

Kickstarting dreams

McDonald's – a proud supporter of community football for more than two decades.

THERE'S A BUZZ of excitement in the air this month as thousands of Kiwi kids get ready for the first game of the 2024 community football season. McDonald's has been the primary sponsor of community football in Aotearoa for more than 20 years, giving youngsters the chance to get involved in the sport and develop their skills in a safe and supportive environment. McDonald's Community Football ensures kids aged four to 12 years experience age-appropriate games and coaching, following standardised playing formats and training recommendations at each stage of their development, with the goal to foster participation, technical competence and a love of the sport.

Three programmes are offered: McDonald's First Kicks (4-6 years); McDonald's Fun Football & Futsal (7-8 years); and McDonald's Mini Football & Futsal (9-12 years). Each season, McDonald's contributes training equipment and gear – plus 100,000 balls over recent years – as part of a generous sponsorship aimed at providing junior level support for future All Whites and Football Ferns. The support extends to the all-important ceremony at the end of each game – awarding Player of the Day certificates and trophies that recognise outstanding performances and encourage participation. Every season McDonald's distributes 150,000 certificates and in recent years, has distributed 15,000 trophies to clubs across the motu.

McDonald's is also a big supporter of the dedicated volunteer coaches and referees who give their time to the sport – the company recently helped New Zealand Football launch onto CoachMate, a digital platform accessed through an app, which provides amateur coaches with high-performance coaching skills. “We're working to solve some confronting statistics around kids leaving sports at higher rates than ever and the implication of that to their physical and mental wellbeing,” says CoachMate chief programme officer Leigh



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Kenyon, who co-founded the platform with Michelle Walshe and Michael Ramirez.

CoachMate aims to create better outcomes for junior players, to keep them involved in the sport. “To do that, we focus on the people who have the biggest impact on a kid's sports experience: the coaches,” he says. “Our mission is to reshape the way coaching education is delivered by making it easier and more accessible for anyone to volunteer as a coach and create great sports experiences. And it's completely free for our users. No matter where a kid lives, their ability or gender, their coaches have access to world-class tools to help [them]



really enjoy sports and thrive... and ultimately stay in the game.”

“Our focus is to help families enjoy New Zealand's biggest participation sport,” says Simon Kenny, Head of Impact and Communications at McDonald's New Zealand. “Each year we work with New Zealand Football to ensure the best coaching resources and equipment gets into the hands of coaches. In addition to our national partnership, our franchisees also sponsor clubs around the country.”

