

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 37

WHEN I heard Kevin Feasey was bringing his Blue movie to the SUSCT Player of the Season night, it seemed natural to assume the Shrimpers Club would be packed to overflowing on April 25. But on seeing the assembled throng actually numbered only around a slightly disappointing 100, it was clear the jungle drums had got the message wrong somewhere along the line.

In fact, Debbie Does Dallas was out and Damon Does Darlington was in. The adult entertainment on show was certainly hardcore. Yet it proved to be the sort of XXX action that brought a different sort of thrill altogether – the ‘highlights’, or otherwise, of the 2001-02 season in all their glory.

Joking aside, the way Kevin had stitched together his bits of campaign video footage from various home and away dates on to a CD-rom got the evening off to a really entertaining start and went down supremely well. It was especially nice to see the likes of Barrington Belgrave and Mark Rawle cringing manfully as their teammates took the mickey out of their often bizarre goal celebrations.

And there is even more good news. The Cd-rom is now available for purchase, though you will need a DVD player or access to a PC with a DVD-ROM drive to watch the action. Also included in the 38-minute epic are extra clips from the clashes with Swansea, Macclesfield and Rushden and Diamonds (how the hell did they make the play-off final?) plus a focus on all three of our award winners – Junior Shrimpers Player of the Year, Goal of the Season and SUSCT Player of the Season. As if all that was not enough, you get a thumping soundtrack and the reproduction quality is excellent.

If you want one, just send a cheque for £5.72 (£5 plus 72p p and p), along with your name and address, to Kevin Feasey, 4 Beeches Close, Hockley, Essex. SS5 5EG. It could be your only chance to preserve those ‘precious’ memories of last season, as once again there is unlikely to be a United video to buy. Or you can contact Kevin by e-mail at Kevin.feasey@ntlworld.com Allow the usual 28 days for delivery.

It was amazing what the CD showed – absent ‘friends’ like Carl Hutchings, Daniel Webb and.....Tony Richards. The defeat of Carlisle while I was on my hols. That Stuart Thurgood is umpteen times better in central midfield than out wide. How we desperately need Mark Rawle and Tes fully fit all season. That Oxford should have been buried at our place. All in all, highly educational.

So what of the awards themselves, hosted by our new fave jewel of an MC Brian Whittaker? First up it was Goal of the Season. Third place went to Barrington Belgrave for the first of his Boxing Day double against Rushden. In second was the boss’s great left-foot finish against Scunthorpe. But the winner, and well clear in the voting, was Stephen Broad for his 30-yard, left-foot onion bag buster at Rochdale. A real cracker we could do with repeating on a few occasions next time round.

An Alan Perry-inspired raffle interlude followed. A vast selection of alcoholic prizes were handed out before some quality sporting literature then found a new home – chiefly because there was no alcohol left. The total sum raised for the kitty was a handy £113.

Next the SJS took centre stage for their presentations – all snapped by Chris Berry, the man with the long-range lens and who is to be known in future as ‘The Flasher’. The SJS Player of the Season award went to Barrington Belgrave and delighted he was to receive the superb winner’s shield. There followed a special award of a fabulous ‘Sammy Shrimper’ clock to 13-year-old Rebecca Keys for attending 19 of Blues’ 26 away games last season and travelling a distance of 7,461 miles with Berry coaches. What an achievement. Hope she got all her homework done.

Paul FitzGerald then stumped up £45 for a signed ball, which he can now mount whenever he feels the inclination. And finally it was into.....fanfare.....the SUSCT Player of the Season 1-2-3.

OTING was heavy, but, after a scrupulous count, third place and a £25 charity cheque went to Damon Searle. In second place, with only mooted booing as he continues to keep everyone guessing as to where he will be applying his trade in 2002-03, was players' and United's star choice Darryl Flahavan. His charity cheque was £50. But in the only position that matters, first, was Leon Cort, who has just got better and better in his central defensive role over the last nine or so months. Leon landed £100 for the good cause of his choice, plus the hugely prestigious SUSCT Player of the Season trophy. And what a big beam he had on his face as the silverware was handed over.

Finally Rob marched up to give a vote of thanks and rouse the gathered troops for next season. He made it clear how much our 'first-class' support, particularly away from home, has been appreciated during what has been a 'difficult' season. He declared: "With more consistency we could have made the play-offs and that's what we must be looking at next season." Then, clearly thinking back to our final home game of the campaign, he admitted: "When we are good, we are really good, but when we are bad we are dreadful." No one was disagreeing there, yet we wanted an upbeat finish and got it. "I have every faith in the players and their work ethic is tremendous. They always want to work hard and that is all I can ask for. Hopefully this time next year we will all be here celebrating promotion to the Second Division." And so say all of us.....

But what of our season? I cannot imagine there is a Blues supporter who has not tried to put their finger on why what many hoped would be a real promotion push when things got under way never seriously threatened to deliver the goods. Having just torn up my latest Corals £500 bet placed before the campaign got under way, I am beginning to wonder if I will ever collect enough to cover my losses.

Dave Webb letting slip the plot in a major way did not help. The Fossetts shenanigans were a major drawback and rumble on unresolved. We need the top brass concentrating on what we are delivering on the pitch, not whether we are going to have a pitch to deliver on. But when that mess will be sorted out, your guess is as good as mine. Gates in the Nationwide League rose overall by 9 per cent. Worryingly, United's fell from an average of 4,306 to 3,982, or a 7.5 per cent drop, and are 25.77 per cent down over 10 years. So bring a friend next season – or two if you can. Basically, though, as Rob accepted, we were not good enough often enough when it counted. Put more simply, we still have, or had, too many performers not up to the job. Hopefully, that is being rectified. I certainly take comfort from the exits of Leon Johnson and Danny Kerrigan. Nothing personal, but they played as if they would rather have their right legs sawn off than use them and frequently their preference for playing the easy ball back with their left foot, rather than something more penetrating with their right, helped slow moves to a funereal pace. I also revealed last July how Barnet fans were delirious with joy at getting £36,000 for one T Richards Esq. They rated him a total dud – and, much to our cost, have been proved horribly accurate bar a double v Halifax. A minimum of a sorted central defensive pairing, possibly minus Phil Whelan, a quality overlapping right-back, Steve Clark firing on all cylinders every week, Rob revealing Wenger-like qualities and Tes hitting 25 goals should see us right next season.....shouldn't it?

I would be interested to hear if you agree with my marks out of 10 for the efforts of the following current or recently departed squad members. 10: You're joking. 9: 'Fraid not. 8: Cort, Flahavan. 7: Bramble, Belgrave, Maher. 6: Searle, Broad, Newman, Gay, Whelan, Rawle, Thurgood. 5.5: Steven Clark, Selley, McSweeney. 5: Beard. 4: Johnson, Kerrigan, Forbes. 3: Richards (feeling generous), Szmid (no Roy Keane). 1: Smith (does he exist?). Not played enough games to judge: A Clark, Alderton, Lunan, Wallace. Needless to say, there were no Blues players in the PFA's Third Division team of the season. OK, next up how we rounded off 2001-02. I am afraid that dazzling it was not.

XETER (H, 1/4/02, W 3-1): The mood was sombre as we prepared for the minute's silence in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. We waited to be called to order to pay our respects. Suddenly, as the crowd stood and the players came to attention, the invitation boomed out. Silence, please, for 'Elizabeth the First, the Queen Mother'. Errrrr, no. Elizabeth the First (b1533) died way back in 1603. But she was famous for some notable victories at international level eg appointing Sir Francis Drake as her skipper for the rout of the Spanish Armada. I am afraid our matchday announcer gaffed – but at least there was a good credit in Private Eye. And, remember, none of us is perfect. Then came the match. I shuddered when I saw the name of 'Mr J J Ross' as our referee. Joe's performance certainly did not disappoint. It was abysmal. He managed to

spot the handball on the line which got us back into the game, with Kevin Maher comfortably converting the spot-kick. But he deserved a free guide dog for not seeing Ian Selley hacked down not five yards from his permanently grinning eyeballs in the second half. Phil Whelan struck with a neat header and Stephen Broad's was even neater. We finished with some Real Blues – stringing up to 30 passes together as we took the ****. A treat to see. Sad the Bank Holiday crowd was only a pathetic 3,588, when, with 'Kids for a Quid', we were supposedly looking for 8,000.

PLYMOUTH (A, 6/4/02, D 0-0): The fixed odds 'experts' had this as a banker home. So it was great to see the lads devastate thousands of doubters' coupons with a fighting display of defensive tenacity. A performance, dare I say it, that bodes well for next season, when, hopefully, the experience our young squad have picked up this time round will really count for something. (Those words were written before our final two games). If you were one of the 30 who travelled half-price by SUSCT Tours, it must have been even more enjoyable. I had to follow the action at Wapping Towers and was naturally delirious with joy when our great point was topped up by Bindaree carrying my £1ew to victory in the Grand National. All winnings, of course, to go towards next season's season ticket. Well done, too, to ref Ray Olivier for making sure justice was done over the penalty that never was.

SHREWSBURY (H, 13/4/02, L 2-0): As bad as it gets was the tag I gave the horrendous Hall defeat by York back in February. Sorry, I was wrong. This game made that performance look all silky skills and magical movement. If this was the lads' way of saying 'Thanks' for our support over the season, then they might as well have just jumped into the stands and given us all a good kick in the gonads. The friskiest thing on the pitch was the Shrews' lion, who clearly enjoyed his bit of pre-match Pulse molesting. Meanwhile we went even further back than square one, lacking shape, any apparent tactical plan and all resemblance to quality – despite facing only 10 men for 65 minutes after a ludicrous red card. The final ignominy was seeing Leon Cort – worryingly wearing Ben Abbey-style silver boots – chucked up front alongside Phil Whelan in a sad late attempt to get us a goal. Cracking finish from Ian Woan, but the visitors' second was another gift on a plate. What must Lou Costello and the lads have thought about it? Barrington Belgrave picked up the Player of the Month award for March from pleased-as-punch, 8-year-old SJS member Manon Johnson. Beautifully announced, as well, by Brian Wheeler's No2. Which everyone agreed was all we have ever asked for. Credit where credit is due.

MACCLESFIELD (A, 20/4/02, D 0-0): A ding-dong battle, but only because of the 20-man punch-up. Otherwise both sides were about as threatening as an Audley Harrison opponent. Our merry band of 66 travelling followers contained 10 going free in fancy dress. The 'Northern Crew' also included Snow White and the Seven Dwarves amongst their number, with Snow White getting herself noticed by being escorted from Moss Rose following an unwise decision to invade the pitch. Our third blank on the trot. Thank God we were safe a while back. Amen to all that.

A few details of the Trust committee meeting held on April 15 still to follow. But let's have a bit of the less demanding stuff first.

Interesting article recently claiming that a primitive instinct which helps animals defend their territory may be one explanation for home advantage in football. Researchers found that an hour before a home game, home footballers experience a surge of the male hormone testosterone. (So what do women footballers experience? Washing-up withdrawal symptoms?) The effects did not happen when playing away and were most pronounced when the team faced a bitter rival. (Can we play C** U every week then?) It was also most noticeable in goalkeepers, who bare the ultimate responsibility for defending their side against opposition goals. So Darryl must be an absolute sex machine by the time he goes between the sticks at the Hall.

HILE we are flitting around matters of a sexual nature, did you see that Barclaycard recently wired up an Ipswich fan named Andy Claydon to monitor his heart rate against M***** U*****? As the excitement Wreached its peak – ie when Ipswich occasionally got near the U***** area – Andy's heartbeat reached up to 138 pumps per minute. That, the boffins revealed, is the same as you might record running hard for a train or working away in that long, dark tunnel that has nothing whatsoever to do with Railtrack. Lucky really that none of our followers was wired for the visit of Shrewsbury. Any reading would surely have registered the equivalent of a nasty case of impotence.

And before we leave the world of erotica, congratulations to our vice-chairman Richard Coxell on his 25th wedding anniversary. Richard told me wife Moira whisked him off to Dublin for a weekend, but refused to go into any further detail.

First up at the aforementioned committee meet was news of another member – Theresa Wellham – unfortunately having to jump ship. Our former membership secretary put in a lot of hard work during her time on board, but has had to give up because of the ever-increasing duty load at her casino workplace. This is not believed to include more frequent pay-outs. Theresa will also be sadly missed as she was easily the best looking of those of us still left.

We now have no female committee members, which cannot be right. So come on girls, make your United thoughts and voices heard. If you are interested in joining us, put your name forward to Trust secretary Derek Murr at degsmurr@hotmail.com or contact one of the current committee.

An ideal candidate could be the author of a letter of complaint to the Trust, with copies for some reason to an assortment of the United hierarchy, alleging defamation of a loved one in NEWSLETTER NUMBER 36. The committee noted the contents, but when no volunteer could be found to administer a sound thrashing to the author's quivering buttocks, it was decided to move swiftly on.

While Fossetts Farm rumbles along, we keep monitoring. Paul FitzGerald will next be making contact with Leisure Services to see if they have any worthwhile input.

Kevin and Terry Jeffreys (contact on terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com if you need any membership info or have newsletter receipt problems) attended the last Liaison Group meeting on April 8.

The stools for the ballboys should now be in place by the start of next season, while the push to see Frankie Banks rewarded with a gong for his efforts in the community are proceeding apace with the assistance of Geoffrey King.

There will be a United meeting with caterers after every home game in future to iron out problems. It has been suggested that all those serving in the burger bars should not be allowed to smoke at the same time. On the alcoholic front, programmes will be sold in the Spread Eagle and, possibly, the Golden Lion next season, so those final pre-match pints will not have to be gulped quite so swiftly.

You can again get finance if you want help with the purchase of your 2002-03 season ticket. This time it will be through the HFC Trust. So if you do not abide by the rules, it will be the Trust and their legal heavies who will be after you, not the football club.

TICKET purchase via the United website is being tested. The system in use is apparently similar to the one on the go at Tottenham, but better! We shall see. As long as the new seat numbering and stand blocks set-up does not cause chaos.....

United are planning a 50-50 draw next season with those charming Pulse temptresses assisting on the ticket front. Should make a fortune.

Mr Berry would like it to be known that next season the Tarpots pick-up point will be further up the London Road towards Basildon, at what is apparently the official coach stop.

The Kevin-inspired 92 grounds in 92 hours event is gathering pace. We hope to use a vehicle supplied by Essex Ford, with Bashes and Barry Harris volunteering to bring the drivers to four alongside Kevin and Paul Yeomanson. One problem we do face is insurance for this enterprise. Anyone who thinks they may be able to help out here or offer advice should contact Kevin as set out earlier. Finis.

Blues fanatic Bob Sills, former co-editor of the Roots Hall Roar, the original United fanzine, has written a book. But this is no ordinary tome. It reflects the contrasting fortunes of England in 1996 (Three Lions on the Shirt, Holland hammered, Gazza in the dentist's chair etc) with those of United (errrr what did happen to us that season?) Find out by buying one of the 150 copies of the book Bob has handed to the Trust on a very generous 50-50 profit split. To buy your copy send £5 plus 70p packing/postage (UK orders only) to Richard Coxell, 20 Redcliff Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. SS9 1AY Or just call in and collect in person when you are passing. Always a great welcome there!

C** U have dropped another brick. They are allegedly moving to somewhere called Cuckoo Farm, though that might possibly be Cloud Cuckoo Farm. And for a bargain investment of £35 each, you can buy a brick that will make up a Walkway of Shame, sorry Fame, around Layabout Road which one day is supposed to be lifted en bloc to the new venue. It's £42.50 a brick if you want gold writing on your two-line engraved message, though you do receive a 'certificate of authenticity'. I reckon the Trust should buy one, with the inscription: Looking forward to giving you another good tanking in the very near future – from all at SUSCT. Should go down a treat.

It ought to be pretty much all quiet for a few weeks at the club now, the silence broken only, we hope, by the patter of new arrivals' footsteps. They will then be unveiled at the Meet The Blues Day on Sunday, July 21, along with the new SUSCT-sponsored Sammy Shrimp – how long before he is elected mayor in the wake of H'Angus the Hartlepool monkey – and our latest new kit. Yes, another one now that Rebus seem to have called time on our heroes. Get those credit cards ready. Then come the friendlies v the Hamsters on Tuesday July 23 (£15 for this one. Wonder why), Charlton on Saturday July 27, a Tottenham XI (so don't expect Sheri, Ledley and Co guaranteed) on Tuesday July 30 and Wimbledon (if they still exist by then) on Saturday August 3.

The Shrimpers Bar will be open for England's World Cup matches, though Argentina on June 7 is apparently already sold out. So go elsewhere for that one.

I see Ron in his website Q & A revealed, among not much else, he had followed his dad in being a 'massive' Liverpool fan - despite never actually going to watch them play. Sounds like 98 per cent of M***** U*****'s current support today. Still, Ron did say 'See you next season' in the Shrewsbury programme, so let's just be grateful for small mercies.

NE for us to watch. This nonsensical idea that Celtic and Rangers should somehow be allowed to waltz into the Nationwide League at First Division level. No way. They don't belong here and want to be associated with the ONL for just as long as it takes them to get to the Premiership, who don't want them either. Jocks out – and I hope Ron is passing that message on to the 'big' First Division clubs currently licking their financial wounds following the demise of ITV Digital.

Looking at the teams when Brentford played Reading in their Second Division promotion decider, an interesting name appeared on the Biscuitmen's bench. One Leo Roget. Has he fallen on his feet after being shown the door by Stockport boss Carlton Palmer?

Who thought Blues had won nothing this season? Wrong. After last year's humiliation in the SunSport Bores League, yours truly is £20 better off following a magical transformation in Blues' form against those dodgy rivals who relished turning us over during the 2000-01 campaign. The final table read:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Southend	8	4	3	1	11	8	15
Bristol R	8	3	2	3	7	5	11
Halifax	8	2	4	2	8	9	10
Carlisle	8	1	5	2	7	7	8
Lincoln	8	2	2	4	9	12	8

So if we saw off the bottom clubs and had a fair record against the top clubs, how come we have only finished 12th?

Looking for a job with great prospects, reliable pay and gets you close to the action at the Hall? That's good, because the club are looking for programme sellers for next season. You will receive £8 plus a ticket for the match. Only problem is you have to be 16-plus. Any of you out there interested, just ring United's commercial department on 01702-304050. Looking at that offer, I cannot fathom why I am bothering to buy a season ticket. Sounds like one for you Mr G.

And, once again, that is your lot. By the time you read NUMBER 38, we will know if Sven and the boys are going for glory in the World Cup or coming home early for another session of brown stuff slinging. It should be great viewing. And if any of you are actually going to South Korea, I hear the roast Jack Russell is a real experience. Enjoy it. Any comeback, info, brickbats, you know where I hang out: nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

NR (8/5)

PS. Quiz questions – 1: Which legendary Blues striker and alcohol aficionado once struck a bet while playing for another 'club' that he could draw blood from his marker inside the first 15 minutes – and managed to collect his £10 wager thanks to a forearm smash in less than five?

2: What have Trevor Bashford, David Cornwall and Boz in common?

3: Anyone wish it was August 10 already?