

Southend United Supporters Club



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NEWSLETTER NO. 3

Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the author of the SUSC newsletter. The former a literary..... No, hang on. SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER THREE can't start like that. Mundane matters can wait. After all the recent doom and gloom, we need uplifting. And inspiration cannot take many better forms than the 3-0 win at Plymouth which, surely, means we can banish all further gloomy images of being dumped in The Conference next season. The Orient victory, fervently backed by more than 1,500 Blues fanatics, was a major treat in Alan Little's first match in charge. But the Home Park triumph, so unexpected after four home games without finding the onion bag, could turn out to be even more significant. I was browned off I was working rather than joining the 70 SUSC members who took advantage of our special 'Plymouth For A Fiver' offer to take the supreme Supreme double-decker to the game. At least firing off six illegal celebratory toots on the car horn as I passed the coach about 10.40pm at the top of Bread and Cheese Hill on the way home made me feel a little bit better. I am sure the neighbours understood.

The number of members prepared to make the long haul down to Devon, by car as well, shows how loyal the fan base remains - and just what support we might achieve again with a bit of success rather than struggle in 1999-2000. All credit to Clare for successfully shrugging off the attentions of her secret admirers long enough to get the show on the road once more. We are obviously planning to take as big an army as possible to Barnet on May 1. The capacity at Underhill, or Blunderhill as it is fondly known locally, is around 4,400 these days according to my Bees contact - a figure not threatened so far this campaign. And a quick call to their ticket office today (April 20) elicited the following information. Apparently the Boys in Blue have told Barnet to expect just 300 Blues fans at the game, which will NOT be all-ticket. When I told the office girl of our hordes at Orient not three weeks ago, you could detect a hint of panic. But a brief discussion with her oberfuhrer indicated no likely change of plan, so that is the current position. The sensible advice would look to be get there early, especially if something still hangs on the outcome. Tickets in the open away end will be £10. All travel enquiries as usual to Clare on 01702-469959. We owe Barnet one for spoiling our 1,000th League game at the Hall back in December and it would be nice for our new boss to maintain his very fair away record so far through to the end of the season.

Most members seem quite happy with Alan Little's performance in his short period in charge. The way he got the crowd fired up at Orient when we first set eyes on him was encouraging and there certainly seemed little sign of Alvin revving up the lads sufficiently to notch up two 3-0 victories on the road. In fact, just keeping us in the Nationwide is likely to make Little a big enough hero. Still, we will only be able to appreciate his true calibre once he has had a grilling from SUSC, so Trevor, through John Main, is currently working to arrange a Q and A night as soon as possible. That is likely to be our next social fixture.

Now where was I. Ah, yes. Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the author of the SUSC newsletter. The former a literary genius famed chiefly for his devastating works centred around the hell of life in the Soviet labour camps in the 40s, 50s and 60s. The latter a 36-year Blues devotee content to knock off a few paragraphs in spare moments to keep our happy band of members in the know concerning what SUSC is doing, planning, thinking etc. No connection there, surely? Wrong. For both have been victims of the dreaded.....censor's pen! Solzhenitsyn used to cop it from the authorities for things like returning home from the ferocious fighting on the Eastern Front at the end of World War

It and then daring to complain when he was rewarded not with a medal and a vote of thanks but a 10-year prison sentence for collaborating with the enemy. Even worse, he wanted to write about all this. The result was classics like *A Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich* and *The Gulag Archipelago*. These novels reflected his experiences and anger - and the Soviet government did everything in its power to keep them under wraps. Yours truly suffered a somewhat more minor whiteout in Newsletter Number Two for expressing in, shall we say, robust terms some displeasure at the way Ron Pountney had decided to sever his connection with the SUSC committee, take the £1,655.20 raised towards his testimonial and go his own way. Now Ron is perfectly entitled to do that. And my input into his testimonial fund-raising was minimal. But some other people's was considerable - and I felt they were due perhaps just a little more gratitude for their efforts than they seem to have received. Because without that effort, Ron, great servant to Southend United though he was, would, I suspect, have had nothing. At least this issue has got the newsletter talked about, which is great for any publication. And if anyone expects political correctness in future, don't hold your breath.

Your committee met together on April 15, discussing not just the aforementioned matters but also the following. Hopefully, by now the majority of you will have received your 1999 membership renewal forms and SENT THEM BACK with your great value £5 or £2.50 subs. This is money essential to SUSC's day-to-day running costs. So when your form arrives, please post it to Kathryn Medcalf by return rather than bunging it in the drawer with the unwanted bills and the Inland Revenue's latest self-assessment bumph. The last thing we want to do is have to start sending out umpteen reminders. That just wastes precious funds. Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated. A big thank-you goes to Club member Dave Oliver, who has provided us with all our new membership cards. He has been rewarded with a year's free membership and a bottle of whatever he fancies. We also hope to have a recruitment drive, with application forms on the turnstiles, when we play Hartlepool at Roots Hall on May 8.

Richard Coxell's SUSC and Junior Blues badges have been a major success, with 250-plus already snapped up at a giveaway £1.50. Buy one soon or miss out, as there are only about 100 left of our initial batch. Richard read a letter from our president, Sir Teddy Taylor MP, thanking us for the badge we had sent him and revealing he will be wearing it with pride at any future Blues matches he attends. Richard has promised the next order will have pins rather than clips. My own badge fell off and the clip was crushed by someone's dancing feet after Neil Campbell's second at Orient, so the pin plan would seem to make solid sense.

Trevor put his treasurer's hat on to reveal the financial position remains sound and that a small surplus was made on the coach trips to Rochdale - £5 - Mansfield and Orient. Subsidising the Plymouth trip cost around £450 out of the travel kitty and was rated money well spent. As for the stroppy driver on the Cambridge journey, Supreme have promised he has been banished to the stiffs from now on.

Sad to say, Blues fans have been on the wrong end of some unacceptable crowd 'control' at recent games. The Rochdale clash, watched by a gate of only 1,344, ended with one SUSC member under arrest. His alleged premeditated assault on a police officer took the form of trying to take the officer's hidden number. Trevor, with the full backing of the committee, will be going to the initial court hearing on May 5 to act as a character witness for the person involved. This person is generally acknowledged not to be a troublemaker of any kind and was apparently mistreated himself after being arrested. Trevor has written to the Rochdale chairman complaining about both the stewarding at the game and the attitude of some of the 'heavies' from Greater Manchester Police.

Equally unacceptable was the behaviour of one or two Blues fans clearly acting under the influence of too much sauce - and that of one SUSC member at Corley services on the trip home. He is to be sent a warning letter that any similar behaviour in future will see him barred from travelling with us. Against Scunthorpe the problems between supporters in the South Bank lower and the stewards were so bad that the football club received about 50 letters of complaint. John Main was so disgusted he promptly sacked the security firm. Police will be used from now until the end of the season. Trevor's letter to the FA concerning Darlington boss Dave Hodgson's finger at Blues followers in the wake of the 2-1 defeat at Feethams elicited the expected response. Sweet FA. Then again, what can you expect from a sporting body run by has-beens, never-weres and David Davies. Davies should have stuck to what he did best - presenting TV news programmes that nobody watched!

If you are feeling both frisky and flush, you might like to invest £35 a head for a ticket to United's May Ball on the hallowed Hall turf. Trevor will be representing us and is already scouring the town for his new gown. Oh, sorry, that's Irene looking for the new gown. Trevor will be in black tie with all the trimmings. United's market research questionnaire seemed like a good idea, but got only 74 responses. Hardly enough to tell them that much, but at least they are trying. We were expecting a bit of innovation from John Main and the football club when it came to season tickets for the millennium season. But early reports suggest an unimaginative set of plans involving no season tickets in the South Lower, East Black etc. plus poor reductions for children. Richard Coxell has written to the big chief with some bright ideas he might like to investigate (with the not inconsiderable help of the SUFC Mailing List members), while Trevor plans to tackle John, when he can track him down, to see what can be sorted out so we get more bums on Roots Hall seats.

A major move forward has been made on the possible new club mascot. Surprised that our allies from Shrimp Season had been quoted as much as £2,800 for a worthy replacement for the terracotta eiderdown, I managed to make contact with freelance costume designer Angela Hallam, who was responsible for the Coventry City elephant, Sky Blue Sam, and Cambridge United's Marvin the Moose. She has sent us some detailed drawings for a shrimp character she had already worked on for Conference side Morecambe, who are nicknamed 'The Shrimps'. The price? £800 - with a repair, cleaning and overhaul service if required. The only problem appears to be that delivery could not take place until early December. The mascot business is that good! Trevor is now consulting with the Shrimp Season fund-raising team and, presumably, we will see what we will see.

Computer buffs will be delighted to know that the new SUSC website is up and pumping online. You can access it via WWW.shrimpers.force9.co.uk/SUSC/ The plan is gradually to add to it and improve it and even have it so you will be able to join SUSC over the internet. It's the appliance of science and many thanks again to Richard Coxell and Tony Cowell for their work on this project. The site is already well worth a visit.

The committee's next meeting is not until May 18. By then we will know our fate for sure. Me? I have thrown away my prayer mat. We will still be in the Third next season. No danger.....
NR.

PS The next Exiles newsletter will go out with Newsletter No 4 in a few weeks time with details of where the exiles are and the views and tactics of Alan Little.

To Help - Not Hinder