



Tuesday 12th February 2019



Doncaster 3 - Southend 0



“Now is the winter of our discontent”: Billy Shakespeare (Dick III)

However no son of the Duke of York, or indeed anyone else, looks about to turn the frozen stasis within which we appear to have become entombed into summer anytime soon given the pitiful performance that just over 200 poor blighted Southend souls were condemned to watch this evening. We travelled in hope but trekked back in despair!

Early afternoon somewhere in deepest Essex. Birds are singing, the sky is blue and Boycie almost has a spring to his step as he boards TBII for the flight north up the A1 to Doncaster. A fantastic performance away at Charlton on Saturday, full of fight and desire, had lightened all of our moods and so, with a degree of cautious optimism, we were taking to the skies. Clear conditions had been forecast but with our journey taking us through the home rush hour period we weren't going to take any chances. Just one stop, at our favourite services in Peterborough, being planned.

Alas, just as at the weekend, the curse of Albert struck and so we were forced to crawl to a halt close to Cambridge. Gobble, as per usual, was in two minds about the reason. Either it was a crash or an abandoned vehicle. In either case, the time that we had allowed for afternoon tea was shrinking by the second and Grandad, without any food or sustenance for hours, was beginning to fear that we wouldn't have time to stop at all.

Then, all of a sudden, things just started moving again. We kept a close eye out for the accident / fly tipping but nay a sign of it did we see. Neither did the supporters club coaches which was travelling a couple of minutes behind us. Although not quite a poltergeist yet, but certainly enjoying his apprenticeship, our delinquent O.A.G has this uncanny ability to bugged you up even when he isn't physically with you. It would appear that even the thought of him, (You try, but he truly is a case of once seen, impossible to forget!) is enough for misfortune to start heading your way and little did we know then that he was going to deliver it in bags!

Still a short break at the services was achieved before once more we resumed our flight, heading in the general direction of the land of chilled out polar bears. Actually, given that a few days earlier half the country was phoning into work claiming that piles of snow were preventing them getting off their drives, conditions weren't actually too bad. So although our route was well populated with other craft, steady progress was made and eventually signs declaring the near proximity of the railway town of Doncaster began to appear.

Their ground is a modern structure, oval in structure with a single tier of seating running all-around it's interior. Able to hold around 9,000 supporters it looked to be almost as deserted as Triggers lunchbox is after halftime. Oh there was a sprinkle of home supporters behind the far goal and some lounged in their seats alongside the pitch but even so the ground looked empty. We were behind the other goal, filling the stand to the brim ... was a vast sheet of emptiness too. Indeed when Blues took to the field, there were more of them applauding us, than we clapping them!

As kick off began to approach the situation did improve a tad; faint splashes of red interspersed in between long abandoned stretches of home seating whilst our attendance too had been boosted to just over the 200 mark. Not as good as some seasons but there again it was a cold, dank, midweek fixture and our numbers were still such that Col Pugh would have been grateful for a similar home gate!

We kicked off attacking the goal furthest away from us and, for the opening 10 minutes or so looked to be well in command. Our play was fluid, quick and contained the same elements of determination and desire that had served us so well at Charlton. Nevertheless someone, a personage who was one of those unfortunates who had not enjoyed the same magnificent view as others who were there, was forecasting doom. Even here he had insisted that we sit directly behind where a trawler had apparently lost its net rather than a location where a conversation with Chrissy and co could have been conducted with ease. But it wasn't the restricted view that was on his mind, it was rather the fact that, just as lightening requires a conduit, so the wrath of Albert needs a channel down which his venom can pour. With a sibling being perfect for the role, the two Brothers Grim were now beginning to mind meld, incanting dark rites of magic as they did so.

Many ingredients, beyond leg of newt and wing of bat, combine to create their unsavoury broth (A bottle or three of shandy and some rounds of toast topped with cream cheese and pickled herring doing the job a treat). But the results are nowt but the lining of Trigger stomach, without a vessel within which to make its delivery. And right on time, out of the darkness, stepped a prince of indescribable vileness. He had a whistle in his mouth, a junior 007 spy kit regulation issue ear piece sticking out of one side of his head and an expression that was just as vacant as a closed carpark. Their weapon of mass destruction had not only arrived but was fully primed and ticking!

A lovely tackle by John White provided the opening that the trio of despair had been awaiting; the ball spinning off his opponent's leg and away for a goal kick. So straightforward an incident that no one but the heralds of doom took much note. That is until the creature, whose C.V claims in unmistakable terms that he walks on water, awarded, not a kick involving our young goalkeeper, but rather one that required more than a degree of close proximity to the corner flag. The forces of Macbeth had succeeded in prevailed over the laws of the game. Bats fleeing their roosts by the thousands as Mike began to comment rather unfavourably about this state of affairs.

He should have saved his breath, because the dark force, the desolation twins pushing its pedal to the metal, was in no mood for turning. Whilst we for our part, lacked even a single Luke that could come to our rescue, not even from the bench. Accordingly, although the initial ball into our area was cleared, it came straight back and, so bemused were the defending forces by activities of the empire of anguish, that they allowed a home forward to stroll totally unmarked into the area and pick his spot. Albert, Catweasel in slippers and hiding away back in the shadows of the Tracy Island, paused his performance of the Rites of Grandads dance for a moment and shrieked out "Strike 1". A cry of malevolence that echoed all-around the stunned stadium.

With the winds of despondency now building up towards gale force, we restarted the game, looking to somehow resume our seat of supremacy. But arts, both arcane and black in nature, had stolen away our earlier sprit of optimism. Along with it had went our courage too and, what had started out as a bit of an adventure, was now showing signs of becoming a nightmare. If only the voices of kismet could have kept stum. But even now they were revelling in their ill-gotten gains; informing all and sundry "That I just knew that was going to happen". Spoiler Alerters!

Now that Doncaster had gained more than a hint about our overall game plan, they were closing us down much quicker. Their lead had also given them a boost and, frankly, it as was all going rather pear shaped fast for us now. Bishop of course was still putting in one hell of a performance, Cox and White were making sure that our hosts kept honest whilst Moore and Humphries also ensured that they couldn't just relax and go to sleep. Which leaves

Yes, as per usual, our midfield had decided to just roll up their tents and call it a night. Klass was stumbling around the field, seemingly totally exhausted, after only 15 minutes, Mantom's feet couldn't find a blue shirt in a smurf's laundry basket and Dieng could be one hell of a player, that is if he only put as much effort in

running towards the ball as running away from it. Leaving Macca who might as well have been away playing with the leprechauns for all we saw of his efforts.

As a result, both Elvis and Hart were often finding themselves outnumbered. Our loanee from Blackburn failed, dismally, to rise to the challenge. But Bwomono refused to let his head drop until, late in the game with four players bearing down on him, he looked around for support from his one of his more senior colleagues and finding none, he too began to wave a white flag.

Chrissy, it's understood, is actively seeking another striker. Which is all well and good should something, a suspension or injury perhaps, happen to either Cox or Humphries. Then we would undoubtedly be in trouble. But such an event could only be classified as being hit by a second torpedo because one has already struck the good ship Blues and it looks like being fatal! Hitting directly amidships, it's completely taken out our engine room. So, before we should build a life raft for those gathered up towards the bow of our stricken vessel, we first need to address the gigantic great hole that's in its side first!

So Chrissy, if we are indeed to somehow get ourselves out of this relegation quicksand, you need to bring in at least one midfielder. Someone who tackles, chats to those around them, controls the game above all has a resolution and determination about them that says 'You can visit but no way shall ye pass'. Someone going by the name of Timlin can provide you with a suitable C.V! should you require one.

Failing that, the TBird's have a suggestion to make. Move Moore up into midfield and then slip Cox back there to play alongside him. Replace Moore with Lennon, and Cox with Kelman. Mantom and Dieng getting to enjoy a long rest upon the bench whilst Klass is introduced to something called fitness training. With a midfield that not only has some bite but also some get up and go about it, plus an already promising looking attack, our submersion into the gloomy depths could get postponed or even cancelled altogether. But just plodding along, following your current course by adding another forward to our books, when those already on it receiver fewer passes than even Rodney, will only result in us being sunk.

It seemed impossible, but we were just getting worse and worse. Indeed, but for the combined actions of Bishop and the posts, Doncaster would have been out of sight long before the break. As it was, we went in still just that one goal down. Possibly Albert must have found another crate, and so given up playing Judge Dread in favour of some serious bottle necking time. Little solace if he had though. He curses and dances even worse when he's drunk!

We came out for the second half minus the service of John White. We had seen him probing his groin about midway through the first period and so, especially given that Turner had been extra industrious whilst warming up during the break, weren't too surprised to see that he had joined the loooooooooooooooooooooooooong queue outside Ben's surgery. Apparently some Charlton fans were bemoaning the length of their injury list after our draw on Saturday. Bless. Theirs is as short as the debit column upon Rodney's annual bank statement in comparison to ours!

In the first half our hosts had obviously been looking to get some joy, and finding it, by exploiting the space behind our central defenders. Now that we were equipped with someone who's turning circle is somewhat akin to that of a super tanker, our Moaning Myrtles could safely call it a day on all their cursing and cussing. The Intelligence services refer to something called 'wet work' and a similar analogue could be used to describe the nefarious actions of the Doom Brothers. Their dire work had been just as affective in terms of a killing. Only rather than some brightly coloured parrot with nails in its feet, it was any chances that we might have had of getting a result in this game that had gone off to join the choir invisible!. At sea, sailors strongly advice against 'Whistling for the wind' lest it attracts tempests. Our wailing twosome had though thrown caution directly in its face, and now we were about to all reap their reward.

Recall 3 2 1? A quiz program where contestants, after attempting to solve impossible riddles, won either a car or took home a rubbish bin. Well we were getting that Dusty experience all over again. Donny weaving patterns around us whilst we played at being dumb statues. Which is not completely true, because Turner was actually moving faster than one and also making a bit of a fist about things. But with our midfield

resolutely imitating the Rock of Gibraltar, we just had no answer to their play. In all truth it was getting way beyond embarrassing. The posts and the outstretched body of Bishop continuing to be the only things standing between us and a rugby score against the French! All good things come to an end though (Had ours even really started?) and so, after playing with their food for what seemed an age, the sharks of Doncaster began to feast.

After the game, our manager confessed to being 'quietly pleased' that we had kept the score down to just three goals. He also said that "We were chasing the game and that we are not really that type of side". Unfortunate remarks Chrissy! and surely ones that you must be regretting them now. They certainly warmed up the atmosphere in a dispirited TBII as we travelled home though!

Firstly, we were a complete shambles and, whilst it is correct that we did manage to keep the score down, that fact reflects no real credit upon our part, rather just considerable largess from Doncaster. So how you can be even the tiniest bit pleased after that is beyond all comprehension. Certainly ours! But even more damning is your second statement. Are you really conceding that, if we go a goal behind, then everyone should just follow the example of your midfield and so go home? Come on!

Politicians make a living out of the ambiguities in the English language. They are also dishonest, conniving and total out of wedlock offspring. None of those characteristics are yours Chrissy. Indeed your reputation is one of the highest in the game. But that then means that we should take you at your word. A very disquieting thought. Because that in turn means that we should be harbouring very real worries about queuing in the rain outside grounds like Newport and Crewe next season. Please, please, say that is not the case because many of us are fearing just that!

Tonight's display, at best, could be labelled disappointing. More realistically a ruddy farce, but never, never, in a month of Sundays as 'pleasing'. It's accepted that perhaps you take the approach that one thing gets said in public, quite another with the private walls of the dressing room. Appreciated and understood. However, if you are to continue enjoy any degree of confidence from within the ranks of the club's supporters, an occasional storm cloud does need to pour down over your players. Provide them with umbrellas by all means, but supplying them with southwesterly winds too is just not acceptable. Back in the day you were a fantastic player, always there with a big grin and an equally big heart. It's getting to be long past the time for you to teach your players how to display them too!

Come on you Blues!!