

Errea Cup and Trophy Finals night on the South Coast

In an exciting end to the secondary football season South Coast held its own regional knockout finals night last Wednesday night at Albion Park Junior Soccer Club's Terry Reserve.

The NSW Combined High Schools runs a knockout competition each year for all secondary schools in NSW called the Errea Cup (boys) and Errea Trophy (girls). This year over 350 school teams were entered in each of the competitions, so to reach the final 16 teams in the state, as these schools did, is a fantastic achievement.

In the girls' fixture, local school Albion Park HS played Illawarra Sports HS in what turned out to be quite a dominant display by Illawarra Sports. Although a very young side, the Illawarra Sports girls held on to possession for long periods, limiting Albion Park's chances to the odd breakaway but the Illawarra Sports keeper, Megan Blanch, was rarely troubled and was able to confidently deal with everything that came her way.

At the other end Albion Park keeper Trudy Burke was under constant pressure and was outstanding in keeping Illawarra Sports to a goalless first half.

After half time however the tide turned and Illawarra Sports found the net, firstly by Caitlin Foord, who had terrorised the Albion Park defence all game, and then by Ashley Clayton. Albion Park had no reply and the final score of 2-0 was indicative of Illawarra Sports' dominance.

Kristina Janeska from Illawarra Sports HS was voted player of the final and both team captains, Ashley Clayton (Illawarra SHS) and an emotional Jaylene Cusack (Albion Park HS) thanked players, coaches and supporters. For Albion Park, also beaten in last year's final, it was made all the more disappointing, as several of their players are in year 12 and played their last game of school football. But they have had an outstanding two years and now it becomes the turn of Illawarra Sports to see if they can dominate the region in the coming years as Albion Park has.

The boys' game was a fast and furious affair with some great quality football being displayed by both teams. Finalists Albion Park HS and Keira HS were both looking to play bright attacking football and the large crowd was kept entertained throughout the evening. Chances came at both ends before Albion Park finally opened the scoring after only 10 minutes when Daniel Manila netted. A one goal lead however was looking only temporary as Keira came close, but a penalty in the Keira penalty box allowed Albion Park's Hayden Lloyd to convert to make the score 2-0.

Keira wasn't going to lie down though and soon after replied with a well taken strike from Mario Ostojic to take the sides into half time at 2-1 to Albion Park.

The second half saw the partisan home crowd get behind Albion Park but it was Keira who scored first when Nathaniel Richardson buried the ball in the Albion Park net for 2-2 to set up an exciting finish. Both sides threw caution to the wind and sent players forward, resulting in chances for both teams that all were unsuccessful until Hayden Lloyd popped up again to score for Albion Park to make the score 3-2. Supporters were on their feet as full time approached, encouraging their teams to the end. With the score still at 3-2 the final whistle blew and Albion Park players and fans celebrated their victory.

Hayden Lloyd from Albion Park was voted player of the final, and both team captains, Matthew Liana (Albion Park) and Jason Gialiotto (Keira) also thanked their schools and supporters after what was a very close, even and high quality game.

Special thanks go to the Albion Park Junior Soccer Club for hosting a great night's football and supporting our young players. Errea's involvement and financial support for the state wide competition is greatly valued and our own South Coast Schools Sports Unit has again provided individual players medals for the two winning teams.

It was a fantastic night's football and a great credit to all schools who participated!