

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 19

HAND the next one, please. Yes, step right this way, sir. Mind that binbag. Alvin Martin's master plans. He has never been back for them. Blimey, guv, it's Dave Webb, isn't it? Hang on a minute, let me turn down the music. Freddie Mercury singing Another One Bites The Dust. Alan Little used to love that. Now tell me, what the hell are you doing back at Roots Hall for a third time?.....'

So, one of the worst-kept secrets even for United has been revealed. Dave Webb, who led us to two successive promotions and the promised land of what is now the First Division back in 1991, is in the hot-seat once more with what is presumably the shortest and simplest of job descriptions from Ron Martin. "Same again, if you don't mind – and as quickly as possible!"

Now Ron has had his critics. But he has shown clearly he is not afraid to take decisive action to get Blues on the move in the only direction that counts – upwards. They say you should never go back. I always remember Howard Kendall's hopeless final stint at Everton after his earlier golden era. And, to be honest, I was not one of those calling for Webby to return when it was Alvin's head on the block. His credentials appeared to have been tarnished by his spell trying to run the show at Brentford, something Ron Noades looks to have proved he is far better able to do. But turning Yeovil from also-rans into the only current Conference challengers to loot-laden Rushden & Diamonds within just a few months convinces me the old magic might still be there. The thing about Webby compared to Alan Little is that he has done it. He merits respect for past achievements both on and off the field. And that can be a powerful tool when it comes to motivating players and letting them know just who is running the show. Imagine Alex Ferguson taking over at Chelsea. He would give some of the prima-donnas plying their trade at the Bridge just enough time to pack a small travelling bag before inviting them to seek employment elsewhere. That is something Gianluca Vialli could never do. Ferguson is a boss, Vialli is a mate.

I suppose there will be a few fans out there unfamiliar with Dave Webb. But I cannot imagine anyone more capable of getting those who remember the great days of 10 years ago and who have now given up on us to rally back to the cause. As long as he does not have the same famous falling-outs with Ron – or the soon-to-be-appointed new chairman – that ended in walk-outs with Vic, we should be OK. Some will feel Alan Little has been harshly treated, getting the axe on the back of a run of five games unbeaten. On the other hand, an old friend of Blues who has recently opted for the gym on a Saturday afternoon rather than suffer the 90-minute traumas any longer rang me on hearing the axe had fallen to say two small but hugely significant words of his own. 'Thank God'. And let's face it, when you examine the performances in those five games you could hardly say the world was set alight. A goalless draw in a Cup-tie that was dead, a win at currently the worst team in the Third Division, two home draws salvaged by wonder strikes out of the blue and then.....Scunthorpe.

This game brought me a date with the 1,892-page Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder dictionary and thesaurus. A definition urgently needed to be tracked down to show whether I or our ex-leader was off-beam. The date was Monday, September 25. Time - about 11.30am. I had been idly joining the rest of the great British TV-watching male population in going for a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics – in the synchronised ladies body-studying. Suddenly, on came the men's 400 metres medal ceremony – top dog Michael Johnson by a street – which seemed like an opportune moment to check out Ceefax on ITV for a Blues follow-up story from the weekend. And there not it was, but they were. First net-buster Martin Carruthers saying he had no other plans than to see out his current two-year contract at the Hall (so 'Up Yours' Rochdale), followed by the source of my concern.

Our man then in the hot-seat claimed to be 'thrilled' by our 1-0 win over Scunthorpe – just two days after alleging it was our worst home performance so far. Yes, thrilled. So perhaps my idea of what thrilled really meant had been wrong all these years. But, no. There were the alternatives in the Reader's Digest thesaurus – excited, stimulated, animated, electrified, galvanised, enlivened, stirred, titillated, moved, aroused, gripped,

riveted. Well, I am sorry, but having witnessed the victory over Scunny first-hand, none of those descriptions summed up my feelings at the end of the contest. I would have gone more for 'relieved' and 'depressed'. Relieved that we had squeaked past one more pretty nondescript side – barring Lee Hodges – and depressed that our static 5-3-2 system left yet another keeper untroubled for an entire game except by the shot that beat him. Martin Carruthers made the most of a defensive error, but must be as fed up as I know a lot of United watchers have been at seeing our most dangerous forward spending almost entire games chasing lost causes and being denied any sort of worthwhile service from out wide.

THIS is what Webby surely has to change. The Third Division these days is full of sides ordinaire. There is nothing to be afraid of, yet constantly playing five at the back, even at home, has almost entirely neutered us as an attacking threat. Dump it. Let's start getting to the bylines and giving Carruthers, Neil Tolson and Co some high and low service they can attack rather than seeing them constantly fielding passes with their backs to goal. No, overall I think we were heading down a dead end with Mr Little (and Mr Gooding?) We had a plan A and nothing else if that failed other than the hopeful lob forward vainly looking for a flick-on to the Invisible Man. Webby, get to it – and may The Force be with you. The net message boards show almost unanimous support and I suspect the crowd against York on October 14 may be just a touch up on the 3,110 v The Irons. No Ron 'Roots Hall Roar' urgings needed for that one. You know, I might even have the last laugh on Coral's with my promotion bet. Webby says he wants to take us back to where we were during his last period in charge. There will definitely be a few along for the ride. Optimism, it's a wonderful thing. And, heavens, we needed some.

Ron apparently insists there is still a bit of a cash in the kitty for a new striker. How fortunate one has just come on the market that fits the bill. Blockbuster shots in right and left boot, 6ft 2ins, good in the air, Premiership experience, on a free and loves Roots Hall. Yes, come back Stanley Victor Collymore. I hear Ron has said we can stretch to £40,000 – as long as it is a year and not a week! Dream on. Perhaps we'll get Barrington Belgrave instead. And if we are really stuck, there is always the legend of Leigh Marshes.....

Right, let's motor further into the inner sanctum of SUSCT NEWSLETTER NUMBER 19. And mentioning October 14 means an immediate salute to our fund-raising queen Donna Fillary for all the hard graft she has put in to making the Quiz Night a complete SELL-OUT.

There will be 16 tables battling for the prizes at Boots and Laces, our best-ever attendance and guaranteed to give the funds a valuable swelling. But don't despair if you have missed out. Just be determined to get in quicker next time, for there will surely be another such grilling of the grey matter before the season ends.

Multiple mentions of Ron – hey, and all favourable so far – also mean a reminder of that other key date for the diary. Tuesday, October 10. It is the big Q & A session with the United overlord at the Shrimpers Club and recent events somehow tend to suggest a packed house. It is 7.30pm for 8pm, so get there early and have your poser ready. To make it even more worth your while, it seems the new manager is due to put in an appearance as well, along with Mick Gooding. Sounds as if it could get very interesting. SUSCT has made the effort to fix the date, you can respond by being there.

Our intrepid skydiving team is also just about in place and ready to go airborne next month. Heroes all. Derek Murr has had to pull out of the adventure, though he is grateful to all those who were volunteering to pack his parachute for him.

*****STOP PRESS*****

So on to SUSCT travel and, I don't believe this, Ron Martin has come up trumps again! Big time. At the last minute, he has arranged TEN coaches through Coach Stop for Sunday's (October 8) trip to Blackpool to ensure Webby gets massive Blue Army backing for his first game in charge. Knowing he needs the best in the business to organise them, Ron has put bookings in the safe hands of our very own Chris Berry, who is now working like a slave to get the coaches filled. This should not be the problem it sounds as EVERYONE can travel for just a FIVER! Yes, a FIVER! Entry into Bloomfield Road has also been agreed at £20 ONLY for

TWO ADULTS AND TWO CHILDREN. So one or two of our adults could suddenly become 'parents' on arrival by the sea. We may end up losing the Supreme double decker for this jaunt, but this is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who fancies a great day out following Blues at a rock-bottom price unlikely to be repeated until our next freebie. Speaking personally, I am sick at having to miss what sounds like an absolute cracker because of work. LET'S GET WEBBY OFF TO A WINNER. GET ON BOARD. BOOK WITHOUT DELAY. RING CHRIS on 01702-558978 (HOME) or 07703-898698 (MOBILE).

What Chris would certainly like for his efforts, not just for Blackpool but every away game, is for ALL those who ring to reserve seats on our coaches to turn up as they say they will. We had this tedious problem of no-shows last season and hoped a friendly warning to that small, selfish element of our membership would be sufficient. It appears not. Our aim is to raise funds for Blues. And everyone who books and does not turn up indirectly costs the club, as well as the Trust, money. This is not acceptable and is sure to be discussed again at the next committee meeting, when maybe some more rigorous guidelines may be called for. On a lighter note, Chris is planning a unique novelty trip for one of the Christmas fixtures. So watch this space for forthcoming details.

The last committee meeting was held at The Railway on September 13, with a slightly reduced attendance to normal thanks to those nice people who were making it so difficult for us all to buy petrol.

Craig Fillary now has the books (uncooked) off Trevor and our finances remain in very capable hands. SUSCT are in a pretty healthy black zone and we aim to keep it that way. The Travel Club are also ahead of the game (no thanks to our absent friends), though £25 coach car park charges at Birmingham and the like so no one runs off with the wheel trims tend to make you despair. As the Trust is now a registered company, Craig stressed how important it is we stay on the ball or Companies House can come a-knocking. Pity the football club have not always been so diligent. The council have accepted our lotteries application, meaning we can get our Christmas prize draw under way and we can all buy and sell lots of tickets.

JEFF Allen is doing invaluable work in his role as SUSCT liaison officer with the club. The silver-tongued charmer has had two highly productive meetings with Ron Martin, produced two excellent reports and is totally accepted at boardroom level within United. This is the sort of contact with the upper echelon that we as true supporters have lacked for years – and now we have it. We feel confident about raising issues with the football club and believe they currently feel they can come to us should any relevant reason raise its head. Anyone who has put a question or made a point to Ron Martin through Jeff – and there have been quite a few of them – can contact him for whatever reply materialised on jeffallen.premiere@virgin.net

Trevor, Derek and the rest of the Trust Board are finalising their operation, while Paul FitzGerald has donated shares to the Trust, which means we now have access to the United AGM etc. Very handy.

One Junior Blues side should soon be dashing around with SUSCT on their shirts in the wake of our sponsorship, while there is also talk of the old Supporters' Club football team being reborn in Trust guise.

Kerry Denton is easing into her Press/PR role and has already made her debut on Essex Radio. It is essential that we have someone who can speak for the Trust on issues that affect both us and the club when the need arises.

The new ground plans have been on display in the Roots Hall foyer for anyone who wants a gander and also down Southend High Street. What is important is that as many people see them as possible and understand what a vital development this is for United's future. In fact, it is United's future. We will do all we can to assist the football club in knocking down the half-truths and untruths already being spread, especially the nonsense that the ground siting will have some effect on the crematorium. How many people do you know who make their final journey on a Saturday afternoon or Tuesday evening?

I see Peter Storrie is another who has made a comeback – as deputy-chairman at Notts County. He and American former Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Albert Scardino have bunged in £3million to get involved. I wonder where some of that cash came from. Let's hope we pass them going in the opposite direction.

The Olympic Games opening ceremony featured some Aussies dressed up as prawns and I fully expected Sammy the Shrimp to appear at any minute. Did he take part in the Mascots Race at Huntingdon, won by Watford's Harry the Hornet from a field of 48? The picture I saw showed the C** U entrant well down in the big one-furlong steeplechase. Shame.

Anyone seen that bizarre Pizza Hut ad on Sky featuring our home venue in all its glory? All publicity is good publicity, though.

THE goal Nathan Jones bagged against Cheltenham at the end of last season seems to have turned him into a pseudo-Michael Owen. Suddenly he cannot stop finding the onion bag for Brighton. I think he has got four now this season – and two have been headers! Needless to say the Angell is still scuffing them in for Walsall, while Andy Thomson's luck in front of the rigging seems to have changed of late at Gillingham. A little bit more good fortune and a few fewer injuries and I reckon Andy could have been a very good striker for us. And what about Spud top of the Premiership. Didn't we always says he was a great manager? I wonder if he prefers having Muzzy Izzet pulling the strings in his midfield rather than Phil Gridelet.....

Those of us included in the Duckhams FansView surveys recently had the results of the most recent probe into football and its relationship with television. Some of the verdicts made interesting reading, with 505 out of 720 people canvassed responding. 57% felt we were approaching too much of the beautiful game on TV against 37% who did not. 78% were opposed to live TV games on a Saturday afternoon. 4% would be prepared to pay £36 or MORE per-week for coverage via satellite TV, pay-per-view, club channels and the internet. 95% agreed lower division clubs could go out of business if the big boys are allowed to do their own TV deals from 2004-05 (but, of course, we might be one of the big boys by then!) 92% believed football needed an independent regulator. We will see what happens.

OK, that about wraps things up. Any comeback or views on the above or anything people want included in the SUSCT section in the 'Longest Pier', please contact me on nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

Finally, due to overwhelming demand (OK, I find them funny), two more from the list of classic real-life CSA 'Who Is The Father Of Your Child' requests: 1) 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. 2) I cannot tell you the name of child A's dad as he informs me that to do so would blow his cover and that would have cataclysmic implications for the British economy. I am torn between doing right by you and right by my country. Please advise.

Forward and upward.

NR (4/10)

PS. Any sign of my video?

Get well soon, Mel. You were giving your all for the cause and did not deserve such a serious injury. Best wishes from SUSCT.

Leo. Phew, what a scorcher v Kidderminster. (Danson, get yourself a white stick).

Good luck, Dave Comley. You did your best.

Has anyone written to Stanislav Dimitrov in Sofia yet?