



Saturday 10th August 2019



Southend 1 – Blackpool 3



Bond: *"The funny thing is I thought Harry Lennon played well today and so did Shaughnessy by and large. Milligan was excellent and the two full-backs did OK. Hutchinson, a young kid, did alright on the ball but we shipped three goals. The two front men were shocking."*

Bond Out!

There, it's been said. Have no idea what woodland fungi the guy obvious chews during a game but to come out after a 3 – 1 home defeat and praise his defender's whilst lashing out at his forwards is just unbelievable. What game was he watching?

Those of us who paid, rather than got paid, to get into this game witnessed a defence being run rugged by what was admittedly a physical side, a midfield that could only pass accurately if it was in a backwards direction and a forward line so starved of the ball that 'Live Aid' are seriously considering putting on a concert for them!

The signs though have been there all through pre-season. Oodles of filly dallying with the ball at the back with the midfield sleep walk around leaving our poor forwards with little choice other than to make runs that they knew were going to be totally ignored. But, being fair to Blind Pu, this is the period within which most mangers will experiment with formations and tactics. However some of his decisions, particularly those taken in regard to Humphries, have been puzzling to say the least.

Humphries had been playing for fun in our early friendly games, not only scoring in each one but also keeping both defenders and keepers busy with his all-round team play. Then, mysteriously, he didn't appear for one game. As he hadn't been wearing his mask, it was quite possible that his injured nose could have been playing up. So no one thought too much about it at the time. However when, in the next game, he reappeared but was made to play deep within midfield, questions began to get raised.

Here was a forward that was scoring and troubling keepers with shots from both open play and free kicks and yet his manager was nailing his feet to the halfway line. Then, in our opening fixture, Robinson whose start to this season has been truly awful gets given the nod over him. The result being that we didn't start playing until Humphries, accompanied by Cox, came on in the second half. But does Bond learn?

Unfortunately no! Because, although starting the game with this pairing, he waited only a short period into the second half before hauling Humphries off; replacing him with a guy that had missed a completely open goal at Dagenham and who was to go on and further emphasise the point by heading wide of an open net in this game.

Bond obviously does not fancy Humphries. This was proven by his post-match comments. Cox though too comes under fire and if anyone worked their socks off in this game it was him. When he wasn't waiting for a bus that never turned up as a forward, he was in midfield trying to lay on at least a taxi for his striking partner. To what result? A lambasting from his manager.

Cox though is an old and experienced warrior. Such remarks washing off his back leaving hardly a stain. Humphries however is a youngster, still finding his feet in the game, and as such is much more liable to take such ridiculous, and totally inaccurate, observations to heart. If, an increasingly big IF, given both this abject

display and its twin at Coventry, we are somehow to survive this season, we need a confident, goal hungry, Humphries on the pitch. Not the shadow of one cowering in the dressing room with his head full of a diet of negativity force fed to him by his manager.

Bond, in stark contrast to his father, is not one that basks in the media limelight. Indeed at times it almost appears as if Chris Philips of the Echo has to squeeze a coherent sentence out of him. So just how much weight then should we take off, not just one line from him, but an entire paragraph of utter nonsense?

Was it simply a case of the 'Morecambe and Wises', all the right words but not necessarily in the right order? Or did he really mean them? If it's the former, then more rope should be handed out to him. But if it is indeed the latter, then the gallows at Tyburn surely need to be being polished up right at this moment.

A visitor from the continent was over for this game. Clutching a plastic bag, strangely unfilled by goodies such as jam doughnuts, Micky Pearce climbed up into the Thunderbirds nest just before kick-off. Denzil was utterly thrilled to see him as now he wasn't the only thatch challenged T'Bird on the branch. Unfortunately the referee then made up the number of shining bulbs to three and we all knew what a bald official meant!

Sure enough, with the game barely having had time to finish uttered its birth cries, he was at it. Totally ignoring blatant, physical assaults upon us whilst wetting his knickers every time we put in a tackle. What is it with ref's for whom the brand Garnier means nothing? They all seem to hold their inability to require a comb against us. Is Ron unsubtle enough to provide only two bottles of shampoo to the referee's dressing room or something?

Whatever, we were getting very little joy, or indeed sight of the ball, as a very strong, physical but nevertheless able, Blackpool team swept us aside almost straight from kick off. Was it mentioned that they were all very tall players too? But this was no excuse for our lack lustre response to the challenge that they, and the ref, presented.

Instead of manning up, we went all 'Denzil inside Bodyshop'; inviting them onto us and crying for hand cream every time we got bruised. Now given that we had a dunny from down under as our captain and someone of fiery Irish descent within our defence, all this white flag flying was a bit of a mystery.

So indeed was just why the game's opening goal was allowed to stand given that it was full of controversy. Oxley's path to the incoming cross was clearly blocked off by at least two wrestling champions and a boxer whilst Elvis was having to be as slippery as an eel to evade all the hands that were reaching out to grasp him. But none of this did the creature paid to do just that, see. Instead he was perfectly happy that the goal should stand despite our lukewarm protests. The concept of "Free speech" still being as foreign to the game as a Blues midfielder with creativity, there were limits that our players could not go beyond. But they were only doing 40 along a 70 mph motorway. Come on lads, give it some gale force, don't just whisper!

There was no doubting however the reason behind our conceding two very soft further goals. Yes, the ball had been lost in midfield. But surely we've had seasons to get used to that particular scenario. But nope, instead we all just stood there looking surprised, Rodney getting a gentle smile rather than a belly laugh in response to one of his chat up lines, whilst Blackpool took their own sweet time before sending the ball into the back of our net virtually unchallenged.

If that was bad, then the absolute farce that was our visitor's third goal will go down in Roots Hall folklore. Those that were there to see it, live without accompanying commentary, couldn't believe it and anyone supping a pint from the comfort of their armchair whilst watching it at third hand will be well advised to have a towel handy given what will happen to the contents of their glass following their reaction.

At first there seemed to be no imminent danger. With a goal keeper and three men immediately behind the Blackpool player who was waiting for the ball to descend from a great height, we should have been able to cope easily. Hey, for the guy to even have a chance of scoring he would first need to trap and control the ball with his back to goal inside a crowded six yard box. He would then have to turn, pick a spot somewhere between a forest of defending legs, and shoot.

But, not only did we allow him to do all this, we also just stood back and let him to take, not one but two pops at goal. The second of which succeeded. Still, no worries hey. It could always all be blamed upon the forwards!

Halftime was met with a resounding chorus of boos. Real ones, not those that Dru, now departed to Brentford, once thought were aimed at him when in fact all we were doing was yelling his first name out in acclamation. Our first half performance at Coventry had been bad, but this was excruciating. Bond, during the week, had said, quite rightly, that there were lessons to be learnt from our opening fixture. Such a pity then that evidently both him and his team skipped school on the very day that that class was being held!

A very strong wind had been blowing into our faces in the first period. Now it was mischievously wetting the tight costumes of the Blue Belles as they performed their halftime routine close by to sprinklers that were attempting to water one half whilst only managing to completely drown the one that was to their rear. So Mickey Pearce's excursion to civilisation couldn't be written down as a total loss.

However our season is beginning to look very much like one; the second period providing very little encouragement to think otherwise. Yes, we did 'score', but like their opening goal it was deemed to be an own goal and the fact that they were later reduced to ten men following a foul that even an official suffering severe alopecia couldn't ignore, also helped to boost our 'shots at goal' tally. But all that was only a thin disguise that couldn't hide the fact that our team just have no idea about what they are supposed to be doing.

Previous managers have been accused of only having a Plan 'A'. Bond in direct contrast has a complete hatful. But like jokers, they have little value outside games other than Canasta. As a direct result our players now look totally confused and unconfident. Caught in a tide rip stirred up by their blind manager they are performing little better than headless chickens. Today, as at Coventry, our defence was a shambles, our midfield confused and our forward line totally bereft of any service.

Someone was indeed 'Shocking' today Bond but it was much, much closer to home than any members of your strike force!

Come on you Blues!!