

## **PRESS RELEASE – 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008**

SCHOOL kids are heading back to Southland Football competitions in huge numbers, and it's got local administrators beaming again.

Southland Football's regional development officer Ken Cresswell said the sport's future in the province was looking as rosy as it ever had, thanks to the influx of primary and secondary players.

Significantly, Cresswell believed heavy investment from the ILT and the ILT Foundation had played a massive part because it had allowed he and recent new RDO, Barry Gardiner, to coach, promote and organise key competitions that have ignited the turnaround.

The ILT Foundation has just approved a grant of \$75,000 to Football Southland, with an additional \$25,000 donation coming from the Invercargill Licensing Trust.

"The assistance from the ILT and the ILT Foundation can't be down played and we're so lucky to have them on our team," Cresswell said. "Because, now, the future certainly looks a hell of a lot more promising than it did maybe two years ago when we were struggling at senior level and struggling with dropping numbers at junior level. We've still got quite a bit of work to do, but we've always thought if we could provide quality programmes, with good service and the right people, then we couldn't go too far wrong. And we believe we are close to doing that as best as we possibly can."

Trust and ILT Foundation president Alan Dennis said the work of former All White Cresswell and his Football Southland team deserved praise. "It's just great to see so many youngsters playing football again because, regardless of the results on the pitch, they'll gain numerous benefits from being involved in teams and in a sport that is obviously delivering a slick, quality product."

It's the success of a Southland-wide college league that has really pleased Cresswell. The league, which involves schools stretching from Northern Southland College in Lumsden, to Blue Mountain in Tapanui and Wakatipu High in Queenstown, has been a telling winner.

Since being launched two years ago, team numbers have grown to 26, which includes a new girls' competition.

Cresswell said the league had brought teenagers back into football, helping address the teenage player fallout issue that most sports faced.

"It promotes the sport in the colleges and it gives a lot of young players, who may not have played football, the opportunity to play it," Cresswell said. "And hopefully, that will encourage them to get involved in club football."

"The college league has certainly done a great job for us since we started it two years ago."

**FOOTBALL SOUTHLAND PRESS RELEASE ENDS**