

# Southend United Supporters Club



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## SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER EIGHT

PETER PERFECT, Penelope Pitstop, Dick Dastardly, Professor Pat Pending and the Ant Hill Mob. New SUSC members? Afraid not. Every person on the SUSC committee can boast some level of expertise on varied topics surrounding their working lives or outside interests. On September 30, Martin Cranmer revealed his. The bloke has a PhD in Wacky Races. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the children's TV programme gave everyone a huge laugh at our highly successful Quiz Night at Roots & Laces. Talk about a misspent youth. Yet this in-depth knowledge did not propel Martin's team to victory. That went - again - to Richard Coxell's brainboxes, though by only a single point. There was some post-contest concern that the runners-up had lost out on two crucial marks revolving around The Lightning Seeds. But it turned out all was above board and the victory wine went to the right homes. Just how much we raised for ourselves and the St Christopher's School will be revealed in NUMBER NINE. Turn-out was up on our last event, though I still think we are entitled to expect even more of our members to support these evenings. Mentions in despatches go to Clare and Kathryn for providing a buffet that could have fed the 5,000, the football club for donating a signed match ball as one of the prizes, former committee man Lee Venus for taking the trouble to donate a raffle prize and Guy Rickard for not only renewing his membership on the night but doing a superbly entertaining job as quiz master. (That will be a tenner, mate). Marking was by Guy's personal computer. John Main? See you next time.

And so into the murky depths of NEWSLETTER NUMBER EIGHT. I think we are obliged to kick off with the final whistle blowing on Vic Jobson at 62. Now Vic may have had a multitude of enemies, mostly in the crowd at home games, but he did ensure the club lived on after Mr Johnson had taken it to the brink of going bang. He at least deserves credit for that. Vic looked a very ill man on the last two occasions I saw him, following what was the most serious heart surgery. Not something you would wish on anyone. What a shame the club programme against Peterborough should contain such a crass error as printing a picture of John Adams alongside the short tribute to the former chairman. It looked appalling, made the club a laughing stock and got as far as a mention in The Sunday Times. On September 28, I wrote to Peter Storrie offering to cast a professional eye over the copy submitted for the programme in a bid to try to eradicate the catalogue of mistakes that still litter its pages. As I write this - October 12 - I am still waiting for a reply..... Your committee agreed to send a representative of SUSC to any remembrance service for Vic and to make a donation to charity if requested by the family. RIP.

The committee last met on September 22. Clare was absent with a back problem. We hesitated to enquire as to the cause!!

There was a positive feedback overall from the Q & A session with Alan Little and Co back on August 26. Alan brought some players along with him, which was appreciated, and he and Peter Trevivian in particular came across well. Next time there will be a facility for written questions on the night, as well as face-to-face, so that no one need feel frightened or intimidated about speaking out. We will also ensure there is a microphone to hand. Background noise, especially from those who insisted on chatting at the bar, was not well received. In future the thinking is we will need some sort of waiter service so that people can concentrate on the reason they are present in the first place. We donated £90 to the football club's Charitable Trust and thanks to all who turned up and contributed. You might like to get your teeth into Peter Storrie next, though that will not be until the new ground plans are out in the open and

initial discussion and debate is out of the way. Peter, possibly remembering the opprobrium poured on him by the media over the West Ham bond scheme, is not keen on Press attendance at these gatherings. However, with Bernie Friend an honorary member and yours truly on the committee, I think it would be fair to say that any attempted ban would be forcefully resisted.

It was decided that we should be represented if possible at the Q & A with former TV commentator Brian Moore, which at £15 a head (plus VAT) for a fish and chip supper, quiz and comedian, as well as Brian flogging his new book, seemed a hell of a sight better value than a certain bloke whose initials are BG appeared to offer recently.

SUSC funds remain in good order, despite us taking a not unexpected cash dive on the Hartlepool trip.

On September 13, myself, Richard Coxell and Chris Berry - a terrifying trio indeed - attended the latest get-together with Messrs Main and Storrie. The first major discussion centred around the distribution of tickets for the visit to Brighton on March 11, a subject already testing the patience of a number of fans and members. Our opening allocation for the athletics track currently masquerading as Albion's home ground is 350. But it appears there might be provision, if demand is sufficient, for this number to be increased to 600. Richard is investigating further. Peter Storrie insisted that tickets would NOT be going automatically to season ticket holders as rumoured. He and John Main currently seem as keen as we are to ensure that those fans who follow Blues to the four corners of the country week in, week out are considered before anyone else. Topping that list at the moment would be those who have already travelled to Hartlepool and Carlisle. The names of all our members who made that trip have been noted. We will do the same for the away games at Chester (a midweek), York (a Friday), Torquay (Christmas period), Exeter (Nov 6) and Plymouth (Dec 4). But what we have to stress is that we are not in a position to make any promises on this matter as yet. The one pledge we can make is that we shall continue to do our utmost to see that whichever fans do end up going will be those who deserve beyond question to be there.

The biggest bone of contention was the new ticket-buying cut-off point on match days. This is where you can no longer buy a seat of your choice beyond a certain time before kick-off. Peter Storrie insisted that as we are now thinking like a higher division club, United are simply putting into practice a higher division way of operating. He said the cut-off point was an hour before kick-off. I maintained that on our gates we could easily make that 45 minutes, if not 30. But he was not for bending - and then what do we find. Notices go up over the turnstiles at the Halifax game that the cut-off point is TWO hours before kick-off. Many fans are not even up then! I bought a ticket for the East Stand for that match and stood alongside a fuming supporter with two children arguing furiously about not being allowed to purchase the tickets his family sat in at every home clash. Eventually he got his way, just so the ticket counter could see the back of him. The logic of this edict defeats me, especially on our gates of around 4,000 regulars. But for now there seems little prospect of any change. If you disagree with this policy, or have had problems, do the obvious. Contact Peter Storrie. I know he will be delighted to hear from you. Then tell us the reaction.

The wraps have still to come off the new ground and the few secrets we managed to uncover must remain such until the curtain goes up officially. John Main says the plans do have the backing of local councillors and that there is NO alternative site to that envisaged around Boots & Laces. John has invited former club secretary John Holmes to join the Southend United Old Boys Club in a bid to build bridges with a man who took a lot of unwarranted flak over the way Anton Johnson decimated the set-up. If you cannot use anything but foul language in the South Upper, beware. The club will not tolerate it any longer and the guilty will be weeded out. Cool it - for your own good. Ian Leask, a member from America, is coming over to run the London Marathon and will be backed by us and United as he raises funds for their Charitable Trust. And there endeth the meeting.

Deadline time has passed for the prediction competition. I tipped United to finish third, though last weekend's efforts at Cheltenham made that look worryingly optimistic. It saddened me on the coach there that the driver had to ask people not to chuck rubbish all over the floor - as happened on the Carlisle journey - because he was the one left to pick it all up. Have we actually got members who live in pigsties? Seeing a coachload of women we passed subjected to V-signs was equally unedifying. Along with the pathetic abuse dished out to every lorry that looked as if it might

come from Poland as we approached the afternoon's Euro 2000 date with Sweden. If you have no respect for yourself, at least show some for others. Equally depressing was Blues' performance. The pre-match music was In The Mood. The team most certainly were not - certainly for the first 15 minutes of each half. Our Peterborough defeat was a warning. Now came concrete notice we still have a very long haul ahead to make it up this season. I was staggered that Alan Little tried to claim that Cheltenham's long-ball tactics caught us out and were no longer the way the game was played in the Third Division. The fact was Cheltenham had lost six in a row, had not scored for seven-and-a-half hours and yet were "good" enough to beat us. They also clipped the bar three times and missed an open goal. We might have got away with a draw but for blowing three great chances in the last two minutes, yet could anyone say we genuinely deserved it? Let's pray Shrewsbury and Lincoln get the backlash. But it was not all gloom. Our Blue Army could be proud of the way they adhered to the minute's silence for the victims of the Ladbroke Grove rail crash. The overall following was superb - 900-plus. Richard survived eating a hot dog with the most revolting tomato sauce and mustard combination imaginable. Sammy the Shrimp outglowed the Cheltenham robin. And, finally, a mention for Peter Grainge. He finished work at 4am Saturday, caught the coach at Hadleigh Church at 9am and was already looking forward to rising at 6am next morning to head for Sunderland and England's international with Belgium. There's devotion for you.

It was not pleasant to hear that Mel Capleton has suffered racial abuse from Mansfield and Macclesfield supporters. We have written to Macclesfield asking them to act and United have already received a letter from Mansfield apologising for the behaviour of a small minority. The SUSC website update is well in hand and will be completed i.s.a.p. Richard is purchasing another plaque for the revamped Blue Boar. Hopefully, the Echo will give us some credit for this one. A recent piece in the paper on the plaque for David Jack did not even mention SUSC. And we provided it! Sort it out, Bernie boy.

Trust there were plenty of Blues shirts worn in offices around the South-East to mark the charity day for Shelter. The plethora of Manchester United, Arsenal and \*\*\*\* \* tops around me in my Blues T-shirt was a disturbing sight.

SUSC received an invitation to the Blues' Second Golf and Football Day on October 19. It is a VIP 18 holes plus food at the South Essex Golf and Country Club, with travel to and from. Then come executive box facilities with "hot fork buffet" at the Lincoln game in the evening. Cost? £90 per person (yes, plus VAT) or £350 (yes, plus VAT) for a team of four. Not surprisingly, at those prices no one seemed to fancy it. I would suggest United might consider this option for the future. Make your own way to Castle Point GC on Canvey, 18 holes, buffet in the 19th Hole there and make your own arrangements as usual for any match in the evening. Cost? Nearer £20. And more likely to be within the price range of a few ordinary supporters.

OK, that's your lot. The next committee meeting is on October 14. One oh so sad footnote must be that the encounter with Lincoln will see the end of a run of 86 successive home League games for me dating back to New Year's Day '96. The reason? All will be revealed in NUMBER NINE. Don't miss it.

JR

PS Alan Caulfield has resigned from the committee. Any member who would like to go on the committee should contact Trevor as soon as possible.