

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF SWOT

In 1999, while I was the Ajax Warriors Soccer Club (AWSC) Registrar, I questioned why there was recreational soccer for men and children in Ajax but not for women. From a social justice perspective, I set out to change that. *Note: I am sure the AWSC had a women's travelling soccer team (possibly within the Durham Girls Soccer League), but there was no recreational (house-league) for women.* My initial motion to colleagues on the AWSC board to expand programming to include women resulted in a flat-out no. However, I knew making social justice changes would be challenging and would take time, but I steadfastly believed it would be worth the effort.

During soccer registration in early 2000, I was now in the role of AWSC Treasurer. I talked to many women as they were waiting in line to register their children for soccer and asked them to if they would be interested in playing themselves on Sunday morning, mini fields. It was heart-warming to have 48 women express interest and leave their contact information with me. Then I drafted a budget showing the viability of a self-sufficient women's soccer program and put another motion on the table for AWSC board consideration. This time they approved but were very adamant that the women's program (called SWOT) should not cost the club any money. It turned out that SWOT was self-sufficient, but in addition, SWOT also contributed financially to the AWSC through administration fees included in SWOT registration cost.

As word got out like a Prell commercial, we ended up adding more players, which led to teams busting at the seams with 17 players each. We could not register any more after that as we were limited by the availability of fields. Therefore, we kept a wait list for the next outdoor season in 2001 where we fielded 4 full-field teams, and all wait list players formed 2 pick-up teams on the mini fields. In 2002, we fielded 6 full-field teams. One comment from players I heard numerous times, "Oh my goodness, I'm never going to yell at my kid to run faster in the 2nd half again". LOL

On October 1st, 2002, the AWSC and Village Soccer Club of Ajax merged to become the Ajax Soccer Club (including the SWOT program).

In 2003, while in the role of Ajax Soccer Club (ASC) Vice-President of Administration, I submitted an amendment to at the ASC annual general meeting (AGM) to add a new board position for Women's House League Director as I felt it was important for the women to have a decision-making voice within ASC. The motion was passed with applause, particularly enthusiastically by SWOT players attending the AGM. **Laura Beare** was elected the new Women's House League Director Position.

In 2004, I decided to retire from the ASC board. Prior to departing, it became clear to me for a variety of reasons that SWOT would benefit from joining the Ajax Adult Recreational Soccer Club (AARSC), also known as the "men's league". At that time, the Durham Region Soccer Association was not sanctioning new soccer club applications; otherwise, we would have pursued becoming our own club at that time. Nevertheless, ASC approved the motion for SWOT to join AARSC.

AARSC welcomed SWOT as a separate, self-sufficient program and both parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

A few months later after a change in ASC leadership, the decision for SWOT to move to AARSC was rescinded. It did not alter SWOT's preference to join AARSC, but SWOT players were forced to decide whether to register for women's soccer with ASC or AARSC. **Tati Tello** and I had several meetings with the ASC President to resolve the issue, but we were unable to agree on SWOT's move to AARSC. Fortunately, most SWOT players followed the SWOT committee and registered with AARSC for the 2004 Outdoor season. Many thanks went out to AARSC's John Jelliman and Brian Moss for their unwavering support of the SWOT program.

AARSC later made a change to their constitution to include a position for SWOT Chair. We would not have had it any other way! On the lighter side, at each AARSC AGM, both the men and women's leagues provided updates, including number of cards issued. The men would report many red and yellow cards, while SWOT's card stats were always zero and our report did draw a round of applause and chuckles.

SWOT and AARSC enjoyed a very amicable relationship for several years and worked in harmony to provide enjoyable soccer experiences for all players. Sometime in 2013 or 2014, the DRSA became open to the formation of new clubs and at that time, SWOT became incorporated, were sanctioned by the DRSA, had a positive and friendly parting of ways with AARSC, and the rest is history. AARSC's kindness and support will always be fondly remembered!

It took a long time to become fully independent, but we did it!

Ronda Evans, SWOT Founder.