

## ***A Spiritual Journey***

***With the success of the Association's U21 team in the State Cup in 1962, factions within the Gladesville Hornsby Football Association decided a team should be entered into the NSW Federation 1st Division Amateur Competition.***

The Club was not endorsed by the Association due to faction fighting between the NSW Federation of Soccer Clubs and the NSW Amateur Soccer Association. Although not condoned by the Executive, the team initially played its home games at Pennant Hills Oval. The team won the First Division Amateur Competition in 1963 and was promoted to the NSW Federation Second Division where it continued to play as an amateur team.

In 1979 the Club changed its name to Gladesville-Hornsby to highlight its representative nature within the areas covered by the amateur association.

In 1981 the club was taken over by the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Association thus formalising its position as the District's representative club in Federation soccer. The Club was funded by an annual grant from the Association and this continues to this date. In 1985 and 1986 the club had outstanding years culminated by winning the State League Division 2 Club Championship.

In 1986 the NSW Federation of Soccer Clubs dictated that the 2nd Division should be semi-professional and that players be signed to contracts. The club overcame that problem by gaining the co-operation of the players and signing them to a \$1.00 per year contracts - it's doubtful that the players would be so co-operative today.

As is the case today sponsorship became necessary to survive and the club struggled for funds and relied heavily on the grant from the Association. The funding of the club became a contentious issue for the member clubs of the Association and finally the clubs voted to withdraw support from the football club with the obvious result being it withdrew from the competition.

With the advent of the National Soccer League we were able to resurrect our representative football by becoming the Premier Youth teams for Northern Spirit FC. Unfortunately, the National Soccer League wound up in the 2003/2004 season, although it was thought we could continue the youth competition in 2004 within the Soccer NSW set up.

This was however not to be, although we were given a lifeline by Soccer NSW as the competition was due to start and it was deemed too late to withdraw our teams so in a matter of weeks we applied for a new name - Spirit FC, changed our white strip to green/red/white so there was never a strip clash, de-registered all our players from Northern Spirit FC and re-registered them as Spirit FC and only postponed our first round match and Spirit FC was born.

Under the Rules of Soccer NSW as from 2005 Youth League were unable to compete in the competition unless they also had senior teams playing the State League. GHFA had Youth League teams playing in the highest level of Youth League but did not have a senior team and therefore would not have been eligible to compete in the 2005 Youth League competition. GHFA complied with this by acquiring a licence from Nepean District football Association to enter senior teams into the NSW State League competition, thereby maintaining eligibility for Youth League teams. We also returned to our traditional playing strip of Gold and Black.

In 2007 our 1st Grade Team won the NSW State League Division 1 but were not promoted. In 2008 our 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Team again won the NSW State League Division 1 and this time were promoted to Super League.

2010 saw our Super Youth League teams win the Club Championship for the first time and incredibly backed this up by winning it again in 2011. In 2013 Football NSW established the National Premier League and Spirit FC entered the National Premier League 2 competition. Success soon followed when in 2015 Spirit FC were crowned National Premier League 2 Premiers but were not promoted due to the Football NSW promotion criteria.

All our teams from Youth to Seniors continue to display the character, drive and camaraderie that defines Spirit FC and now that we have returned to our spiritual home at Christie Park following the installation of synthetic pitches I'm sure further successes are not far away.