

The Suncorp Challenge Cup

Match fitness and experience gained in the Domain Soccer League helped the New South Wales Bar to a 3-1 victory over the Victorian Bar in Melbourne on 5 September 2009.

It has been a vintage year for the New South Wales Bar football team. It made its debut in the competitive cauldron of the lunchtime Domain Soccer League (the DSL), formed its first inter-state touring squad and successfully defended the annual Suncorp Challenge Cup, when it defeated the Victorian Bar for the second consecutive time.

Kick-off was at 2 pm under, for the most part, blue but chilly skies at the Darebin International Sports Centre, home of Football Victoria. The home side won the toss and elected to take advantage of the breeze in the first half.

In a gutsy, gritty and at times spirited performance, the NSW Bar fended off a number of determined incursions to down the home side 3 – 1 and retain the Suncorp Cup for another year. The win was a well-deserved team effort with leadership being provided both on and off the field by Captain John Harris who, as goalkeeper, blocked a number of impressive assaults by the Vic Bar on the visitors' goal line.

The visitors drew first blood roughly 20 minutes into the match. A melee in the Victorian goal area saw the ball cleared to sweeper Simon Philips, who was standing in an unorthodox position just outside the penalty arc. He seized the opportunity and slammed home a most impressive goal.

Ten minutes before half time, hard-working midfielders Watkins and Gibian combined to feed the ball to Patch, who passed with pinpoint accuracy to Stanton, who was hovering just to the right of the far goalpost. He made no mistake in whacking the ball into the back of the net. The home side was held scoreless at half-time.

In the beginning of the second half the visitors let down their guard, which allowed Hamish Austin of the Vic Bar to sneak one home. With the confidence of a goal under its belt, the home side made a number of determined forays. Yet, in the finest traditions of the NSW Bar, the visitors' steadfast defensive line of Marshall



The touring squad comprised John Harris(c), David Patch, Penny Sibtain, Houda Younan, Colin Magee, Carlos Mobellan, Simon Philips, Greg Watkins, Gillian Mahony, Mark Gibian, David Stanton, Scott Goodman, Cameron Jackson, John Marshall SC and Anthony Lo Surdo. Nick Tiffen (clerk, 7 Selborne Chambers) was the referee, with his daughter, Hannah, the assistant referee.

SC, Magee, Philips, Younan, Sibtain and Mahony courageously repelled each incursion.

Ten minutes before full-time the home side was desperately trying to level the score and force a penalty shoot-out. However, their fate was sealed when the NSW Bar regained possession. In a mesmerising display of one-touch passing by almost the entire team, the ball was fed to Cameron Jackson, who beat the Victorian goalkeeper with a masterful, floating shot to the far post to score the NSW Bar's third and final goal.

The visitors' man of the match went to a very deserving Colin Magee with special mention made of Gillian Mahony's unswerving commitment on the day. The home side's man of the match was Nick Terziovski.

The game was followed by drinks and presentations at Rydges on Swanston Street, sponsored through the generosity of Thomson Reuters. On behalf of the New South Wales Bar, Captain John Harris accepted the cup from Peter Agardy (the Victorian Bar's captain). Commemorative medallions, supplied with help from Suncorp, were presented by John Marshall SC to the Victorians and by Maryanne Loughnan SC (of the Victorian Bar) to

members of the New South Wales team.

A special thank you to Peter Agardy, Andrew Hanak and Tony Klotz (each of the Victorian Bar) for their efforts in organising what was a fabulous and thoroughly enjoyable contest. Thank you also to each of the members of the touring squad, who made the journey to Melbourne, and to those partners, families and friends who joined them. Each of the teams should be congratulated on the good-hearted yet spirited nature in which the match was played.

The New South Wales Bar team is looking forward to making it a hat trick when it again defends its title in Sydney in 2010. In the meantime, the team is also looking forward to again playing in the DSL competition next year.

By Anthony Lo Surdo