

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 26

CERTAIN footballing moments remain seared into your memory banks for ever. Standing right behind Benjy's promotion-clinching left-foot curler at Gigg Lane, Bury back in May 1991 and the detonation of unrestrained Blue Army joy that followed will always be one for me. And now there is a somewhat less noteworthy addition to the ranks – Martin Carruthers' nightmare miss after 75 minutes of the LDV Vans date at Brentford.

Six yards out, home defenders still vainly waving their arms praying for an offside flag that would never come.....and he hits the feeblest shot imaginable against the stand-in keeper's leg when it looked a hell of a lot easier to find the net. Had he scored, I am convinced we would now be looking forward to the day out of our lives at the Millennium Stadium. To put it poetically, the Bees were on their knees as we piled on the pressure. Instead, all we have left yet again is what might have been. Brentford went straight down the other end and got the break denied us to seal their overall victory. We all wanted a Southend representative in a final, but I don't believe anyone thought it might be Canvey Island! And Mr Carruthers? Next day, the striker we were talking about bringing in £200,000 shortly before Christmas agrees to fly the coop for Scunthorpe in a deal reckoned to be worth £20,000. Unless, that is, a nought has gone missing somewhere along the line – and, somehow, I rather doubt that.

Any vain hopes that Stan might answer the call to return to his spiritual home as a senior spearhead for the rest of the season have been dashed after he claimed he was now trying to break into films after quitting soccer. I hear he is already up for a part in the latest Electric Blue, a cinematic remake of Roots and Tom Cruise's Cocktail follow-up – Shrimper Cocktail.

Our inconsistency drives you mad. Blackpool have won one of their last six away – against us! Hapless and hopeless Halifax had won one of their last nine before seeing off Barnet – against us! Barnet, sinking like a stone, have won one of their last 11 – against us! And then we trump 21-unbeaten Hartlepool!*?! Supporting Blues down the decades has always been a frustrating experience. But rarely more so than at present. The ability within the side has not made itself visible with wins on occasions we badly needed them – and has then shone through when least expected. What with Fossetts Farm making itself more and more a part of the mix, the faithful simply never know these days whether they should be putting in an order for Prozac or pep pills.

Fossetts and where the Trust stands you read all about in the recent NUMBER 25. So before we come to a Farm update, latest SOS details, the Trust committee meeting of April 2, match reviews etc, let us see if we can ease the slightly depressed feel by finding something that might raise a smile. Like Donna Fillary's face.....

NOW don't get me wrong. Donna's visage almost invariably bears a cheery smile. But not at about 11pm on March 10, minutes after our second super soaraway Quiz Night. It had more of a green tinge as she announced: "I've lost £700." I had not spotted any potential Kenneth Noye wannabes in the assembled throng, so who was the tea leaf? Err, none other than Donna's mum and dad, who had made their departure with the cash for safekeeping. Or that was what they said as they rang next day from the Bahamas. No, only joking. Donna's colouring returned to normal after she had tracked them down in the Boots and Laces car park. Overall the event added up to around £550 for Trust coffers, a superb return. Huge thanks to Donna, Craig and Theresa for the bulk of the arrangement donkey work and getting the dinner, to Alan Perry for another great raffle, to whoever it was paid £60 for the Halifax match ball, to Guy Rickard for the questions (whatever did happen to that Black Sabbath track?) and to yours truly for the mental gymnastics as solo scorer with 15 tables taking part. Pity no players bothered to turn up this time – shellshock from Blackpool I expect. Perhaps we need to change our point of contact. Anyway, let's do it again some time. While I think of it, the race night planned for April 20 has been 'delayed'.

Since NUMBER 25 hit your doormats and computer screens, activity has, of course, been frantic on the Fossetts front. The big uncertainty at the moment is when the key planning meeting will be held at which the application for outline permission will again be heard. This is all due to the country's biggest-ever barbeque, currently being held countrywide as some of the nation's finest pigs, sheep and cattle are done to a turn to try to quell the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Council election date has been put back by St Tony to June 7 from its original May 3, so expect D-Day now to be late June or even July.

Trevor has been pushing the cause both on radio and teletext and roused the SOS troops with a spot of Hyde Park-style soapbox rhetoric in the Shrimpers Club prior to the Hartlepool encounter. Presumably, all those who carried on drinking at the bar were not interested in United's future. Garry Smith also made another informative contribution. Jeff Allen, Chris Berry and Garry were due to be having a further update meeting with Ron Martin that day, but it had to be postponed owing to 'personal circumstances'.

Hopefully you have heeded the call and are gradually getting those letters written to your local councillors and MPs, informing them how important it is that the Fossetts plans are passed both for the football club and the town. If you have forgotten, put it off, are claiming writer's cramp etc, please do it as soon as you can. The more representation there is from supporters, the more seriously our views should be taken.

You can also sign the e-petition on the SOS website – www.saveoursouthend.co.uk - which has been brilliantly put together in a very short by time by Dave Scriven. Dave has put in a vast amount of work already to aid the SOS cause and is active in a number of different ideas fields – not least the giant SOS flag, which is due to be unveiled in all its glory before the Mansfield clash on Easter Monday. It should be worth attending the match just for that. BE THERE! We plan to have the flag on display wherever and whenever necessary, especially at all future home and away games and publicity opportunities. Any further ideas or comments you have regarding the SOS call to arms should be directed to any SUSCT committee member or to fossettsfarm@hotmail.com or webmaster@sufcfans.com For snippets of information tune in to the Trust site – www.susc.co.uk - and for updates as and when keep reading your newsletters. You know it makes sense!

THE flag was just one of the 'in your face' ideas discussed when the Trust committee came to its SOS overview at its last meeting. Jeff Allen, recent pin-up boy of the Southend Standard, is keeping liaison with the football club on the boil and Ron remains firmly on board with all we are trying to do. Martin Penton is pushing as many PR buttons as he can – sorry I cannot currently get SunSport interested until the bailiffs are at the door – while Trevor was featured in a nice article in the April 6 edition of Sport First. I thought I recognised some of the wording. A lot of the background was taken from my heart-rending piece on the SOS website homepage. We are presently trying to get a mention on Sky's Soccer AM programme one Saturday soon and will be contacting the fanzines of every other Nationwide club to tell them what SOS is about and what is going on. SOS, if you had forgotten, is a separate entity within the Trust auspices.

As well as the flag, we have an order in for around 500 car stickers, which should not only adorn your vehicles when they arrive but add value, too! Anyone who wants a 'Save Our Southend' T-shirt can get one via Donna or Theresa Wellham. Definitely one for the beach this summer – the T-shirt, I mean! Our postcard event is looming, while Dave Scriven aims to produce a badge which will, hopefully, be as successful as were the Supporters Club badges. Dave Scriven has already had a quote and with luck the metal masterpieces – including superior attachments – will be on sale soon at around £2 each. Top value. We have heard from 'Fulham United' as well, who have advice to offer on how they led the way in helping to get the OK for the redevelopment of Craven Cottage.

So, as you can see, the SOS campaign is going through the gears. If we all do our bit, with luck we may get our reward. It is crucial we succeed, as even Webby has acknowledged by admitting the ground plans are more important than promotion this season!

As a small aside, multi-billionaire Hungarian investment maestro George Soros has agreed to a £264million management buy-out of Delancey Estates. Soros – so far unable to get to a game at the Hall due to other

allegedly more pressing engagements – will I am sure inform the new Delancey power brokers they should be proud to have SUFC as a key part of their portfolio.

SOS discussion naturally took up the bulk of the time at the Trust meeting, but other matters did raise their heads on the agenda.

It looked as if a Trust investment in the football club's youth structure might be worthwhile a short time back, but the viability of this remains under review. At least we have been able to splash out around £100 on some vital new training gear, the need for which became apparent during discussions with Dave Webb and Rob Newman on the way back from Darlington. More of that later. Ron Martin is also feeding us ideas for consideration on possible funding opportunities, which will be looked at as and when.

MENTIONING those names reminds me – GET THESE DATES IN YOUR DIARY! Firstly, Wednesday April 18. That is when we will be holding our latest Q & A session with DW, RN and RM. This should be mostly about football matters, but doubtless the Farm will crop up. Venue is the Shrimpers Club, 7.0 for 7.30pm. Then on Wednesday May 2, 7.30pm for 8pm, comes get-together time for the SUSCT Player of the Year night. You will find a voting slip at the end of the newsletter, which should be returned to Richard Coxell ASAP. Or you can e-mail him your selection. If you don't vote, you have no say. Nathan Jones took the honours last season. Let's hope we can get the trophy back off him – and that this season's winner does not leave us within five minutes. As an extra incentive to attend, Donna is doing a buffet.....

Paul FitzGerald has very generously had 10 United shares transferred over to the Trust at last, with the certificate to be framed on receipt and hung somewhere suitable.

Our vice-chairman recently had a spot of spare time on his hands and, as you do, opted to have a wander round Sutton Cemetery. It may seem as if his interest is more ghouls than goals, but you would be wrong. He located the last resting place of Oliver Trigg, landlord of the Blue Boar when United were founded there, who died in 1919 aged only 41. The grave could do with a bit of tidying up and Richard is currently getting a quote in for the work to be done at Trust expense. Obviously, we also plan to clear this with the family first.

Paul reported that our membership now totals around 675. It would be nice to think even more will join as the SOS campaign gathers momentum. But after 15 months in the post, Paul has now decided to step down as membership secretary in the wake of a period of unmitigated success and hand over the reins to Theresa. We have no doubt she will be just as praiseworthy – especially if she can take us past the 1,000 mark. Any membership info you require, Theresa can be contacted on 07867-515378. Trevor proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks to both.

Chris Berry is taking bookings for what may or may not be our final three away trips of the season to Macclesfield (Apr 21), Plymouth (Apr 24) and Cheltenham (May 5). His usual numbers are 01702-558978 or 07703-898698. A reminder that NO alcohol is allowed on board our coaches. One member who decided to ignore this dictat is now on a one-month ban from travelling with SUSCT. Be warned.

Some news of United old boys. My Carlisle-supporting colleague informs me David Morley is regarded as one of the best signings they have made in recent seasons! How about this from a Carlisle website following the recent 1-0 win over Macclesfield – 'STAR MAN: Second game running has to be David Morley. How on earth we got him on a free I'll never know! His composure on the ball is magnificent and his effort can never be faulted.' Perhaps if we had used him as a central defender more – as v Brighton first game of the season – we might have seen the benefit. A 15-minute target man he certainly was not. I can also reveal that, perhaps not unexpectedly, Gordon Connelly is not held in quite such high esteem. In fact, one query on a Carlisle message board was: 'Is Connelly the worst player ever to wear the Carlisle blue?' Well, we did warn them.

Meanwhile a C** * 'pal' – who has Blues listed on his website favourites under 'Scum' – is constantly telling me we were mad to let Barry Conlon go. Which is a bit like saying we had a gem in Dominic Iorfa. You also have to remember this is a bloke whose idea of a recent birthday treat for his wife was to take her for a slap-up

meal at the BarSide burger bar, Layabout Road as the poor woman was forced to endure 90 minutes of C** * v Brentford. She should get a good solicitor and sue for unreasonable behaviour and mental torture.

TALKING of centre-halves, Leo is no more and we may rake in £100,000. With his head screwed on, even semi-permanently, he should have been worth a million. Still, let's hope he succeeds. We might make a bit more if Stockport sell on. Stephen Broad impressed me against Hartlepool. Good in the air and a solid tackler, despite being burdened by his new SUSCT sponsorship. Thank God we never got hold of Neil Ruddock – over-age, over-rated, often overweight and an influence I would have thought we would want nowhere near the Hall.

Even firearms expert Ricky Otto is on the loose again, which is bad news for bank managers nationwide. Now 32, he is donning the boots once more with Halesowen Town in the Dr Martens Premier League. Ricky was a great, if unpredictable, winger with us under Bazza before moving to Birmingham for £800,000 and then seeing his career cut short by injury.

As far as I know, the hunt is still on for the little boy hit in the face by Macclesfield keeper Tony Bullock kicking the ball into the crowd following his sending-off against us at Roots back in November. We wanted to treat him to a free day out, and a chance to be Blues' mascot, at the return fixture. If you can ID him, let Martin Penton know on 01376-345340.

Time now to think of our exiles, members in foreign climes and absent friends and zip briefly through our latest set of fixtures and performances, starting with:

YORK (A, 1-0): In a word, dire. Even Webby admitted as much as we flopped to a goal from Lee Nogan that Carl Hutchings just failed to clear off the line. Nogan never did much for us in his short Hall spell, but rarely seems to miss our onion bag. Mark Rawle's red card capped it.

BLACKPOOL (H, 0-3): Big build-up, big letdown. Two wavering fanatics of many years left a rugby club lunch early to attend and declared: "To think we missed the cheeseboard and port to watch that." A blatant penalty for a foul on Ben Abbey that was not given and Hutchings limping off cost us dear. Abbey wore his new silver boots, but might as well have opted for carpet slippers. He and Rawle spent 90 minutes in the vast pocket of Daniel 'Brick' Shittu. It was men against boys following their beautifully worked opener.

BARNET (A, 2-1): Huge Blue Army braved appalling conditions to see us throw away what should have been three points once Rob Newman levelled. Barnet, who had just lost at home to Carlisle and had taken a pathetic eight points from their previous 45, won it with a fluke deflected free-kick. A major kick in the teeth.

BRENTFORD (LDV Vans – H, 1-2; A, 2-1 – Agg: 4-2): Great battle at the Hall and so unlucky to lose. Still baffling why Russell Williamson does not play more often. Pity an incident well away from the pitch brought publicity we could do without in the current circumstances. The return saw us take four coachloads. A superbly vocal turnout in more diabolical weather roared their backing all game. Mr G scoffed six Melton Mowbray pork pies en route then found himself giving 'first aid' to a fainting Blue after the Bees' opener. Lucky the bloke did not need the kiss of life. Carruthers' miss – nuff said. Even Brentford know we should be gracing the Millennium Stadium on April 22.

HULL (H): Blues 0, downpours 1. Now being played on Tuesday May 1.

CHESTERFIELD (A, 1-1): Leon Johnson's first league goal got us a deserved draw. Shame we could not build on it, as Chesterfield have been going through a dodgy home patch. We nicked a point and now Derbyshire cops have just nicked all the Spireites computer equipment and one of their employees. The club's disciplinary hearing is about to start and my tip is don't wager any cash on them finishing Third Division champs.

DARLINGTON (A, 1-1): Tes Bramble to the rescue with a fine first league goal of his own. The other rescue of the night saw our brave coach party of 29 having to travel 45 minutes back up the road from Peterborough to collect the team plus Webby and Co after their vehicle broke down yet again. Lucky there was room this time. At least the onboard discussions led to our buying some new first-team training bibs, discs, ball-carrying nets and generally improving the players' haute couture for practice – a contribution gratefully received by Messrs Webb, Gooding and Newman.

HARTLEPOOL (H, 2-1): We began Hartlepool's 21-match period without defeat – and ended it. At times with some style, possibly due to the adrenaline rush given by the return of the Pulse Cheerleaders. Like Lincoln's before them, Pool fans superbly respected the minute's silence for Ernie Shepherd (the man who brought us Billy Best died recently aged 81). Only our usual inability to convert chances kept the visitors in it – plus the ref adding six minutes of injury-time. A performance that showed how much promise there is among our youngsters, allied to another fine show from Kevin Maher. Tes could be Blues' Emile Heskey with a bit more pace and another 20 minutes in the tank. Mark Rawle has plenty of skill and just needs to find that key decisiveness when he makes himself space. Extra physical power could transform him into Richard Cadette Mk II. At the moment, though, his spindly legs are more Sada N'Daye. £23,000 in the Blues account from Rebus and £90 in mine thanks to £2ew on Red Marauder and £1ew on Smarty. An all-round fine day, apart from Mark Tinkler scoring.

I SEE the M***** U***** fans are still standing in their fight to get some terracing at Old Trafford. Credit to them. Culture Minister Chris Smith has admitted that standing in the Bundesliga is perfectly safe, but, anxious to kiss the bottom of the Football Licensing Authority, maintains he does not want it here. The bloke is a political pygmy and should be replaced by the divine Kate Hoey immediately.

Talking of that U*****, Trust member Peter Borland from Leigh-on-Sea has seven of their players in his Daily Telegraph Fantasy Football team Shewas Athletic. They recently helped him to a nice £250 prize and two VIP tickets for a Premiership game (including three-course meal) as he won a Manager of the Week award for February. Watch out Webby!

Changes so far planned for next season include just a one-legged Worthington Cup in the early rounds. The new campaign will kick off around August 11 and end, after increased midweek action, as early as April 20 because of the World Cup in Japan and Korea.

Cardiff are probably in a promotion slot ahead of us because they have found the net twice as often as we have. But we will always be grateful to Rhys Weston for his classic last-gasp own-goal equaliser at the Hall in January. Rhys also dropped another clanger recently, getting sent home from the Wales Under-21 trip to Armenia. Apparently he and two or three other squad members popped off-limits for 'a drink'. Risky, when the hooch in Armenia is apparently the equivalent of supping four-star unleaded!

Every sympathy to Tom Hanks for not winning another Oscar for his performance in Castaway. It was not until Richard and I were bagging up NUMBER 25 (to do 400 takes us about two and a half hours) that I realised Tom has apparently moved from California to Shoeburyness. Great to have you in the Trust! Just a reminder, anyone who can take their newsletter by e-mail, please inform Richard on Coxell@btinternet.com

Someone with the initials NL bounced a cheque on us for £50 a short time back. Any repeat and I shall reveal their name in full.

JERRY Moss was not amused when some ne'er-do-well fondled his helmet in the toilets before the LDV shoot-out at Griffin Park. This time it was his bicycle helmet, but who knows what the future might bring. Jerry has also been unanimously appointed Trust ambassador concerning all matters Sopotian.

Finis. Any comment, criticism etc, as usual it's nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

NR (10/4).

PS. 1. Did you know that one in 20 men are victims of persistent stalkers? I have looked round a few times to see if I can spot Gillian Anderson, but so far no luck.

2. An anagram of Southend United Football Club is 'Beautiful blend, couldn't shoot'. Uncannily, and unfortunately, accurate when it comes to much of this season.

SUSCT PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2000-01

Name..... Membership No:.....

My Player of the Year is:.....

Please return asap to: RICHARD COXELL, 20 Redcliff Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. SS9 1AY

OR E-mail: Coxell@btinternet.com with your details and your vote.