

# **SUSCT NEWSLETTER 18**

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**TAKE a dive to help Blues stay alive! Sounds dramatic – and it certainly will be for a dozen or more SUSCT members who have an opportunity to bring new meaning to being good in the air. Most people enjoy going up in a plane. But SUSCT is looking for something more. People happy to go up in a plane – and then throw themselves out of it! Yes, come forward you hardy souls willing to do a parachute jump to help us raise funds for United. This risk-life-and-limb brainwave was born at the first meeting of the SUSCT Fund-raising, Marketing and PR Committee on August 23. But it is a serious project and I hear our esteemed chairman, T. Bashford Esq, could be one of the plummeteers along with Brigadier Jerry Moss. Overall we need at least 12 names by September 30. The ‘victims’ should be available to do a day’s supervised training on Thursday, November 9 and then ready to put what they have learned to the test the following day. SUSCT will pay for the training, but each jumper must provide £250 of sponsorship to go into our Trust fund. Simple. So if you are a frustrated Red Beret, now is your chance to make your dream come true. Any member interested should contact our new fund-raising officer, Donna Fillary, on 01702-512169 for more information.**

**Watching a couple of Blues’ recent performances has, I am sure, had some of our number feeling like diving out of a plane minus any parachute. The range of performance, from the near sublime at times to the purely ridiculous at others, has been staggering over just six games (up to September 3). The talent is there. Alan Little just needs to harness it consistently – if he can.**

**The Brighton clash, with 7,500 in the ground, actually had an atmosphere. You knew the crowd was big because it took Richard Coxell 15 minutes to buy three Cokes in the Shrimpers Club before kick-off. Committee man Jeff ‘Golden Tonsils’ Allen was a picture of composure as a TV crew followed him around. He only looked slightly flustered when the scantily clad Pulse Cheerleaders got a bit too close for his comfort on a couple of occasions. Jeff said he had a mike in his pocket and I believe him. There was the drunk Albion nutter who came on the pitch, kicked the ball into Andy Woodman’s net and then ran off to be arrested and fined around £500 for his pathetic antics. And we picked up three fine points with a proud show of defensive solidarity and chances well-taken. My £5ew promotion punt on the lads at 25-1 with Coral’s was looking money well spent (then) – especially as we were down to 20s soon after the Albion’s disposal. Torquay, by all accounts, should have brought our points tally to six. Early lead was followed by missed penalty and eventual equaliser. The police stopping our coach for a spot check en route to Devon did Bashers’ blood pressure no good at all and the two surrendered points capped the day.**

**United’s Worthington Cup collapse against Birmingham beggared belief. Inept does not do it justice. A friend of the Trust, attracted back after our reasonable start, declared: “I would rather be stuck in Belfairs’ 12<sup>th</sup>-hole bunker than watch this.” He also confirmed he will not be returning for a while. Scott Houghton’s classic free-kick, which may well still be rolling down Fairfax Drive, summed up the night. The kids from the School of Excellence passed the ball better. We were promised we would ‘bounce back’ when we met Darlington. We bounced all right. But, to use a Stock Market analogy, like a dead cat. Blues failed to force a single worthwhile save in 90 minutes against a Darlo side nowhere near the force of last season. Two more defensive clangers and it was curtains. A performance best summed up by one of their subs – Kaak. It was alleged Mr Little tried to share the blame for the nightmare of tactical aimlessness and bizarre substitutions by criticising the fans’ lack of backing as well as the players’ lack of quality. A dangerous move that by Alan, who quickly claimed he had been misquoted. Let’s hope so. Fans show passion as long as the players do the same. And patience in some quarters is wearing thin.**

**Which probably explains why there was a certain noticeable first-half negativity on the Ninian Park terrace as a couple more horror blunders at the back put us two-down by the break. Our doughty following clearly feared the worst, yet ended up being more than pleasantly surprised by some decent quality football which deservedly ended up in two goals, a point and a slap in the face for the cretins of Cymru that Cardiff seem to attract. The mood was definitely upbeat on the Supreme double-decker for the journey back, adding a certain**

extra something to my already top-quality ham and egg rolls. Alan Perry conducted another of his highly successful raffles for Trust funds and at the end of the day the only violence we encountered was when one of the coach's emergency doors had to be kicked open to shut off the emergency buzzer. One thing that fascinated me was how almost everyone on board had a mobile phone, which they cosseted like a precious jewel and used whenever possible. I may end up with one eventually, but for now I am clearly saving myself a fortune!

LINCOLN – well, simply more frustration. After our coaches just made it to Sincil Bank in time after a 40-minute accident hold-up on the A127, Blues gave the Imps a footballing lesson for 25 minutes in the first half only to fail again to turn pressure into goals and pay the price. One or two doubts are already being expressed about the defensive capabilities of Phil Whelan – and if he looks at a video of the first two goals he will see why. The players apparently had their regular fish and chips already ordered by the final whistle. So Alan Little is clearly no Gianluca Vialli when it comes to players' diets. And when you think the team's pick-up point to the match was the Little Chef at the Halfway House, it makes you wonder even more. Jerry Moss got a bit agitated when we could not stop at the Camra Pub of the Year en route, in fact any pub in his guide en route, while Paul Grange must have wished he could have used that England v France ticket he had in his wallet. One bonus for Richard Coxell was winning the 'Bus Stop' £9 on the journey back. After watching the strangely amusing video 'American Pie' as we returned, it was probably no surprise that he said he would probably spend the cash on a couple of salami and a large apple tart.

As expected, John Main has been eased out of the reins of power at United with Ron 'Mr Bobsleigh' Martin and his cohorts all frantically trying to counter the claims of imminent doom ringing from all sides. In a recent letter to season ticket-holders, Ron declared he aims to meet with United's supporters soon 'when I should be able to allay any concerns about the club's future'. He added 'I am committed to ensuring that the good relationship between supporters and the club's management continues to grow' and 'The club is bigger than any individual, whether it be the chairman or the major shareholder.' Ron can certainly take it for granted that SUSCT have a Q and A session with him and Colin Wagman very near the top of our wanted list. My first question would be: Why are Delancey Estates now claiming they are right behind United and its future plans when on July 28 they said they were ready to 'listen to offers'?

I am not going into all the current United politics here. The rival sides have had their say in the Echo and elsewhere and never the twain shall meet. While John did his best for United, even if Martin Dawn claim the outcome was unsatisfactory, he was never in a position to remain at his post with such powerful opposition – and so many boardroom votes – lined up against him. For me, his critical mistake was going out on a limb to criticise Delancey Estates in public over the lack of the Inland Revenue cash. It was a piece of ill-judged bravado no employer could allow to go unchallenged and still retain their authority. No, John has gone – with our heartfelt thanks for all his efforts – and his replacement, whoever that is, must now pick up the pieces. We want co-operation and hope the remaining powers that be see things the same way. The brochure distributed by the football club to 280,000 homes in the Southend environs was a fair start. It said the right things and made the Fossetts Farm plans sound what they are – exciting and forward-looking. But if confrontation with fans, or an attempt to sideline us over the redevelopment issues, becomes the order of the day, we will be ready. Our agenda has but one item on it – Southend United's continued existence. Then again, who is to say the European Union and their current meddling in football is not digging our graves and those of many other clubs at this very moment. But I am sure we would do our best to give the faceless grey suits of Brussels a bloody nose, too, before we ever allowed United to fold just so the pampered posers of the Premiership could stick a few more millions in their bank accounts.

MENTION of that planned Q and A session takes me back to the August 23 fund-raising meeting, where a number of other potential money-spinners were proposed along with the leap from the heavens. These included an event involving comedian – and Blues devotee – Terry Alderton, a golf day to feature both fans and representatives from the football club (but not costing the £100-plus per head of United's forthcoming golf and football event), a prize draw and a revival of the old '200 Club'. These will all be given further consideration, though our first fund-raiser of the new season has already been arranged. It is a QUIZ NIGHT, on Saturday, October 14. It will be 7.30pm for 8pm and should be a pleasant way to wind down from the excitement, hopefully, of seeing York City taken to the cleaners earlier in the day. Tickets can be booked beforehand

through Donna Fillary (01702-512169) at a cost of £5, though this includes a MEAL. You can choose from fish and chips, chicken and chips or a vegetarian alternative if you are not into the pleasures of the flesh. Entry, of course, will also be possible on the night, but fixing your seat early helps our arrangements and sorting out numbers. The quiz questions should be ideal for all those who fall somewhere in between Carol Vorderman and David Beckham, which means everyone should have a chance. Or that is what the quiz master fraternally assures me. So let us see as many members and guests present as possible!

The next full Trust committee meeting is on September 13, with our happy band now ensconced once more back at The Railway. Any member who has not had a Trust brochure, or who wants one, can still obtain a copy from Derek Murr at the address on page one of the newsletter.

I thought the crowd for Ron Pountney's testimonial might have been a bit higher than the 3,144 who eventually turned up for what was a pleasant evening's entertainment. It all seemed to go off successfully, which is no more than Ron and organisers like Derek Murr and Paul FitzGerald deserved. Certainly nothing much changed on the pitch in the old boys' prelude to Blues v Charlton – Keith Mercer showed he could still head wide of an open goal, Derek Spence has not lost that old air shot and Alan Little is still trying to get a 25-yarder on target. Meanwhile Mel Capleton should have studied David James' form before deciding to go blond. The whiter England's (how?) James has his hair, the worse he performs. And Mel seemed to have caught the bug with his horror first-minute clanger against the visitors from the Valley which all but ensured his bum would be warming the bench for a while.

Our SUSCT travel service has got off to a fine start this season, again under the able guiding hands of the boys Berry and Bashford. They deserve huge praise for their unstinting efforts in the face of absurdly late requests for seats, absurdly late cancellations and still the occasional appallingly selfish no-shows. Trevor won a well deserved Trust vote of thanks for the £10,000 travel sponsorship he managed to get out of NatWest, which will enable us to price our coach trips even more cheaply over the next FOUR seasons. The Birmingham jaunt will obviously have cost us, but that is what we are about. Enquiries for Halifax (Sept 16), Rochdale (Sept 30) and the Blackpool Lights Extravaganza (October 6 – a Friday) to Chris on 01702-558978 or 07703-898698.

I heard that SunSport readers on the Torquay trip were drawing nooses round the picture of reporter Andrew Dillon after he supposedly tipped Blues to be relegated to the Conference in his 'Ups and Downs' for 2000-01. In fact friend Dillon forgot to fill in his Third Division relegation tip. And as he was off on print day, it was filled in for him by a crazed Barnet-supporting colleague who thought it would be hilarious to stick Southend in the blank space. I have promised him the buzzless Bees will be squashed on October 17.

LEO may be a daft so-and-so – done for speeding (in his car, not on the pitch) and no insurance. But he clearly has a way to go to beat a member of the Walsall squad, one of seven men questioned recently by the boys in blue about a series of armed robberies. Brings back happy memories of Ricky Otto.....

Have you ordered a copy of last season's video (£12.99) from the club? They need 100 requests to make it worth producing and so far have had just 40 or so. Remembering some of the dire stuff we turned in during 1999-2000, it is hardly surprising so few want reminding of it. But one would make a very nice birthday or Christmas present for someone you really dislike – and I am keen to bag this film noir to keep my collection going. So go on, get that order in. One gift that should be worth receiving is the new Barry Fry autobiography. A rare production this – a football book worth buying. Then again you can always hang on for the Becks 'blockbuster' next month. Yawwwwwwww.

I see sadness is alive and well in Billericay in the shape of all those star-struck dorks who turned up to see a M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\*\*\*\* XI play Chelmsford. If wearing a red shirt made you a football fan, they would have been laughing. Get a life, folks – and then get down to the Hall.

Anyone know a bloke named Mark Taylor? He gave his views on Blues' performances last season and prospects for this to Total Football magazine. Quite amusing they were, too. Only problem came with 'Best Goal Against'. Mark revealed: "Some bloke from Darlington whipped in a beauty on Boxing Day, I vaguely

remember.” Bit tricky that, seeing as we played Northampton on Boxing Day! Doh! Another tipster – from the Trust – predicted “mid-table mediocrity” for us this campaign in another publication. Sadly, right now it looks as if he might be right.

Stanley might have another bout of depression setting in. It is claimed he has had a bust-up with Spud at Leicester over his fitness – or lack of it. Come back to Blues, mate. You know this is where you are happiest.

Any fans of the organ out there? No, not that one. I mean that which will feature at the Benfleet and District Organ Society evening on December 5. The soloist? Chris Powell. Could it really be?

PAUL Byrne is back from his trans-Atlantic bid for success. The rotund one lasted about two weeks in the States and is currently rebuilding his career wid St Patrick’s Athletic.

To round off, let’s have a nice bit of politically incorrect humour. The following are all replies that, reputedly, have been included by women on Child Support Agency forms in the section for listing father's details. God help the kids of these ‘couples’.

‘I don't know the identity of the father of my daughter. He drives a BMW that now has a hole made by my stiletto in one of the door panels. Perhaps you can contact BMW service stations in this area and see if he has had it replaced’.

‘I do not know who the father of my child was as all squaddies look the same to me. I can confirm that he was a Royal Green Jacket’.

‘[name given] is the father of child A. If you do catch up with him can you ask him what he did with my AC/DC CDs?’

And on that edifying note, time to depart. Any quips, comments etc concerning any of the above, e-mail me on [nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk](mailto:nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk) Also contact me with anything of interest you think should be included in our ‘Longest Pier’ programme notes.

NR (3/9)

PS. Which non-executive United director is supposedly a lifelong Arsenal fan and Highbury season ticket-holder?

Has anyone seen Alison Moyet? If so, please inform Derek or Paul of her whereabouts so we can get in touch.

Why has David Seaman got a dead rat on the back of his head?