



Saturday 2nd October 2021



Solihull Moors 2 - Southend 0



I desperately, desperately, wanted this to be a match report full of fun and humour. Containing only slightly exaggerated accounts of Denzil's dreadful navigation, the Greens strange diet and Mikes awesome daring dos as a pilot, it would have been a reflection of our delight at Blues finally turning a corner after three seasons of plunging in only one direction. Straight down !

Unfortunately though, the events that unfolded at Solihull do not lend themselves towards such an account. Instead, cold water, in the form of both pouring, incessant rain, and Blues inept performance, totally destroyed any such dreams. Dampening them to the point where barely a blue flicker of hope could reasonably still exist that our headlong plunge down through the leagues has finally reached its nadir.

We currently sit firmly inside the relegation zone of the National League. During the game our chairman displayed incredible misjudgement in confronting angry fans in the away end and our assistant manager apparently offered to take on supporters in Solihull's carpark. Can our, once proud name, get dragged through the filth and dirt any further?

Seemingly so because, as fixture follows fixture, the situation just continues to deteriorate even more. We have two games this week, both at home and the later one, against Chesterfield, is being televised. However, where once we looked forward to a match with enthusiasm and anticipation, you now almost dread having to put a foot out of the door. Just where will our club be this time next week, still lying in the gutter or, just for varieties sake, once more being dragged through the courts for tax evasion or non-payment of players wages.

The contrast to Grimsby, who exited the football league alongside us last season, could not be more apparent. Whilst they sit secure at the top of the table, we are stranded adrift at its foot. What have they done right that we haven't?

Stupid question and one that we all know the answer to. Ron !

The only constant in our demise from a club that was once knocking upon the Premiership's doorway to one who can barely get a kick of the ball against teams like Solihull and Wealdstone, he seems to be determined to, not only bring the club to its knees (He's already succeeded in doing that) but extinguish its life completely.

Remember Saturday morning pictures and everlasting toffee that wasn't? Can you recall those black and white films where the heroes all wore Stetsons and the villains sprouted moustaches? And what about the boos that used to greet you when, dragged up on stage because it was your birthday, you whispered out your school's name. Each and every week the main film (Yes, your half a crown entitled you to see at least three films, rather just one) would end with someone, usually a woman, in desperate peril as a thundering train bore down upon them. Well now we, and our beloved club are the ones who are tied to the tracks. Our apparent future? Just scrape marks in the sand tracks of history.

No stranger on a white horse is going to come to our rescue. No inhabitant of a cave, full of bats or otherwise, is going to spring into action to free us of Ron's terrible tyranny and telephone booths complete with spinning reporters are even rarer than any match points awarded to us thanks to the mobile revolution.

We are all on our own and stuck in such deep doh dah that the smelly sticky stuff is licking right up against our nostrils.

However, as Thunderbird II blasted off from Tracy Island International, it was not the contents of some dark sewer that were enveloping her but rather the products of an extremely pregnant rain cloud labouring overhead. With its waters bursting, the cloud desperately clung to us; following our course as we flew due West towards the midlands. The roads were therefore very wet making driving conditions hazardous. Accordingly it wasn't all that much of a surprise when news came through of two crashes on the M1 that had brought it to a standstill. Mike, badly in need of a coffee to aid his concentration, was not impressed. With the nearest service station an unknown distance away and Gluegoo suggesting that he should head Sarf in order to cut their projected journey time by half a second, the commotion coming from the luggage compartment was deafening. Where was 'Smoke me a kipper' when you needed him?

Dependably as ever, he was right there and already on the case. Totally ignoring the goocall girlies who were by now urgently trilling that he should fly in a direction that was directly away from our intended destination, he instead skilfully manoeuvred the powerful, sleek, Thunderbird such that it could not only evade the problem of the growing queue of traffic but also resolve Mike's thirst issue too. Awesome or what !!

A few minutes later, and somewhat refreshed in terms of both body and spirit, we continued our journey towards Birmingham and Solihull up a jam free motorway. The sounds of silence issuing from the boot were most welcome, but then the game of "Name that Stobart Lorry" began in earnest, Denzil winning half a point as a result. But just what sort of name is Isabelle for a truck loaded down with engineering parts?

Arriving as the ground was a bit of a strange experience too. You had to drive right past it before looping back around a roundabout to return to it. Other aircraft, taking off and landing from the nearby airport, only adding to the confusion. Boycie had been a talking clock for most of the flight, rather worried that all the available places in the club's carpark would have gone by the time we arrived he had been on edge. As per usual though, he was partially right but mostly wrong. Just ask Marlene!

Yes, mooring posts, other than those at the ground, were, thanks to the airport, quite some distance away from it and the inclement conditions hardly enhanced the prospect of having to endure a longish walk. Fortunately though and due mainly to 'Smoke me a kipper's timely and expert intervention, we had arrived just as the last spots were being taken up. Even so, some bugger had still sneaked, unauthorised, into our allocated spot and so we had to be directed to park elsewhere.

Accordingly, Mike headed towards a place that was close to where the away coaches had been stowed. Only to find himself in almost a head on collision with Ricky Duncan who had opted to select the very same spot! Happily both pilots were on top of their game and so nothing untoward occurred; each ace pilot grinning and smiling as they somewhat ruefully brought their respective vehicles to a halt elsewhere.

It was still raining cats and dogs; rumours that the game might be called off growing. So we elected to remain aboard until conditions either improved or kick off became imminent. Observing the gentle fall of rain as it sprinkles down upon a well groomed lawn may well be an therapeutic exercise. However, trapped inside a steel tube whilst the disaster to music known as Marlene and Boycie munch into some compost, certainly cannot be described as being all that edifying. When you add into that potent mix the aroma of Denzils banana and grapefruit hand lotion, yells of "Man the lifeboats" definitely become appropriate.

So, despite the hammering rain, Mike executed a rapid exit from his craft, heading for the away terraces which, of course, were over on the far side of the ground. The hinterland around Tracy island is certainly swampy, and, probably home to reptiles full of teeth too. However, compared to the flooded path that led to the away stand, it was as dry and free of hazards as a pub during lockdown. Puddles, knee deep in water, were everywhere and notices to mariners dripped despondently upon every wall. It was only the tantalising smell of hot dogs and burgers that spurred Mike on as he walked sorrowfully through a downpour that was lacking any evidence at all of the sunny spells promised by weather forecasters.

Finding the source of the delicious smells was somewhat problematic though. Yes, just over there was the away terracing any, protected only from the elements by a slim, rusting roof, it didn't look that inviting.

Standing nearby, were a couple of burly looking types who turned out to be stewards protecting the entrance to a portacabin that claimed to boast a bar. But where was all the sizzling stuff, and, come to that, just as urgently, where were the loos!

“Wade against the flooding tide” was the directional advice offered and so, along the outside of the ‘bar’ we splashed before making our way down the edge of some seating that was unoccupied bar for one lonely soul. Grandad had decided, despite making strong denials to the contrary, to make the trip after all, and was now ensconced inside it. Despite his waterproofs looking to be anything but, he seemed to enjoy being directly underneath a leaking roof.

We were hardly in any better state though, and things did not improve when we espied the refreshment stall. Surrounded by its own bespoke lake, it offered most of all the usual fare plus hot drinks etc, but at prices that would have seen Rodney urgently seeking medical attention. A single sausage was on offer for £4.00 whilst a cheeseburger was only slightly south of a tenner. Thirsts therefore got quenched but nay a morsal passed through our famished lips. The onions looked really good too !

Upon the damp terracing behind the goal, just under 700 of the faithful were gathered. A decent away following and one that Col Pugh has not witnessed for many a year, even at home! But there was a strange atmosphere. It could almost be described as uncomfortable and not all the friendly. Not helping things, an eight-track cartridge from the 70’s was being broadcast upon a continuous loop, and, listening to it over and over again was simply awful. Marlene, dancing along to it like a troll with badly burnt feet, tried to lighten the mood (Video of her performance is available on Facebook if you search hard enough) but only succeeded in making things even worse.

However, this attempt to dampen our enthusiasm by Solihull wasn’t really necessary as, apart from a few half-hearted cheers, we were pretty much silent. Our away support has always been tremendous but not today. It was almost as if a sense of foreboding about what was to come had enveloped us. With the clouds overhead still pouring down all their woe, our mood was anything but cheerful.

The game started with Blues, all in white, attacking the end furthest away from us. Brown later described our play as being absolutely to plan; round pins in round holes. Well possibly, but only through his rose-coloured lenses! Fair enough, as foreplay, it had certain attractions, but with regard to anyone worrying about any resulting pregnancies, it was a total non starter. We just had no penetration!

Our build up play was both slow and predictable; our defenders fielding more passes than any of our forwards. Or rather it should be said, forward, singular. For reasons known possibly only to himself, Brown had elected to cut his strike force down to just one striker. One, who up against two tower scrapers of central defenders had no chance of winning a ball in the air. Yet what did we do? Yep, you’ve guessed it, play high ball. You didn’t need to be a detective at Cluedo to see that our manager was guilty of murdering us, with a knife, in the ballroom.

Poor Murphy had no chance, and neither did we. That said, Solihull too looked lifeless and bereft of any ideas other than trying to put the ball behind our defensive line. The game quickly became boring as a result. Neither team looking capable of doing anything and, in all truth, neither really looked like they wanted too either. With the sky still weeping and further grey clouds queuing up to dump their loads, it really was an afternoon better spent at home, in the warm, risking sixpence each way on a set of four legs that would soon be gracing a dog tin. We were certainly looking at a dog’s breakfast!

Thank gawd for referees. Bet you never expected to read that in one of these reports !

But without the idiot in black this would have been such a non-event. Boycie, who always likes to know these sorts of things, had studied the referee’s form before the game and the individual in question had apparently already built up quite a record for issuing yellow and red cards despite the season still being barely out of its diapers. Accordingly, Mr Green was morosely anticipating us witnessing more card waving than even when Albert got caught cheating at Snap. He was not to be disappointed.

Seven cautions in all were awarded over the course of the game, one being waved at Brown. We were not exactly sure why our manager had received a yellow card. Neither it appeared was he. But, approaching the ref at halftime to enquire further, he got totally blanked. This non starter of a conversation was to have further implications but, before all of that, the sad fact that, yet again, we were a goal down has to be covered.

By the point in the game that it had been scored, both sets of supporters had become totally bored. Yes, the ref was helping to enliven things up a jolt by issuing cautions for tackles that wouldn't have laddered a ballerina's stockings but even so. He was obviously working to system. If a player touched the ground, then it was automatically a foul; if they also whimpered as they went down, then it was also a booking. Totally pathetic. But by now any excuse to shout was extremely welcome.

So, wet, bedraggled and totally peed off, we could all only watch on as both teams went through the motions. Blues looked unmotivated and disinterested whilst they, although perhaps having a tad more about them, nevertheless appeared to be about as formidable as Trigger armed with a book. Even their goal was the result of a very simple plot. A pass through our sloth like midfield, a ball across the front of goal and a defender's boot to plant it home. End off. Even their own supporters could barely summon up a cheer, and as for us

Things did not improve in the second half either. Except that is in regard to the referee's performance. Obviously his nose was out of joint after Browns attempts to interrogate him, so he had decided that he didn't like us anymore. Breathe on their player, and it was a foul. But if one of our players had their shirt half removed or their knee's chopped off, then it was simply a case of play on, it's a man's game.

Thank you God !!

At long, long last we had something that we could get our teeth into. It was almost like being back in the good old days as we began questioning the ref's doubtful parentage and the health of his guide dog. It would have almost been enjoyable but for the fact that he had already awarded a generous penalty decision that meant that we were now two goals down and looking like conceding even more!

Then, away to our right and up in the director's box, Ron's distinctively quaffed bounce got spotted. Yells for Brown to take a short walk down a long pier quickly being substituted by shouts for Ron to go away and procreate. At this time it would have not been at all inaccurate to describe the Blues supporters mood as being very ugly. And understandably so! We were just about to lose our fourth game on the trot, we were anchored firmly in the relegation zone, and were looking to have very little fight and desire about us that could change things.

So just why, Ron, surrounded by more security than ever the president of the USA attracts, chose this moment to come over and press hands is beyond all comprehension. The bloke is just a total prat. What did he expect? Us to share a cup of tea and a plate of cockles with him whilst discussing the curls upon his head?

Idiot !!

The scenes that resulted could justifiably be called a riot and Ron should be called up before the relevant authorities for his unconsidered actions. This was an error in judgement of monumental proportions, He further exacerbated the situation by resisting the advice of his security team to make a hasty retreat. Instead ,he opted to continue on the argument with supporters who were almost beside themselves with fury. He even exchanged fierce words with one of their fans as, finally accepting the inevitable, he decided to make an undignified exit from the ground.

Our blood was well and truly up by this point and it was only through the use of no small amount of humour that the stewards were able to restore some sort of order to the away end. The game was all but forgotten by now though, and players from both teams were asking each other just what on earth had gone on. No one seemed to know for sure. Not even those of us who were closest to the action. But conversations regarding both Ron's and Brown's futures were now not only rife, but the only dialogues in town.

Not long after, the game ended with us still in an angry mood. That we had been once more defeated hardly seemed to matter. Much more upon our minds was the state of our club. Although out of our control, we were really worried about its future. Are we really doomed to be playing Canvey and Wakering for real in the not too distant future? It seems very likely, given what is going on right now. But then, our very existence as a club is also in tremendous doubt, So just what does the future hold for us?

In days of yore we always used to leave grounds after a defeat dismayed about how we had just been cruelly robbed by biased officials. Such blessed, days are now long gone though, and in their place we instead grouse and complain about the unholy pairing of Brown and Ron. Not quite in the same league as the Krays but the effect that they are nevertheless both having upon our beloved club is just as devastating.

Brown should surely have got his cards after this defeat. But, by astutely publicly supporting his chairman's outrageous actions during this game, he has 'won' support sufficient for at least one more week. As for Ron, just what can be done that isn't? He's the major shareholder and thus holds all the cards. Possibly given our enraged reaction to his 'peace' talks he might finally be considering selling the club. However, with it owing at least 20 million to his retirement fund, who would be interested in not only coming in to save it but also financing the rescue mission that is most definitely required to save us from even further relegation?

Returning to the more immediate, just what action is the club going to take with regard to the social media reports concerning its assistant manager. Equally, just how secure or otherwise is Brown's position? Has he, by throwing the team under the bus, already lost the dressing room. Certainly it would seem to be so given this appalling performance. Then again, what will be Ron's attitude be should our protests against his reign be broadcast nationwide come Saturday?

As mere supporters, we can do little more than offer up opinions. However, unless our concerns and worries are not only heard but also properly addressed, then Southend United, the team with a 100% record against Manchester United, sadly will not be around for very much longer.

Heart breaking times indeed.

Come on You Blues!!