



# SHRIMPERS TRUST

## NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 2



### THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

WELCOME BACK AGAIN, and unfortunately we did not win in Cardiff in the final of the LDV Vans Trophy and I cannot even begin, as I wanted to, by saying 'We are top of the League' as Oxford United's 2-1 win at the Kassam Stadium yesterday allowed Yeovil Town to guzzump us...

Thanks for the positive feedback from my last (first) effort, and hopefully I will be able to live up to that in what could be described as the 'difficult' second Newsletter. Well, if footballers can have 'difficult' second seasons and musicians 'difficult' second albums, why can't I?!

After the victory at Moss Rose on Tuesday night, I really thought that we would have no problems in overcoming Oxford United on Saturday but, as ever with the Shrimpers, nothing is easy.

That said, three points against Yeovil Town and a long overdue win at Grimsby Town will be enough to see the Shrimpers crowned the inaugural champions of Coca-Cola League Two. Indeed, unless Swansea win both of their last two matches by a number of goals, one victory should be enough, and all of us would have taken this position at the start of the season.

Looking back then, who would you have expected to have been named Shrimpers Trust player-of-the-Year? My money would have been on Mark Gower, but it seems that we have a number of other contenders as we approach the final stretch.

So, who gets your vote? Will it be the solid defending and galvanising goals of Adam Barrett, the clinical and confident finishing from Freddy Eastwood, the safe hands of Darryl Flahavan, the tenacious tackling of Mark Bentley, the leadership of Kevin Maher or the speed of Wayne Gray that you believe makes one person stand out from the rest. Choose your top three, and then either email them to [terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com](mailto:terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com) or return the voting slip at the back of the newsletter to the printed address.

Make sure that you get your votes in quickly, as our Player of the Year awards night takes place on Wednesday 11th May 2005 - automatic promotion or play-offs - at 8 p.m. We are asking members of the Trust (this is an all-ticket, members only event) to arrive from 7 p.m., and please be aware that you will have to purchase a £2 drinks voucher in advance to enter. Tickets are selling fast, so get in touch with Paul Yeomanson or see a member of the Shrimpers Trust committee as soon as possible to make sure of your appearance.

Talking of getting in touch with the committee, please do try to do that if you have a gripe with the Trust. A couple of our members this month have instead voiced their opinions rather forcefully elsewhere, instead of taking their problems to the root. As in any situation, we are unable to help you out if you won't let us.

On a more light-hearted note, news came out last month that Port Vale were to be known as the 'Port Vale Spitfires' and play in the Reginald Mitchell Stadium if a new deal comes off. It seems that the World War To aircraft's founder has more in common with the Potteries than the Garden of England and Kent, so the northwest club are looking to cash in. Any thoughts on what Ron Martin and Geoffrey King could call the Shrimpers will be welcomed at the email address below, and the best will be presented in the next Newsletter.

There's something in the air at Newcastle. First on the field as teammates Keiron Dyer and Lee Bowyer locked horns or, more accurately, fists, and then when Graeme Souness launched another savage crusade on former boss and all-round good-guy Sir Bobby Robson.

Magpies' supporters are often dubbed the best supporters in the land, and they must be bemused by what is going on at St. James' Park. However, they must also have done something wrong in a past life as they have been blessed with the most obnoxious chairman in history in the smug Freddy Shepherd. As far as I, and any other lower League supporter I'm sure, is concerned, I can't wait for the day when Newcastle ply their trade in the Football League again. And hopefully that might rid the Geordies of their buffoon of a chairman.

Returning to southeast Essex, and the player of the year, could someone enlighten me as to just how Jimmy Corbett managed to get nominated for the club's text vote award? Is one penalty and a stunning strike at Scunthorpe all you need to do these days? I'd encourage all of you to vote, if you want to waste a quid, for the former Blackburn Rovers man and make a mockery of the whole thing. Then, and only then, Blues might stop their latest money-making crusade - I know that Ipswich Town don't charge to vote, and they have been in administration.

As usual, any comments, suggestions or criticisms can be directed to [robertcraven173@hotmail.com](mailto:robertcraven173@hotmail.com). And, as a disclaimer, I must also point out that I can lapse into my own opinion rather than that of the Trust. Up the Shrimpers,



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### THE FINAL – CARDIFF 2005

**The Date:** Sunday 10th April 2005

**The Time:** 14:05

**The Score:** Wrexham 2 Southend United 0 (aet)

**THE TENTH OF APRIL 2005** turned out to be much the same as the 21st March 2004...

Whereas twelve months earlier Southend had gone down 2-0 to Second Division side Blackpool, this time against re-branded League One outfit Wrexham they were defeated, albeit after extra time, by exactly the same scoreline. Yet somehow, second time around, it was both much better and much more difficult to swallow in equal measures.

Better, on a personal level, because instead of having a cameraman follow me around as I experienced this year, it was travel supreme Chris Berry that had the country's media traipsing around behind him, even if it was only BBC Essex. Don't get me wrong - I enjoyed every bit of it last time around, but I wanted to savour the moment a little more second time out.

Better, because this time we had an idea of what had to be done at Roots Hall and Basildon where the Shrimpers Trust Had organised pick-ups. Chris and Paul 'Beaver' Yeomanson are the men that need the credit here, as well as chairman Trevor Bashford further down the road in the county's new town. The coaches ran like clockwork - out by quarter-past-seven and in the Welsh principality of Cardiff at half-past-twelve.

Better, as our travellers had generally been on last season's trip and understood what we had to go through, and there were no scrapes involving alcohol or cigarettes - not that that's ever been a problem in the past, but it wasn't even a concern this time.

Better, because we were in the ground an hour-and-a-half before kick-off and able really get a feel for the atmosphere and occasion, unlike last term when I had a full quarter-of-an-hour to acclimatise. The ground swelling, the noise building, the flags flying: Cardiff was a sea of Southend blue (again!).

Better, for Kevin Maher wasn't looking up at a closed roof as the match got underway. Drewe Broughton wasn't there sporting a pair of ridiculous white boots (even if Mark Gower was doing his best impersonation) and we had 20-goal hot-shot Freddy Eastwood up front instead, a man on a mission. Eastwood was going to 'Make Our Day'.

Better, as this time we were the side with experience, This was OUR final. Last year had been the pre-amble, we had played on the lush Millennium Stadium pitch, we had reached the first

national final and we had removed the millstone from around our necks. Where Blackpool knew all there was to know about Cardiff Bay in 2004, in 2005 it was the Seaside who could point opponents in the right direction.

Worse, because we made a shaky start once again. Don't worry, we thought, we've done this before in the League this year and still we're in the automatic promotion spots thanks to an uncanny knack of scoring goals at important times, being determined, and even a little lucky at times.

Worse, because we actually made a chance or two this time around when last time we didn't even have a sniff. Spencer Prior's header was tipped over the crossbar, Eastwood hit a post with a typically opportunist strike and Mark Bentley shot weakly on the turn.

Worse, for when we did stuff up, we did so in front of more supporters than we did last year. When the blank, defeat-ridden faces appeared on the big screens, there were more people laughing at us. And we used to mock West Ham...

Worse, as second time around, it was a protracted, lengthy reverse. Not all over in ninety seconds, as 2004 had been. Not consigned to defeat without a chance to hit back. 0-0 at ninety minutes, we were subjected to extra time. Extra, gut-wrenching, time.

Worse, because when the goals came, they weren't scored by a journeyman professional who deserved his moment of glory and the young pretender. Oh no, this time it was the play-actor Juan Ugarte, Wrexham's version of Eastwood who has threatened to walk out if the Red Dragons get relegated, and Darren Ferguson, son of the manager of the most hated club in Britain. Well, until Roman Abramovich's millions arrived anyway.

Worse, because we knew what happened when the winners went up, and many of our supporters had departed to make a quick exit. The Millennium Stadium's southern concourse was a barren, desolate wasteland just fifteen minutes after the end. Last year, many stayed to applaud the team. This time, a sizeable proportion walked out minutes from the end.

Worse, because 450 miles is a long way to go to lose, and even longer when there are transport problems on the way back. The so-called 'family method of travel', the trains, were re-routed through Birmingham, and did not arrive back in Essex until well past one o'clock.



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Far from gloat about this mis-recommendation from director Ron Martin, I would like to leave my feelings with those Trust members stuck on the hill. What is most disappointing is the fact that it took five days for the club to apologise (of sorts) on the official website. The supporters concerned acted with the utmost dignity.

So, it all went wrong again on the big day. But there's one thing that will make 2005 the better day - the fact that after Cardiff, we weren't facing a relegation battle with Carlisle United at Brunton Park but a promotion push against Macclesfield Town at Moss Rose.

And if, just if, we are promoted on May 7th, then a 2-0 defeat to Wrexham will be all but forgotten.

### THE TRUST – What We've Done

Thanks to the following people for helping out with travel for the LDV Vans Trophy Final

Chris "The Late One", Rosemary, Tom & Ben Berry, Paul "Beaver" & Jenny Yeomanson, Alan Perry, Victor "Weekender" Peretti, Richard Coxell, Roy Keyes, Daryll Adlington, Steve Hodis, Steve Wilson, Clare Brooks, Del Rudd, David Ford, Roy Rice, Andrew Eglinton, Roy Cottis, Derek Jaques, Junior, Trevor "Mr Burns" Bashford, Bob "Womble" Mays, Paul "Wino Wagon" Marshall, Dave Towers, Peter Brock, Craig & Donna Fillary, Matt Donohue, Adam Pickering, Reece Lawrence and all the Staff & Drivers at Supreme Travel.

#### Committee Meeting Highlights (21/03/2005)

In addition to the names included above for helping getting people to Cardiff, a special mention must go to Bryan Woodford who, in addition to manning the Shrimpers Trust coach hut on days when no committee members were available, also kept people supplied with lunch and relieved them so that they could take a comfort break! Thanks Bryan.

The prospect of a long-term banking account for Shrimpers Trust funds was discussed, although where that money goes to is another matter. On numerous liaison meetings, Paul Yeomanson, Terry Jeffreys *et al* have tried to force Geoffrey King and co into allowing us to help with the Centre of Excellence and to set up a 'Shrimpers Trust Army Fund'. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears, and as such, we have decided to stop pushing them. Maybe in the future our money, raised by yourselves, will be considered more important.

Paul Napper and Trevor Bashford are continuing to try to set up a re-union of the 1990/1 promotion-winning squad, and there is the possibility that it could happen with the 2004/5 squad. Watch this space if Blues win their last two matches of the season. Also, city workers should get in touch if they want to be considered for a possible London pick-up during next season. The initiative will be withdrawn if there is not enough support.

#### Committee Meeting Highlights (11/04/2005)

A short and sombre meeting this one, coming as it did just 24 hours after the defeat in south Wales. Those present discussed how well travel had gone to Cardiff and bemoaned the lack of success on the pitch on the day, and moved on to plans for the Player of the Year night. Much more will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### Liaison Meeting Highlights (16/03/2005)

The first matter for discussion at the latest get-together with representatives of Southend United was the continued absence of 'Shrimpers Trust' on the back of the mascots. Geoffrey King promised that this would be sorted out, and finally it was, with the names in place at the last few home matches. On another matter arising from the last meeting, Brian Wheeler revealed that the comfy seats that we used to enjoy at Quiz Nights are now being used in SUFC's sold out executive boxes, so we will have to put up the more ropey number sin the future. At least we have been supplied with a vacuum cleaner for chairman Trevor Bashford to brandish around the Shrimpers Bar pre-event!

There is also disabled access to the Shrimpers, although it is so hidden away that nobody could really be expected to have ever seen it before. If you require it, head towards the South Stand turnstiles and turn right. You won't find anyone on duty to sign you in there - yet!

There is no problems regarding persistent standing in the South Lower according to GK, despite the protests of some of our members. However, from our second-from-last committee meeting, he has asked if people could



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stop standing at the back of the West Stand - that's a directive from our beloved stewards. Either stick around in your seats for the last ten minutes or bid farewell to the game, and the same goes for the East Greens as well.

The move to Fossetts Farm is still on(-ish!). Delancey are reportedly considering Ron Martin's offer, and South Eastern Leisure have met the new chief executive of the Council, so I presume that we can decipher that things are 'progressing'. GK doesn't know a councillor that is not in favour of the move.

Previous Newsletter Editor Nigel Rickard had very forthright views on the next subject - the sound system at Roots Hall. One interesting nugget to emerge was that the PA is tested in an empty stadium. Surely that defeats the object? GK said that the noise was especially loud at the Bristol Rovers game as this was a big match. Prepare for an ear-bashing against Yeovil at the end of this week then, although that would be improved by Terry Jeffrey's sensible suggestion to stop the speakers pointing downwards at people's heads.

You may have seen a couple of committee members of the Trust and one lucky auction winner wearing a special Trust LDV Vans Trophy shirt - exactly the same as the club one but with a different sponsor and long sleeves. Understandably we were not allowed to go ahead with our commemorative product, or anything else in blue, but we did come up with a white sweatshirt instead. Continuing on the Cardiff theme, the cost of the trains was at least £20 dearer than Trust coach travel because of engineering works in Gloucester.

Problems with the club's Seatbooker are thankfully few and far between, and it is one aspect of ticketing that has improved dramatically in the last eighteen months. However, one person has been allocated a season ticket holder's seat, and GK is now looking into this technical hitch to make sure that it doesn't happen against the Glovers, when they won't be able to 'sit somewhere else' as the supporter was helpfully told. And finishing with stewards, the guy who got on the field following Lawrie Dudfield's disallowed 'goal' against Mansfield Town is the reason why they all stand up fifteen minutes before the end. Newsflash - no supporter will want to get on and attack a linesman when we're 3-0 up! However, the ten-year banning order is a positive move.

*\*\* Full details of these meetings are available online at [www.shrimperstrust.co.uk](http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk) \*\**

### Curry Night

26 people turned up for Alan Perry's Curry Night at Le Raj in Leigh, and by all accounts enjoyed a good time at the Leigh Establishment. £149 was raised towards the Trust coffers, with a raffle helping to bring in a considerable amount of that. However, such events can only continue to take place if they are well supported by our members, so please don't hesitate to contact Alan on [alanperry4@hotmail.com](mailto:alanperry4@hotmail.com) as and when he next advertises the night.

### 100 Club

Since the last Newsletter there have been six more winners of the 100 Club - contact Alan again to become involved. They are as follows:

\*\* Simon Rayner (£36.50)

\*\* Graham Hart (£38)

\*\* Phillip Endell (£38)

\*\* Darren Posnack (£37.50)

\*\* John Clench (£37.50)

\*\* Paul 'lucky' Claydon (£38 - this was Paul's third win in the 100 Club!)

As you can see, the prize find is gradually getting bigger and bigger, but the only way it can continue to grow is through your involvement. Email Alan or call him on 01702 476 458 for more details on how to become a winner! £38 isn't a bad return on £5 a month, is it?

### Quid-a-Goal

Following the 2-1 win at Macclesfield Town, Quid-a-Goal money, which has primarily been used to purchase physiotherapy equipment for John Stannard, stood at £3896, and with Freddy Eastwood netting at the Kassam Stadium four days later, we will have raised nigh on £4000 with just two games of the campaign left to go, as long as everyone sticks to their commitment. Well done on a fantastic effort.



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### The Crowe's Quiz Night

The Shrimpers Trust, having hosted many a Quiz Night in the past in the Shrimpers Bar, have now started taking a travelling Quiz Team around the county! Well, four committee members and some of their relatives turned out to support members Gary and Alison Crowe as they attempted to raise money for their daughter's trip around the world. And guess what? We only went and won the first prize! In addition, Membership Secretary Paul Yeomanson walked off with a DVD player won in the raffle as well.

### LDV Pennant Around The World

The 2004 *ShrimperZone*/Shrimpers Trust LDV Vans Trophy pennant has left Australia, and is now winging its way around North America. Colin Pearce took control of the memorabilia in Dallas in the good old United States of America, and since then it has been forwarded on to John Bridge in Oakville, Ontario. It is now heading towards Brampton, also in Canada. You can track its latest progress via the interactive map at [www.shrimperstrust.co.uk](http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk).

### New Life Members (total: 85)

Darren Andrews, Stephen Bibby, Geoff Boutle, Warren Day, Jack Dearlove, Steven Heath, Lee Holman, Peter Holman, Brian Shaw, Trevor Speed.

### Welcome to these New Members

Greg Allen, Robert Bailey, J. Banks, Martin Bennett, Stephen Bibby, Malcolm Bird, David Blockley, Ian Bloye, Robert Bourne, Craig Bowen, J. Bringay, Richard Brown, Adrian Burwood, Tom Chamberlain, Mark Chatterton, Peter Chatterton, Lee Clarke, Paul Daniels, Deborah Davidson, Michael Davies, Lee Davis, Jack Dearlove, Matthew Driver, Kevin Duffill, Adam Edge, Brian Evans, Colin Evans, Gary Faulkner, Mary Fountain, Simon Goggin, Howard Graham, Michael Haig, Denis Hegarty, Paul Hewitt, John Hickey, Wayne Hickey, Ian Holmes, Perry Huckfield, Martin Hughes, Kevin Hurd, Marcus Ingram, Craig Jackson, Tony Joy, Andrew Leeder, Nick Lemon, Stephen Maltby, Craig Mason, Paul Mattholie, Mr. P McManus, Mr. T Meadows, Kenneth Morgan, Simon Nead, Steve Nead, Gary Pankhurst, Craig Patterson, Keith Petts, Curtis Pizzey, Chris Poore, Maria Potter, Thomas Qusted, Michael Roberts, Sue Rogers, Richard Rollings, Mike Ronald, Dominic Rooney, Zienna Sanders, Brian Shaw, Jennifer Sherstone, Liz Sherstone, Ryan Smith, Trevor Speed, Mike Staines, Tracey Suckling, Martin Sutton, George Tanner, Alan Thacker, Lee Venus, Graham Wallis, Glen Ward, David Warren, Peter Warren, Mr. L Wells.

## THE NEWS – Away from Home

### Wrexham and Fans United

During March, the Shrimpers Trust were approached by Nic Outterside, a Brighton & Hove Albion supporter, who is a Fans United organiser and was interested in making the LDV Vans Trophy final. All of you should have received the press release, which saw our chairman Trevor Bashford lent his weight to the argument about getting as many lower League fans to Cardiff as possible.

Unfortunately, judging by the attendance at the Millennium Stadium compared to last year seems to suggest that the pleas fell on slightly deaf ears, although I suggest that this had a lot to do with the fact that until the day of the match, supporters of others clubs could only purchase tickets from the clubs involved in the final. The Football League could have been a lot more accommodating to the idea had they set up a neutral zone in the Welsh principality.

### Oxford United and U's Youth

During our trip to the Kassam Stadium, Southend United supporters were able to see how an Ox Vox initiative to raise money for what was once the club's ailing Centre of Excellence worked as they made a half-time draw, the proceeds of which go to the U's youngsters. A presentation was made to one of the Under-15 players who was the club's Young Player of the Year. Unfortunately, at the start of the season, Southend United turned down our advances to get involved in the Shrimpers' Centre of Excellence, and therefore any similar arrangements at Roots Hall have not been forthcoming.



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### THE MATCHES – Blues in Review

**mar 12: lincoln city (h) d1-1 [league two]**

Steve Tilson called it 'The Land of the Giants'. Whatever it is, Lincoln are a very successful side, and Ben Futcher is exactly the sort of player to exploit it. The massive centre-half was the Red Imps top goalscorer in Keith Alexander's first play-off reaching season, so it was some surprise that when he got up to nod home Kevin Sandwith's corner five minutes from the end, it was his first of the campaign.

Worse still, with the first League goal conceded at Roots Hall since Mansfield stole a 1-0 win in December, Blues were in grave danger of losing a match to one of their promotion pretenders. Step forward Freddy Eastwood, who stole the ball from regular penalty taker Wayne Gray after Mark Bentley had been floored by Lee Beevers and confidently stroked home.

**mar 19: cheltenham town (a) w3-0 [league two]**

The sun was shining in the west of England and there was a feeling of spring in the air as masses of Shrimpers made the trip to Cheltenham. This was a side that now believed in themselves, but unfortunately success brings along some unsavoury characters (as we'll encounter a little later), and a plethora of rather heavy-handed stewards contributed to what was, at times, an atmosphere of shame at Whaddon Road. It appears that they were merely warming up for the visit of Swansea City a week later, but nonetheless taking that out on innocent Shrimpers on the away terrace is a little over the top.

The Wayne Gray and Freddy Eastwood partnership came up trumps on the pitch, and contributed to what was probably the most comfortable away performance of the season, barring perhaps the 4-1 win at Rushden & Diamonds. Freddy slipped the ball through the 'new Pele' on the quarter-hour mark, and Gray turned his marker and shot low past Shane Higgs. Seconds before half-time, Eastwood again provided for Gray, and he held off the inadequate Gavin Caines to fire past Higgs again. Eastwood provided another special midway through the second period before being rested in favour of Lawrie Dudfield.

**mar 25: rochdale (h) w3-0 [league two]**

Over seven-and-a-half thousand supporters - nearly all from southeast Essex - piled into Roots Hall for the latest Friday extravaganza against Rochdale, although this one took place during the afternoon. The Spotland side had beaten Blues on the second away day of the season, and so this result represented yet another example of how far the Shrimpers have progressed under Steve Tilson.

Freddy Eastwood moved to within one of Billy Hick's club record eight successive matches scored in with just a minute left in the first half to open the scoring when he tapped home Gray's low cross. From that moment on, there was no doubt that the Seasiders would enjoy a spot in the automatic promotion spots once again, moving into second spot by the time that the evening fixtures kicked off.

Only Matthew Gilks' agility in the Lancashire outfit's goal kept Blues at bay, and although Darryl Flahavan had to deny Marc Richards thanks to Che Wilson's short back-pass on the half-hour, Southend were always on top. Ten minutes after the interval, Eastwood's fierce shot was beaten out by the helpless Gilks, and Mark Bentley, given the key role in midfield thanks to Kevin Maher's suspension, converted from close range. And, in a second half in which Blues did not have to get out of cruise control, Eastwood returned Gray's favour of the first period to set up the 23-year-old for another simple finish to seal successive 3-0 wins.

**mar 28: cambridge united (a) w2-0 [league two]**

Two East Anglian rivals met at the Abbey Stadium on Easter Monday, with the U's desperate for points at the bottom of the table and the Shrimpers bidding to move back into second place. The hosts put Tesfaye Bramble on the front of their programme for the clash, although their efforts to get the inconsistent striker into the side in return for Luke Guttridge playing for Blues fell on deaf ears.

As Southend took over the South Stand and the southern end of the Habbin Road Terrace, there was talk that a section of the Main Stand at the 'Shabby' would also be handed over to the marauding Shrimpers. The official figure ended up at 2,207, and they saw a club record-equally sixteenth match without defeat, and a third triumph (and clean sheet) on the trot.



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Freddy Eastwood was, unfortunately, unable to level Hick's achievements, despite the desperate attempts of his teammates to set him up throughout the second half. That they were able to do that was largely down to two central defenders, who set up a two-goal advantage at the break. Kevin Maher, back from his ban, set up Adam Barrett midway through the first half, and although John Ruddy, who will join Everton at the end of the season, pushed out his aerial effort, Spencer Prior was on hand to tuck in his second goal of the campaign. Barrett made it double figures for himself on the stroke of half-time when he rose highest to power home a corner.

### apr 1: bristol rovers (h) w2-0 [league two]

Most of the Shrimpers key moments this season have come against Ian Atkins' Pirates (and what an escape we had to miss out on his management last December!). At the Memorial Stadium in August, Southend slumped to the foot of the League Two table, and then over two legs United defeated Rovers in the area final of the LDV Vans Trophy final to reach a second consecutive final in that competition. Now, we went top of the League Two table!

Steve Tilson was handed the Manager of the Month award for March just a day before the fixture, and after the game he expressed his delight that the accolade had not proven to be a curse as it so often is. 14 minutes were on the clock when Wayne Gray burst through, and although Ryan Clarke saved his shot, Mark Bentley was again in position to stab home. Gray was then upended in the penalty area to give the striker the chance to convert his 13th goal of the campaign from the penalty spot (well, his 13th goal of the season - only Yeovil's Phil Jevons scores that sort of amount from twelve yards out).

He later hit the crossbar with a header, and Clarke, who always impressed me as a shotstopper in his time at Roots Hall on loan, saved from Eastwood, Gray and Gower in the second half, but unlike in the LDV, Rovers never threatened to get level in the game.

### apr 15: leyton orient (h) 10-1 [league two]

After the disappointment of Cardiff, the worst possible League match to return to would be against East London 'rivals' Leyton Orient. Blues have won only three of the fourteen matches between the sides since 1998, and just one at home. To make things worse, the O's had not won away since November. A morale-boosting victory was unlikely.

And so it proved. Adam Barrett stabbed wide as he failed to score his first goal with his feet for the Shrimpers on twenty minutes, and then Matt Lockwood's corner was headed past Darryl Flahavan by Spencer Prior under hefty pressure from John Mackie. Freddy Eastwood was denied by Lee Harrison just after the break, and Wayne Gray was seemingly tripped just outside the box. Mark Bentley also failed one-on-one with the Orient goalkeeper, but Blues never created a clear-cut chance and paid with a first home defeat for four months.

### apr 19: macclesfield town (a) w2-1 [league two]

"We are top of the League" reverberated around Moss Rose - 'packed' with 2,700-odd fans (600 from Essex) after Alan McCormack, on loan from Preston North End, became the Shrimpers' latest hero in a season full of them with the first two goals of his senior career. It was just reward for a performance that lacked clinical finishes, but contained as much possession as you will ever see from an away side.

The goal that dented Blues' spirits came on 28 minutes when the latest in a line of dubious free-kicks allowed Jon Parkin to curl the ball around the Southend wall and beat Darryl Flahavan. It rebounded off of the post for ex-Shrimper Dave Morley to tuck in unmarked. Three minutes later, though, United were level, McCormack scything through the Macc defence to fire underneath Steve Wilson and into the bottom right-hand corner of the net.

Nerves were frayed in the second period as Town enjoyed slightly more of the ball and, with a number of free-kicks around the box and corners, threatened Flahavan's goal as the match went on. However, despite Freddy Eastwood trying his luck selfishly and poorly from distance, the 22-year-old finally threaded a teammate in and McCormack made no mistake again. Some supporters were in full voice - some had had all the air sucked out of them encouraging the ball over the line.



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apr 23: oxford united (a) I1-2 [league two]

Unfortunately, before the newsletter went to print, there was just one more fixture to get through, and it ended in a first away loss for three months, this time at the hands of Oxford United. The U's barely saw any of the ball in the first half, but still went in at the break two goals to the good. Nicky Nicolau was caught out of position for Chris Hackett to cross for Chris Davies on 20 minutes, and then a combination of Duncan Jupp and Kevin Maher combined to touch the ball past Darryl Flahavan, with Tommy Mooney claiming the last touch.

Unfortunately, even away from the action on the pitch, the game will be remembered by the 1,900-or-so Shrimpers present for the inexcusable actions of a couple of so-called 'supporters' as they heavily laid into another fan in front of women, children and disabled supporters inside the away end. Southend United do not need people like this at away games, and it can only be hoped that they are served up a lengthy ban from the terraces up and down the land.

Back on the field, Blues upped the tempo as they found out at half-time that none of the trailing sides were leading, and eventually Yeovil and Scunthorpe only drew with Swansea losing. However, despite sub Wayne Gray's pressure aiding Eastwood as he netted for the 21st time this season following Chris Tardif's mistake, Blues could not find a leveller that would have kept them at the top, and needing just three points against Yeovil Town next week. Nonetheless, a win then should be enough to seal Blues' progress to League One. Hopefully.

Until next time, up the Shrimpers!

Robert Craven (24/04/2005)

### SUSCT PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2004-05 VOTING FORM

A) My vote for the 2003-04 SUSCT Player of the Year goes to:

1.....; 2.....;  
3.....

B) My SUSCT Goal of the Season was scored by:

.....v.....

Please return as soon as possible to:

TERRY JEFFREYS, 32 Herondale, Basildon, Essex. SS14 1RR