

Southend United Supporters Club



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SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER ELEVEN

MY dictionary defines depression as a "state of extreme dejection." In that case, there must be 4,000 United fanatics wandering around the area at the moment showing all the relevant symptoms. Blues' slide down the Third Division table seems irreversible and even the play-offs now look realistically beyond us. Most damning of all - and this is before we face a Swansea side with nine successive league wins under their belts - our points total of 34 is exactly the same as it was this time last year. The time when we all knew that Alvin was on the slippery slope to a far from fond farewell.

Alan Little's early promise appears to have evaporated. You can trot out the old "we lack confidence" excuse for only so long before closer examination reveals the problem on the pitch is a lack of other qualities - technique, ability and tactical nous to name but three. John Main has pinned a lot of faith in Little and the options are already clear. Thank him for his services but tell him it is just not working or stand by him and hope the trust he has in his squad is eventually repaid. You takes your choice.

The biggest gripe I have is Little's insistence on keeping a 5-3-2 formation which has all but neutered us as an attacking force. Only victories are of any use to the side now. So the moment we crazily lost Martin Carruthers at Barnet when we were 1-1 and just taking charge, why did we go 5-3-1, leaving Neil Tolson a lonely outcast up front, instead of 4-3-2? Remember Barnet had lost a key defender in sent-off Greg Heald. I almost choked on my superb pilchard and beetroot sandwiches. Rochdale showed, in bizarre circumstances, what we can do. Following a first half of sheer ineptitude that beggared belief, we switched from 5-3-2 to 4-3-3. We had no alternative but to push forward and, for once, stopped worrying about what the opposition might do and concentrated single-mindedly on our own game. The result was a bit of restored pride and three goals I am positive would never have materialised had we been 0-0 at half-time rather than 0-3. Yet was anyone really surprised when normal service was resumed at Mansfield as we reverted to the tried and trusted disaster set-up?

I would love to see what goes on down at the training ground. Whatever the recovery plan each week, details clearly do not linger long in the players' memory banks. Leo keeps lunging, Mel keeps juggling and Tinkler keeps sleepwalking. OK, enough. I am getting worked up and there is much of SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER ELEVEN still to be imparted to the flock.

First off, details of one of our finest moments - the unveiling on January 15 of the Blue Boar plaque to commemorate Blues' founding in said establishment back in 1906. Richard Coxell did a cracking job of organising the plaque and its birth from behind the new small but perfectly formed SUSC flag. Our honorary president, Sir Teddy Taylor MP, did the official part in fine style and was only sorry that constituency business was going to keep him away from the Rochdale clash 90 minutes later. Sir Teddy, old son, at 3.45pm against Rochdale there were a lot of people wishing they were on any sort of other business. I trust a

picture got in the Echo - either from their photographer or 'Snoop' Berry - if only for the jaunty angle of Richard's scarf. Sorry, mate, it looked more like a noose! Nice to see John Main along as well, plus a solid band of the faithful. A buffet followed in the Shrimpers Club, with the usual high quality of cuisine from Irene Bashford and Rosemary Berry. Many thanks ladies.

Next an apology. A couple of printing glitches occurred in NUMBER TEN, meaning one or two sentences did not make total sense. You may well ask what's new, but sorry anyway. I also referred to Chris Powell and Blues being involved in the Anglo-Scottish Cup, when it should have been Anglo-Italian. Smacked wrist for that (with no apologies to the PC set).

AGM! AGM! AGM! Shrimpers Club, Thursday February 24, 7.30 for 8pm. Be there!

Your committee met on January 13, with Richard, Chris Berry and Paul Fitzgerald reporting on their monthly meeting with John Main from three days before. Items discussed included the club shop, which is generally regarded as a major success story since its revamp under the guidance of Lorraine Main. ROSSCO has gone bust - sounds familiar - so direct dealing with suppliers may lead to some lowering of prices. The key issue, though, remains the planning application for the new ground. From September 15 we have moved to November and now the end of this month for the plans to be submitted. John is only too aware of fans' concerns about this and that it is one matter we will never stop hammering on about. The final nail was banged into the coffin of any return to the North Bank for home boys. The club's safety officer and the police will not have it and, of course, their voices are the ones that count in these enlightened times. You will not be stunned to hear that John did not think a Q & A session with Alan Little would serve any purpose at the moment. Well, well.

If you like comedian Terry Alderton, I can reveal he has been offered a New Year honour - honorary membership of SUSC for his unflinching efforts to mention Blues whenever he appears on the radio or the box. By the way, anyone seen Alison Moyet lately?

Our financial position continues to give no cause for concern. We took two nicely packed coaches to Barnet, which always helps. I was amused at Underhill by the taunts thrown at their players about the stereo which Leo gave a full service at Roots Hall. What surprised me, though, was that, after losing, some fans could not cope with a bit back from the Barnet players as they 'warmed down'. One woman was demanding the ever-present boys in blue take action, invoking Hillsborough and all sorts of rubbish. My attitude is simple - if you can't take it, don't dish it out.

Are you the life and soul of the party? Can you organise a piss-up in a brewery? Then SUSC may well need you. We reckon we could do with a social secretary to organise a few events over the next year. So if you fancy this might be a role right up your street, let any committee member know or spring it on us at the AGM.

As I mentioned in NUMBER TEN, our travel plans and costings have been hampered by a small band of selfish members who book seats on the coach to away trips then decide they will simply not bother to turn up. We could not let this continue without doing something to try to stop such a lack of consideration escalating. Therefore, if you are that way inclined take note. Any SUSC member who books a seat on one of our Supreme charabancs will be given the benefit of the doubt on one future no-show. That will earn a warning. A second no-show will mean a letter advising said member that if they travel with us in future it will be at the non-member's rate. A non-member will pay an extra £5. There is no excuse for such

thoughtlessness and it impresses no one.

AGM! AGM! AGM! Shrimpers Club, Thursday February 24, 7.30 for 8pm. Don't miss it. All your committee members have agreed to stand again - I can hear the cheers - except for John Campbell. John is stepping down after two years and has been in the firing-line since SUSC's inception. He has been thanked for all the effort he put in. If you fancy standing for 'office', tell a committee person or be at the AGM.

I see executive boxes can now be had for £250 instead of £350. Still not quite a sufficient reduction to tempt many fans away from their current locations, I suspect. And when you are offering a prize of a season ticket for the rest of the campaign, the club could certainly not have timed their raffle draw worse than having it at half-time against Rochdale. Whoever got that had our sympathy.

Progress remains slow on the website, though Richard is doing his best.

While Blues struggle, it is galling to see the likes of the Angell and Andy Thomson banging them in for fun elsewhere. And Mark Kinsella, once rated by Vic not worth a £150,000 splash to sign from C** U is now being talked of in £3million terms for a move from Charlton to Newcastle. Thanks Vic (RIP).

What about Blues changing their name from Southend United to Southend City? Well, it could happen if we are the town chosen by Royal assent to become a city. We are currently a 16-1 shot, with Wolverhampton the favourites. A local councillor said we should be considered because we fished up 60 tons of cockles a day and had more restaurants per square mile than any other town in the country. Sadly, he could not claim at present we had one of the nation's great football teams.

Right, that's it. Except for one last reminder - AGM! AGM! AGM! Shrimpers Club, Thursday February 24, 7.30 for 8pm. See you there.

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PS Message to anyone filling in a membership application form. Capital letters are best. Some of the writing seen recently looked like it had been perpetrated by a spider on illicit narcotics.