

## Longtime soccer veteran White's vision keeps Lake Highlands among area's top programs

By PHIL STEPHENS

Dick White was honing a keen interest in soccer long before the Lake Highlands Soccer Association ever formed.

By the time he was elected president of LHSA in 1994, he was already a longtime Dallas soccer veteran going back to the days when the sport was just getting organized in North Texas.

That helped White be a visionary leader of Lake Highlands when he started as president and gives him an extraordinarily perceptive viewpoint as he deals with today's challenges, still as president of LHSA 12 years

later.

He took an uncommon (at least for Dallas, Texas) interest in soccer in the mid-to-late '60s when he was in high school at Bryan Adams. White was way, way ahead of the curve in soccer as far as your average Dallas area citizen at the time.

It continued to his collegiate days at SMU, where he says he helped push SMU put into an intramural soccer program and then form a club team before he went into law school. White was just getting a taste for competitive soccer and played with the old Dallas Tornado amateur soccer

*See LAKE HIGHLANDS, Page 2*



*Photo by Phil Stephens*

Dick White is in his 12th year at the helm of the Lake Highlands Soccer Association.

# LAKE HIGHLANDS

*Continued from Page 1*

team and in the Dallas Soccer Association (DSA).

"At first, I couldn't find anyone else knowledgeable or very interested," White said. "I got intrigued by the sport watching the English FA Cup on ABC's Wide World of Sports," he said.

He kept playing as the sport began to prosper locally. He switched to the men's premier league after it formed in the mid-1970s. His own kids started coming to his games at an early age, and in a classic switch from the norm, they began to bug him about how they wanted to play, too.

In a way, he drew them into the game instead of vice-versa. During that time, he served as president of the Premier League. When his kids started playing in Lake Highlands, he was asked to be a commissioner, then vice president and not long afterward, president of Lake Highlands.

"Rick Hale suckered me into it then. I just haven't been able to talk anyone else into taking on the job since," he quipped. As one of the older Dallas soccer associations, Lake Highlands has some special challenges associated with it, but not a lot of uncertainties.

The recreational side of the league has

stabilized to about 1,100 to 1,200 registered players. The Solar Soccer Club, which puts players in various competitive Metroplex-area leagues, adds another 500 to 600 players to the total. But Lake Highlands helps facilitate at least seven leagues, all using Moss Park on Greenville Avenue. The Park lies between Royal Lane and Meadow Road and has a total of 10 fields. The league also uses the Northwood field on Royal Lane for some games.

The LHSA sponsors the Girls Classic League, which operates in cooperation with, but basically autonomously from the league. The Classic League still plays a number of games every week at Moss, though most games have moved to Pizza Hut Park.

Other leagues include the LHSA recreational league, PAL league and the RIAD inter-league association that also includes the North Dallas Chamber, Dallas North, Richardson and Rowlett, among others. The North Texas Adult Coed League, North Texas Men's Premier League and North Texas Women's League also play at Moss Park.

Moss Park was also one of the early sites of the Dallas Cup. A lot of Dallas soccer history has unfolded at Moss Park.

An area that gets as much usage as Moss Park requires a lot of maintenance and attention. White works closely with the local workers and administrators of the Dallas Park Department. But sometimes he must depend on additional funds and fees to help pay for some of the special attention that is needed.

The Girls' Classic League helps meet the difference, along with the annual LHSA fees

each player pays. The LHSA has assumed a lion's share of the capital expenses improving Moss Park, such as \$200,000 in a sprinkler system and \$20,000 annually on seeding.

Under White's leadership, the LHSA has made huge strides in administrative operations, adding a league office and a paid staff person.

White has not done it all alone. One person that has made a big difference is Vice President John Gossett. Gossett works with the referees and oversees field development, interfacing with the city of Dallas. White still does a steady turn as a ref.

John Brown has taken a big load from White, working in the office, but the president still puts many hours into his role.

White, who just started a new two-year run as president, is proud of a skills program the association has started with Jan Van Beveren (former world-class international player from Holland) as instructor. The Sunday evening clinics are with the association's U-10 teams and younger. He said he wants Lake Highlands to be known as where the best players come from in the area.

White says one of the biggest challenges for his association and many others, is continuously invigorating a new crop of volunteers with the many thankless but necessary jobs it takes to make a soccer association successful.

Even with the advent of online registration and the convenience of an association office and personnel, the enthusiastic participation from volunteers ultimately makes the difference.