

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 60

**WE WANT A Q & A WE WANT A Q & A WE WANT A Q & A
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ROLL up, roll up, roll up. Yes, it's that time of year again when all is sweetness and light in the lull before the storm. The Meet The Blues Day is the occasion when happy, smiling faces abound as United's faithful cross their fingers, say a silent prayer and then trip off to mingle with fellow like-minded optimists at Boots and Laces in the curtain-raiser to the league kick-off.

The action for 2004 is on Sunday, August 1 and the Trust will be well represented, as ever, by the usual band of earnest hard workers who will be doing their best to put a spring in the step of those visiting our designated pitch. The SUSCT 'gazebo' / pavilion, a 9m x 3m edifice purchased for just such an event by the bargain-hunting Beaver, will be in place to welcome all-comers and stage autograph signing by the Blues squad, the sale of assorted merchandise, programmes, shirts and other memorabilia and be the focal point for the familiar raffle. A donated United ball, fully monickered for the occasion we hope, will be just one of the prizes on offer, along with £30 and a 'special' involving Trust-sponsored Mark Gower. The committee youth arm will also be running our ever-popular penalty competition, so don't miss the chance to try and rattle one into the bottom corner. Or simply come and say hello and put a face to some of the names you see mentioned in these pages each month. And if you are signing up, or bringing someone who wants to sign up, even better. Enjoy it.

You will also be able to get any SUSCT info you require as the United 'SUFC on Tour' bus does its rounds of the local environs.

One or two in attendance on the 1st may well be doing so with a sore head. The day before, Blues have their final pre-season friendly at Grays, who I have discovered are the only football club in the country to feature in the Good Beer Guide. You can guzzle IPA and a mix of six to eight guest beers there between midday and 11pm on July 31. So at least there will be some consolation even if the match action is flat. Cheers!

Whoever makes the MTBD prize-winners' list, naturally, I will do my best to get their names up in lights in NEWSLETTER 61. But, reluctantly, there could be one or two other names featuring prominently as well – those tardy few who have not paid what they owe to last season's Quid A Goal fund. Alan Perry has been making his final effort to obtain the unpaid pledges over the past few days, having already tried for two months. Sadly, it has been decided that, as a last resort, the names of those who still refuse to cough up, for whatever reason, will have to be made known to a wider audience. So if you recognise yourself, don't delay any longer. Send Alan your cash and save yourself some embarrassment. One potential nudge we have introduced for the reluctant latecomers is that no one owing money will be allowed to travel by Trust coach during the coming campaign until their dosh has been handed over. So, be warned. On a far more encouraging note, Alan reports £2,957.75 in the pot. By the time we have finished, United should have the best-equipped physio's department in the league. All most of you need do now is think about who you are going to back in Quid A Goal for this season.

UNITED physio John Stannard has recently been handed funds from the sums we have raised to purchase pairs of weights from 2.5kg to 15kg plus a storage rack and, in addition, a further £1,000-plus to obtain a host of vital ultrasonic, fitness and rehab equipment to boost players' recovery from injury. But there is more to be done and the plan for the coming season's QAG cash is to put it towards important, but costly, cardio-vascular items such as treadmills, cycling and rowing machines etc. John has sent the Trust a 'massive thank-you' for the help we have given so far. But that is what we are about – and it will not stop us nudging the club over their apparent lack of willingness to inject any funds into this vital aspect of the SUFC set-up.

The QAG pledges you can make for 2004-05 are many and varied – back a player, back a couple of players, back clean sheets, home wins, away wins, whatever, all from 25p per pledge and payable without fail next May. All contributors will be able to see their names in the matchday programme. Those Trust members on e-mail have already received an application form and those receiving this newsletter by post may find a form accompanying it or not as the case may be. Whenever you receive, just fill it in and send it to Alan Perry as requested. Simple and, Mr G and Mr I, so personally satisfying. We would like the players involved this season, as well, though not along the same Scrooge-like lines that their then rep Embo proposed last time around.

Talking of our fund-raising supremo Alan Perry, as we often do, the 100 Club membership has lured in 96 potential customers. By now all should have had their paperwork to enable arrangement of their bank standing order – return ASAP – for the payment of that paltry £5 a month which will bring the chance to win £50 a week plus £500 in the Christmas draw. And that £500 is guaranteed for this year as well, even though the Club is likely only to have been in operation for five months by then. It is another Trust initiative well worth getting involved in – especially as you might cop a few quid for yourself at the same time. If you want to join the swelling ranks, contact Alan on alanperry4@hotmail.com or 01702-476458 and he will give you the details.

The Trust's profile at SUFC has probably never been higher, yet there are still plenty of fans out there who if you asked who we are and what we do would give you a blank stare. United have very kindly granted us a free slot for a sign on the East Stand and we are taking the chance to make our name even better known at the first league game of the season v Cheltenham when the Trust will be sponsoring what is another family bonanza day. This will generate big publicity for the Trust and, with luck, continue to broaden our appeal, whilst allowing us to give United important backing on a day that should attract a big crowd. The most difficult aspect as far as the Trust is concerned has been deciding how to allocate the 20 places in the executive box to which our sponsorship entitles us. Not everyone will be happy with the verdict but on this occasion we are inviting our president, Sir Teddy Taylor MP, along with his wife, with the rest to come from a draw involving the heroic walkers to Orient, the long list of Cardiff helpers and two obligatory committee members. But not me, as I have opted to remain in the East Greens. I am not sure a Robbie Williams soundalike and Lucinda Rhodes will pack 'em in. But it's the thought that counts and United's commercial department has never done more thinking than it does currently.

Such key issues as previously mentioned have made up just a fraction of the matters up for discussion at the most recent Trust committee meetings on June 22 and July 12.

It is with great regret that we have had to say goodbye to our treasurer, Craig Fillyard. Craig has done an outstanding stint in the post, our finances are on a very healthy footing and he more than deserved his vote of thanks from Trust chairman Trevor Bashford. Craig has agreed to work alongside his replacement, who we hope to have in attendance at the next committee meeting scheduled for August 2. Then he can be named.

We have received a very healthy £7,000-plus from SUFC from the Cardiff travel operation, showing that when the right Trust and SUFC minds go into a Mr Spock-style meld the outcome can be a spectacular success.

NEEDLESS to say Messrs Berry and Yeomanson are the Trust names in question here and it is good to report that they have both agreed to continue carrying our travel torch for 2004-05. We believe we had good service from Supreme last season and, especially as they have agreed to peg prices, we shall be continuing to take our varied jaunts around the beauty spots of League Two aboard their coaches.

It is already time to start thinking about those first journeys. But because of the Berry / Yeomanson holiday plans, please NOTE: if you want to travel to Lincoln (Aug 10, £20 / £15) or Rochdale (Aug 14, £25 / £20) contact CHRIS ONLY on 01702-558978 or 07703-898698 (no texts). For West Ham (Aug 24, £10 / £8) and Bristol Rovers (Aug 27, £20 / £15), contact PAUL ONLY on 01702-302373 or 07860-825127. For all bar the West Ham trip there will be a £10 surcharge for non-Trust members. The Shamsters supplement will be £5. Departure time details will eventually be in Paul Napper's Trust programme notes and Echo column, but are already on the Trust's website and font of all knowledge – www.shrimperstrust.co.uk ALSO let Chris or Paul know if you would be interested in backing an occasional OVERNIGHT coach trip, similar to the one that went successfully to Cardiff.

You detect plenty of local excitement about the Carling Cup opportunity to go and stick one right up the Championship pretenders. But a friendly Hamsters fanatic informs me the game has not got them quite so fired up around Upton Park and predicts an attendance of no more than 16,000. That will do us, though, especially if at least 2,500 (?) are of a blue hue.

Trust membership continues to be at just on record levels. Latest figures put the full member tally at 935 and the SJS at 184, a grand total of 1,119, plus 37 life members. To join up or to get anyone from your mate, mum or mistress involved contact our membership secretary Mr Yeomanson on the above telephone numbers or e-mail him at p.yeomanson@blueyonder.co.uk Should you be having any problems receiving your newsletter, either on the wire or by post, then our secretary Terry Jeffreys is the man to get in touch with without further delay on terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com or 01268-523974.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS SINCE NUMBER 59: Richard Cunningham, Joanne Denton and Matt Eva.

NEW MEMBERS SINCE NUMBER 59: Jamie Annis, Steven Doyle, Scott Draycott, Colin Hulmes, Colin Hunt, Matt Ing, Jay Mitchell, Luke Mullendar, Graham Overall, Brad Pierce, James Piper, Leon Rider, Craig Rowland, Lin Taylor, Gary Weeks, David Wenborn.

FINAL MEMBERSHIP REMINDERS: 1179 Paul Alton, 1173 Adam Berg, 1174 Liam Cook, 1181 John Hickey, 1182 Wayne Hickey, 104 W.N. Murphy, 11 Martin Penton, 1175 Carol Smith, 1493 David Smith, 734 Mike Smith, 203 Michael Steptoe, 1177 John Upton.

Terry recently attended the Football Supporters Federation AGM in Walsall, while Bashers has put his name forward for election to the Supporters Direct board.

Directors Derek Wilshire and Frank Van Wezel will be invited to share the matchday experience with the fans at either the home game with Wycombe (Sep 11), Kidderminster (Sep 25) or Swansea (Oct 16).

OUR Indian restaurant get-together should take place in the first couple of months of the season and Paul Yeomanson would like to hear from any of our members who would be interested in partaking of an evening of crazy golf at the venue next to Southend Sealife Centre on August 26. We can have the facility to ourselves, or at least the section in operation, at a cost of £2.50 for adults and £1.50 for children. Food can be provided, but we need a minimum of 50 takers for the occasion. Paul's numbers and e-mail are as above.

There has been plenty of activity on the Liaison Committee front as well, featuring all the usual high-powered suspects now into a consistent monthly regime of get-togethers the last of which were on June 16 and July 7.

One matter that will affect the Trust is the new 'classroom' plan for the annexe in the Shrimpers Bar. If the bid for its construction is successful, our Hall of Fame and other memorabilia will have to be relocated elsewhere on the premises. The effects of the potential loss of light and ventilation in the bar would be monitored.

The supposedly agreed Trust sponsorship package for the Centre of Excellence came like a bolt from the blue to Geoffrey King, who revealed that bigger fish were already being fried by SUFC's supremo - as it turned out to the tune of £25,000. The figure the Trust was talking was a tad below that, so we have bowed out gracefully but with heads held high. Now we will be looking for that extra £1 on tickets supposed to be for the CoE to be utilised in an equally worthwhile way. Meanwhile we will always be prepared to assist with the CoE if required.

GK explained the current set-up of the CoE to those assembled. The CoE manager reports to Steve Tilson, with the scheme audited by Arsenal's best friends Deloitte & Touche (see footnotes) and assessed on coaching levels and its administration. There are no trustees and Derek Wilshire and Michael Markscheffel are only part of a fund-raising team.

Terry Jeffreys gave the latest overview on Trust funding of the physiotherapy department via the sums being raised through Quid A Goal. It was agreed that the best way for this to be done was for the club to purchase the equipment required on John Stannard's suggestion and then the Trust would pay the club. (The purchases have been progressing in the ways set out earlier.)

There has been discussion on improving facilities for United's disabled supporters and Terry and Helen Giles will be identifying anything that needs to be done. United, to their credit, already gave free entry to registered disabled supporters and half-price entry to their helpers but have now extended the free entry to the helpers as well. A lesson to a lot of far wealthier set-ups. The facilities for the blind are currently not used. United will also continue to give such potential fans every encouragement to attend matches at Roots Hall. Alan Perry has volunteered to be the Trust's disabled supporters' representative. The idea now is to compile a register of disabled supporters and then invite them to a forum where they can suggest ideas of their own.

United's centenary celebrations are sure to be a landmark not just for the club but for the town and United have invited the Trust to be part of a six-person joint 'steering committee' for the project. More excellent and encouraging news in our ongoing link fostering. United's representatives will be Helen Giles plus two others. Ours will be Paul Yeomanson, Robert Craven and Terry Jeffreys, with Bashers and Paul FitzGerald on the bench. The committee's first get-together will be in about six weeks' time and it will meet quarterly from then on. United are planning an event during each month of the centenary season and are looking for any relevant ideas. There was talk of possibly inviting the first foreign side we ever played over for a fixture. This, it appears, was FC Berlin in 1910, though they may no longer still exist. The first home match against continentals was probably in 1938 against Olympique Marseille, who very definitely do and are former European Cup winners. They would certainly be an attractive draw. The only question these days is: How much would they want?

Brian Wheeler is to review the pricing of placing plaques on the memorial wall at the Hall. At £50 per annum the take-up has not been great. He is also investigating a 'sponsor a brick' idea for the new stadium.

Perhaps the most important thing about the liaison meetings, though, is that PY reported them as being 'very positive'. That is just what we want to hear.

I understand that about six months ago Trust representatives suggested it might be an idea to look at the chaos of traffic trying to get in and out of the Hall car park on a match day and, hey presto, that very issue has now been addressed and changes put in place for the coming season. I won't go into them all here but if you use the car park the problems will, with luck, be greatly lessened.

Yet I don't think United have quite got everything right yet. Let me step momentarily into Mr Angry mode. And what has upset me? Simple. The club, after allowing me to purchase a season ticket, suddenly announce without any direct reference to those who have coughed their cash that they have decided to switch five Saturday home games to a Friday night. Sorry to bleat, but I work on a Friday night and had I known this was in the offing would have thought twice about stumping up my £305 plus £1.50 postage. One switch, fair enough. Two, that's pushing it – same as if we played umpteen Tuesday home games. Five, that is a joke – even if the excuse is England are at home on two of the dates. And when we are playing the likes of Azerbaijan, so what?

I see Steve Tilson had a big say in this, remembering the 'atmosphere' of playing on a Friday. So let's get real. The Friday nights of the late 60s and 70s, when we used to attract bumper crowds as we turned out regularly at the Hall on those evenings, are NEVER coming back. In those days, many Southend punters would head for the old First Division grounds next afternoon, which is impossible in the all-ticket Premiership of 2004-05. Plus there were a hell of a sight fewer things to do of an evening. The floating fan will currently come to Roots Hall for one reason only – to see a successful side. And they are no more likely to come on a Friday than any other day. For every curious floater you might attract by the change, you risk losing a committed supporter like myself or those who will now have to flog back from work in London or wherever by road or train just hoping to make kick-off rather than enjoying their usual pre-match ritual. Saturday is now the day just about universally accepted as *the* day for football, outside of the Premiership, and if the powers that be at United want to isolate themselves, I'm sorry, they are mistaken. Ask yourself for starters how you will spend those blank Saturday afternoons. We get little enough national publicity as it is on a Sunday / Monday, after playing on a Saturday. But at least we get some. Don't hold your breath if we start playing in the Friday dead zone. Plus, in the 'halcyon' days, the number of people travelling to away games was minimal compared to what it is today. How would our horde of regular away travellers feel if we suddenly found more and more of our away games were being rescheduled to a Friday, like Bristol Rovers and Swansea have now very kindly been? Yes, we love getting home at 1, 2, 3 in the morning whenever possible. Many of our home crowds are well supplemented by away support. Forget that almost totally on a Friday. And forget, too, the great away support United still manage to take around the

country. You may disagree, but I rate this a decision made after half-baked consideration and with little thought for the possible implications. On issues like this the complete fan base's views must be sought direct – not in some trumped-up poll in the Echo (read by what percentage of our fans?) or on the United website (seen by what percentage of our fans?). Correct or not? Hit me!

It strikes me a little like the confusing way one minute we are not running a reserve team, the next minute we are back in the delightfully named Pontins Holiday Combination Reserve League. There, in league games only, we shall do battle with second strings from the likes of Crawley, Stevenage and Woking. The feel of flying by the seat of the pants still conjures itself up now and again – and that has to be a worry with so many serious and major United issues to be confronted, especially on the new home front, in the not too distant future.

AS for the proposed Wiggers legal action, what was all that about? Paying off managers when you dump them has become 'de rigeur' in football, especially in recent seasons. It should be a lesson in never giving them too long a contract in case, as in S Wignall's case, they happen to be nowhere near up to the job in hand. Look at the career killings Peter Reid and El Tel have made. But a contract is a contract and you can read it however you wish depending which angle suits you at any given moment. It seems United were not happy with the quality of some of the signings Wiggers made. Fair point. But then he can respond: Remember Mark Gower and Leon Constantine. An agreement was being mooted at around £17,000 rather than the initial £25,000 sought, so with a fair wind the saga will end. I would rather Wiggers got a few bob than some blood-sucking lawyers, who are the only ones who ever get rich if disputes like this turn nasty. Blues need their cash for more important things. The key is surely making the right appointment in the first place – and our track record on that in recent times has not exactly been glowing. I know Paul FitzGerald articulated a lot of these points in a letter to Ron. A definite case for due diligence.....

Ron took centre-stage at the recent United AGM, joined by most of the board big-wigs except for Ray Osborne and Frank Van Wezel who were kept away on business. Our own big-wig, Trust chairman Trevor, was also absent, thanks to some poor soul deciding to end it all by diving in front of a passing train at Wickford and thus bringing a halt to the Liverpool Street service and Trevor's access to Prittlewell Station.

The United accounts, over which there had been so much speculation, were passed without problem while Ron and Geoffrey King were re-elected to the board. Ron apologised for the delay in revealing the current financial position, all down to that important writing-off of £1.8million of Roots Hall rent owed to S.E.L. He *promised* the next accounts would be on time and that the next AGM would be in January. Prime your diaries. Ron expects to reveal a profit in those accounts, the first for nine years, which has to be music to our ears. Fossetts Farm should be up and running by 2006-07, in time for the centenary celebrations. The build time is 15 or 16 months. He hopes the council will pass the plans without problem. Even if Two Jags calls them in, though, Ron remains very optimistic about getting the all-clear.

Tilly also joined the gang and there followed a few questions from the audience concerning Wiggers, the Cort and Constantine sales, the goalkeeping position etc. It was revealed that Wayne Gray will start as our new penalty-taker, with Kevin Maher remaining as captain but bolstered by the vocal support from the back of Andy Edwards and Adam Barrett.

But the Trust has to make it clear again here and now, and Paul FitzGerald will once more to Ron by letter, that this, in fact, did not constitute the Q & A we have been seeking for more than a year. When we say.....

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we mean one for ALL Trust members, not just the handful at the AGM, and featuring RM, GK, Tilly and our own new man of the moment Mark Gower. So let's get it on.....

THAT previous mention of lawyers reminds me. I see a long-time Blues fan and barrister named Jonathan Swift has paid £1,500 to become a 'player' for the coming campaign and join the team photo etc etc. Very laudable. Yet why, like mascots, do these sorts of thing always have to come down to how much cash you

can stump up? Plenty of lifelong Blues fans probably find just existing today a hell of a struggle. But because they cannot hand over a large wedge, are they really less worthy of a similar opportunity? Another one for you to ponder.

Did you know that if you stick 'Ron Martin' into search engine Google, a whole fascinating range of options comes up? There is a Ron Martin the renowned artist, for starters. But even more interesting, there is Ron Martin the 'magician and illusionist'. Now this particular Ron is supposedly based in Canada. But if I ever discover details of a Ron Martin, the master of disguise, then we can really push the panic button. I must remember to try the next in line some time.....

Yet we know Ron is a good guy, really. Don't we? Well, why else would he pledge to set up a steering committee once the Fossetts plans are submitted to the council, which will feature Trust representation so as to ensure the new stadium and its facilities accommodate the fans' requirements within a cost-effective design. This should be seen as a most welcome and forward-thinking venture. But I suspect the financial restraints mean anyone who suggests a lap-dancing club on the premises will now be unlucky.

But enough of a slight sense of negativity. With the new season less than a month away, we must strive to be positive. After all, we have just thrashed East Thurrock 7-0! That squad go-karting has clearly worked wonders.

Certainly, nothing has been a bigger plus-point for the Trust than the great coup of landing the chance to sponsor Mark Gower for the coming campaign, fresh from putting pen to paper on his one-year contract extension. Mark's talents have made him hugely popular within the Trust's ranks and we look forward to frequent bouts of hearing both his and our names announced in conjunction over the tannoy on Hall match days to celebrate another MG contribution on the goal front. Thanks must go to Paul Yeomanson, who moved very smartly on our behalf to set up the link once it became unexpectedly available and it was clear Mark Warren would no longer be an option for sponsorship retention from 2003-04.

KEVIN Maher deciding to sign a new two-year deal, whether or not because no one else came in seriously for him, has to be a major plus for the side as well. Let's trust that he will also heed Tilly's planned crackdown on dissent and keep his yap shut rather than collecting a string of unnecessary bookings and bans. Even Spinner is back and wants to play for us again, after all knowledge of him seemed to have been denied. But what is it with us and goalkeepers? OK, push Darryl aside if you have better or feel you cannot cure his weakness against the high ball. If you are signing a replacement, though, be sure you are buying an improvement. And as a long-time watcher of Nationwide League Extra and its predecessors, I am slightly concerned about Mr Bart Griemink. The Bart man has dropped a clutch of classic howlers in his time and I just hope we are not unveiling the Dutch Carl Emberson. Tilly declared: "He has a great set of hands on him." Having seen apparent proof of the opposite, let us pray he is right and my eyes have deceived me. At least we missed out to Walsall on Richard McKinney. As a renowned C** U saddo commented: "Think about it. He wasn't even good enough to shift Simon Brown!"

Lewis Hunt has finally finished ummming and aaaahing and put pen to paper for two more years, while Che Wilson has also decided to throw his lot in with us for at least another season. As for Michael Husbands, is he with us or not? A bit odd, too, that Mark Bentley will be in the No 9 shirt and all the strikers feature from No 11 upwards. Dudders has already suffered a 'tweak' in a knee, which is not what we want to hear.

Meanwhile Neil Jenkins has joined Dr Martens champions Crawley in the Conference, I think Mark Warren has gone to Fisher Athletic, Barrington Belgrave will be plying his trade from now on with Lewes in the new Conference South, Leo Roget has landed himself an interesting switch from Brentford to Oxford United and Graeme Jones has moved on from Boston to Bury. As for Hullraiser Leon Cort, he has broken a toe. Is that divine retribution?

Should our great leaders think I have been a mite hard on them so far, the upper echelons have at least had one very good recent idea of late – SUFC TV. It is innovative for a club at United's level and should produce some interesting viewing if whoever is directing is given a bit of licence. Plasma screens are due up in the Shrimpers by today (July 19) for the visit of the Canvey Caravan Club. Have a look, too, for the new Trust logo due to go up above the entrance.

Nice to see that no agents have profited from United largesse according to the Football League's figures. Let's try and keep it that way. As for United wanting views on sin bins and goal-line technology, here are mine. A) A waste of time. B) No time to waste.

WHAT are the bookies playing at? I cannot find Blues anywhere at better than 33-1 to win 'League Two', while the likes of Scunny and Darlo can be had easily at 50s. Anyone who fancies us for the Carling Cup should climb aboard now – at 2,500-1! Somehow, I don't think they rate our chances.

Our latest Hall capacity level has been set at 12,268. Still seems too high. It was all but packed with 9,603 for the LDV semi-final confrontation against you know who, so where are that extra 2,500 going to squeeze in?

Pre-season friendlies have already begun, with East Thurrock battered and Canvey Island being entertained at the Hall just a fraction too late for my deadline. Millwall (July 21) and Brighton (July 28) are the other Hall dates, both with 7.45 starts and costing £12 to attend. These days we seem to be paying nearly full price to watch what is really nothing more than a glorified kick-about with a horde of substitutions. Not exactly tempting, I am afraid. But there is one big consolation. The Trust-run Shrimpers Bar will be open for pre-match 'entertainment' and SUSCT merchandise purchasing on each date. I might have a quick look back at our friendly efforts next month – or I might not, as we will by then be into the action that really counts.

Should be interesting to see some of the squad down at Essex Cricket Week at Southchurch Park at the end of this month. I remember as a kid the Park used to be packed when we were playing the likes of the Aussies back in the 60s, with lunch and tea taken up by impromptu 20-a-sides with a tennis ball. Happy days, jumpers for goalposts etc. Now a disappointing falling off of interest means there is room for all, though, hopefully, the chance to catch some of the lads doing their thing will attract in a few of the curious.

Returning to the 'magic' theme, Paul Harrington has been in touch and could be the man United should turn to if we need to appoint that official 'juju man' for the coming campaign as mooted in Number 59. Paul has worked for 10 years in West Africa and also done a spell in Haiti, the home of voodoo. So if you see him with a couple of pins in his hand, watch out!

FROM where did the rumour emanate that we might be playing in striped shirts this season? Seems it was a load of nonsense. Hello, though, to all of you who were at the home of Essex football on April 7, 1969 when we stuffed Aldershot 4-2 wearing a borrowed West Brom kit.

The FSF's 'Time For Fans To Have A Say' document, setting out ways in which the views of the average supporter should hold far greater sway than they do at present, received widespread backing via an Early Day Motion in Parliament recently. Local MPs David Amess, Sir Teddy Taylor and Bob Spink all put their names to it, though overall Tory support looked worryingly slim and the tag of Rayleigh's Kevin Francois was absent. Wake him up, somebody. Another proposal that had the FSF venting steam of late was one backed by C** U calling on the League to reduce the number of clubs promoted and relegated from the now League One to Two from four to three. Fortunately, good sense prevailed at the League AGM and this idea was rightly bombed out.

SunSport's 'Bores League' has sadly been wound up for 2004-05, due to the fact the organiser's favourites have now been relegated to the Conference. Final positions – at the cost of another fiver – were:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Northam'pton	8	4	4	0	9	5	16
Lincoln	8	4	3	1	13	7	15
Bristol R	8	4	1	3	10	9	13
Southend	8	1	4	3	9	12	7
Carlisle	8	0	2	6	6	14	2

To finish we cannot avoid going international. I watched it in the office, finishing off a lump of cold pizza while trying to juggle two four-par intros, depending on the extra-time outcome, for the match report of SunSport's man on the spot Shaun Custis. You were probably sat around a TV screen at home or in the pub, rounding off the evening with another infusion of alcohol to drown your sorrows. Yes, I am talking England's demise at Euro

2004 back on June 24, when once again the nation's optimism was raised to ridiculous new heights only to be deflated in the way to which we have become sadly accustomed.

No need to go into too great a detail, other than to put to you this premise. That both Sven Goran Eriksson and 'Goldenballs' should have been given the bullet right after the tournament for lying to the great English football public. David Beckham said before the event he had no fitness problems, unlike at the last World Cup. Eriksson insisted he had a fully fit squad, unlike at the last World Cup. Then after four stinkers, the skipper suddenly announces he was carrying a bit of a knock after all and was 'tired' because of a below-par Real Madrid fitness regime – later claimed to be rubbish by his Portuguese team-mate Luis Figo and now former Real boss Carlos Queiroz. So, in fact, we went into Euro 2004 fixtures with, effectively, 10 men and a passenger – not exactly a format for victory. Becks lacked the bottle to own up and Eriksson, who normally seems to do his best work 'away from home', connived with a player who these days is more of a teacher's pet. How else can you explain the fact he is never substituted – a question even some of his playing partners have been asking? Unless there is a more sinister explanation. Think about this. Eriksson has been told by the FA that Beckham is too important from an image viewpoint to be dropped and must stay in the side whether he is playing well, badly or indifferently, whether he is fit or unfit but can raise at least a jog. This theory gains strength when you hear the latest whitewash from FA chief executive David Davies, the ex-TV newsreader who looks to have all the backbone of a cold rice pudding, as he announces total satisfaction with £4million-a-year Sven's efforts and the hope that Beckham will soon be back to his best and ready to lead us to the 2006 World Cup. Lies? What lies? Yes, we were magnificent, as usual, which was why, again as usual, the squad sloped back into Luton Airport as far away from the small group of waiting fans present as possible. Questioned about whether he should remain as captain on present form, Beckham's response was: "I love being England captain." So, to him, presumably that is why he should stay. Does this suggest a team player – or a highly selfish individual? It sounds all too like his Miss Loos wailings. "I'm a nice man." So what. Someone is having a laugh – on us! What's your view?

JUST one other question. Will someone please tell me how, other than through nauseating sentimentality and BBC / UEFA slush, Wayne Rooney, admirably though he performed, was credited with his second 'goal' against Switzerland? His shot hit the post. It never crossed the line and would never have done so had it not hit the hapless Swiss keeper. Had the ball hit the post, rebounded, and then, say, hit Paul Scholes on the leg and bounced in, who would that goal have been credited to? No doubt about it – Scholes. So Rooney's strike had to be an own-goal by the keeper and any other verdict was both b*****s and a dereliction of duty by the game's decision-makers. Then again, if as shining an intellect as Ian Shi, sorry, Wright says otherwise, who am I to argue? Shame about his Ferrari (untaxed), wasn't it.....

And so another saga ends. By Number 61 we will probably have swiftly gathered a shrewd idea of how the season will pan out. Please let it be in the top three. Whatever happens, though, the Trust battalions will be backing our boys. Forwaaaaard!

Any responses of whatever hue should be sent to: nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

NR (19/7)

PS1. The Trust was very sorry to hear of the death of Ray Scott from United's Football in the Community department and sends its condolences to his family. We will be making a donation to their chosen charity, the Stroke Association.

2. I see some of Arsenal's paupers are paying 1% tax on their six-figure bonuses thanks to a completely legal tax 'break'. Gives you a nice, warm glow doesn't it – as the vomit starts to rise.....

3. Pierluigi Collina gets an honorary DSc from the University of Hull. Why? Avoid his book, too. *ZZZZZZZZZZ*.

4. Onandi Lowe gave our defence the occasional runaround in his Rushden days. Now he needs a good defence after being charged with 'attempting to possess crack cocaine with intent to supply'. Over to you, m'lud.

5. 7.45.

**WE WANT A Q & A WE WANT A Q & A WE WANT A Q & A
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