

Recollections from the Past

2001

For the Somerset Sharks, 2001 was the year that could have been. Over the previous 12 months, under senior coach Andrew Greenwood, the club had developed an exciting young group of players and a real sense of expectation was brewing. The signings of some high quality recruits over the summer only added to the expectations. Among the players to join the club for the 2001 season were Shaun Conkie, a natural goalscorer with national league experience, David Jordaan, a classy holding midfielder who could run all day, Marty Wells, a towering defender who joined the club from Burnie United, and Johnny Richardson, a pint-sized but tough-as-nails midfield dynamo. With the new signings complementing a playing list that already boasted Ricki Eaves, Jarrod Cumming, Adam Conkie, Casey Eaves, Richard Garnett, Andrew Keygan, Nathan Palmer, Adam Hoare, Stevie Treloar and Josh Burr, the Sharks joined Devonport and Launceston City as the early favourites to take out the Northern Premier League title that year.

After taking out the Burnie Cup for the first time in 20 years, the Sharks set the early pace once the season proper got under way. In fact the Sharks simply couldn't stop scoring during the early stages of the 2001 season, with huge wins over Western Knights (12-0), North Launceston (7-1) and Ulverstone (11-0). The first true tests for the Sharks came with consecutive games against Launceston City and Devonport mid-way through the first half of the season. Somerset held its own in the first of these matches, coming away with a 1-1 draw against Launceston City, however the Sharks were taught a lesson the following weekend when they were walloped 2-5 by Devonport. The Sharks slipped up over coming weeks only managing a 2-2 draw against a lowly ranked Launceston United and suffering a devastating 2-1 loss against arch-rivals Burnie United.

The remainder of the season became something of a roller-coaster ride for the Sharks' supporters, with the team producing sustained periods of scintillating football, but occasionally letting their high standards slip at inopportune times. For the Sharks, the undoubted highlight of the second half of the season was a 4-1 victory over Devonport – a team the Sharks had not beaten in many years. As the referee's watch ticked down that day towards a famous Somerset victory, the Sharks' supporters, led by one Ron Treloar, took up the cry “the Snow is melting”, as Devonport champion Snow Compagne tried in vain to inspire his team to victory. Needless to say, the celebrations that followed that win are nearly as famous as the win itself.

By season's end the Sharks had scored an extraordinary 93 goals from only 18 matches, but the 29 goals conceded during those matches prevented the team from finishing any higher than third on the ladder behind eventual champions Launceston City and second placed Devonport.

The club learned a valuable lesson in 2001 that a team of champions does not necessarily equate to a champion team. Many of the star recruits drifted away the next 12 months and the club went back to basics to foster a core group of young players who were not only talented but also close mates and who would stay together for long enough to eventually produce the results the club so desperately desired – but that's a story for another day.

From the vault, as a special treat for all you history buffs out there, here is the report written by Michael Foote which appeared in *The Advocate* following the Sharks famous win over Devonport in 2001:

Round 14 of the Boags Northern Conference League saw Somerset claim possibly the biggest scalp in its club history by defeating the Devonport Strikers.

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At Cardigan St, yesterday, Devonport needed the points badly to keep it's second place deficit at just 1 point however it's desire didn't quite match that of Somerset who's main aim was to provide a quality exhibition in front of it's own crowd.

Any nerves that may have hindered the Sharks were quickly dispatched on 11 minutes when Adam Conkie scored a gem from the edge of the area. The match continued evenly with both sides playing well. The Somerset lead was doubled on 20min, when Ricky Eaves finished a one on one with the 'Port keeper.

Devonport came out after half-time full of fight and for 20 minutes threw everything at Somerset, in the process pulling one back when Howard's long shot bobbed past Treloar in the Sharks' goal. The Strikers then scored again but were dismayed to see the linesman's flag up for offside. 'Port coach Guilbert joined the action and soon earned his side a penalty kick, but disappointment set in again as Treloar saved the Collins strike.

This all but ended the Devonport charge and Somerset took control. Ricky Eaves extended the lead mid-way through the half and then completed, seemingly, his umpteenth hat-trick for the year just seconds before the final whistle. Coach Greenwood, along with his players, was ecstatic with the 4-1 winning performance while Anthony Guilbert for the Strikers was left to rue what might have been had his side converted some of it's chances.



2001 SOMERSET SENIORS