



In this week's edition, we have an in-depth look at the Under 16s side for this year, before previewing the season ahead and wrapping up all the results from the final trial games of pre-season.

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The Day the Hakoah Feds Club Came of Age

It was a warm Sunday morning as the Hakoah Feds sides began to arrive for their final pre season hit outs before the start of the season. The entire club was up against Sydney University, the only other Eastern Suburbs club. This was the rivalry that has enveloped the Club since its inception. Sydney Uni are in the Super Youth League, one division above the Hakoah youth sides, whilst their First Grade side is in Super League, two divisions above Hakoah.

This rivalry has engulfed many for years. Not only are certain Hakoah coaches and players ex-Sydney Uni boys, but the club shares the same home ground, have had vicious battles over the years, and are constantly fighting for bragging rights.

Now, since Sydney University's promotion in the youth, this was the only chance for the rivalry to be reignited. Welcome to the inaugural Hensley Challenge!!



Hensley Athletic Field - Hakoah's home ground for 2011.

Under 16s Wes Hamburger (centre) and Justin Malek (right) contest a header

Playing under lights on the brand new Astroturf pitch, the First Grade were up to prove that a string of bad results were nothing more than teething issues. A side that has a lot of expectation had failed to deliver in the pre season games, and now, up against a Sydney Uni side two divisions up; many feared a slaughter.

As I watched this game from the stands, let me say this. This was one of the finest games of football I have witnessed. To say Hakoah held their own is an understatement. To say Hakoah should have won this game is closer to the point.

Chairman Jon Marcuson summed up the entire day's performances, with specific reference to the First Grade with the following quote:

"Today, we came of age".

The First Grade game began with both sides feeling each other out. However, after seven minutes, a lapse in defence saw the Sydney Uni forward, aptly described the '6 foot 8 giant of Hensley' squeezed in between the defence to slot home. 0-1 down. The fury from the Hakoah bench was evident to all.

However, shaking off the concession, the Hakoah side settled and began to run riot over their opposition. Neil Jablonski had a penalty decision turned down, before he headed home off a corner, only to be disallowed again by the referee for a foul. The game had changed, Hakoah were in control.

Rani Rimmer was causing chaos down the left flank, whilst Nathan Kosmina was marshalling the midfield. The Sydney Uni 'giant' had suddenly disappeared from the game, taken out of it by centre back and 17-year-old Seamus Dowd, supported by captain Marc Kacen.

A near miss from Moshe Wakil left the score unchanged going into half time, with possession comfortably 50-50.

Coming into the second half, Hakoah were awake and up for the challenge. Both sides were playing sublime football, with Hakoah starting to get on top.

It took until the 70th minute for Hakoah to equalise. Rimmer beat his defender on the left flank, before whipping the ball into the box. Adam Joseph flicked it down with his head, before Jablonski slammed into the back of the net.

1-1. Game on.

Between Jablonski and Kosmina, Hakoah were winning the midfield battle. Up front, Wakil and Justin Kosmina were continually causing havoc for the Sydney Uni defence.

However, with five minutes remaining, a rare error by keeper Adam Sonnabend gifted Uni a heartbreaking winner, ending the match 1-2.

It was clear from this performance though that this Hakoah First Grade side will be a force this season. The quality of the players has never been in doubt, but it was apparent to all who witnessed Sunday night's performance that winning the competition is a real possibility this season.

In the youth games, Hakoah again performed admirably against the Sydney Uni oppositions.

The under 13s were 2-0 up early into their game, before conceding two goals to end their match 2-2. The team again showed their attacking prowess, and will be a powerful side this season.

The under 14s also put on a very impressive performance, drawing 1-1. The boys put in a quality performance, and will be a very tough side to break down in the season ahead.



Under 14s Mark Filler attacks the Sydney Uni defence

Under 15s Coach Steve Lawrence, a former Sydney Uni coach before crossing the floor to Hakoah in the Club's first season, suffered another loss to his former club, with his side going down 1-4 in a hard fought effort.

The Under 16s, despite playing classy football in parts, fell to a 2-3 loss to Uni. However, Hakoah's second goal was one of the best seen in a while, with an intercept in defence before one touch football found Robbie Ezekiel 25 yards out. Ezekiel took one touch before calmly knocking the ball into the top right corner of the net.



Robbie Ezekiel (Under 16s)
scores a screamer

The Under 18s were inconsistent in their hit out, dominating at times before falling asleep at others. They went down 2-3 with Max Kanikevich scoring in sensational fashion in the 85th minute from outside the box after a string of short passes with Judd Felsher.

The Reserve Grade put in an encouraging performance, falling 0-2 to the Super League Sydney Uni side.

Rumour Mill

Sightings of a 6"2 man with his head on fire had surfaced this week after concerns from players at trainings. After a minor investigation by the necessary agencies, fears of safety concerns were allayed as this man was confirmed to be former Socceroo Hayden Foxe.

Foxe was sighted working with the First Grade at trainings, as well as assisting coach Mark Robertson in the game against Sydney Uni.

When pressed on the issue, the Club refused to confirm or deny that Foxe will remain involved in the club in a coaching/playing capacity.

Watch this space for updates on the Foxe situation.



Hayden Foxe – sighted at Hakoah Feds First Grade Training

Team to Watch – The Under 16s

With this weekend's trial games completed, the season proper awaits the entire Hakoah Feds club, beginning from the weekend of the 11th and 12th March 2011. With this in mind, we have decided to have an in-depth look at the form team of the entire club at this moment; a team that has endured pain and anguish on the route to success last year, and now come into the competition as favourites for the title.

It is now household knowledge that the 2010 Hakoah Feds Under 15s won the minor premiership and made the Grand Final. However, this feat is often underrated when considering the shock death of their coach and mentor only weeks before the season started. As Justin Malek, member of the Under 15 side and this years Under 16 side, says, "I think that last year the death of Iggy [Ian Gray], our coach and mentor was a real driving force towards winning the minor premiership. Every game we felt we were playing for him like we owed him for all that he had given us".



The boys with Iggy on tour in Singapore in 2009

L-R: Sam Wrublewski, Justin Malek, Robbie Ezekiel, Brad Karpin, Toby Shabtay, Ian Gray

Winning the minor premiership, the first Hakoah youth side to do so, was historic in all senses of the achievement. Captain Robbie Ezekiel described the triumph as “one of the most memorable football moments of my life”.

To cap a remarkable season off, the boys toured England in September last year, to test their might against some of the best youth teams in the UK, such as West Ham United, Burnley and Reading.

“The end of season tour was probably the best experience I have ever had in my life. The teams we played against varied from local teams all the way up to the best of the West Ham Youth academy”, said Sam Wrublewski. “The style of game over there is incredible. It is fast paced, aggressive and free flowing”.

“Playing against the stronger oppositions brought the best out of us, and in many occasions the whole team stepped up to their level.”

Now, after putting in performances that have made the entire club take notice, this season’s Under 16s are ready to go one better than last year.

“I think with the team that we have this year and the guidance of Robbo [Coach Mark Robertson] we will be aiming for one better than last year”, says midfielder Brad Karpin. “Our goal is to win the finals”.



Coach Mark Robertson (left) with Under 16s player Ilan Kessler

With the core players of this side already experiencing Reserve grade football last season, and with Wrublewski having a run with the First Grade in their trial match against Woden, the physicality and pace shouldn't concern this group in the season ahead.

The entire club will be watching with eager anticipation to see if this group of boys can make history again this year and take home both the minor and major premierships.

As captain Robbie Ezekiel says, "I personally think the team this year will be successful just after seeing how we have been playing throughout pre-season so far. We are all working great together and we are looking like a great football side".



Hakoah Feds Under 16s

This Upcoming Week

This week the season starts with Round 1 for both the Feds Youth sides and the Feds Opens.

The Opens are up against Prospect United at William Lawson Park, Myrtle St, Prospect. First Grade kicks off at 5pm. Reserves at 3pm.

The Youths are up against St George at St George Stadium (also known as Barton park), 88 Bestic St, Rockdale. The day starts with the Under 13s kicking off at 8.30 am and ends with the Under 18s at 2.30 pm.

That is this week's edition of the Hakoah Feds Newsletter. Until next time, let your passes find the man, your shots find the goal, and your skills find the girls.

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