper into the bottom far corner of the net.

The Taupo defence was rock solid and the midfield was in full control enabling the side to push forward at every opportunity. Stout defence from the visitors repeatedly denied Taupo who came very close to extending their lead when Mark Jones struck the foot of the post after a great run into the box and Roberts fired narrowly wide from a good position as the half drew to a close.

The second half began with Taupo needing to score early to take the element of risk away and it was another tremendous goal from Alan Lamb that did the job just three minutes into the half. Lamb lined up a free-kick from outside the box and slightly to the left and curled a great shot over the wall and into the top left corner past the goalkeeper's despairing dive, to the acclaim of the large crowd.

As in the first spell Taupo came very close to extending the score-line on several occasions but the visitors refused to roll-over and fought every inch of the way to the final whistle. Most sportingly they and the match officials lined up to applaud the Taupo team off the field before the celebrations began.

Stand-in keeper Clint McCormick was generally well protected by the back three but handled everything confidently and in the circumstances kept a very important clean-sheet and justifiably earned the coach's Finn MacCuhals man of the match award.

Ray How and Robbie Williams were totally dominant at the back with Cam McGrath commanding the left side of the park. The experienced Paul Drake directed things from his position in front of the back three. Westerman and young Mark Jones bossed the middle of the park while young wing backs Gaetano Dedual and Smith were constant threats out wide. The ever-dangerous Lamb and co-striker Roberts kept the visiting defenders busy all day.

Ironically inspirational leader Ben Westerman suffered a potentially serious knee injury some fifteen minutes from full time, but it had little effect on his celebration.

Team: Clinton McCormick, Ray How, Robbie Williams, Cam McGrath (Steve Painter 85mins), Paul Drake, Gaetano Dedual (Jeremy Robertson 53mins), Ben Westerman (Sam Brown 78mins), Mark Jones, Jesse Smith, Alan Lamb, Chris Roberts. Sub (not used): Rex Mincher.

It was a great ending to what has been a difficult season at times with injuries, suspensions and players leaving at various times continually impacting on team selection. However there is a lot of

pride in this team and a great team spirit not matched anywhere and this more than anything contributed to the deserved success of the side.

Coach Simon Foy has guided the team to two championships and they have suffered only one defeat in the process but has decided to step down for next year to spend more time with his young family.

The Federation competition has only been in operation for five years and both trophies associated with the competition the League Cup and the Challenge Shield only have Taupo AFC inscribed on them. No other team in this quality of competition would have such a legacy and it is a record that is unlikely to ever be matched.

Other Federation League results:

Top 8: Otumoetai 0 Claudelands 0, Tauranga City Utd 2 Matamata 2, Hamilton Wanderers 2 Rotorua Utd 0.

Remaining games: Matamata v Rotorua Utd, Tauranga City Utd v Hamilton Wanderers.

Top Eight Table :

WAIKATO/BOP FEDERATION	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finn MacCuhals TAUPO	20	14	5	1	58	24	47
Matamata	19	14	1	4	45	21	43
Tauranga City United	19	11	2	6	47	32	35
Whakatane Town	20	11	2	7	45	32	35
Hamilton Wanderers	19	9	5	5	39	25	32
Rotorua United	19	10	0	9	50	39	30
Claudelands Rovers	20	6	7	7	26	29	25
Otumoetai	20	6	5	9	28	32	23

Gordon Williams
0274 733 763
williamsg@landcorp.co.nz