**Jones serves up an Easter treat.**

**Wanderers v Waitakere 7 April**

The first proper game of the season saw the Waitakere team rock up to Porritt . The omens were good as our reserves spanked theirs by 4-0. Then the first team hit the number one pitch. Welcome to the sandpit, boys. The pitch resembled Raglan beach in some places and the Sahara in others but was flat and the weather nice. Our guys were sartorial elegance personified in their new dress gear (sponsors plug here) funded by Frucor and Aussie Bodies.

Waitakere obviously caught the theme of the day with one of their defenders seeing red after throwing his toys out of the sandbox. This was fairly early in the first half, but by this stage we were already 1 up, with an early goal from Graham Kay after some neat work by Daniel Frischknect and David Samson. Samson nearly made it 2 when put through for a one on one but his shot was slightly astray. We capitalised on the extra player with two more first half goals, the first was poked in by Mark Jones after a fine surge down the left by Samson, who looked as sharp as a tack. Jones also scored the 3rd goal, this time a sharp turn in from the left side and a great shot that looped over the keeper and nestled in the far corner.

We hammered at them for a period after this. Frish hung deep at a corner and smashed a fine shot on target but it was knocked away by the keeper. There was slight slackening of effort in the second half but efforts by Kay, Jones and Frish were not quite good enough to increase our tally. In the end the only goal of the second half was score by Waitakere with a net-ripping shot. However the result was well beyond their grasp by then. As their coach sulked in their coach, we all enjoyed a cold one and 3 points in the bag. And our coach, Mark Cossey? Happy as a sand-boy.

Rod de Lisle

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**Hot sun and sand but no day at the beach for Wanderers**

**Wanderers v Onehunga Sports 9 April 2012**

Signs that two game in 3 days might be a little daunting as the lads trundled in on Easter Monday sporting a few aches and pains from Saturday’s game. However with another fine day at Parc de Porritt and a fair sprinkling of spectators enjoying the sun, we all were looking forward to a goal-fest. Indeed things were encouraging early into the match as David Samson knocked in a great ball to Graham Kay. Kay scored from a similar early chance on Saturday but spurned this one, knocking it wide. The miss was to prove costly. Our tactic of long raking balls gave our front men plenty to chase after but couldn’t direct any serious goal bound efforts.

The Onehunga boys showed how it is done late in the first half when their number 10, Franchini, wriggled past some ineffective tackles and unleashed a powerful drive into the top left of the net; unstoppable. Daniel Frischknect then got free, rounded the keeper, fell and was booked for diving. Degree of difficulty? “7” declared the ref as he brandished the canary. In the second half we continued a pattern of half chances including 2 or 3 free-kicks that caused consternation to the opposition but weren’t converted. At the other end classy keeper James Clement was barely tested and centre defenders Adam Luque and Raymond How bossed things well . Luque barely put a foot wrong all day. A late hand-ball and shout for a pen (to us) fell on the ref’s deaf ears. All in all we could have easily got 1, or even 3, points but finished with nothing more than a few extra aches and pains (any physio’s looking for a pro-bono gig please apply here.) However the team seem to have knit well together and have an positive spirit about them. Bring on the mud and rain!

Rod de Lisle

**Kings dethroned**

**Wanderers v Three Kings 14 April 2012**

Mark Cossey came up with a masterly game plan for the difficult assignment that Three Kings posed. Against a quality team Cossey opted to load the midfield and also retain the direct approach that has been serving the team well.

We put pressure on them from kick off and Captain David Samson gave warning their defenders were in for a torrid time with a fast physical approach. Both teams had a chance or two but on the half hour mark it was still scoreless. “A good time for a goal” I muttered to reserve keeper, Roger Ramjet, as we won a corner after good work from Samson. The lads smartly obliged as Mark Jones crossed for Raymond How to score with a header via the underside of the crossbar. However Three Kings had been working the left-hand channel well, with Sam Margetts plying his devilish trickery and they equalised via this route a few minutes later with Margetts skipping free and crossing for a tap-in goal.

However Daniel Frischknect restored the lead, and then doubled it, with two well taken goals in quick succession. The first a great through ball from Tom Crawford which Frish seized on and neatly put through the keepers legs. (‘On purpose’ said Frish at half time). The second was a flick header from a Jordan Shaw long ball.

A third sunny game in a row at Porritt Beach and 3-1 up at half time against Three Kings? Obviously a lucky number for us. At this juncture the Three Kings bench were looking a tad perturbed. After all, hadn’t they picked up easy points here last season? It was to get worse for them. In the second half Jones and Frish combined well with a tip-tap move that lead to a defender scything Jones down and the ref seeing red. The resultant pen was converted by Frish for his hat-trick and left them reduced to 10 men. After that the game petered to a close. In midfield Crawford, Jones, Samson and Ricky Broderson worked tirelessly, like Eveready bunnies. Our defenders were again on song, with stand-in Vlad Frank in goal, as solid as a Russian tank. The final score 4-1. A footballing lesson from Coach Cossey and ‘A’ pass to the team .

Rod de Lisle

**Van-tastic winner at the farm**.

**Eastern Suburbs v Wanderers 22 April 2012**

My previous visits to Madill's Farm weren't particularly good ones. In 1994 I had to rush my 18 month son off to A & E after he opened my glove-box, found a packet of panadol and swallowed 9 (while I was packing up our footie gear in the boot). One high speed journey and a stomach pump spared his life. I also remember my Rotorua City team losing 3-0 there in the 80's. And the guys tell me we were spanked there last season. Anyway it was a nice day there Sunday and we were hoping for a good outcome after last week’s sterling result.

The pitch was narrower than Mark Jones's skinny legs but dry and fast. Right from the kick off we were dominant and forced the issue. We had a few corners, long throws and assorted chances to hit the lead that were mostly spurned or saved. A warning sign told us that this was not to be a easy day when Daniel Frischknect burst through and rounded the keeper who took him down. The ref looked at the spot and a regulation penalty beckoned. However he was summoned by the lines-bloke and eventually, after a lengthy summit conference, Frish was booked for diving. Really? Cue a tirade of friendly advice on the finer points of reffing.

Anyway our dominance continued. From a corner Adam Luque was narrowly wide with a header and David Smith had a good shot blocked. Kevin Fallon was urging on his young team forward and they responded with a couple of chances, one forcing a good save from Vlad Frank in goal. Raymond How at the back was dominant, winning every header and combining well with Luque, Jarrod Young and Jordan Shaw.

At the break Frish was forced off with a reoccurring foot injury and Graham Kay hopped on in his place. It was more of the same, a fairly scrappy game, but we clearly wanted to win more than they did. Some good work by Kay on left resulted in a cross for Samson who had the goal beckoning. He normally smacks the stitching off the ball with the ferocity of his shots but this time a tame placed shot was saved. He had another (ferociousness restored) shot blocked and it was starting to look like one of those games. However we eventually got a break down the left for Samson to cross to substitute Van Ewart who poked it home. 1-0. We weren’t content to rest on our laurels and continued to press. Next was a chest down by Kay and another powerful Samson shot tipped over . Towards the end they pressed hard and Vlad was forced to come off his line and collided with their striker who went down like a sack of spuds. A nervous wait till the ref gave the correct decision; goal kick.

The ref eventually blew for fulltime and we pocketed the 3 points gratefully. Our midfield worked their socks off (in fact everyone worked their socks off) and substitutes Ewart and Kay had good games. We could've had more and have played better, but in view of past history, coming away with anything from Madill’s Farm is a good day’s work.

Rod de Lisle

**Desert outfoxed**

**Wanderers v East Coast Bays 25th April 2012**

Anzac Day and from the trenches, ok the dugout, this game had a vaguely battle-like feel to it. I wasn’t going to mention the war but the sandy pitch at Porritt is reminiscent of a North African desert and our foes were East Coast Bays lead by wiiley German, Willy Gerdsen. Like Rommel, the Desert Fox, Willy has a reputation as a shrewd tactician. ECB had won 5 out of 5 and they beat us in a pre-season tussle.

The first half wasn’t too flash from our point of view. However we put in lots of running and continued our practise of hard work and harassment which has worked well this term. David Smith looked sharp and was combining well down the left with Jordan Shaw. Then came a small-scale skirmish after Mark Jones was held down after a tackle and a dozen players piled into a melee before some yellow cards restored order. Our only good chance of the half was when Smith ran across goal and flicked off a reverse shot that was only narrowly wide. The Bays boys eventually scored when a long ball was misdirected by our defence down for Nathan Palmer to run onto and round the keeper.

Behind at halftime Gavin Clark and then Mark Cossey gave Churchill-esque speeches along the lines of ‘We will fight them on the beaches’ etc. It worked. We unleashed a fusillade of attacks culminating in a long ball from Raymond How being knocked down by Samson and a Tom Crawford shot was blocked before the rebound was met by a flying sardine in the shape of Mark Jones who scored with a dive header. They responded with a Dan Peat goal-bound thunderbolt that was tipped over by James Clement in goal. But we commenced our own bombardment which was capped with Jones beating neatly beating his marker before crossing long for an excellent Smith dive header. 2-1.

Our celebrations were soon curtailed when we suffered a battle casualty. Sampson burst through with the goal beckoning then tripped, breaking his ankle in the process. Play was delayed but luckily orthopaedic specialist, Dave Priest, was on hand to render assistance before Samson was dispatched to the hospital. ECB obviously felt for Dave as they contrived to gift us a goal, their keeper dropping the ball straight to the feet of substitute Elliot Collier, who dispatched it tidily.

Again we endured some last minute torture before the fulltime whistle but ECB had effectively put up the white flag some time before. For Wanderers, Smith, Clement, Ricky Broderson and Jones had effective games. Commander Cossey and his troops filed from the field; another Auckland team put to the sword and Waikato pride restored.

**Half of horror at Porritt**

**Wanderers v Manurewa 28th April 2012**

With seemingly the last of the sunny weather gone, this outing on a showery autumn day also signified a downturn in our fortunes. Wanderer’s squad had been hit by injury. Daniel Frischknect was still out and David Samson’s broken leg further diminished our stocks. But no-one expected us to be 5 nil down at halftime. We were. A rampant Manurewa side had helped themselves to a handful of goals in a 20 minute period that basically killed the game off for us. They harried our lads and played a similar style of football that has worked well for Wanderers this season, fast and furious. We responded well and grabbed 3 back in the second half before conceding again, right at the death, for a final score of 3-6. A case of Manurewa versus Manure?

However the Waikato Times summed it up well. *“Wanderers had cause to bemoan their misfortune.... they could have snatched a draw had some luck and a few decisions gone their way*” He went on to say; “The *visitors included a goal from a controversial free-kick and two debatable offside rulings in the opening spell”.* Dead right. We also had first half chances including a couple of mazy runs by Mark Jones and Van Ewert that sliced open their defence only to be denied by profligate finishing.

A half time lambasting by the Wanderers coaches had a desired effect. Words to the effect of ‘Guys let’s find some cojones’. Substitute Salah Bahiss came on and immediately injected speed and skill down the right flank. Early in the half he was scythed down after rounding the keeper who, to everyone’s amazement, was not sent off. The Times again; *“A red card was the obvious outcome as Manurewa’s recovering defenders weren’t in a position to stop the impending goal*”. Jarrod Young duly converted from the spot. Then Adam Luque scored with a towering header from a Mark Jones short corner and Graham Kay knocked in another from a Tom Crawford cross. Our guys dominated the second half and at 3-5 down we had other chances to make it 4 or even 5. Key, playing against his old team was unlucky, and he could have easily had a hat-trick. But in the last minute, in one of their few forays of the half, Manurewa galloped through to make it 6.

Although hard to take many positives from this game it was gratifying to see such a determined fight back. In particular left back Jordan Shaw showed immense character after being roasted by their winger Nkoy in the first half. He didn’t put a foot wrong in the second and had the measure of his skilful opponent. Captain Ricky Broderson, Young, Kay and Jones also put in solid spells and can take some positives from the game. In the end the two key factors were a horror 20 minute period and (*far be it for us to criticize- Editor*) some baffling refereeing. That’s football folks.

Rod de Lisle

**A B.O problem?**

**Bay Olympic v Wanderers 5th May 2012**

We suffered the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" against Bay Olympic in this latest outing. Given that New Lynn based Bay Olympic are perched on the edge of West Auckland, “Outrageous Fortune” country, it was almost appropriate. This in the land of police sirens, flashing red lights and the smell of burning rubber hangs heavy in the air. We weren’t intimidated though. Our team had provided the upset of the season last year with a sneaky 1-0 win against the table toppers who went on to win the league. By all accounts we won with our only chance in that match.

This time we had 3 or 4 decent opportunities and with more good fortune may have gained a point or three. In the first half we had a good early chance after Daniel Frischknect had worked hard to win the ball up front and crossed for Salah Bahiss who had his shot blocked. And we didn’t look bad against the unbeaten Bay team. But then their Colin Gardyne tried a long shot that seemed destined for the space race but inexplicably lost height and snuck in the top corner. 0-1. We kept on trying, with Frish and Tom Crawford having half chances and Jarrod Young connecting well with a Mark Jones cross. But they pressed back and it could have been two as custodian James Clement twice came off his line in one-on-ones to keep Bay at bay.

Our litany of injuries started to tell in the second stanza. We had started the game without either of our two David’s and Raymond How and keeper James Clement were nursing niggles sustained in the first half. Frish eventually had to limp off followed by Jones. But it wasn't a bad half. We valiantly battled for an equaliser. Adam Luque has developed a good long throw and was causing consternation in their ranks. He was also up for a burst down the wing and cross to Graham Kay whose shot was just wide.

In the end it petered out for us. Ricky was penalised when he cleared the ball for a corner. It was rather innocuous, but their attacker fell theatrically and the ref pointed to the spot. Everyone including the Bay player (who admitted it) knew it wasn’t a pen. Their successful conversion made it 2-0 and finished off the game. We also lost Jordan Shaw to a red card for overzealous appealing. (Golden rule; refs NEVER un-blow the whistle despite any protestations. )

So Bay march on, and as we left Olympic park, with the setting sun glinting off their Westie power pylons, we reflected on a game that could have with an ounce of luck been ours.

**A Central Perk up.**

**Wanderers v Central Utd 19th May 2012.**

As the big shiny Central bus rolled into town one wondered how their strong line-up might test our younger team. Our boys had lost 2 in a row and suffered a few injuries lately. On the plus side we had a couple of prodigal sons returning from overseas to strengthen the blues. With Jordan Shaw suspended, Matt Gibbons was thrust into the fray at left back and there was also a spot on the bench for Jason Walker. The game commenced with a flurry of action. Shortly after kickoff a teenage commentator on the sideline said this was like "another déjà vu all over again". Indeed it felt a wee bit like the Manurewa game. We again suffered lapses in concentration with Central pouncing early to leave us 2-0 down in 8 minutes. Like traitors we were already were all working out how a loss would leave us on the table. Central's rapier attacks from Stu Hogg, Paul Urlovich and Jason Hicks unsettled our defence and it looked like there could be a few more goals to come. On our part there was more ball watching than at the Waikato stud sales.

Luckily we rallied somewhat and Raymond How and Adam Luque tightened things up at the back. Van Ewart made a good surge down the right flank which tested their defence. They passed that test sadly. But then Ricky Broderson broke into the penalty area and managed to coax a penalty after a clumsy challenge from their defender. Jarrod Young stepped up and grabbed a goal back, with not the most convincing of spot-kicks (but we'll take it). Then Gibbons sliced through the midfield like a new knife and put pressure on their defence which eventually came to nought but made the crowd take notice. Central responded with another good chance, cleared off the line by the busy Gibbons, who had settled in nicely. A bit frantic at times but for us, 1-2 halftime score line was not a bad outcome.

The halftime friendly chat and cuppa seemed to do the trick as it was a fired-up team that headed back out onto Parc du Porritt. But we nearly capitulated early in the half when our Yankee shot-stopper James Clement had to pull off two outstanding saves in quick succession. The first, a dive to his right, and the second a tip over the bar. We pressed back with Coach Cossey incessantly urging the guys 'Forward, Forward' like a latter day Napoleon. David Smith was looking very handy with nifty trickery and ability to carve through the defence. As usual Mark Jones was all energy and movement, like a whippet on speed. Jones created the chance that got us back on terms with a lovely ball the bisected the defence for Broderson to cleverly flick it past the phalanx of defenders into the net. As we stood around celebrating our good fortune we looked up, and as if by some magic, Smith had the ball and was surging toward goal. A big wind up and a left footed thud had the ball nestling back in the net again (we hadn't seen Graham Kay win the ball and send Smith clear). Nice one Graham. 2 goals in a minute and a 3-2 lead.

And that the way it stayed. It was a good second half for Wanderers again. Central did hit the bar later on after a spot of lazy defending by our lads, but we stuck on Jason Walker, then Che Bunce for a cameo and that nearly lead to another goal for us. Central had to rush away early for a function in Auckland, no after-match speeches for them. On reflection perhaps they'd mentally boarded their bus 45 minutes too early.

Rod de Lisle

**All square in the battle of the ‘tron.**

Wanderers v Melville  26th May 2012.

A sizeable crowd bowled up to Porrrit Stadium for our derby against Melville. Their coach, Declan Edge had made the papers with eccentric comments about our long ball game (something along the lines of if God had meant football to be played in the sky there'd be grass up there. Declan, if God had meant you to wear funny orange glasses he would have called you Bono, not Edge).

Most of the punters expected a tight and physical game and they got it. Once again our guys were a little sluggish out of the blocks. In fact we plan to apply to the Lotto NRFL to play two second halves in our next match and do away with the first 45. We'd be unbeatable. Having said that, we did have a very early chance in the first minute and a goal then would have put a different slant on the game. But it was not to be and Melville pushed forward with their dinky-dink style causing a few palpitations for Wanderers fans. An outstanding left handed save from keeper James Clement indicated he was on song, even if the rest of the team hadn't quite clicked into gear.

Our best chance on the first half was a Tom Crawford shot that was charged down. Soon after Melville took the lead with a passing move that ended with a simple tap-in. They were ecstatic but not for long. David Smith made a run which ended with their custodian, Neil Mouncher, launching himself out of the area and connecting with Smith's leg. A red card for the GK and Smith off to the A and E with a dead leg.

Against 10 men we took the game to them in the second half. New boy Michael Built, fresh from Northampton, had a good chance but sent it wide. Melville continued to break and Clement was forced to make another 3 top drawer saves to keep us in the match. But gradually we got on top and from a Mark Jones free kick Graham Kay headed home to make it 1-1. Jones was nursing a dodgy leg but started to run amok down the right. in the last 20 minutes he was beating defenders willy nilly and lacing in crosses like tracer bullets. Our strikers valiantly tried to convert but the closest we got was a Van Ewart header that sliced onto the cross bar, down and then out. "It crossed the line" according to those near the action but our appeals were not voracious enough and play was waved on.  There was also a goalmouth melee, shots galore, surely a goal was imminent? But the keeper (a replacement) eventually flopped on the ball.

In the end a draw, not what we wanted, but perhaps a fair indication of how the game went. Clement took MOTM honours but Jones was right behind him. The single point was enough to push us up to 3rd on the table while Melville continue to languish in the nether regions. With 9 games gone, our half term headmaster's report surely must be a good one albeit it with a 'must try harder in the first half' comment.

Rod de Lisle

**Elliot shows why West ain’t Best.**

**Wanderers v Waitakere City 2nd June 2012.**

Wanderers have a great youth policy and we seem to be churning out young stars like a veritable football factory. Some of the promising youngsters include Jarrod Young, Elliot Collier and classy goalie Ruben Parker. Young has played regularly this year and Collier seems to have a bright future. He was on the bench again for the start of this match outr west against Waitakere City. Prior to this game I was told that Wanderers haven't beaten Waitakere away from home in living memory. So the away fixture at Fred Taylor Park was always going to be a hard ask for the lads , despite our respective positions at top and bottom of table. When our reserves blew a 3 goal lead to draw 3-3, the omens weren't looking good. Frankly coach , Mark Cossey looked a tad worried. Coaches are like that.

However, with a billiard table surface, the sun nice and shiny and a good looking crowd, it was a cracker day for football. There was a small distraction at the start when a trio of old ladies settled in on the reserve bench before being ask to move by the line-o. They said they thought it was the pensioners-handicapped area. Well I suppose Cossey and I made it look a bit that way. Our team was also a bit distracted at the start, and against a Waitakere team chock full of stars, we wondered was another woeful first half on the cards? Well yes and no. We trooped in at half time at 0-0 but we did have our goalie, James Clement, a crossbar and the post to thank. We'd had a close effort or two as well, including a Michael Built shot from a corner that was cleared off the line.

The second half was a cracker. A through ball from Ricky Broderson to Daniel Frischknect nearly resulted in a goal. Frish was giving their defenders a hurry-up without quite getting the reward of a goal. Then from a Graham Kay shot the ball dropped nicely for Built to tuck it away to break the deadlock. However within minutes Waitakere pushed up, Matt Gibbons slipped and they knocked the ball across for ....to score. Clearly this game could go either way or first Van Ewart with a close shot, then Frish with a dinky run, gave their defence more problems. Coach Cosssey decided to put on sub Collier with instructions, get a goal or you're walking home. Elliot being an obliging young bloke, promptly got on the end of a rebound from Built, after good work by Mark Jones, to net the winner. Cue celebrations galore.

So the Waitakere hoodoo was broken as we complete the double over them for the season and a timely endorsement of the youth policy by Master Collier.

Rod de Lisle

**A Royal Eight for Liz.**

**Wanderers v Papakura City Chatham Cup 4nd June 2012.**

Sitting in third place in the Lotto NRFL premiership, Wanderers are the leading Waikato club side at present. On Queen's birthday Monday it was expected that we keep the local flag flying for our Chatham Cup second round match against cellar dwellers Papakura City. With the Queen celebrating her birthday and 60 years of reigning over us minions, what better way to celebrate than to knock in a few goals for the old girl?

Again the weather was reasonably fine, we've had a charmed run with sunny games this season. (that last sentence will no doubt jinx us for the rest of the year - sorry). And yep, for Liz, we managed an 8-0 win with a fairly clinical display to send us though to the next round.

We haven't been the best starters in the world but the guys were determined to atone for this. Early on Matt Gibbons burst through the middle and could have scored but he delayed his shot a little. But shortly after, an Adam Luque shot was blocked with a hand. The resultant spot kick was tucked away by Jarrod Young after a 5 mile circular run-up. A long ball from Luque was then passed by Young to Graham Kaye who volleyed it down and in for the second. Then came a tasty goal when Daniel Frish and Michael Built combined well to tee up Ricky for a regulation shot that bulged the onion bag. Down by 3 goals Papakura responded well and pressurized us for a spell. They got a little physical. Goalie James Clement was taken out and in his understated Yankee style commented "There's a little to much in that one, ref" in the manner that Clint Eastwood might say “Do ya feel lucky punk?” Ricky was next to get clattered, luckily Gooch was on hand to liberally smear Vaseline to the bloody cut on his head. Ricky battled on with a ginga tinge to his hair.

Goals flowed more freely in the second 45. Frish got through and the keeper saved well but then Ricky snuck a good ball through the defence and Michael Built ran on the slotted home. Then the busy Frish popped free and unselfishly knocked it across to Gibbons for a tap-in. Another Frish run and his cross eluded most and came eventually through to Salah Bahiss who coolly controlled and slotted number 6. Elliot Collier was introduced and, like Saturday, almost immediately made his mark with a goal, this time receiving a pass from Ricky and then a wonderful curling shot that gave the keeper no chance. The final nail in the coffin was hammered home by Built after a nice long ball from Jordan Shaw. He lobbed it over the keeper and ran round him to stab the ball home. At 8, our cricket man, Phil Rice suggested we declare, so we did.

A good days work, in the cup it isn't important to win by big margins but the guys keep the pressure on well in a disciplined display and oh, nice to see a clean sheet, the first of the season for us.

Rod de Lisle

**Raymond shows How.**

Onehunga Sports v Wanderers

9th June 2012.

Another trip over the Mumbai hills to the bright lights and power pylons of an Auckland Football ground. This time, Onehunga Sports, nestled on the shores of the Manukau harbour amidst stockcar tracks, factories and scrap metal dealers. Not a salubrious address but their clubrooms belie this. Modern and shiny with a great viewing deck above the pitch. Jealous much? Ah we can only dream... or lobby the Hamilton City Council. The only complaint was their tiny visitor's changing rooms, spatially reminiscent of a U-boat I saw once. Perhaps a cunning design feature eh?

It was the last outing for capable keeper James Clement who returns to the USA. He was determined to keep a clean sheet but this team had beaten us earlier this season. It was sunny but with a swirling breeze, not a keepers day. Playing against the wind we had a decent start, for a change, with a cross from Mark Jones glancing off the bar and out. However a bit later came a goalmouth scramble, the ball pin-balled back and forth then out to Raymond How who showed the forwards how it’s done by belting a screamer into the top left. A lovely goal. Buy Ray a beer and he'll spend an hour or two telling you about it.

Then Michael Built embarked on a dribbly dribble but took one too many touches. No goal but it got them a bit nervous. Their nervousness increased a few minutes later when Daniel Frischknect and Built combined and the eventual shot was blocked. However to our surprise Onehunga got back into the game with a corner that was flicked on and into the net. Kick it out! screamed Cossey, demonstrating on an innocent drink bottle that was minding its own business. We had an offside goal disallowed before we gained a penalty for a handball (I think) that Jones dispatched to make it 2-1.

With the sun and wind behind us, the next 45 minutes should have been better for Wanderers, but there were no goals. It was a rather second-rate second half with both teams looking decidedly average. We could have made it 3 when Built and Van Ewart both beat defenders before squandering their respective chances. James showed he will be missed by pulling 3 good blocks out of his goalies bag-of-great-saves towards the end. Built and Frish toiled away well up front without reward. On defence our two wingbacks, Matt Gibbons and Jordan Shaw performed well in their nuggety way and restricted the threat of Sean Lovemore .

In some ways an ugly win, but I'd bet most managers (with the exception of the bloke who run who runs the show across town) will take 3 points when they can get 'em, ugly or not. Two out two successive away wins in the big smoke made for a decent trip home.

Rod de Lisle

**1 Game 2 Goals 3 Kings**

3 Kings v Wanderers

16th June 2012

Another week where the umbrellas remained furled and sunny conditions prevailed. 13 games played in the dry, is that some kind of a record? (Phil Rice will know). Game 13 proved to be an unlucky one for Wanderers as we came unstuck against a tenacious 3 Kings side in Auckland. Although no rain, a brisk southerly meant the subs bench was a chilly place to be and spectators were flirting with hypothermia by the end of the match.

Winning the toss Ricky elected to face the wind. We had a decent first half. Daniel Frischknect looked lively on the wide and was put through early on, only to nudge the ball narrowly wide of the sticks. In our goal Vlad Frank, restored to the side after James Clements’s departure, looked sound. A game defining moment occurred in the 10th minute when Mark Jones burst through only to shoved in the back. And in the penalty box. This agricultural challenge had the ref immediately put the whistle to his mouth, clearly a pen and a booking. Then as if smitten by the Angel Gabriel he pocketed the Acme Thunderer and wheeled away. No penalty kick, no booking. Ref you should've gone to Spec savers, muttered a spectator. Another burst through by Frish but no-one on the end of a decent cross (or was that a shot Frish?) Ray headed wide from a free kick then we were pressed back. Vlad was called on the make a save or two and also thanked the cross bar for keeping one out. The second game changer was where Graham Kay was put through, the keeper saved his shot and the rebound fell nicely for him to hit wide and high. GK is normally a cool finisher but you must have hit a divot, eh GK?

After this fairly decent half we slumped in the second. The walk from changing room to pitch at Keith Hay park is a lengthy one. Perhaps trudging there and back at half time tired the lads out? Those first half misses came back to haunt us as 3 Kings scored two clinical goals. both from speedster Daniel Morgan. Twice he sliced through our defence and slotted home. We pushed back and had a couple of corners but seemed to run out of ideas. As the game meandered on Vlad pulled off more outstanding saves, one a tip over the bar that seemed destined to go in. The lads toiled hard but passes went astray and, like the Irish rugby team later that night, we didn't really get the rub of the green.

So a reasonable first half, a shabby second but we maintained our position in 3rd by the skin of our teeth. Maybe a nice rainy muddy game is on the cards to get back into the groove.

Rod de Lisle

**A good old fashioned cup tie.**

Wanderers v Waitemata - ASB Chatham cup 3rd Round.

June 23rd 2012.

Last Saturday some footballing visitors to Hamilton were sent packing with their tails between their legs. An embarrassing thumping by a record margin. Unfortunately that was the Allblacks game. In contrast Wanderers made rather heavy work of this 3rd round tie. In the cup the margin isn't important of course but most home supporters expected another goal or two at least. But this Waitemata side are not easy-beats by any means. They'd upset higher placed teams in previous rounds. My stepson overheard their coach urging them on before the game in blistering language that made Mark Cossey's pre-match speech seem like a kindergarten sermon. They'd come to play, perhaps this was their cup final?

Early skirmishes were mainly in our favour and from a corner a shot was blasted over the top, before Jordon Shaw made a sharp run into the box and was up-ended. The penalty was duly dispatched by Mark Jones and the crowd settled back expectantly awaiting the torrent of goals.

The torrent never came. Ricky Broderson shot wide then Elliot Collier cut through only to put his shot onto the post. As unexpected as the rain (rain?) that arrived towards the end of the half Waitemata started to offer some resistance. Eventually one of their midfielders cut inside a defenders and walloped the ball goal-wards. A single fingertip from keeper, Vlad Frank, managed to deflect it onto the bar and out. We maintained our lead and composure. Just. The feature of the half was Jones launching himself into the air for a Brazilian-type scissor kick which would have burst the net if he'd connected properly. He didn't.

At halftime Cossey upped the ante in the stirring-speech department and sent the chastened troops out to increase the lead. We continued to press for a second goal that, like a lotto win, never came. A Broderson free kick was headed over by Adam Luque, another gave Collier a chance and yet another resulted in Shaw shooting wide.

Waitemata responded with a couple of corners but were generally kept in check by Raymond How, Frank and Luque at the back. Shaw and Matt Gibbons were also industrious but the midfield a little subdued. Substitute Salah Bahiss burst through on the right but was caught in two minds and his shot/pass trickled past the far post. Striker Daniel Frischknect then had two excellent chances , the first was a one-on-one, an attempted lob, that showed his pitching wedge was not on song. The second saw him seemingly shoved in the back in the goal area, only to be booked for diving. Cheer up Frish. When the tough get going and all that jazz...

Waitemata made another valiant effort or two to secure an equaliser but in the end our lads hung on comfortably for the 1-0 win and all eyes now turn to the draw for the next round. This writer stills thinks we have a chance to go a lot further this year, perhaps the final. Our coaching staff better start practising those impassioned team talks. My stepson can provide the adjectives if you wish.

Rod de Lisle

**Suburbs succinctly sunk.**

Wanderers v Eastern Suburbs.

June 30 2012.

A slightly changed Wanderers side faced relegation haunted Suburbs at the House of Porritt. Gone were Matt Gibbons, Jason Walker and Michael Built and in came the old warhorse Che Bunce for his first start of the season. He was slotted into a defensive midfield role and Van Ewart returned to the wing. Beleaguered Suburbs turned up without coach, manager and one or two of their lads. It seems that they are not long for this division but Cossey was quick to remind the lads that no sides in this league are easy-beats.

From a quick initial free kick that Bunce headed over to a corner that flew to (guess who?) Bunce to head wide it seemed we were on top early on and dominating proceedings. However goals were not materializing and a few worried frowns became apparent. Adam Luque fired in a few of his supersonic long throws and then a Ricky Broderson cross to Tom Crawford was knocked it to Daniel Frischknect whose shot was saved. Then Van fired up his speedy dribble machine and surged dangerously like a blazing comet toward goal. Suburbs saw the danger and brought him to earth. The resultant free kick was taken by Jarrod Young and his exquisite shot flew into the far corner of the net. A beauty. The Suburbs boys were having a right old go at the ref. Eventually their vociferous captain Prince something-or-other ended up in the ref’s notebook after unwelcome instruction on how to run the show.

Like the Waitemata game the week before, the second half remained goalless. Our goalie, Vlad Frank, didn't have too much work to do apart from fend off the cold, as our defence coped with the few attacks capably. Adam Luque was enjoying an excellent game with his anticipation spot on and passing laser-like. Raymond How was as solid as ever and one sensed the Suburbs boys had no belief that they could score. A super team move, starting from Young at right back, passed through midfield and eventually found Frish who shot agonizingly wide. Suburbs reacted to this with a chance of their own when their number 10 stung Vlad’s fingertips but generally caused no great worry.

It seesawed a bit after that and although Suburbs sliced another couple of shots over we held resolute to the finish. The ref finally blew for fulltime and the 1-0 win was collected in our 1970's-Arsenal-esque fashion. Narrow victories still bag the 3 points but certainly make the game more nerve wracking. How about spanking someone 5-0 guys? The result left us in 3rd place and 20 odd points ahead of you know who (the-club-that-can't-be-mentioned). Nice work boys, now for the cup.

Rod de Lisle.

**Washed up on the Shore.**

Birkenhead v Wanderers

Chatham Cup 4th Round

8th July 2012.

By delaying my match report does it make writing it easier? Err no. So I'll make it short. We lost to the cheeky North Shore upstarts who had the temerity to us draw into false expectations by conceding an early goal before whupping us 4-1. Sheppard Park was sunny and a large crowd had turned up. They had kids with face painted and drums and vuvuzelas providing a cacophony of noise. Cossey did warn us they'd spent a few bob on their team which is unbeaten in the first division and seemingly destined to join us in the Premier next year.

With a narrow pitch we used Adam Luque early on to chuck in a few long throws that unsettled their defence. And from a Che Bunce flick-on Graham Kay stabbed home a goal to make give us the lead. We dominated much of the first half but slowly Birkenhead crept back into the game. A defensive lapse let them back on terms not long before halftime and that visibly gave them a lift.

The second was scoreless for a long time before they scored 3 goals late on. We struggled to maintain possession and get shots in. When Bunce couldn't hear what Coach Cossey wanted in terms of changing our pattern, Coss quipped "I'll email ya". The last goal was typical of the day, a penalty after Luque copped a red for a rather late challenge. Our team had few standouts apart from Jordy Shaw who was tenacious and battled well to the end. So we're out of the cup and "can concentrate on the league" but keep an eye on Birkenhead. With their red and white army of support they may go quite a bit further in this competition.

Rod de Lisle

**It’s a Sure, Shore, Shaw thing.**

East Coast Bays v Wanderers

14th July 2012.

Wanderer’s defender Jordy Shaw must like travelling over the harbour bridge. For the second week in a row we crossed the coat-hanger and for a second consecutive week Shaw was named M.O.T.M . (Must be in the name or something- Editor).

Shaw was drafted in as central defender following injuries and suspensions. We kicked off as underdogs -paying well over $3.00 on a betting website- against second placed Bays. However I thought their pre-match ‘shoot-in’ was abysmal as shots were spayed wide and high, a good omen?

Early on it seemed that, after last week’s lacklustre display, some of our old fire and spark was back. Although Bays forced Vlad Frank into an early save and also hit the bar we were also pressing and Elliot Collier even attempted some kind of bicycle kick which didn’t go well. We were guilty of some ball watching as they had a header wide. Then came the ‘worst free kick ever’ which we won’t embarrass the guys by describing, but it ended with Ricky Broderson being booked against his old club. His ‘legions of fans’ didn’t seem too upset by that.

Graham Kay was having a tidy game, a deceptive player he rarely takes the wrong option. In the 30th minute when the ball came to him, he controlled neatly and passed out to David Smith who slotted it home to give us the lead. Smith celebrated with an impressive double back flip thing that may have the Olympic selectors interested. The goal-scoring move worked so well that, 5 minutes later, we tried it again. Kay in the centre out to Smith on the right. Goal! 2-0 before halftime.

The second half was a busy affair. The boys were told to focus especially for the first 10 minutes and Vlad Frank our Russian goalie reminded the boys of this with his call of “Shut up and work” (J Stalin – 1945) when the lads got a bit mouthy. Nice call Vlad.

Chances went both ways and there could have been 3 goals each during the final 20 minutes. Franks pulled off two sensational saves, one shot in particular had goal written over it until somehow he managed to fingertip it over. For Wanderers, substitute Daniel Frischknect had a good shot blocked and Collier was guilty of putting one wide. Then towards the end Mark Jones won an unlikely ball and fed a surprised Kay who couldn’t quite get round the keeper.

But it finished 2-0 and kept our guys in with a shout for 2nd place this season. Frank, Jones, Jarrod Young and Kay had very good games and Smith, returning form injury, was the match winner. Smith’s exquisite touch is a good foil for the higher work rate of the other midfielders and shows how a good team is built round melding different styles together. But it was Jordy Shaw, employed in a stop-gap role that took the eye and the free beer.

Rod de Lisle

**Rogue ref rewards ‘Rewa.**

Manurewa v Wanderers.

21 July 2012.

Manurewa seem to be a bogie team for Wanderers. Strange really as they are a workmanlike side, normally below us on the table and aren’t that great. They faced us this week after conceding 6 in their previous outing against Waitakere. So was it to be a day for revenge? Was it heck!

We elected to face the brisk breeze in the first half and held them out till halftime quite comfortably. In fact we could have taken the lead when a nice move down the right flowed from Jarrod Young to David Smith who moved it up to Graham Kay. Kay, facing his old team, cut to the line and neatly crossed back where Daniel Frischknect blasted well over. Oh dear. Play then turned a wee bit nasty and it was physical as a fight for the buffet at a FIFA convention. Van Ewart was forced off early on with a leg injury and Jordan Shaw, struggling with a groin problem, was eventually subbed off too. Manurewa used the wind well and snapped in a few shots for Vlad Frank who dealt with them in his usual unflappable manner. Kay then laid a pin-point through ball to Smith who cut in well but his left footed shot was wayward. Another cross from Young found its mark but Kay’s shot was blocked.

In our home match against ‘Rewa we were 0-5 down at the break, so coming out for the second half at 0-0 we had a fair expectation of a win this time round. A bad omen was when Cossey lost his voice and had to send instructions via Gooch or myself. Talk about Chinese whispers. It was a lacklustre half in the end and we were fairly ordinary. About 10 minutes in Manurewa ganged up on our defence - 4 to 2- and clattered home an untidy goal after Frank was unsighted. Then from one of our corners they broke away and, with 3 on 1 this time, nearly scored again. ‘Bugger this for a game of soldiers’ thought Mark Jones. So when we lost possession again at a corner he tracked back, won the ball and set off on a scything run through virtually the whole Manurewa team before being scythed down himself. Young converted the penalty but Jones’s run was deserving of a goal in itself.

At 1-1 neither team looked convincing winners but then a ludicrous decision cost us the match. With about 10 minutes to go they swung onto the attack before one of their guys handled the ball. Ref gaily waved play on (?) and a cross was swung in. Goalie Frank was pushed in the back whilst going for the ball and it fell to one of their lads who fell over. Penalty said the ref to the surprise of all and sundry. Penalty? You’re mad! He then compounded his foolery by sending off Raymond How for ...hmm not sure what. No-one seems to know. A trifecta of bad calls that cost us the game (and I’m not normally a referee basher). They dispatched the penalty duly and that was that.

A draw may have been a more fair result. Or even a win to us. Probably just as well for that ref that Coach Cossey had lost his voice.

Rod de Lisle

**Olympic not that Special.**

Wanderers v Bay Olympic

28th July 2012

Our last home game continued the fine weather that has been a feature of every game. A good day to celebrate a decent season and maybe defeat the newly crowned champions? It was not to be. Now kids, a hallmark of a championship side is to win lots of games; even with some fluky 1-0 wins where a defeat looks more likely. This game was a case in point and for Bay a win must have seemed unlikely as they had been reduced to 9 men by the time they scored the solitary goal.

Despite their lot being the champs an' all, the game was fairly open and Wanderers had several chances to take the lead in both halves, even when the opposition had a full complement. Graham Kay was in fine form up front and showed a deft touch in creating one or two scoring chances. The best was in the first half when Michael Kim sent in a fine cross that Kay headed onto the post and fortuitously (though not for us) off the goalies legs and out. However at the other end, Adam Luque stopped a bullet strike with his head that surely must have left him slightly brain damaged, though we couldn’t really tell. In the second half when Mayne was dismissed (for comparing the ref to a lady-part) we surprisingly seemed to lose some impetus until their mouthy number 8 was also sent off. With 9 men, surely a winner was on the cards? Nup, they pushed into our half, knocked in a long ball that bisected our defence and Bay’s Matt Cunneen nodded in a clinical header to snaffle the 3 points.

Along with Man of the match Kay, Che Bunce also had a very strong game and rallied the troops well in the absence of Ricky Broderson and Raymond How who were both suspended. News filtered through that Melville had been relegated. This leaves Wanderers to fly the flag for Waikato in the Premier division. We still have two games left this year but thoughts naturally turn to next season where this fine young squad can only improve and look to really challenge for the championship (he said hopefully).

Rod de Lisle

How to give your goalie a back-ache.

Central v Wanderers

Aug 18th 2012

A late report, because after such a high scoring match I had to abandon my typewriter, get some wood and build an abacus. So here goes, the world’s first match report via abacus.

The Central players walked out to Coldplay's 'Yellow', which matched their kit. And if we didn't pick up on the 'yellow' theme, the eccentric bloke whose property borders Kiwitea Street commenced banging on an old rubbish bin and chanting "Yellow, Yellow" for the next 90 minutes.

The din on the bin obviously put our guys off, as we conceded early on. They tikka takka'd the ball round a bit then escaped down the right and knocked back for Urlovich to smack home. 1-0. Next time they did this Vlad managed to get a Russian bit to the ball and deflect it onto the bar. But they were playing a short sharp passing game and giving us a bit of a run-around. Then Mark Jones copped a yellow; it was looking a bit dire. At the back Che Bunce barked out orders and Raymond How tried to stem the tide. Daniel Frischknect did manage a decent run down the left but his cross found no waiting teammate. Unlike Central, who swished up the pitch, took a lucky bounce off a defender and pulled back for Urlovic to make it 2-0.

After this set-back we decided to play for a bit. Captain, Ricky Broderson somehow got loose on the right and he crossed to Graham Kay who slid the ball home in a sweet move. 2-1. Then, from a free kick, the ball bounced to Bunce from a Kay header and the tall defender nutted it home. 2-2. "The best goal of the match" said Bunce modestly. In our home game we fought back from two down to win 3-2. Not this time. Before halftime we shipped two further goals. 3-2. Then 4-2. -*Abacus getting a wee bit hot*-.

In the second 45 the lads attempted to re-group and make a game of it. When Adam Luque won a 50/50 ball it resulted in a pass to Kay who again calmly slotted home. 3-4. Shortly after this The Central keeper handled outside the area and could have/should have been given a red, but the ref settled for a 'yellow, yellow' card. They said “Ta ref brown envelope waiting after the game “, headed up the other end, won a corner and scored to make it 6-3. "Never say die" muttered Broderson who was having a fine game and so the boys battled on. Mark Jones burst down the right in a trademark bustling run and hit it hard and low across the box where Frischknect smashed it in to make it 6-4. Jones then gave Kay another chance but his header went wide. That was the end of a valiant fight back and they snuck the ball up to their speedy forward, Tade who sprinted through to make it 7-4.

Sadly this defeat secured third place for the Central team who have also have the Chatham cup final to look forward to. But to be fair they had a high-powered team on display and also the bloke on the drum, so knocking in 4 goals wasn't too bad an effort. On the day football (and maths) was the winners.

Rod de Lisle

**Done and Dusted.**

Melville v Wanderers

25 Aug 2012

The garden cafe opposite Gower Park offered us 15% discount as were “part of Melville football club." I tried to explain we were playing against Melville not for them, but the discount still stood. Maybe it's a sympathy thing. Anyway the lads all met there before the game and had a quick coffee before strolling across the road. Gower was looking good, hedges nicely trimmed and what great dug-outs they have. Too good for the first division.

A biggish crowd was on hand for the last league game of the season and although both sides were depleted somewhat, there was a fine array of young talent on show, including Melville's Adam Thomas freshly back from the Olympics. Our bench had an average age of about 12, showing the positive impact of our academy which is churning out players like a veritable footballer factory.

It was another typical derby like our earlier home match with Melville and although they were already relegated, one knew that it would be rough and ragged. We started kinda like we did against Central. They played some sharp moves down the right and forced our fullback Jordan Shaw into some desperate tackles. But we responded, and pushed back. Then they pushed back, or rather pushed Elliot Collier in the back. Pen said the ref. It was a little soft but Mark Jones thwacked it in for a 1-0 lead. They continued to pass and run round in speedy triangles; you can see what they've been trying to do this season without much luck. When Billman got loose on the right behind our defence it was panic stations. The ball eventually fell to Awad who made it 1-1.

Back and forth it flowed like a tennis match. Jones was fouled. Adam Luque hit the resulting free kick to their keeper. They had their own attempt that sped just over the bar. The whistle blower in the middle was dishing out kicks to both sides like lollies. Melville's Declan Edge was apoplectic at times. "Why do we always get shit referees?" he bellowed at one stage. "Because we're bottom of the league" replied their manager, Bruce Holloway, dryly.

Towards half time we were hot on attack, tried a long throw that was headed out and like the Birkenhead game, a footrace ensued with their forward bearing down on our goal with everyone chasing him. Unlike Birkenhead, luckily, the eventual shot was high and wide.

The second 45 followed on in the same vein. Jones had a chance for a shot, but delayed too long. They broke and could have scored. Then Collier made a good run down the left and crossed to Van Ewert who was denied room to shoot. Then came a defining moment when Jones slid in on Jesse Edge and both players ended up on the floor. As Jones limped off the ref unsympathetically brandished a red card at him and we were down to 10 men. Shortly after, when Che Bunce was a little late with a tackle Melville grabbed the pen to make it 2-1 and probably the match.

But Wanderers have spirit and self-belief and continued to press. Substitute David Smith brought some composure and skill into the game. We had several corners and denied them any more chances. With time running out Mark Cossey sent on 16 year old James Davies for his debut with the order to 'score with your first touch". A minute or two later another youngster, Jarrod Young, sent a delightful through ball to Davies who coolly controlled and stroked past the keeper to equalise.

And that was the final score 2-2. Although a draw against the bottom club is not normally a cause for celebration, that last chance goal lifted us two places in the league to a final 4th. All 'n all, a decent season for a club lacking the cash and players of the big boys. Although short of goal scoring prowess at times, we knocked in more than we conceded and had wins against most of the top 5 sides. The trick will be to build on this for next year and hopefully push for top honours.

Rod de Lisle