



Saturday 8th September 2018



Southend 2 – Peterborough 3



Saturday mornings are elastic! Not in a rubber band sense but rather in temporal terms. On those weekends that Blues are playing away, the morning passes quickly. Full of laughter, daft conversations and misprinted maps; time just seems to unwind away at a gentle pace. But when we are at home, something goes wrong with its engine. Stalling and misfiring, the hands on the clock move as if they are wading through porridge; kick off steadfastly remaining a remote island; hours and hours away every time you look.

Philosophers have noticed this phenomenon in other spheres too. The majority putting it simply down to some novice Tibetan monk experimenting with his wheels. But, think for a moment, whilst playing with the speedometer of an artefact that accumulates wisdom whilst at the same time disposing of bad karma certainly explains Albert's various ups and downs, does it really address the reason why Saturday mornings crawl whenever we are at home?

Take Denzil's experience for example. He is now spending so much time in the Odeon that Father Christmas is going to be seriously confused as to where to deliver his presents. Equally, sitting in the dark so much is addling his brain. Once the playground of mathematical formulas, it's now brim-full with so much mush such that he even claimed that his late arrival at the game was due to him being at work and losing touch with time.

But, if we are to take Denzil at his word (Tough, given that his team have taken to putting his photo on milk bottles seeking information about his whereabouts) time, as well as being mercurial in its nature, can also be physically held and felt. Expanding upon that idea and employing a concept used by electrician's when trying to explain a circuit, if time can be considered to be like water, something both tangible and controllable. Who then is the bugger playing with the plug on Saturday mornings?

Chrissy Powell and the boys are looking down at a plughole too! With nearly half the squad injured or suspended and at least three tough fixtures to safely navigate before conditions are likely to improve, our current mid-table berth is at risk of getting caught up in a maelstrom that could drag us down into the depths of the relegation zone. The high hopes that many had before the season have been dampened, both by the length of the queue outside Ben's surgery and the F.A's curious method of counting.

Because the Premiership clubs might cheat (Never!) the midweek fixture against Cambridge, albeit in a now totally devalued competition, does not count towards any suspension. So rather than spend three games gazing at their navels, Kightly and Oxley have had their sentence extended to four. Ridiculous, but then that kinda sums up the F.A in one word!

Col Poo has suffered too at their hands. Yeah, not ordinarily a matter for anything other than crocodile tears but, as this effects an ex Blue, namely Prosser, please indulge a little longer in this diatribe. Now, apparently he committed a naughty early in a game but a confused (Aren't they all?) referee booked the wrong player. Then, later in the same game, he did another naughty; this time being correctly identified and so cautioned. Game finished a short while later, job done everyone thought.

But then the cretins at F.A headquarters got involved. Their decision being that, as Prosser should have received the first yellow card, he was therefore deemed to have received two cards in the same game, and thus was to incur a suspension. Even though he only ever actually received the one caution.

Ok, fair enough. A mistake by an official was being corrected. Few, especially this author, can complain about such an action. Only, why stop there? Last week, against Charlton, a right nasty tackle got committed against Kightly. It was a straight red, no question about it. However the ref, somehow imagining a vicious lunge, launched from 10 yards away with both feet in the air to be a genuine attempt at the ball, only awarded a yellow card. So, the question is, why do the F.A opt to act in one case but not the other? Clear video evidence shows that the referee was far too lenient e.g. made a mistake. So why is that not that call being reversed too? Furthermore, whilst players are having to endure suspensions, both of the officials concerned escaped all censor; officiating at games again this weekend. The rules concerning pigs in Animal Farm does rather come to mind!

Moving on. Acting swiftly to cover the position of Oxley's absence as goalkeeper, Chrissy has signed David Stockdale as an emergency loan. Hailing from Birmingham City and an experienced keeper, Stockdale will spend three games with us before returning to the midlands as Oxley completes his suspension. One game is never enough to judge any player by and he certainly had little, to no, chance with any of Peterborough's goals, so judgement will be suspended. However, initial take was that he will do a job!

In front of him, Mantom and Dieng made welcome returns to midfield accompanied by Bunn who was getting his first full league airing with us. Even further forward, Chrissy, still seeking a partner for Hopper, was giving Cox another chance to claim that berth. A makeshift side them? Not really. With Demitriou away on International duty, young Elvis was our only inexperienced player. But against the league leaders; a side yet to lose a game, it would still have been nice to have been able to field a stronger side. Maybe around Christmas time though

Thirty minutes in, and with one side hardly able to get out of its own half, a neutral could have been forgiven for getting the teams names the wrong way round. A typical Evans side (And just what was that fat lump doing jumping up and down on the lineside when he was supposed to be suspended?) Peterborough were big and physical. Hardly a ball player amongst them, they marched like soldiers up and, mainly, back down the pitch. Attractive they were not!

That said, they were well organised and knew their roles. So although we were playing with our accustomed flair and energy, little reward was coming our way. The F.A, obviously so keen to ensure 'Fair Play' might like to look at a video of this game and enquire of the ref just why their defenders were given such licence to hold, shove and push Hopper. Doubt that they will though!

Chrissy has made a great signing here. Full of enthusiasm and drive, Hopper leads our line well. If only we could find someone to play alongside him. Partnerships such as that shared between Mercer and Spence don't seem to exist in the modern game anymore but we are crying out for such a relationship amongst our forwards.

Cox brings guile and experience to the field, Robinson speed and McCoulsky goals. However the pairing of the latter and Hopper has yet to be experienced, that is other than for a brief cameo performance in the dying embers of a game. Time for a bit of an experiment there perhaps Chrissy? The other two options have been given plenty of opportunities, so why not McCoulsky?

Blues are, certainly at the moment, a frustrating side to watch. The promise of something special is so evidently there but until we cast aside our shawl of cobwebs, that is all it will be. Take a look at the stats for this game, we had twice the number of shots that they had and a similar proportion applies to corners. Our shots on target ration was three times as good as theirs and yet they were the ones that scored more goals.

The reason was our poor defending at set pieces. But you can't cast all the blame on our back four, although mistakes were certainly made, because the midfield too have questions to ask of themselves. That said, either Turner, or indeed White, expected to play every week for us. Yet that's exactly what circumstances are causing them to have to do. Old bones do have the advantage of experience but youth brings along with it energy and speed. Ocean liners turn quicker than some of our defenders and so balls played behind us, or quickly, soon have us all of a panic. Given Chrissy's post-match comments though this has not gone unnoticed and so, once guests start booking out of Hotel Ben, changes in this department probably will be made.

Our approach play though is something to be admired. And, if the field of play was just 20 or so yards shorter we would be unbeatable. Alas then that the length of a cricket pitch away from goal our game just disintegrates. Crosses either hitting the first man or going out of play and shots getting blazed all over the place. But at least we are taking shots at goal now. A few weeks back it was a severe case of 'After you Claude' but today, whenever an opportunity presented itself we did at least give it a go.

So, another 3 – 2 home defeat with a late goal deciding things. Not encouraging. But neither is it a case for Eeyore to come out of his shed just yet. Despite forlorn wailing and much airing of despair from both of the brothers Grim prior to the game, we have only lost two points and as many places in the league. Sure, the rocky slopes of a lee shore are much closer than we would all like, but, looking towards the horizon, with players of the calibre of Yearwood, Lennon. Hyam and Barratt silhouetted against it, the view looks much brighter.

Come on you Blues!!