

# SUSCT NEWSLETTER 30

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**WHAT** an eye-opener. You cannot help but be impressed when you first set eyes on the gem of a set-up at Rushden & Diamonds. Fine new ground, even though it presently holds only around 6,000, plenty of car parking and beautifully manicured and landscaped surrounds. If only Max Griggs had been a Blue. What we could have done with his Dr Martens millions. My only disappointment was not having sufficient time to stop off for some pan-fried calves liver (£9.95) in the Seasons Bistro.

Entering the stadium is as pleasant a surprise as examining the exterior. There are pristine toilets, plus immediate access to food and a drink adjacent to the turnstiles in surroundings so clean that there was actually a woman trying to mop the floor as about a hundred of us milled around her. I was baffled by only one thing – why the ground rules said you could not wear a mask. But as everyone seemed to have left theirs behind anyway, it did not really matter. The view from the visitors' block in the AirWair stand was excellent and all it did was make you wish some arses back home would get into gear over Fossetts Farm.

It was a true shame that our two Trust coachloads to the Northamptonshire countryside were not followed by a third vehicle full of Southend councillors and KARERS, so they could have seen how with a bit of vision, foresight and imagination – oh, and some cash – you can create a new football stadium that is a total credit to its community. If Fossetts Farm turned out like the Nene Park complex, we would surely have an asset that would be the pride of Essex. Does that vision exist? It cannot be much longer before we find out the truth once and for all. But if it doesn't, the town of Southend might as well give up the ghost.

A few words on the game later, though the words 'mighty' and 'relieved' can be combined together after our 1-0 triumph. I read an article pre-match that said 59 per cent of fans have an item of clothing that they wear for luck at every match they attend. In this weirdo's case, it is that any underpants and socks sported to watch Blues must be.....blue. And, of course, clean. Maybe the bit of good fortune they brought this time tipped the balance. Or maybe I should see a psychiatrist.

**ONE** thing is for sure. Without another great save from Darryl Flahavan in injury-time, we would have ended up with only one point instead of three. Darryl was 24 on Sunday, though celebrating was probably the last thing on his mind. It is only little more than a month since his elder brother, Portsmouth keeper Aaron, was killed in a car crash. Many of us have brothers and know how we would feel should anything happen to them. Yet Darryl has managed to hide his upset and bravely continued to perform heroics for the Blue cause, even though there must have been times when he would rather have been elsewhere. When SunSport feature writer and Fulham fan Dave Kidd came down to Roots Hall to watch United play Orient on September 1, our poverty-stricken performance got him a paltry four paragraphs in the paper. But the moving words he elicited from Darryl in a short chat after the game quite rightly (for once) earned a much better show last weekend and, hopefully, around 8million people took time out to read what a courageous young man this is. Here in full, including a couple of sentences yours truly had to sub-edit out of the piece that appeared on space grounds, is what Darryl said:

*“WHEN it happened, I couldn't see any reason for doing anything, let alone playing football. My brother was everything to me.*

*“My dad left home when I was very young, so Aaron was like a father as well as a brother. Because we were both goalkeepers, we were even closer than most brothers. He was always the first person I phoned after matches. When we lost at Birmingham in the Worthington Cup the other week, I went to key his name into my mobile phone and realised he wasn't there and I couldn't speak to him any more. We would chat about things if they weren't going too well and look at goals we had conceded and work on things together. He was always there for me.*

*“It’s tough, but I’ve got to be professional and grieve in my own time. It was probably the biggest decision of my life to play in our first game of the season against Darlington just a week after he died. But I know he is looking down at me and that he wouldn’t want me to sit around and sulk. He would want me to carry on playing football, because that’s what we both loved doing. I spoke to the manager, Dave Webb, and my mum Irene and they both agreed with that. It didn’t go too well against Orient, but I have been playing well so far this season. It’s almost as if my brother is up there, helping me. Everyone at Southend has been magnificent – the manager, players and the fans have all helped me to cope.*”

*“The most difficult times are when you are alone. But I have been going down to Southampton to see my mum and my little brother Dimitrios. Mum had him five years ago after she remarried and he’s a smashing little fella – though he’s not a goalkeeper yet!*”

*“What happened to Aaron has given me a new perspective on life. Football is my job, I love it. But it is not the be all and end all. My family is the most important thing to me.”*

I don’t think there is any need to add anything after that. So onwards.

The Executive Committee met on both August 14 and August 28. The initial meeting began with a review of Trust goals and the feeling from our chairman Mr Bashford that when we should be celebrating all that the Trust has managed to achieve so far, he is especially disheartened by odd voices in the background apparently keen to question our efforts. All we can say is the Trust will listen to representations on any points members wish to raise. But if you don’t raise them with the Executive Committee, you will just continue whistling in the wind. The Trust is only as strong as its members’ support and any attempts at undermining from any direction will do us no good at all.

IT is with regard to a Trust position on the United board that one or two seem to have thought that those steering the ship are not propelling it forward fast enough. Yet the Trust’s financial position, while sound, is in no way sufficiently strong for us to be making any demands on that score. And boardroom wariness on the issue means this is a path that must be trodden carefully. It *will* take time. However, members can rest assured that should the day come when we are in a position to nominate someone for what would be an historic appointment, that someone will be elected by YOU.

Next up was the subject of the Junior Blues, of which more below.

Regrettably, three members have had their memberships suspended because of behaviour deemed unacceptable. It is never pleasant having to take such action, but we cannot afford to shirk it if the circumstances so demand – and will not.

Paul Fitzgerald and Derek Murr were hoping to attend the Supporters Direct conference at Birkbeck College in London on September 6. Workshops that looked as if they might be relevant to us included ‘Running Elections’ and the hopefully not needed ‘Clubs in Administration’.

Jeff Allen has prepared a certificate that we are planning to present to Ben Jay, formerly head of Ben Jay Autos. A veteran of more than 70 years of true Blue support and financial aid packages, we hope to make the handover at a forthcoming home fixture. Ben’s backing was recognised by a past such certificate which got mislaid, like a number of other things, during the Vic era.

At our 28<sup>th</sup> get-together, Kevin Feasey was welcomed on board the committee. Keen to help with the work the Trust is endeavouring to do, he is already focusing on another fund-raiser with potential.

The feedback from the barbecue on August 11 was that everyone seemed to have enjoyed it who attended. But the committee overall had to own up to not doing sufficient to back up all the hard work that Donna Fillary put into organising the occasion. So much so that Donna was ready to quit as our fund-raiser-in-chief, a job she has

done so admirably. A salutary lesson has been learned, which, all being well, will be reflected in the greater financial success of planned events further down the line.

Donna, other half Craig and Theresa Wellham gamely endured the smoke from the barbecue's sizzling sea of saturated fat all evening, with some small help from myself and Jerry 'The Galloping Gourmet' Moss. I found our customers generally very patient as, after being summoned to dine by Jeff over our new PA, they waited for their burgers, hot dogs, jacket potatoes etc. One or two, though, erroneously seemed to think this was a silver service and butler occasion. Sorry if we misled you.

JEFF asked nearly 5,000 people along from the Darlington game earlier, but attendance was nearer 200. Not bad, but, as usual, plenty of room for improvement on what was quite a pleasant evening weatherwise. Many thanks to Ray Martin and Kathy Nicel, who ran the penalty competition in trying circumstances – none more so than when the goal frame's crossbar broke. I confidently stroked home one of my three efforts, which at least was as good as the Lion of Leigh Marshes. Conner Fardica and Luke Higgs took the overall honours. Eight teams entered the 5-A-Side tournament, with overall victory after a final ending in a penalty shoot-out drama going to the Kursaal Flyers / White Ensign outfit over one of the Blues Youth entries. The three winners from our painting competition should now be able to see their work framed and hanging in the Shrimpers Club.

Terry Jeffreys is working hard on a new badge for the Trust, similar to the very successful one Richard Coxell produced a couple of seasons ago.

Jeff Allen and Paul Fitzgerald attended the latest meeting of the Liaison Group with Geoffrey King and Derek Willshire on August 29.

The major topic of the meeting concerned the future, if it is to have one, of the Junior Blues. This thorny issue has already caused a considerable amount of grief to some within the Trust for a variety of reasons, sadly much of it revolving around the ugly, but familiar, old bugbears of rumour and innuendo.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of their decision, the football club decided they no longer wanted the Junior Blues run under an SUFC umbrella in the final guise in which it had evolved under its former leading lights. The Trust was then stunned to discover it was being trumpeted that we were taking charge. Stunned because we knew not a thing about it. Our connection came in references made in correspondence between SUFC and other parties to 'The Trust' taking over the Junior Blues. In fact, this was not SUSCT but the Football in the Community Trust of Frank Banks. It was an unfortunate error, but one which ignited some needless friction.

TAKING on the Junior Blues, in addition to the responsibilities the Trust has to its senior members will be a major undertaking. So any of you who feel this is something with which you would like to be involved, just let any of the committee know.

I am sure this will be a big topic of interest at the SUSCT AGM, which I remind you is being held in the Shrimpers Club on Thursday, October 25. The AGM is a crucial gathering and it is vital that as many of our members are present as possible so that your voices can be heard on any matters of concern.

After the AGM, you will then be able to unwind at our latest QUIZ NIGHT, to be held on Saturday, November 10 in the wake of the Macclesfield Town contest at the Hall. Start eating that brain food. If you want to enter a team, contact Donna Fillary on [dfillary@visteon.com](mailto:dfillary@visteon.com) - and do it quick if you want to ensure your place. Donna will also shortly have our Christmas Draw tickets up for grabs. Remember that £1,000 first prize and snap up as many as you can.

Right, back to the Liaison Group. The football club are investigating the implementation of loyalty cards and concession cards. If they come about, we shall be endeavouring to get the most favourable privileges possible for our members – especially with regards to club shop purchases and certain match tickets. Remember that all ticket sales are now being routed through the club shop, except on match days and at 'times of high

demand' when the old main ticket office will open its doors. With luck, the recent phone problems should by now be a thing of the past.

SUFC have increased their shirt order by 150 per cent in relation to last year, but demand is so high the manufacturers have been unable to keep pace. The backlog of orders will be cleared a.s.a.p.

The Trust and the football club are both eager to continue the funding collaboration between the two parties. United's players will from now on be selecting a 'Player Of The Month', which we will sponsor and provide a trophy for the recipient. The winning player will receive £50 to be donated to a charity of his choice, while the club will receive set amounts as required to purchase specific items for the playing staff, etc. There could also be scope for us to assist with improvements in facilities for the disabled at Roots Hall. Our current player sponsorship is for Stephen Broad, not, as I thought, Mark Rawle. Needless to say, Stephen has been out of the team of late with 'the curse', but had a stormer in his comeback at Rushden.

WE are concerned that Chris Berry's coach travel arrangements as advertised in the matchday programme now make no connection whatsoever with the Trust, simply because the advertising on that specific page is for c2c. That is no good at all to us and Geoff King is investigating. What we want is the return of the Trust logo as a minimum. Remember also that the new c2c travel packages are made up of train ticket, match ticket and match programme. You cannot go, say, to Pitsea Station and buy just a match ticket. Get your bookings for Oxford (Sept 22) and the Torquay Friday Fun Night (Oct 5) to Chris as rapidly as you can on 07703-898698 or 01702-558978. Whilst no-shows have reduced, it has been decided that names will now be named in future within these pages. Beware! I'll have a special barb for you.

SUFC has provided SUSCT with a list of shareholders' details for marketing purposes. In return, unless there is major membership objection, we are ready to consider providing Trust members' details to SUFC for the same purpose. Anyone who has a problem with that should let the Trust know.

The Liaison Group will not have discussion on the Fossetts development as part of its remit. But we are conscious that now is the time for Ron Martin to provide further details on what the next steps are to be. Paul will be contacting Messrs Martin, Wagman etc for the relevant information. We keep repeating that this is one issue we will not allow to drift. It is simply too important. Once that info seeps through, the position of SOS can be reassessed as to what the next moves there ought to be.

Ron has given brief details of the Fossetts get-together of August 1, when he, Delancey and Lansbury had a two-hour meeting with the council. He reiterated that the emphasis of the development now will be on retail units, which he feels will help contribute to town centre regeneration and secure the future of SUFC. The new proposals are designed to overcome objections to the planned nightclub and restaurant and to the perceived threat to seafront trade. Another meeting is due after the summer recess, when the council officers will be back from their hols. Deep Throat is also on the case.

Next a brief look back over Blues' early-season performances for absent friends.

**DARLINGTON (H, 11/8 – W 1-0):** A £50 Premium Bond win and three opening day points in the bag. Excellent. Upbeat feel about the Hall, with a huge queue for shirts at the club shop and a real sense of enthusiasm and anticipation. But £2.20 for a programme? I have not had such a shock since discovering Sam Fox is a lesbian. Darryl Flahavan got a standing ovation – and no one deserved it more. Darlo were poor, but will be kicking themselves for not winning when we were down to 10 men for so long. Barry Conlon did to Damon Searle what he then did to Kidderminster's exotically-named Parfait Medou-Otye the very next week – conned the ref into sending him off. Conlon's ears sure were burning when he was subbed. Sweet late decider from Mark Rawle.

**MANSFIELD (A, 18/8 – D 0-0):** Stags No 2 Stuart Watkiss saluted Blues' 'excellent commitment' as we managed to sneak a draw. We were rarely seen as an attacking force and Darryl had to weather a storm, but a point at Field Mill has to be a good one.

**BIRMINGHAM (Worthington Cup, A, 22/8 – L 3-0):** A great result. No chance of silly injuries – or more daft dismissals – further along the way in this now basically discredited tournament that might hamper the all-important top three push. Two goals for Tommy Mooney. Credit to him for showing in recent seasons he really did have a bit more talent than most of us gave him credit for. Leo would have been proud of the way Leon handled on the line in injury-time when we were already 2-0 down and out of it. Potty. Let's hope he learns from it. Likewise Mark Rawle, our other Mr Early Bath.

**HALIFAX (H, 25/8 – W 4-1):** Our first four at home in a league game since we stuck the same number past.....Halifax on September 18 1999. Webby missed the game with a bit of ticker dodginess. And there were a few Blues fans with their hearts in their mouths after just 30 seconds of a scorching afternoon as a floated Steve Kerrigan header rebounded off the bar for the Shaymen. In fact, it floated almost as well as the cooked chicken thigh in the men's urinal just by the Far Post Club under the East Stand. Charming. I told my Barnet pal that Tony Richards is now known as 'King' after his well-taken double and all-round effort. His reply? It can't last. We'll see. Neat overhead flick strike by Daniel Webb, who again never stopped trying, and Leon Johnson scored with his RIGHT foot. Chiefly because he had no option. We have not looked as threatening for some time and I began wishing I had banged on more than a fiver at 25s on us to go up. My one concern was Tes. I still maintain he is utterly wasted wide right and the needless penalty he conceded put us under 10 minutes of unnecessary pressure. Congratulations to Elvis J Eel and Sammy for sweltering valiantly in their suits. I also heard more than one person say the Pulse Cheerleaders were overdressed as well in that heat.

**LUTON (A, 27/8 – L 2-0):** The derisive cry came from 1,200 Blue voices in unison: "The referee's a w\*\*\*\*r, the referee's a w\*\*\*\*r!" Quite false, of course. He was nowhere near that good. Joe Ross? It might as well have been Diana Ross, Jonathan Ross or Edmundo Ross. None of the latter could have been any worse. And what made things even more infuriating was that while Joe was having an absolute catastrophe, he had this constant inane grin on his face which said simply 'You're right. I don't know what I'm doing'. Some mystifying bookings in a crazy 20-minute period of the first half, though pal Joey did get one thing correct. Mad Mark had to go. Is red his favourite colour, or what? Kevin Maher made only one mistake all game – pity it was our penalty. The 10 men performed heroically, just like the Blue Army. But, somehow, you always knew we would lose. Jeff Allen ran a well-oiled coach in a very fetching pair of troos that looked as if they had shrunk in the wash. And if only you could get a police escort everywhere, life would be so much easier. The heads of the travelling Trusties I was with stayed high even in defeat, except on the news that C\*\* U had somehow gone back to the top of the Second Division and Barry Conlon had hit Darlo's winner.

**LEYTON ORIENT (H, 1/9 – L 2-1):** Straight down the driving range after this one. I mean, the frustration had to be taken out somewhere. Omens were good – a black cat crossed my path near Blenheim School and the chicken thigh was still in situ. So what the hell happened? Caught cold in two minutes, we were unsure at the back, overrun in midfield and punchless up front. One Tony Richards 'power drive' on the turn surely had snow on it after soaring over the North Bank and must by now be orbiting Venus. Even after Phil Whelan equalised, we were still playing more lump it than spray it. Not even them going down to 10 men helped. Tes is not a right-sided midfielder. How many more times? It is not working. Can't we sign that Steven Gerrard? He looks quite useful – as George Boateng can testify. How could we deteriorate so badly in five days? Richard Coxell was collecting for a Southend anti-domestic violence charity before the game. Any thus inclined nutter watching this one and I dread to think of the mayhem when he returned home. It was a performance to make anyone feel punchy. Lucky Webby missed out again. He would have been back on the ward well before the final whistle. I can't see Jimmy Hill wanting to return to the Rendezvous Casino East Stand for a while, either.

**RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS (A, 8/9 – W 1-0):** Never have three points been more welcome. The luck was ridden again, but a 1,000-strong army of support got their reward with Damon Searle's 75<sup>th</sup>-minute strike that was greeted with an explosion of delight. Tes set it up after coming on as a sub in place of Daniel Webb. Certainly just having two plain ball-shielders up front in DW and Tony Richards is offering very little threat at present and too swift loss of possession merely piles on added pressure at the back. The benefits of hill-running round Hadleigh Castle plus bringing in a fitness adviser were not immediately evident and, basically, this was just a

case of let's be grateful for the victory. Referee Trevor Parkes did what we all thought was impossible – perform nearly as badly as Joe Ross. I say nearly because at least he sent no one off.

Who caught the first Soccer Sunday on ITV at 4.55pm on September 2? Anyone else agree with me that it was possibly the most embarrassingly bad television programme ever produced? Les Ferdinand's attempts to read the autocue were laughable, their first live call was from a bloke who blew a raspberry and then put the phone down and their studio guest, our own much-loved Chris Powell, came up with this corker of a comment on the England performance in Germany. "It was quite an unbelievable result. But it was believable." Les claimed there would be plenty of Nationwide and non-league action. There were a few snippets of Nationwide (yes, we featured v the Os) and *no* non-league. Frankly it was a pathetic insult to all followers of the game in and around the London area whose loyalties lie outside the Premiership. Meanwhile, Football Focus on BBC, featuring the ever-genial brown-noser Ray Stubbs, has miraculously rediscovered the Nationwide now their Premiership contract has gone round the U-bend. Pathetic hypocrites.

What about that Rebus, too, on ITV. There was nothing about our shirt sponsors at all.....

The current two most knowledgeable pundits around have to be Ron Atkinson and SunSport reporter Janine Self. Ron tipped us for promotion in the News of the World, while the divine Janine tipped us to go up and C\*\* U to go down. She really knows her stuff.

Farewell Martyn Booty, whose og in Chesterfield's 6-3 home rout by the worst team in Essex must have gone down a storm. Then again, he did equalise at Notts County. So that's two more goals than he ever got for us.

BLUES' commercial department has had stick from the Trust in the past, sometimes deservedly. But credit where it is due. As I strolled into Victoria Circus one morning pre-season, there was the United-sponsored Arriva double-decker. And parked bang in front of it were the commercial team flogging shirts and handing out posters to a variety of kids and mums wondering how to fill another 24 hours of the summer holidays. Whoever had that idea, it was first-rate and, hopefully, won us a few more youthful followers.

A big hello from all his old United contacts to Paul McKenzie. One of our intrepid parachute brigade of last season (He says 'Hello, Theresa'), Paul has now moved to California, where he proudly shows off his Rebus shirt to the supporters of LA Galaxy in the 100,000-capacity Rose Bowl. Paul reports that the Galaxy top their division of the Major League and face New England Revolution in the US Open Cup Final on October 27. The Rose Bowl pre-match sounds even better than Roots! Mexican bands, huge video replays, giant flags and bizarre mascots, though their witch doctor and power ranger are surely surpassed by the shrimp/eel combo. Galaxy appear to thunderous rock music and each player is introduced with a rocket firework. Blues should try that. One or two of our squad could do with a rocket. Before a penalty against DC United, they showed scenes from Braveheart (Scream might have been more appropriate at Kenilworth Road for KM's horror) and post-match it is fireworks and ticker tape. Sounds a buzz, Paul, but it will never beat Carlisle on a wet Tuesday night.....

Many congratulations to probably our current highest-profile fan, Terry Alderton. While the rest of us were sick as dogs in the wake of the Orient defeat, DJ and comedian Terry had the consolation next day of cuddling up to former Page 3 girl Dee Ivens after making her Mrs Alderton. As for allegations he later went down in the penalty area and followed that up by coming in from behind with a terrifyingly hard tackle, I am afraid I cannot comment. Alison Moyet has resurfaced starring in 'Chicago' in London's West End. No mention of her love for Blues in any of the recent publicity interviews I saw, like she used to trot out. Hope she has not gone luvvie.

I understand Leo enjoyed his trip to China with Stockport. But apparently he had the local Red Guards baffled with his occasional query: "Where's the nearest takeaway, mate?"

AND that's it. But before I go, news of a personal nightmare. How was I supposed to know in March that when I booked a long-haul hol for the last week in September it would be the only week in which we had two home

games? Two successive Hall dates to be missed. God knows when that last happened. My nerves will be shredded. Hey, waiter, another cocktail to drown the sorrows please. All being well I'll be luckier than Richard. The Colossus of Rhodes – as he tells me all the beach babes called him – had a very nasty scare when the donkey he was riding on a day out with Mrs C ran amok and bounced him off a wall.

Any feedback, ego massage, hate mail, underpants details, you must know where I am by now – [nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk](mailto:nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk)

NR (9/9)

PS. Amazing. A couple of responses to the last edition query about why the home corner flags are more expensive to sponsor than the goalposts. Steve Lowes showed clear insight as he suggested: “The ball, and therefore the crowd’s attention, spends more time near the corner flags than the goalposts at Roots Hall.” Blues historian Peter Mason had a similar theory and added: “I'm told that, by the same token, the piece of open ground behind the North Bank is even more expensive to sponsor.” Now that, Peter, is cruel.