



Tuesday 12th March 2019



Scunthorpe 4 - Southend 1



Red accusing eyes stabbed through the darkness. Directly alongside them was a zero plus a sort of twisted inside out 'S' shape that looked like it belonged inside a Greek tragedy rather more than one that was home grown in Essex. Mike wearily averted his gaze from the darkened window and spared the digital clock that was sited up high close to the vehicles ceiling a glance. It read 11:30 and the paroxysm of groaning and moaning that had been their constant companion since their departure, was finally beginning to die down as people gradually surrendered to the beckoning call of sleep.

Few were counting sheep though. Missed chances, yes. Missed opportunities, yes. Missed points, a most definite yes! For this was a game that we should have won, and comfortably. But instead we were travelling home without tails very much between our legs. Itinerant curs on the road to nowhere.

As with most disasters, thing had started off so well. Actually, that's not quite true because a Thunderbird, in need of both a programme and a coffee, had found themselves, still thirsty and with nothing to read, standing close to the players entrance as our team coach arrived at the ground. Expecting a few cheerful waves and comments to be exchanged, they had therefore put their hunt for stomach and brain stimulation on temporary hold, while they instead prepared to greet our team as it made its way into the stadium. However not a smile or even an acknowledgment did our players exchange with the small group of their supporters who were huddling up against the cold. Instead, heads down and with their faces set to grim, they had just hurried straight past them. Neither a great omen nor a good way to treat loyal fans.

The seeds of adversity had therefore been scattered long before kick-off, giving them plenty of time to take root. Other warning signs were there too. Recall when our lads used to joke and laugh as they went through their warm up routines. No, neither can I. If there is any kind of a team spirit then it's a very quiet and demure one!

The weather, although completely neutral in that it was looking forward to treating both teams with equal contempt, wasn't being too kind either. At Blackpool we had expected to freeze inside the ground but had instead been able to sunbath. Tonight, at Glanford Park, it was not only dark but also very windy and rather cold too. Only a few hundred of the faithful had made the trip and, dispersed as we were along the length and breadth of the away end behind one of the goals, our collective output of heat, if measured in terms of frozen toes and fingers was pretty much equal to the square of our numbers.

A few minutes into the game though and were all white hot with excitement. Following a period of sustained pressure, what us?, yes us !, we opened the scoring as Cox chested down a cross from Hart before introducing the ball to the back of the net with quite some considerable glee. Scunthorpe had hardly touched the ball and were now behind in a must win game for both sides. Were we happy? Well Snow White and the other six dwarves might not have been hanging upon our every cry or shout but our fantastic team most certainly were as they ran back up the pitch celebrating almost as madly as us.

For the next ten minutes or so it was almost as if we had shed aside our self-created cocoons of despondency and despair to emerge as brightly coloured butterflies; each one not only a footballer, but one that was fully possessed of both confidence and ability. The home crowd, a second heavy home defeat in just a few days

looming before them, began to get on their teams back. All music to our ears; an unsympathetic symphony that was the perfect backdrop to the demoralising experience that we were subjecting their players to. They couldn't get near us, or touch the ball during this period, other than to simply use it to employ Route 1 football that caused little trouble to our determined looking defence.

We could even have had a second after a great through ball by Cox set Bunn through on goal. Unfortunately their goalkeeper was able to run out and smother it, but it certainly served as notice of our intent. The home crowd growing even unhappy as their, clearly unconfident side stuttered and misfired almost as much as we have been doing over recent months. Three precious points gained tonight would set us up very nicely though and, with the way that we were playing, they were almost certainly in the bag.

Silly us. How could we ever believe such things. This is Southend United we are talking about here and Lady Luck threw us aside as a scorned lover many seasons ago. Tonight though her sidekick, Miss Fortune was riding in the saddle and so, when a hopeful, misdirected, cross came over into our six yard box no signals got set to danger. Not one of their players was anywhere near it and the only thing at risk of being hit was the corner flag. But then a fierce gust of wind almost halted the ball in its tracks before setting it on a completely new course. One that introduced it to an obliging post that allowed it to rebound straight off it and so into the back of our net.

Their supporter went wild. His side hadn't experienced luck like that since a telegram had arrived announcing that Albert wouldn't be travelling North for this game. We though just couldn't believe how, in the space of two games, life could be treating us so cruelly. A late, late, equaliser at Blackpool and now this. Somebody clearly doesn't like us!

Still no worries. We had had our foot firmly on the pedal before their stroke of incredible luck, so no reason to take it off now. Only for some reason we did just that and from that point on in the game we were just bit players in a play that had embarrassment and abject humiliation written all the way through it like letters inside a stick of rock. Frankly, we were appalling.

Whereas before the ball had smoothly glided from one orange (Yes were playing in tango coloured shirts) foot to another, it now seemed to have a mind of its own and, if we were fortunate, it went out of play, if not, then it fell to a home player who then employed it to launch yet another attack down upon our goal. Indeed, but for some brilliant saves by Bishop, we could have been two, possibly three behind before the break. Somehow though we managed to survive until that point without conceding any more goals. But we all knew that that storyline was unlikely to run for long in the second half unless something changed.

And it did. Their manger bringing on a forward for a midfielder (The ball was earning so much air time that both midfields were pretty much unemployed) whilst our manager did nowt.

Every supporter, regardless of what team they actually support or just watch on tele whilst wearing the badge, knows when a goal is about to be scored. A certain rhythm in the game develops and, as it build up to its crescendo, so a feeling envelops you that simply shouts out 'Goal'. However in the case of Southend supporters it's even simpler than that, the opposition just have to have the ball!

In fact, in the here and now, it was so obvious that they were going to score that we had already resigned ourselves to the fact long before it finally occurred. Not that there was anything that we could have actually done to prevent it, other than just sit back and suffer. But our bench most certainly could, and should, have done. But they seemed just as rooted to their seats as we were. And so the, oh so foreseeable and completely preventable, plot unfolded before us.

A spell of home pressure, a corner (Yes, no surprises here!) and lo and behold we were behind inside a game that we should have been winning by miles. Instead we had just meekly waved the white flag after their fortunate equaliser and retreated into our shells. Our management team had evidently done the same and even though someone had urged one of our subs to start running up and down (Possibly in the faint hope

that it might disturb the home fan who was just about to enter seventh heaven) it was far too little, too late. A third goal slamming into the back of the net just minutes after their second.

Their celebrations did allow us time to make our substitution though and it had an almost immediate effect. Scunthorpe scoring their fourth, and thankfully, last goal of the evening. It was a farce, a total farce and fans who had given up their Tuesday afternoon and hard earned cash to follow their team were not at all amused. If our team had only shown some fight or character we might have been able to forgive them. But Denzil, swooning over a new recipe for hand cream, would, even in such a highly intoxicated and giddy state, have put up more of a show. Awful doesn't come close to describing what we were witnessing!

Some players were mere shadows of themselves (Just what has happened to Taylor-Moore?), others were plainly frustrated (How much more of this humiliation must Cox, and indeed ourselves, suffer?) but many, far too many, didn't even appear to care. That, unfortunately includes our manager who, although supposedly coming over to applaud the away supporters after the game (The Thunderbirds had by then made themselves absent to do to a wall what their team had just done to them!) made few, (Read zilch) comments about either how badly his players had performed or indeed how he was working to address it. Oh and an apology would have been nice too!

So where do we go from here?

Well, following an invitation, the Thunderbirds had travelled to this game aboard the Trust's coach rather than within the cabin of TBII. It made a pleasant change and will be one that will be repeated. Hot drinks were provided both coming and going to the game and whilst TBII unfortunately lacks such facilities, the thoughtful practice of tipping the driver is one that certainly can be adopted!

As for that bunch of useless, hopelessly inept and lazy players aka Blues, well what can you say? Other than that everybody within their ranks, players and managers alike, need to step up their game. They have all been enjoying sitting upon the naughty step for far too long, Certain individuals, the Coxes and Bishops of this world apart, (Equally so our loanees who generally have performed far better than those who are not only upon our considerably pay bill but also on our books) need to take a long, hard look at themselves and ask are they giving us value for money? Are they wearing the badge with pride or are they just extracting the urine!!

Apart from the opening ten minutes of this game we were an absolute shambles. A disgrace to the club and its fans. It was embarrassing to watch as we floundered and flapped around, getting worse with each passing minute. Unfortunately though it's a sight that we have become only far, far too accustomed to this season. Our players are supposed to be professional footballers but, looking at them right now, you would never guess. Axes therefore need to be swung and fast.

So Chrissy, just as our fate is still, somehow, in our own hands so is yours. Accordingly are you going to make some hard decisions (Actually they are rather simple and obvious) with regard to your team or are you instead going to force Uncle Ron's hand with regard to an execution warrant? It's your call!!

Come on you Blues!!