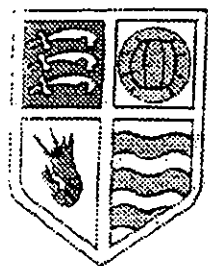


Southend United Supporters' Club



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Hon. Membership Secretary

Hon. President: Sir Trevor Taylor MP

BODMIN the 18lb rabbit, Monica Lewinsky's Oval Office romps, Bryan Robson's mistress, Tony Blair's bald patch, Robbie Williams' tattoo, Glenn Hoddle's never-ending battle with the English language.....All major national and international issues, yet paling into insignificance compared to the start of the Southend United Supporters Club's second year of existence.

We may no longer be 'Independent' - more of that later - but our commitment to the survival and progress of the Blues is as strong as ever.

To start with, welcome to the first newsletter of what is hoped will be 12 more months as successful for the Club as its initial 12.

A minor technical hitch has meant everyone receiving this first missive slightly later than projected. But it is planned the newsletter should drop through our members' letter-boxes about once a month, with the intention of letting you all know what is going on within the Club, what events are planned, what issues have cropped up etc. Any feedback, event ideas and so on can always be filtered through via any officer or committee member for future consideration.

The Club's AGM was held at Boots & Laces on Wednesday, February 3. Around 75 members attended, which was a very pleasing turn-out. Our then chairman, Tony Hall, gave a rundown of the Club's achievements during year one, which I believe were pretty well covered in the addenda to the AGM notices you should all have received in January. Membership currently stands at 267 and treasurer Trevor Bashford revealed a balance sheet that showed our financial position to be highly satisfactory.

Then came the election of officers. Tony Hall had decided to stand down as chairman to concentrate just on running the hugely successful Junior Blues.

Mrs Hall's increased family also made it impossible for her to carry on as our PR/Press officer. Fortunately, the voids were filled rapidly and the new officers and committee members are as follows:

CHAIRMAN: Trevor Bashford

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Richard Coxell

TREASURER: Trevor Bashford.

SECRETARY: Clare Crammond.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Kathryn Medcalf.

PR/PRESS OFFICER: Clare Crammond.

COMMITTEE: Chris Berry, John Campbell, Alan Caulfield, Martin Cranmer, Jerry Moss, Nigel Rickard

The main bone of contention of the evening concerned the retention or otherwise of 'Independent' in the Club title. After a lively debate, the vote went in favour of removing the 'Independent' and becoming simply the Southend United Supporters Club. United chairman John Main, who had taken the trouble to attend the AGM, was clearly pleased by this outcome. Our relations with the football club remain good, but rest assured we are not now tied to its apron strings. John Main is well aware that should his agenda for SUFC and ours suddenly diverge dramatically through whatever circumstances, so be it.

Officers and committee held their first meeting on February 11. One of the first decisions taken was to agree to offer Tony and Carol Hall the equivalent of a lottery jackpot for all their past efforts - honorary membership of the SUSC. They deserve it.

There will be no more fund-raising events for the Ron Pountney testimonial, so you can put your golf clubs back in their bags. More than £1,400 currently nestles in the Ron Fund, to be supplemented now only by the lion's share of the proceeds from the planned Roots Hall friendly against West Ham on a date to be announced.

Our new membership secretary will shortly be circulating you all with details of membership renewal. It is vital we not only keep up our current membership, but add to it whenever possible. Spread the word. And when your renewal request arrives, please return it ASAP. The subscription has been pegged at a bargain £5 (cheaper than three pints of Adnam's), with our OAP members able to join for just £2.50.

It is hoped an SUSC badge will soon come on stream, courtesy of Richard Coxell's efforts. Richard is also working with various members on the setting up of an SUSC web page. So start saving for that computer!

Moves are already afoot to get the Club soccer forums under way, hopefully at least one every couple of months. But our first social event has already been decided on. This will be a **QUIZ NIGHT** on **TUESDAY, MARCH 16**. Details are on the mini poster you should receive with this newsletter. It is for everyone, not just members, and the question topics will be many and varied. So if you are not a sporting Einstein, don't worry. Most important, though, get the date in your diary now. This should be a good evening and I can heartily recommend the experienced quiz master - my brother.

It seems to be generally agreed that one thing the Blues do need - other than a stack more points - is a new mascot. The terracotta eiderdown in the Charlie Chaplin suit currently masquerading as a shrimp and the lion costume that must constitute a health hazard to be inside do not do us much credit. Cyril the Swan has shown the way - what John Main would give for that sort of national publicity - and we back any moves to give birth to Southend's own quirky character. United supporters Derek Muir and Ian Kemp have set up a fund to try to finance the cost of a replacement mascot, which, allegedly, can run as high as £2,800. We do not think that sort of outlay is necessarily required, but SUSC chairman Trevor Bashford plans to meet with Derek and Ian to see if we might be able to help in any way with their project.

Clare Crammond has taken over the coach travel to away games arrangements from Tony Hall and it was great to see she had conjured up three packed coaches to make the trip to Cambridge. Pity the ref was blind, though. Clare can be contacted concerning all imminent away bookings (Rochdale, Darlington) on Southend (01702) 614876.

The Club has received a circular from Duckhams, the oil people, for 10 members to join their FansView scheme. This involves sending back some personal details in the envelope provided and then taking part in certain postal and phone surveys on great football issues of the moment throughout the season. Trevor still has a few forms left for anyone wishing to participate. I have sent mine off and have not heard a dicky bird.

You may have read of the recent tragic death from meningitis of United School of Excellence member Mitchell Kemp. SUSC sent a wreath to the funeral to express our condolences. As for the Brighton moron during the minute's silence, 'nuff said.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for March 4. Your next newsletter should, hopefully, be circulating pretty soon after - though probably not as long, warming and absorbing as this one.....

NR