

January 2006

The Kicker

Newsletter of **Oak Park River Forest Strikers Soccer Club**
P.O. Box 5544, River Forest 60305 • www.oprfstrikers.com

Strikers Kick for Cancer

—By Michele Donley

At preseason training camp in August, Strikers players' accomplishments went far beyond sharpening their skills for the upcoming season. Players from our club raised more than \$17,000 to help fight childhood cancers in the Kicks for Cancer program (more than any

sometimes other body parts, Strikers players raised money by asking friends and family to sponsor them for the 1,000 juggles each player did over the preseason camp week. The U13 Girls team won ice cream for the entire team at Oberweis by raising the most money, a whop-

\$311; Okker Verhagen, sisters Emily and Victoria Gullo and teammate Kate McCole with \$300 each; and sibs Will and Caroline Criste, with \$290 each.

Strikers got involved with Kicks for Cancer at the suggestion of OPRF High School player and former Striker Brad Clarke



The Kicker is a quarterly publication for family and friends of the Oak Park River Forest Strikers Soccer Club. We welcome comments, suggestions, and especially photos. Please send any and all to Vivien Barkidjija at vpcprelations@oprfstrikers.com.

—Serena Hinckley
Newsletter Editor

other soccer club), in the process becoming a model for other soccer clubs nationwide and the first club in Illinois to take on this National program. Brian Goodman of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society said, "We are proud and honored to be partnered with The Oak Park River Forest Strikers in this endeavor."

Juggling balls off their knees, feet, thighs, heads and

ping \$1,815. Strong competition came from the U12 Girls with \$1,680 and the U10 Orange Girls, who brought in \$1,490.

Notable individual and family fundraising efforts by players included: #1 fundraiser Sarah Garvey, who brought in \$550; sisters Kristie and Brittany Borg, who each raised \$500; siblings Malachy (\$330) and Erin (\$310) Schrobilgen; Ryan Ebersole with

and his family. Brad successfully battled lymphoma diagnosed as an 8th grader in 2001 and is now back on the soccer field, starring on the OPRFHS Varsity last fall. "We are...amazed at the generosity and hard work that so many offered to make this fundraiser work!" Brad's dad, Dave Clarke, wrote.

Letter from the President

D

ear Fellow Strikers,

The Fall season was a great success. I would encourage everyone to take a few minutes and have a look at our WEB page (www.oprfstrikers.com) and you will see lots of examples of very happy players. Congratulations to all our Strikers teams! Special congratulations go to the Girls U10 Orange team who took first place in their division and the following teams who placed second in their divisions: U10 Boys, U11 Orange Boys, U11 Navy Pacific Boys, U12 Boys, U12 Girls, and U17 Girls.

Currently we have approximately 70 players taking advantage of Sportszone at Melrose Park (chicagosportszone.com). Sportszone is a brand new indoor soccer facility with two regulation indoor fields. Come out on either a Tuesday or Friday from 4:30 to 7:00 PM, and see how much fun it is. Only 25% of our club players are taking advantage of this wonderful facility. We hope that more players will train at Sportszone next year.

I would like to thank all of the many individuals who made the Homecoming parade such a success. I would particularly like to thank John Ciccio of

JC's Landscaping who provided us with a great vehicle that made OPRF Strikers look really impressive. Also, special thanks to Jane McCole, Christine Sutton, and Lois Platt for organizing the players and decorating the vehicle. You will see some nice pictures on our WEB page and we hope to see many of you again next year.

We have our Annual General Meeting on January 30th and I would encourage you to come. It is a great way to become informed about what to expect for the upcoming year, and to let your opinions be known.

We are looking forward to 2006 with high expectations for lots of fun.

Daniel Corcos

President

Oak Park River Forest Strikers Soccer Club

Where are they now?

Natasha Creticos

Played Strikers 1996-2001

High School OPRF HS

Varsity 1999-2002; Captain, Senior Year

Current team University of North Carolina

Asheville Bulldogs

4 year Division I Varsity player

Fall 2005 13-6 record

Big South Conference Runner-Up

Current position Defense

Striker positions Defense and midfield

Favorite Strikers memory "My best memory is my teammates and also my coaches. I had some great times and made some of my best friends through Strikers. The funniest moment was when a bird flew into a teammate's

head and Ms. Deam

[long-time Strikers

coach Catherine

Deam] held the

bird on her

clipboard

and told

us it was

ok, when

it was

actually

dead."

What I learned in Strikers that helps me most now "I

learned that even

if you do not have the

best individual players, it

doesn't mean that you cannot

win. Playing together and having fun while doing it are far more important."

College major and plans for the future

Major in Psychology. Natasha plans on taking a year off and working before going to grad school.



Girls Use Orange— Working to Move Up

—By John Barkidjija

“Gabrielle... which is the left side?” “Meghan... where does a striker play?” “Tess... keep both feet on the ground when you throw the ball in.” These

were all very common in-



struc-
tions shouted
by the then Girls U-9
coach in the team's first season
in the fall of 2004. The girls were
athletic and fast, and had great
attitudes, but they had all come
from playing soccer on very small
fields and small goals. Now, they
had to learn about spreading the
field, playing their positions, and
passing the ball. Most of the first

season was spent on basic soccer
skills and field positioning. The
team finished with a just under
.500 record and 4th in its division.

After a decent turnout in
winter indoor training, and a
new coach, Katie Johnson, for
the spring 2005 season, the girls
started to figure out the game
of soccer. Once the girls' skills
improved, and they learned how
to play their positions and
spread the field out, they could
capitalize on their speed and
athleticism and outplay
their opponents. They even
beat the division leader 5-0
at the end of the Spring
season.

This all came together
in the late summer and fall
of 2005. After 100% team
attendance at pre-season camp,
the now U-10 team won first
place at the Schaumburg Soccer
Fest tournament in August with
a record of 4-0, outscoring their
opponents 26 to 2. They contin-
ued their winning ways in the fall
season, finishing in first place in
their division with a record of
9-0-1, outscoring opponents 39
to 4.

The results of
the tourna-
ment and
the fall
season

are a reflection of how far this
group of girls has come since
they started three seasons ago.
The defenders learned how to
play tenacious defense, backing
each other up, and passing the
ball between themselves and
to midfielders. The midfield-
ers learned how to transition,
switch fields, and score. The
outside midfielders learned how
to stay wide, and spread the field.
Finally, the forwards learned how
to get open, not be off-sides, and
finish. The record was the result
of a great team effort: 8 girls
scored at least one goal during
the season and 11 girls had as-
sists. Most of all, the “teamwork
wins” attitude, lack of egos and
positive parents created a success-
ful team dynamic.

Members of the team
include Elana Abrams, Gabrielle
Barkidjija, Caroline Coughlan,
Emma Dunne, Isabela Escalona,
Meghan Ide, Sarah Jordan, Elena
Levi-D'Ancona, Erin Schrobilgen,
Hannah Silverman, Kate Spittle,
Tess Trinkka and Lauren Wilkes.



Strikers Excel at Florida College Showcase Tournament

—By John Donley

The Oak Park-River Forest Strikers U18 girls played with determination, skill and resilience at the Cocoa Expo college showcase soccer tournament in Cocoa Beach, Florida on December 27-29, finishing with one victory and one tie in three games against a strong national field.

The Strikers defeated Massachusetts Cheetah 3-0 on goals by Jenny Donley, Cynthia Treflek, and K.C. Gies and lost to the Florida Fusion 2-0. But the highlight was a defensive masterpiece in a 0-0 tie

a perennial national power that won its other four games with ease to take the tournament championship. Strikers sweeper Amanda Corcos, goalkeeper Anya Twillie and holding midfielder Gillian Sullivan-Bing frustrated the Thunder by shutting down the middle of the field, while full backs Larissa Gasinski, Molly McGinnis and Cassie Wilson controlled the outside lanes.

Tourna-

ers Mel Becchi, Alison Colucci, Eleni Nikols, and Debbie Marder. Steve Mort, a renowned English college coach and former Strikers coach, flew in from Manchester, England to coach the team, and was assisted by Daniel Corcos. Although

soccer was the focus of the trip,

the girls also visited the beach and nearby Disney World on their day off.

The team consists of players from OPRF High School, Trinity, Bartlett High School and Stevenson

High School. The

Club is planning similar trips to national showcase tournaments for other teams in the future.



Hali Schwartz speeds up the left wing at Cocoa Beach in the finale of her 20-season (U9-U18) Strikers career.



ment standouts

included forwards Ana Pappageorge, Colleen Harmon, and Hali Schwartz and midfield-

against the TSC (Maryland) Thunder,

Whirled Cup

—By Vivien Barkidjija

It was a sunny, brisk November day when Strikers players and families gathered at Concordia University for the 5th annual OPRF Strikers Whirled Cup. As the day went on, players, coaches and parents played soccer, ate hotdogs and brats, and cheered each other on, all the while having a great time and raising money for Strikers' financial assistance fund. Through the generosity of Strikers families and friends, this year's Whirled Cup, along with some related donations, raised over \$11,500 to

support player financial assistance, furthering Strikers' goal of not losing players for financial reasons.

A few highlights of the day included Hearty Souls games with coaches and a few brave parents playing against the high school teams, and mini Hearty Souls games with younger players playing against their parents. The

parents were notorious for

breaking many

soccer rules, including the one about not carrying your child across the field to move her out of your way! Other activities included juggling contests, presentation of the Players' Player awards and farewells to the graduating seniors.

Strikers is deeply grateful to Ellen Plourde for her tireless work organizing this annual event and to Concordia University for allowing us to use its fields. Thank you Strikers families and friends!

Players' Player Awards

Players' Players are selected by their teammates (not the coaches or parents) as the players who consistently train hard, have positive attitudes and best exemplify what it means to be a team player. Congratulations to the fall 2005 Players' Players!



Lauren Mann, Carly Loughran, Erin Schrobilgen, Emily Munz, Zoe Snelling, Mary Puls, Lexie Barber, Rachel Durbin, Ali Brozek, Isabel Firpo, Dianna Heredia, Theresa Yerkes, Amanda Corcos, Joe Gullo, Mark Hallman, Eddie Torres, Sam Walder, Nick Fascione, Mason Hinckley, Max Neumann, Griffin Berg, Grahame Watt

2005 Strikers Donations

The following individuals have contributed \$100 or more to the Strikers during 2005.

Thank you for your generosity!

Sheila and Fraser Aird
Anonymous
Vivien and John Barkidjija
Kathy and Daniel Corcos
Michele and John Donley
Mark Grabowski
Cristy and Keith Harris
Winnie and Larry Kearns
Ron Koch
Kary and John McIlwain
Anastasia O'Brien (Milan Stambolic)
Gillian Siegel and Steven Gillman
Paul Wright

Board Meetings

Held the 1st Monday of every month at 7:30 PM
River Forest Community Center
Look for e-mail reminders
All are welcome!

Board of Directors

Daniel Corcos

President
president@oprfsrikers.com

John Donley

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Strikers Office

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Winter/Spring 2006

Winter Training

January 8–March 19

Annual General Meeting

Monday January 30, 7:00 PM
River Forest Community Center
All interested parents are welcome!

Spring season training begins

April 3

Spring season games begin

Girls April 9, Boys April 23

Tryouts for 2006-2007 Seasons

Saturday June 3 (Sunday June 4 for high school girls)

Boys League (NISL) Seeding Tournaments

U9 August 12–13 Forest View Arlington Heights
U10 August 5–6 Forest View Arlington Heights
U11 August 5–6 Wedgebury Rockford
U12 August 5–6 Sportscore Rockford
U13 August 12–13 Sportscore Rockford
U14 August 12–13 Wedgebury Rockford

Mandatory preseason training camp

August (specific dates to be confirmed)

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River Forest, IL 60305

