

# Southend United Supporters Club



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## SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER TEN

WELL, that's the Millennium madness out of the way for another 1,000 years. By the time 3000 arrives and SUSC members are rocketing off at warp speed to see Blues play in the President Blair Inter-Galactic Memorial Vase at New Basildonia's Queen Posh Stadium on the planet PC World somewhere a few light years off Alpha Centauri, the antics of the current set-up will be long forgotten. But in the here and now - and Happy New Year to every one of our current faithful band - our United favourites' fast-fading push to make at least a play-off place this season is surely concentrating the minds of us all. (Yes, even you Rob!).

A run of seven games without a win dealt a severe blow to our promotion bid, while dreams of Wembley in the Auto Windscreens Shield lasted 90 miserable minutes against Cheltenham. In the quiet-as-the-grave East Stand that night, the proceedings were enlivened mid-way through the first half by a frustrated roar of "ABSOLUTE SH\*\*E!" Strangely, it was not John Main. Heads were turned in a bid to discover the perpetrator and then, as various eye contacts were made and nods exchanged, it suddenly became clear this mystery bloke's analysis had general approval. From the promise of the Brighton win, we seemed to have turned full circle back to the darkest days of Hammy the Hamster.

Barnet was a giveaway and at that time saddled us with the Third Division's worst goals against record at home. Simon Coleman's programme notes hit a new low and we need a new skipper if only for that. Simon may be a nice bloke, but a fist-shaking inspiration to the troops he sure ain't. York? Just give Mel another b\*\*\*\*\*king. Easy to blame only the keeper again. Think back for a moment to the 0-0 at Chester. Abysmal Leyton Orient went there on December 28 and stuck five in their onion bag. Yet I don't remember any Alan Little tongue-lashing directed at our outfielders for being kept to zilch at the Diva. That was a good point, while York, of course, was a bad one.

Northampton had a bit more passion and it was only fair that late Cobblers header came back off a post. Nigel Pepper is a welcome addition, but his duff pass set up their equaliser and his missed header handed them their second. Did Little pan him in the Echo? I suspect not. Torquay? Joy of joys. A victory at last, superbly saluted from what I could see on TV by the Blue throng behind the goal at Plainmoor's open end. Then it's Rotherham and another let-down. I actually saved myself £15 (entrance plus programme), as this was the first game I have had to miss through work commitments in four years. I wonder how many former regulars are now doing the same thing permanently, fed up with the seemingly unstoppable slide. Gloomy? Too right as we hit 14th. And Alan, I see Mark Prudhoe blundered!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It was a superb effort by everyone who made the latest long old haul to Devon. But as we take the last of the Christmas wrapping off SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER TEN, it is that trip which gives us our first bone of contention of the 21st century. The Westward Ho jaunt cost members a measly £5. Despite the poverty of United's recent form, we filled a 77-seater Supreme machine. Chris Berry did a cracking job of organisation and was sorry he had to turn away even more supporters keen to make the journey. So what browned him, and your committee, right off was the selfish little group of six who booked seats and then failed to turn up to meet the coach.

What members - and the odd non-member - must understand is that if Chris or any travelling committee rep is contacted even up to the last minute and told you cannot travel after all, your seat can often still go to someone else. If you simply no-show, you are costing SUSC money and quite likely depriving a fellow fan of a chance to follow the team. This is happening too frequently - five missing for Exeter, three for Chester, eight for York which prevented us breaking even - and your committee plans steps to try to stop it. These are likely to be finalised at our next meeting on January 13, but will be designed to ensure more thought from the thoughtless. For example, a member who books to travel then fails to materialise may end up paying a non-member's rate the next time he wants to go away. Another blank space at the pick-up point with no explanation and the railway is likely to have another passenger - in perpetuity.

Our away travel is an SUSC success story. We cannot allow anyone to jeopardise that. Think about it for Barnet.....

As if Chris had not had enough to worry about on the Torquay journey, an old boy who could not see properly out of his car windows gave the coach a bang outside the Palace Theatre, Westcliff on the way back. Supreme damage? About £1,200 worth.

These things are sent to try us, but all is relative. Roger Cousins recently lost his brave fight against cancer and tragedies like that tend to put everything into a clearer perspective. A loyal SUSC member, Roger was also well known for his fanzine contributions. We sent a wreath to the funeral.

Next, a crucial date for your diaries. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24. Let me repeat that. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24. That is the date set for the SUSC AGM, where your officers and committee will be up for election / re-election and any gripes / praise you have can be aired to the world. Any nominations for whatever position should be directed personally or by mail / e-mail to Trevor or any other current committee member. Clare Crammond has recently resigned as secretary - with thanks for all she did - so that is one post that will need to be filled. Martin Penton, Neil Brand and Paul Fitzgerald were all co-opted on to the committee at its December 23 meeting. (Jerry, where were you?) The AGM will be in the Shrimpers Club, 7.30pm for 8pm. Let us have as big a turnout as possible and as many ideas as possible floated for the next 12 months. It is the only way SUSC will continue to thrive.

John Main sent us a letter of thanks for the £90 we sent United following the Little / Main / Storrie Q & A event. I see magazine figures for the '97-98 season allegedly had us as the country's 66th-wealthiest club, with a turnover of £2.3million - three times more than that outfit somewhere else in Essex, but around 40 times less than M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\*\*\*\*. Strangely, now the books have finally had a good going over it seems we are not quite so well off after all. Funny that.....

The plaque for the Blue Boar has arrived and all the excellent work done by Richard Coxell in this regard will come to fruition with the grand unveiling at 1.30pm on Saturday, January 15 - i.e. 90 minutes before, hopefully, we romp past Rochdale. The unveiling will be performed by our honorary president Sir Teddy Taylor MP, who has expressed himself "honoured and delighted" to be asked to do the necessary. Trevor has also promised a prime position for the new SUSC flag. All Blues fans welcome to attend - the more the merrier. There might even be a buffet to follow in the Shrimpers Club. Might.

Our revamped website is proving the computer equivalent of a difficult birth. The overview has still to be completed and Richard's own machine doing a Chernobyl has not helped either. Never mind, it is on its way. The official United site is available for calling up on [www.southendunited.co.uk](http://www.southendunited.co.uk) I understand reviews have been mixed so far, especially from those attempting to buy merchandise on-line. I can certainly praise the personal service in the club shop, though. They had an out-of-stock 1997-98 video ordered, run off and delivered to me inside two days. Impressive.

SUchequer continues to cause us no immediate concern as Trevor guides us expertly clear of the Millennium Bug and into 2000.

Apparently a new committee is being formed to oversee the revival of the Ron Pountney testimonial match against whoever and whenever. Any fixture will have no direct link to SUSC this time round, which is probably for the best.

The John Main / Peter Storrie Q & A night at the Shrimpers Club on December 9 was rated a success. Both men answered a variety of posers with a candour unusual from the upper echelons of football administration these days. Storrie was calmly forthcoming on the subjects of his big bucks salary and why he has opted to raise ticket prices. John Main was as open as he could be on the new ground while being hampered by the fact that the plans remain unavailable for public scrutiny. We like to think that had this event not been held almost immediately after the football club's AGM, the attendance of around 50 would have been somewhat more substantial. What we want to try to do next is get a representative of Delancey Estates along to a future Q & A to give us their in-depth view of just where we are going on the stadium front. New boy Paul Fitzgerald will join Richard and Chris at the next SUSC / John Main monthly talk-in on January 10. The stadium plans and future club sponsorship will be high on the agenda.

Have you been collecting your vouchers in the club programme? They began marked 'Cup and Play-Off'. Then they became just 'Play-Off' when Torquay dumped on us. It is if they ever change to 'Conference' that we will know we really are in the cart this season.

Sammy the Shrimp still seems to have fans split. Personally, I remain in favour, though I would like to see two things. Firstly, his feet definitely need a wash. Secondly, he needs to be visible during matches. Where does he go once he has worked up a lather chasing the Pulse Cheerleaders down the tunnel before kick-off. All the best mascots get involved during games, not just before. So Sammy, buck up - or it could be ship out.

Terry Alderton, the comic who appears to have taken over from Alison Moyet as our highest-profile fan, gave us a Millennium night mention on the telly reference during a recent stint at the Cliffs Pavilion. He revealed we have done a Crystal Palace and signed two new Chinese players - We Wun Wunce and How Long Since. Then he told how while Sky have been buying into Leeds and M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\*\*\*\*, another media group has been casting an eye over Blues. The Big Issue! Very droll, Doddy. Does the Inland Revenue know about you?

I trust you all saw Bob Hayes' top-class 'What If' piece on Charlton's ex-Blues and Derby ace Chris Powell in Tuesday's SunSport. Chris revealed his best goal ever was his equaliser in the 2-2 draw at Luton back in 1992-93, the one result he would change if he could would be our Anglo-Scottish Cup semi-final KO on penalties by Notts County which cost us a trip to Wembley and his greatest team of all time was Dave Webb's '91 promotion side. What a true star, genuinely one of the finest and nicest players ever to grace the United shirt.

Finally, an apology. Buster Bloodvessel. I was amazed he actually got applause for his apology of a 'performance' before the Northampton match. Did the lard monster get paid for that dire "Eh-oh" caterwauling over a track? If that was pre-match entertainment, bring back the St John's Ambulance brass band. Of course, you may have rated Buster Imminent Heart Attack the dog's whatsits. If so, I would be fascinated to hear from you - or anyone else with a point of view on any of the above - on [nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk](mailto:nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk) Any pressing SUSC problems or general queries, direct your pearls to [richardcoxell@supanet.com](mailto:richardcoxell@supanet.com)

We'll meet again in NUMBER ELEVEN. Keep your heads up.

NR