

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 38

FROM the Land of the Rising Sun to the Land of the Rampant Shrimp, can there be anyone who has not enjoyed the World Cup - at least until the 47th minute against Brazil? Some cracking matches, some great goals, the Argies sent packing with their greasy barnets between their legs and plenty of time to spend wondering which of the stars on show will be plying their trade at the Hall next season. OK, I know - none. But we can dream.

One thing I did not know was that there was a Blues influence somewhere among Sven's backroom staff. That second-half 'lump it' show against the Swedes was straight out of the United book of tactics dusted off from time to time last season. Tord Grip must have secreted himself away somewhere at Roots during the Shrewsbury nightmare in April, when we were hoofing big time, and thought: When all else fails, we'll give it a go. And against Henrik Larsson and Co, all else had failed. Surrendering that quarter-final goal to the Samba All-Stars in injury-time was another well-known Blues trick. And a true sickener. It was certainly hot, hot, hot. Even so, did Emile Heskey really ever break sweat? David 'Over Me 'Ead, Son' Seaman blundered, but my hate figure when it was all over was a player I really rate - Paul Scholes. When is his pea-size brain going to take on board the fact that you cannot tackle through the man from behind and get away with it? He does it almost every game - and his crass foul set up Ronaldinho for that free-kick shocker. Sven's 'We were tired' bleat was pitiful, his call for a winter break even more so (if you fail to cut the fixtures, when are you going to play the games?) and if we stick with the likes of Seaman for sentimental reasons we can forget Euro 2004. But we cannot really give the lads the bird. Not when we already have Becks looking like a cockatoo.

Talking of a cockatoo, what has Darryl been up to? Alleged indecent exposure after a night on the sauce? I wonder if he told the police he was a ball player. And is he any good at baseball? We could flog him to the Los Angeles Dodgers. But, seriously, if there was one bloke in the squad I would have expected better of, it is Darryl. It is hardly the sort of image United need. Stay off the pop, mate. You know it makes sense. Talks with 'Daddy' Newman on his future suggest Darryl still wants out, as he feels he should be at a 'bigger' club. Perhaps it would be best now if he did go. As for that wee incident - best forgotten.

A few names bandied around on the transfer front, but nothing concrete so far apart from 19-year-old Danny Maye from Port Vale. An unknown quantity indeed. Could the Angell be back? He is currently 33 and was never exactly spritely when he was here 10 years ago. Still deadly from four yards, but hardly one for the future. He could be good if we just want to bang it forward and look for a flick-on.....no, please, let's not go down that road again. Lee Hodges, Ruel Fox, Hong Myung Bo? Who knows. But such speculation is always fascinating. We have also said farewell to Ben Smith. Did he really exist, as I never saw him in all the months he was on the books? Injury can be a cruel thing, but he seems to have suffered more than most. With only a short-term deal on offer and Rob clearly frustrated by the whole issue, he has moved on to Hereford. Pity. Great things were expected when Ben first arrived from Yeovil as the supposed dominant midfield force we could still do with.

It should be a really quiet time on the Trust front at present, especially as it is out of season. But the committee is still meeting, with one or two matters of considerable import mulled over. So here, all whipped into one, is a resume of what occurred at the last two gatherings on May 20 and June 24.

One matter arising concerned the Trust-funded plastic seats designed to bring their very own comfort zone to the ball boys at each home game. These have now been purchased and, with any luck, should be on show from the moment we entertain the Hamsters onwards. You lucky lads. United have even said thanks for the gesture - which was nice.

After a spell spent weeding out all the non-payers, the disappeared, the non-contactable and the back-turners, membership secretary Terry Jeffreys reported our current signed-up band of brothers and sisters stands at 692.

This indicates a bit of slippage, though is still a healthy 17.3 per-cent of United's average gate. And while there are no guarantees in life, I would bet on that figure increasing back towards our 1,000 goal if we can only get that bit of form, consistency and success we so want to see next season. I have just rejoined for two more years - money well spent. For all membership info and help with sorting out any receipt of newsletter problems, contact Terry on terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com

The SUSCT will be actively represented at United's July 21 Open Day, in conjunction with the SJS, and casting around Boots and Laces for new recruits. Bob Sills' excellent book (see NUMBER 38) will be on sale, along with Terry's top-notch SUSCT badges. We plan, too, to raffle the Darryl Flahavan shirt that we sponsored - once we get it from the club's clutches. This, of course, is not the 'Flahaven' shirt hanging framed in my kitchen. To help out United, we shall be running a drinks site on their behalf. We shall also be looking for sponsorship from anyone interested for our Kevin Feasey-led 92 clubs in 92 hours tour of England's Premiership and Nationwide League centres. This should be a great fund-raiser for us and all our members should be eager to put their hands in their pockets. Once the insurance details are finalised then the start and finish dates can be arranged. We would like to hear as well from anyone with some Blues memorabilia they no longer want which we could either sell or consider for Hall of Fame purposes. If you like to donate any memorabilia, please contact Terry on 01268 523974. The Open Day is an occasion when we can raise the Trust profile somewhat. Please try to get along if you are a member and support us - particularly by buying raffle tickets - in any way you can.

That same decline of interest in Blues due to the falling away towards the end of the season was blamed for the lower-than-anticipated attendance at the Player of the Season night - despite the occasion, highlighted by Kevin's CD-rom presentation, being generally accepted as the best so far. Kevin's CD film work went down so well that Brian Wheeler is encouraging him to do more - hopefully to culminate next May in '2002-3 - A Promotion Odyssey'.

On the sponsorship front, we plan to sponsor another player next season - no name yet - and to continue with our popular Player of the Month award. We will also be discussing relevant items that United may require with which we may be able to assist financially.

Mike Smith hopes to inaugurate the 'Hall of Fame' as early as he can from August onwards. The first 10 players to be saluted will be Chris Powell, 'Sir' Stanley Collymore, Ron Pountney, Alan Moody, Billy Best, Tony Bentley, Sandy Anderson, Roy Hollis, Richard Cadette and Paul Clark. Even without a keeper, I reckon that line-up could possibly get us out of the Third Division - and the Second and First. Like Kevin with the 92 in 92, Mike has put hours of effort into this project and deserves huge praise. So to say thanks, make sure there is a good audience for the unveiling whenever that is. United will also support it with tickets and a box for any ex-players involved. Great PR.

A further thoroughly deserved vote of thanks went to Chris Berry for another superb stint of travel arranging for our band of away supporters. It would be nice to think he will be even busier next season, because that will mean United are doing well. Four quotes have been sought from coach firms for the upcoming countrywide slogs, though it looks likely we will remain faithful to Supreme. The issue of those banned from travelling has also been discussed - and it was decided any bans currently in place should remain for the time being. They are something we do NOT want to add to once the action starts again.

Had a nice letter from Ron - or is it Ronald? - about 10 days ago. Did not say or reveal a lot new, but it was gratifying to know he was bothering. Certainly the fact that season ticket sales are up on last season, presumably now around 1,400, must have given him a lift after the body blow of the ITV Digital fiasco. Only problem is income has dropped because of the special offers available. Notts County are the latest club to go into administration - no wonder Peter Storrie opted to jump ship. Saving £1million last year definitely helped our finances and the boy Martin hopes to do better for the year up to next month. Give him credit, he is trying. As long as the purse strings can be loosened just occasionally, should Ronaldo or the like become available. Ron says promotion is a priority - we will all second that - and new stadium discussions remain ongoing with the council. Further details are lacking, which is hardly surprising.

The ITV Digital scandal has clearly had a huge impact on the Nationwide League's finances and the fightback is now about to begin. This involves YOU! Apart from the legal battle, an additional physical effort is being undertaken. All the NL clubs are sending representatives, including chairmen hardly known for their Marxist persuasions, to demonstrate outside the Carlton and Granada offices in London from July 11 to 26. This will encompass around six clubs each day and our time in the sun will come on Wednesday JULY 24. The plan is to meet at the Copthorne Tara Hotel, Scarsdale Place, Wrights Lane, Kensington around midday. The nearest tube station is High Street Kensington and the hotel is about 350 yards round the corner. Once there, we will be met by a representative from the Football League and also joined by fellow fans from Sheffield United, Sheffield Wednesday, Shrewsbury, Stockport and Stoke. Presumably in a spirit of fellowship and friendship rather than ready for a dust-up.

However, the League want an idea of fan numbers, so if you plan to go - and it is well worth making the effort - United request that you do the following. Send an e-mail saying you will be there to protest.itv@ntlworld.com OR phone Kevin Feasey on 01702 207768 after 7pm weekdays or at the weekend. We will then let the League know our anticipated attendance at the end of the week prior to the protest. Hopefully no one has been watching any ITV World Cup coverage and you will continue to boycott all the other pap for the masses that they broadcast. United also plan to have a petition for signing both at Roots Hall and at the Open Day, plus they will be making a protest letter available to supporters that can be sent to Carlton. Trust and United representatives have also met with local MPs Sir Teddy Taylor and David Amess, who fully back the action that is being taken.

The protest should be a fascinating experience and I am sure former student activist and agitator R Coxell will be leading the choruses of 'Out, out, out!' directed at the TV companies' men in suits. Seriously, though, this case involves as close to a case of legitimate fraud as you can get and Carlton / Granada deserve all that, with any luck, is coming to them. Be there.

Apparently a Trevor Hoffman of the San Diego Padres has just been inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame in America. He is the grandson of SUFC old boy Jack French and, as a boy, served at his aunt's seafront cockle and oyster bar. More relevant to us, he is now a multi-millionaire. So Paul FitzGerald has agreed to write to him asking if he can spare us one - or perhaps a signed baseball cap if he is stretched.

The latest liaison meeting was held on June 17, when Kevin and Terry met with Geoffrey King and Derek Willshire. I have covered some of the issues discussed already, but there is one piece of information for which I know you are all gagging. It can be revealed that Sammy the Shrimp has undergone a metamorphosis not matched since a certain Dr Frankenstein was on the loose. The plan is that he will come out of the closet (NB: this is not to indicate he is now gay, just where he is kept) in time for the Open Day bash. As agreed with United, the Trust will be donating £1,000 towards the cost. Let's hope the rebirth has been worth it. I hear first indications are promising and, once the head has increased in size, it will be a mascot to be proud of.

There is some refurbishment going on at the home of Essex football. The Far Post restaurant is being turned into the Platinum Lounge, the Collymore Suite into the Sponsors Lounge Suite and the away dressing-room is getting a lick of emulsion. Seat renumbering is due to finish shortly - stand by for chaos.

On the catering front, the West Stand food bars will now remain open until 15 minutes before the end of matches to give devotees longer to stuff down more chips, pies, sweets and so on. And on the honours front, United have agreed we should lobby for some gong-style recognition of Frank Banks' unceasing efforts on the football club's behalf.

Wimbledon's current plight should concern anyone affiliated to a Nationwide League club. I wrote on the Trust's behalf to the FA, expressing our opposition to any plan or moves to relocate the club permanently outside the environs of the Wimbledon area. This was the same view expressed by MPs like Tony Banks and Kate Hoey, supporters' clubs, Trusts and almost all other football lovers who could see what giving Milton Keynes the go-ahead might mean for the future of their own favourites. Needless to say, these representations were totally ignored. Now Charles Koppel and Co have been given the green light to uproot Wimbledon - who once they move will remain Wimbledon for approximately five minutes - and other such 'entrepreneurs' will

doubtless be licking their lips at the prospect of being able to do something similar with further victims. The FA say Wimbledon are a 'special case'. Knowing how much faith you can place in their words, that probably means until the next 'special case' comes along. To me, the grubby money-grabbing fingers of David Dein and his ilk are all over this. They do not give a toss about all that supporting a football club, its roots, its heritage, its local attachment etc means to genuine fans rather than the Premiership fly-by-nights with whom they prefer to associate. Pounds in the pocket, preferably theirs, is the consideration that matters and nothing must stand in the way of that 'progress'. Well, I think the SUSCT has made it clear in the past what our line is on anything that threatens the wellbeing of our club and how critical it is nothing should undermine its link to the town of Southend. We will be giving our backing to whatever the sold-out Dons fans plan in the light of the removal of their club to a location that might as well be on Mars for all the connection it has with the Londoners. It seems most are now behind the recently formed AFC Wimbledon, which will remain in the borough area, ground-share with Kingstonian and begin life in the Combined Counties League. Good luck to them.

The Trust website, surely one of the best fans' sites around in the loving hands of, yes, that man Coxell again, is currently in the throes of a revamp overseen by our titan of technology Dave 'Boy Wonder' Scriven. Anyone with any ideas about how they would like to see the site improved or with anything they would like included, where suitable, should e-mail Dave on dave@shrimperzone.com The site, of course, is currently at www.susc.co.uk

Talking of website content, what about the 'Blues Babes' debate on the official United site? It does not seem to have offended the likes of Scunny and Halifax, yet we have given it the thumbs down, which rather surprised me. To offset those in the 'female exploitation' corner they could always have had a 'Blues Blokes' section. Mr G was game, though thinking about some of the beer bellies that roll around the Hall it would probably have been less than edifying. Oh well, if you are desperate there is still Page 3.

Anyone fancy the offer to be part of the squad, have your own number, be in the team photo etc etc. Not quite sure what the point of that is, but whoever is the 'chosen one' can look forward to a campaign of unremitting mickey-taking. If they are looking for someone of proven football ability from amongst the faithful, though, surely there is only one candidate. Step forward the Lion of Leigh Marshes!

On the subject of our esteemed vice-chairman yet again, he was up in Tartan territory during the World Cup group matches as wife Moira will insist on returning over the border to see her family occasionally. It seems a large number of the Sweaty Socks were sporting Argentina shirts in their eagerness to see England knocked out, so a pox on the Jocks and a 'Keep Up The Good Work' message to Berti Vogts for the superb way in which he has so far transformed the Scottish team from abysmal to just utterly s***e!

One other little World Cup story. On the day the Argies were paid back handsomely for the 'Hand of God', a select gathering of the great and the good from one of our finest business institutions gathered in a suite at the Hall to watch the action and raise a few bob for charity. First up was a signed photo of the boy Beckham, which pulled in £400. Then came an England shirt from the England v Greece clash, signed by Becks and Michael Owen. This attracted a mammoth bid of £1,400. Next came the ball. The buyer was delighted to lay out £200. Only problem was that, on examination, the signatures were a little unfamiliar - no Beckham, no Owen, no Sol, no Seaman. For this was not, as some in the audience believed, the England v Greece ball - it was a United off-the-shelf job straight out of the club shop! For Beckham read Bramble, for Seaman read Searle. Needless to say, on reflection its red-faced purchaser was not exactly amused. Top bid was expected to be about 20 quid. Still, there was one plus side - at least he outdid the purchase price of a signed snap of Michael Schumacher.

Our sympathies have been with Mr Bashford recently, who has been suffering with torn ligaments in his right hand. For some reason he has been a bit cagey as to the cause.

Any Blues fans who read the 'Other People's Jobs' feature with Dave Jobson in the June 14 issue of the Southend Standard must have smiled. The article claims the man who, allegedly, brought crowd-facing seats for stewards to this country believes stewards '.....play a major part in creating a family-friendly atmosphere at Roots Hall'. Anyone disagree? He also announced '.....I believe we've got the best supporters in the land'.

That being the case, why are so many of them so unhappy with the treatment they are given within the stadium. No answers from Dave on that one, I am afraid.

Gratifying to see that United were one of only seven clubs with no one on the FA's banned list before the World Cup. Cardiff's finest topped the tree with 112, followed by Stoke 92 and Leeds 66 - none of which will come as a surprise to anybody.

Ronnie Whelan was on the radio the other night. The bad news is he has quit his job in Cyprus and is packing his bags. The even worse news is he coming back to this country and looking for a job. As long as it is not anywhere in the environs of Southend, we will be perfectly happy.

They might have given us an easier first fixture than Hull away on August 10. We need a good start - especially with TWO down to the Conference at the end of the coming campaign. But it is at places like Boothferry Park we have to perform if we want to figure in the promotion battle this season. Then come Carlisle and Shrewsbury at home, the latter a swift opportunity for us to make up for that pitiful performance against them in our final home game of last season. Go get 'em!

Anyone know a Paul Bysouth of Canvey Island? He won £25,000 for finishing third in SunSport's annual Dream Team competition, so perhaps he might like to buy us a player. Far more rewarding than blowing it on cars, holidays and wild living, surely. A Mark Lawlor of Basildon was fourth, though his reward was sweet naff all.

Steve Tilson and David Crown as joint assistant deputy understudies. Will that work - especially with Rob looking to get even more hands-on by possibly hanging up his boots? Let's give it time - and pray.

I prefer travelling up to London by train rather than car if at all possible. But not when I have to share a carriage to Fenchurch Street with saddos dressed in Gooners kit heading for the capital to celebrate the capture of the Premiership crown and FA Cup. If you live in Leigh-on-Sea, there is only one club you should be supporting - and they do not play in red and ponce around at Highbury.

Don't forget tickets for the pre-season friendlies are now available. For some reason there is more interest in the West Ham and Spurs fixtures than the trips to Burnham Ramblers and Bowers United, though will the former be any more competitive?

Thanks for all the answers that flooded in - OK, one - to the question about which former Blues striker legend and alcohol tippler once supposedly struck a bet while playing for another 'club' that he could draw blood from his marker inside the first 15 minutes of a game and collected his tenner thanks to a forearm smash in less than five. The stab I received went for Bill Garner. Good try, but the clue was in the 'club'. It was none other than mighty Roy McDoughnut during his less than halcyon days at C U.**

And there you have it. Any comeback, feedback, info, praise, criticism, points you think worth including etc contact me at the usual address - nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk NR (26/6)

PS1 Apologies for NUMBER 38 appearing a little later than it would have normally. Simply trying to be as up-to-date as possible re the protest etc, etc.

2. Ricardinho is not one of my Brazilian relations.

3. Daniel Webb has rejected a new one-year deal. Anyone bothered?