

Villa Town



Villa Town Football Club is a professional association football club in Townsville, Aurora, Pharos. They currently compete in the PSL B Championship, the second level of the Pharonian football league system.

The club was founded in 1884 and its competitive peak came in the 1970s when they won their only Pharonian National Championship. They have also won a PSC Cup, in 1986.

History

Beginning and early success

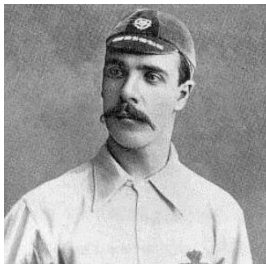
Villa Town FC was formed in 1884 as an offshoot of Townsville Country Club, a Pharonian football club (Pharonian football was a sport played in Pharos with sticks and feet) in an attempt to give players and supporters a winter interest as well as secure the club extra revenue. The original intention was to name the club "Townsville Country Football Club" to highlight the link, though Townsville FC, formed in 1883, objected on the grounds it was too close to their name and fans might mistake it for their team. The name Villa Town was chosen instead, proposed by Vil van Mor, a bank clerk and accountant at the North Aurora Railway.

Playing their home matches at the Pharonian football club's Woodsides Ground, 1884–85 saw the club undertake an extensive program of friendly matches, the first of which was a 6–0 defeat to Great Lever FC on 13 September 1884.

The opening day of the Auroran Football League season was on 8 September 1888, and saw Villa Town come from 3–0 down away to Eden Utd to win 6–3, though the club ultimately finished 10th out of 12 teams.



Vil van Mor



Jan Goddal

Despite this poor start, the club acquired its first superstar in May 1889, with the shock capture of forward Jan Goddal. Goddal had just finished the season as the league's top scorer and had been part of Kent Utd's famous "The Invincibles", who had just won the League and Cup Double and gone the whole league season unbeaten. Despite Goddal's presence the club could only manage a 7th-place finish in the 1889–90 Football League and

recorded the club record defeat when they lost 11–2 away to Foundation BC in the Cup first round.

In the 1891 close season, Villa Town absorbed Great Lever FC, who had just beaten them 1–0 in the Cup Final, leaving the Villans as North Townsville's sole professional football club. They went on to win their first Auroran Championship in 1892 and repeated their feat the next season too, winning the double by beating Kingston FC 5-2 in the Cup final.

The Bloom years (1893-1906)

The opening day of the 1893–94 season saw the league debut of 18-year-old Stanel Bloom in a 3–1 win away to Kent City. Bloom, widely regarded as the finest goal scorer of his generation and Villa Town's finest ever player, was mentored by Jan Goddal, crediting Jan Goddal with his early development. Over the next 13 consecutive seasons Bloom was the club's leading Auroran League goal scorer, as well as the overall top league scorer on five occasions in 1896, 1897, 1899, 1901 and 1904. Despite Bloom's presence, Villa Town won only 1 more Auroran Championship title,



Villa Town 1892 – Jan Goddal holding the ball



Stanel Bloom

the one in 1895. However, they managed to win 7 Auroran Cup titles, 6 of them in a row from 1897 to 1903. Characteristic of Villa's dominance in the Auroran Cup is the quote of Foundation's player Jani Vitenheus in 1902: *'It is useless to take part in the Cup and go through all that trouble; in the end Villa Town is going to win it'*.



The bust of Bloom at N. Power Arena

The period also saw three other significant occurrences in the club's history – in 1894 the club adopted its, now familiar, purple and sky-blue kit colours, in 1895 moved to The Forum Stadium permanently and, in 1896, after becoming a limited company, appointed Dokor Lark as the club's first-ever manager, replaced by Harry Neubold in 1899.

Bloom departs and first relegation (1906-1911)

In 1906, Stanel Bloom was sold to Kent Utd due to financial constraints, and Villa Town subsequently suffered its first ever relegation the following season, forcing Harry Neubold – who saw the enforced selling of Bloom as a sign of things to come – defect to become manager/secretary at Eden Utd in January 1907. Former player Limmar Methven replaced him.



Harry Neubold



Limmar Methven

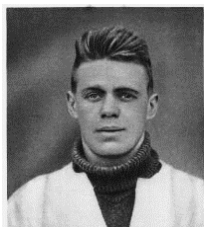
Methven had to rebuild the team ahead of the 1907–08 Second Division season, and attempted to replace Bloom with Alvin Bent, whom he signed for £50 from St. Michiel. Despite Bent proving a worthy successor to Bloom, breaking Bloom's records of most goals in a League Season as he struck 27 goals in 35 matches, Villa Town struggled to challenge for promotion, managing it as late as 1911. Bloom returned in 1911 at the age of 35 and promptly retook his position as Villa's top scorer, hitting 20 as the so-called front line of '5 *Busy Bee's*' (Bloom, Bent, Barnet, Bauchar and Fran Backl) hit 63 of the team's 73 goals, though they could only finish 6th.

Interwar era

Villa Town would win 4 Auroran championship titles between the two World Wars; in 1916, 1923, 1930 and 1939. They also won 5 cups; in 1922, 1928, 1929, 1935 and 1936. The appointment of Genar Job in 1922 kick-started a successful period for the Villans and the club became a formidable force, with high finishes from the late 1920s and all through the 1930s, including finishing as runners-up twice.



Genar Job



Rik Trenko



King Brada

Under Job, Villa Town played attractive football and was always the talk of the footballing world in Aurora and around Pharos. Great players that played during that era were goalkeeper James Bul, defenders King Brada and Cornel Storge, midfielders Luke Hoop and Fran Roebak and strikers Rik Trenko and Dokor Kayer.



Luke Hoop



Cornel Storge

Decline (1940-1960)

Genar Job retired in 1941 and during the World War II years so did most of the 1939 season players. Stanel Millan replaced Job as manager. Millan, who had some caps in the 1910s for Villa Town, had operated in various capacities for the club, including scout under Job and as adviser to the club.

In 1949, Villa Town fell afoul of the footballing authorities. Castel Attaral, the club secretary from March 1946 to July 1947, had been dismissed by the club after they discovered he was an undischarged bankrupt and found financial irregularities from his time in office. This led to an investigation by the Auroran Football League auditors who summoned another joint commission with the AFA, mainly



Stanel Millan

focused on accusations of payment of excessive wages, concerning a Czechoslovakian tour undertaken by the club. The club admitted to the charges, but denied instructing Attarall to commit the offence. However, club chairman, Beno So, was suspended, leaving football all together, as was Attarall, who committed suicide in 1954. Beno So, who had twice broken the transfer record and was a forward-thinking chairman, was replaced by Orum Anson, who oversaw a steady decline in the club's fortunes.

The ageing stars of the late 1930s were not being replaced by those of the same calibre and, from 1951 onwards, the club's decline became even more apparent. After finishing 17th in 1951 – 52, the club's lowest finish since it had returned to the Auroran top flight in 1911, Villa were finally relegated in the 1952 – 53 season. Stanel Millan was sacked after almost 12 years in charge.

The return to Second Division football did not go as well as the club would have hoped. They came back up after 6 years, changing 4 managers. During that period, The Forum underwent some innovations, bringing its capacity to almost 30,000.



The Forum, 1950s



Helnus Storr

In 1958 the board hired Helnus Storr as manager. Storr had a reputation of getting clubs promoted from the lower leagues, having got Aegel Vierkant in 1946 and Quazar Julianadorp to the First Division in 1948. Storr walked into a club with a £60,000 overdraft and shattered morale. Making it his priority to establish leadership and discipline on the field, as well as off it, he made some crucial transfer moves as well as promoted some youngsters from the youth squads. Villa Town finished on top of the table in the

2nd division of 1958-59 and returned to the top tier.

Treading water and the Cyril Grein era (1960-1980)

"I insisted in the Board to choose Storr as manager. I'd always admired Helnus Storr. He had a sharp tongue, a heart of gold and a fantastic knowledge of the game."
Chairman R. O'Rodrig on Helnus Storr

Villa Town continued to underperform after their return to the Auroran 1st Division. Although the style and success of Storr's attacking football saw the club regularly gather 20,000 home gates for the first time since relegation from the First Division, and even

attracted 29,886 for the visit of Centralia Trandor in April 1964, the team would finish in mid-table for the next seasons.

Another season of mid-table obscurity (finishing 11th) in 1967–68 was to be Storr's final contribution to Villa Town, as he retired in 1968, at the age of 64, after nine years as the club's manager, citing the need to make way for a younger man. Storr's spell as manager had revived a club in a significant slump as it struggled in the 2nd Division and his frugality in the transfer market had significantly reduced the club's overdraft, though he failed to make significant progress in the top tier.

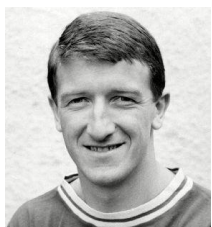
Cyril Grein, who had guided modest Minder St. Willibrods to the first division for the first



Cyril Grein

time in 1966, finishing also in 5th position, was hired as Villa Town's new manager to succeed Storr. Grein's first season in charge of Villa Town saw the club finish one place lower of Storr's previous campaign, 12th, but it saw the recruitment of numerous players, such as defender Lev Mauntel from Kootwijk Simonstd, winger Yahim Ferl from Kent City, forward Stetin Palver from Eagleton Utd and

midfielders Lanel Jordi from Eden Utd and Yord Siril from Valke Vosburg, who would go on to form the spine of the club's most successful ever side. Of the inherited squad, eleven players departed and only five were retained: Neim Luna, Terel Strupar, Zdenek Kucera, Idor Proktor and Lathan Devers. Grein also fired the club secretary, the groundsman and the chief scout, along with two tea ladies he caught laughing after a defeat. In Devers and Proktor, Grein based his whole game philosophy, stating that *'it's great to have one general in the field, I'm lucky to have two'*.



Lathan Devers

The completely reformed Villa Town finished on top of the Auroran League in 1971, earning their eighth title and went on



Stetin Palver



Yahim Ferl

to the National Championship, representing Aurora for the first time after 1939. They finished in 5th place, but Grein and his team were ready for greatness.

The 1971-72 season started in encouraging fashion, with a 12-match unbeaten run, though 7 of these were draws, only coming to an end 1–0 defeat away

to Foundation BC. They finished on top of the Auroran League for their 9th Championship and a few days later they won the Auroran Cup in Trandor, beating Dynamo Corel 3-1. Grein and his close assistant Abel Drobniak, had built a balanced team at Townsville, one in which



Idor Proktor



Lev Mauntel



Abel Drobniak

every player knew his job. Although they rarely swept away the opposition, instead they were building on the foundations of a strong defence.

In the following National Championship Grein's team was leading the table from the start, but 2 away draws in Villemstad and

Holborn brought them level on points with Dynamo Pharos with a 1 goal disadvantage. In the last day of play they beat Cardenas SFC 2-0 in The Forum and Dynamo Pharos lost in Villemstad, so Villa Town was Pharos Champion for the first time.

The great Townsville team made an impact in Europe as well, reaching the quarter-finals of the European Champions Cup (ECC) next season, eliminating on the way Spartak Trnava of Czechoslovakia (2-1, 4-4) and Anderlecht from Belgium (1-0, 0-0), before going down to England's Derby County (1-0 and 0-2). Villa Town's European adventure came at the expense of their league campaign, finishing 3rd in Aurora and 6th in the National Championships.



The Cyril Grein and Abel Drobniak statue



Villa Town 1971-72 National Champions at The Forum

Standing (from left): Cyril Grein (manager), Yord Siril, Abel Drobniak (trainer), Ren O'Rodrig (chairman), Pelleas Anthor, Stetin Palver, Terel Strupar, Neim Luna, Lathan Devers, Lanel Jordi, Zdenek Kucera. Front (from left): Idor Proktor, Levi Norast, Yahim Ferl, Lev Mauntel

Grein's frequent outspoken comments against football's establishment eventually led to him falling out with the board of directors at the club, especially with chairman O'Rodrig, so Grein and his assistant Drobniak left in October 1975, after six and a half years at the club. Such was their impact on the club that, 42 years later, a 9 ft (2.75 metres) bronze statue of the pair was erected outside N.Power Arena in commemoration of their legacy.

Life after Grein - New owner and the Fenel Azer era

Despite the departure of Grein and Drobniak, Villa's league success was repeated in the 1978–79 season when they won the Auroran title for the 10th time under successor Daryl McKane, who had been a player under Grein in St. Willibrodus. McKane led the team as manager until 1981, when Villa Town were one of the three Auroran representatives in the newly formed PSL A division.

Though they challenged well in their first season in PSL, finishing in 9th place, Villa Town were soon hit hard by rising debts, falling attendances and dismal performances. Under managers Roman Sis and Zdenek Kucera, they could not avoid relegation the next season to PSL B. Fenel Azer the youth squad coach was promoted as manager in the summer of 1983 and led Villa Town back up that season. However, Villa Town faced great financial difficulties, but did manage to avoid going out of business, as they were soon under the ownership of wealthy businessman, media-proprietor and politician Jan Hoch.



Fenel Azer

Hoch was born in Czechoslovakia and moved to Pharos at a young age, took part in the WW II as a war correspondent and was decorated. Later he worked in publishing, building up Pergamon Press to a major academic publisher. After six years as a Social Credit Party Member of the Auroran Parliament (MP) during the 1960s, Hoch again put all his energy into business, successively buying the Pharonian Printing Corporation, Afenlad Group Newspapers and Avis Publishers, among other publishing companies.



Jan Hoch

Villa Town's new manager Fenel Azer, with the financial backing of new chairman Jan Hoch brought new stars to the team, such as Yol Brunendal, Fenel Mertoh, Escel Moos and Escel Balzani. The team would finish in mid-table from the promotion in 1984 to 1987 when the PSL changed its format to a 2-phase one, with regular



Escel Moos

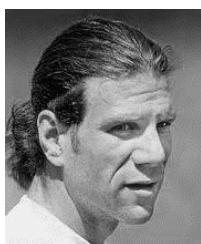
season and play-offs. However, they enjoyed success in the Cup, reaching the 1985 final, when they lost to Zaria on penalties. They will win their first (and only) PSC Cup title the next season, when they beat Atlantic Union in the final by goals from Ray Clobber, Fenel Mertoh and Escel Balzani.



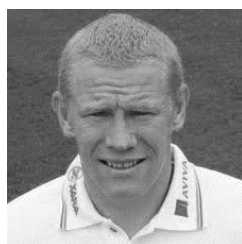
Fenel Mertoh



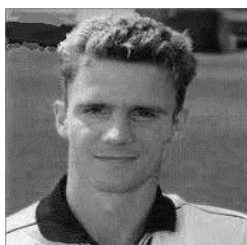
Ray Clobber scores past Lovell Hess and the Atlantic Union defence for the 1st goal in the 1986 PSC Cup Final



Dokor Tomlin



Preeme Elop



Otto van Eersel

Villa Town would reach the Cup final in 1989 as well, but lost 0-4 to Dominic.

Big spending playoff contenders (1990s)

Azer and Hoch made some very expensive but important transfer moves, that gave Villa Town a winning prestige. Preeme Elop, the prolific scorer was bought from Kent Utd in 1986, Dokor Tomlin from



J.L. Brown



L.G. Conejo

Rutugrian in 1990 and defender Otto van Eersel from Real Madrid in 1991 in a record fee for Pharonian standards.

Also, Hoch bought Argentinian world cup winner center back Jose Luis Brown as well as Costa Rican goalkeeper Luis Gabelo Conejo. Villa Town reached the 1991 PSL play-offs final, losing to AG 1959 and the semi-final in 1992. Villa Town also reached another European quarter-final, this time in the 1992 UEFA cup, eliminating Torpedo Moscow, Sigma Olomouch and Hamburger SV, before losing to Real Madrid.

Azer disagreed with Hoch in the summer of 1992 and left, to manage Select, with former AG Nobel manager Levi Jorden replacing him.

Financial crisis, change in ownership and first relegation (1995-2004)

Under Jorden, already 3-times in a row PSL champion with AG 1959, Villa Town continued spending big, bringing to The Forum players like Hungarian star Lajos Detari from Bologna, midfielder Jan Hicks from champions AG 1959 and striker Edwin Vennard from Dynamo Corel. The team reached the play-offs semi final in 1994, but failed to promote for the first time next season and Jorden left, to return to Nobel.

Shenet Forel, former National Team and Hilvar Athletics manager was hired. Villa Town could not make the play-off round either season under Forel, so Hoch ended his contract in 1997 and hired former Foundation BC manager Yate Broderig.

In the meantime, Hoch was drawing away from the club; critical of attendances (The Forum as this point could hold only 25,000 spectators and only broke 20,000 on three occasions) and at war with the football league as they blocked his attempts to add Aegel Vierkant to his portfolio of clubs, decided



Yate Broderig

The Ley and Normanton Stands



The Forum, 2000s

to put the club up for sale in September 1997, putting it into limbo as it was unable to buy players or even bring any in on loan. Elop was sold to AG



Lionel Pikrin

1959 at a record fee, that went into paying off Villa's loans to Hoch. Eventually a group of businessmen, led by Lionel Pikrin, who made his

fortune through the founding and running of a free newspaper, brought majority shareholdings and invested ff 12m in the form of a loan, becoming the club's new chairman. Broderig began restructuring the team as many players had either retired



Moree Setrar

(like van Eersel, Hicks, Tomlin and Vennard) or left. Striker Ankor Grodal and fullback Moree Setrar were 2 of the most important add-ins by the new manager. Villa Town finished last in the PSL's new format of 20 teams in 1998 (there were no relegations then), 17th in the next season, climbing to the 12th position in the turn of the century.



Ankor Grodal

Broderig left in 2001 and former Dynamo Corel player Yol Daluben replaced him. Pikrin was facing serious problems financing the club, so Villa Town could not make any higher positions than mid-table. When Daluben left in 2003 for Zenith Parietal, feeling underpaid, Bale Edwin was hired. Edwin had worked in Ceiserstellen, mainly as an undertaker manager and had no experience in the top flight. The team, with no adequate funding and many players from the youth squad, finished 19th in the 2003-04 season and was relegated for the first time in PSL B.

Back in PSL A

Chairman Lionel Pikrin, after putting temporary faith in former shareholder Brit Ridson and a notional ff 30m bond, was removed from the chair after the club temporarily entered receivership by the Aurora Co-operative Bank, who instantly installed a new board composed of Jole Sleholm, Jelmer Kei and Stanel Hardin, for the cost of ff 1 each.



Nathan Meyer

With no money to spend, new manager Nathan Meyer, who had spells in Centralia Trandor, put up a team based in youth squad players, like Yord Adamek, Jan Danov, Lev Noser, Bale Bruns and Keer Yul. The team finished on top of the PSL B table, 10 points ahead of any opposition and was promoted back to PSL A.

Financial circumstances were worsening as the debt spiralled to ff 30m plus, despite Meyer's building success on the pitch without using any transfer funds. A refinancing

scheme was put in place which saw The Forum sold to the "mysterious" Panama-based ABC Corporation and the club paying rent of ff 1m a year to play there, which local journalist Gebor Mort described as "an affront... to those who put everything into building (the ground)."

Meyer's only purchase into the top tier was 21-year-old midfielder Bora Hamil from Cardenas SFC. Villa Town finished a respectable 9th in 2006, but fell to 14th place the next season. Meyer quit, due to severe back problems in the summer of 2007.



Bora Hamil

Administration reshuffling and a new stadium

Going into the 2007-08 season, however, it was overshadowed by confusion off the pitch. The ownership trio of Sleholm, Kei and Hardin, dubbed *"The Three Amigos"*, came under increasing criticism from the Villa Town support, with two separate supporter's groups set up in protest of their ownership in the form of the *VillansTrust* and the *Villa Protest Group (VPG)*. When Townsville Constabulary received allegations of financial irregularities, Sleholm resigned his position as chairman in April 2008, stating:



Peter Gads

"My position has been made untenable. Recently it has come to my attention that meetings have been held, important decisions taken and documents signed without my knowledge. Important information has been withheld from me."

A group of local businessmen, dubbed *"The League of Gentlemen"* by the local press, and led by former board member Peter Gads, emerged to take over the club at the end of April 2008, although Jelmer Kei, with the back of Trandor venture capital company TISU, fought hard to retain control. It was revealed that the debt had risen to ff

52million, with the Gads-led consortium injecting more than ff 20million, paying off the ABC Corporation loan and negotiated a deal over the remaining debt with the Aurora Co-operative Bank, as well as returning The Forum to club ownership. Three years later, Jelmer Kei and finance director Anno McKenzie were charged with taking a secret commission worth ff 440,625 from the club and were each sentenced to a combined seven and a half years in prison.



The Forum demolition and the grounds today

Amidst this uncertainty, Villa Town was relegated for a 2nd time in 2008. This time they would remain in PSL B until 2012, only to go down again in the next season, finishing in the last place. After the new relegation, Gads stepped down as chairman, to be replaced by Ador Pers, who immediately began searching for investment from overseas. Meanwhile a row of managers passed from the club, changing 8 of them from 2013 to 2017!

Villa Town would remain in the 2nd division for the next 8 seasons. The Anno Pers administration, not finding suitable buyers, came to an agreement with the Bank and the City of Townsville over the stadium. The Forum property was sold to the Bank in order to eliminate the debt from the loans and the city offered to help Villa Town to build a new venue, with the partnership of private investors. The project started in 2015 and by 2017 the new stadium was ready for use.



N. Power Arena

A simple, single-tiered bowl that accommodated 21,088 people was designed by TTH Architects. Conference and banqueting infrastructure were located in the main grandstand. The venue was a public-private partnership case between Villa Town FC and the Townsville Municipality. Municipal authorities thus cooperated with a consortium of developers who aided the stadium in return for retail park in the vicinity. When it was still a plan and later a construction site, this ground was most commonly referred to as 'White Rock'. This derived from old copper works that used to be in its place. However, the municipality and the team decided to put up the name rights for sponsors. First naming rights deal was signed in October 2016, just 3 months before inauguration, for 10 years, with the N.Power company.



Albi Molin

Albi Molin came as manager in 2019 and led the team to PSL A after two seasons, but could not keep the good form for long. He was let go in December 2022 with Ador Mulden taking over and Villa Town went down again by the end of the season.

On 26 June 2022, after Townsville-based property developer Franio Ulvers had purchased part of N.Power Arena, buying Gads' shares and 50% of the Co-op Bank shares as well, his bid to buy the club was accepted. The administrators said Ulvers' offer complied with PSL insolvency policy, meaning Villa Town would avoid a points deduction due to entering

financial administration for debts. The deal, and the club's exit from administration, was eventually confirmed on 1 July 2022, though some constraints on transfers were agreed by the PSL and Villa's new owners. (Ulvers paid ff 33m to purchase the club, which included ff 19.7m paid to creditors, and agreed a ff 22m deal to buy the whole N.Power Arena from the Municipality and settle an outstanding loan to Aurora Co-op Bank.)



Franio Ulvers

Ulvers spent heavily in the transfer season, bringing to Townsville seven new names, mainly from PSL B and amateur clubs. Villa Town finished in 4th position in the 2023-24 season, failing promotion under manager Jan Nolan and Ulvers hired former Olympic Trandor manager, 48-year-old Dokor Ourom to lead the effort for promotion.