



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 3



THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

SHRIMPERS TRUST CHAIRMAN Trevor Bashford has described winning the Coca-Cola League Two Play-Off Final on Saturday 28th May 2005 as “the greatest single moment he has seen during his time watching the Seaside. I don’t think that there is a better way to sum up the 2-0 extra time victory over Lincoln City at Cardiff’s Millennium Stadium.

It was supposed to be the last basement division play-off final to take place in south Wales, but depending on how Australian construction firm Multiplex come out of their recent troubles, there may be another set of gripping ties taking place in 2005/6. If they do, it will be hard to match the sheer drama of the first two to be played out there this time around.

Of course, those two determined the identity of the final two clubs to form League One next season, and thankfully after the first of them, it was our very own Southend United who prevailed against the Red Imps. There are those that deride the play-off system, but on balance, it keeps the season going longer for a number of clubs.

Jeremy Alexander of *The Guardian*, in the official play-off programme, admittedly attempting to ‘big up’ the occasion, made the point that, with five games still to go on April 9th, eighteen teams in League Two could make the end of season extravaganza. It may be unfortunate on those teams that finish in the highest non-automatic spot - witness Ipswich Town this season in the Coca-Cola Championship - but these clubs know the rules before the campaign starts, and anything that increases attendances and helps football clubs survive in the current financial climate is good by me.

In the end, the best non-automatically promoted side from League Two did go up. It would have been nothing short of a travesty if Southend United had not gone up in 2004/5, although there is little doubt that we would have been adequately equipped to have climbed a level next time around. But instead of Barnet and Carlisle United, the Shrimpers will be travelling to double European Cup winners Nottingham Forest. How good is *that!*

I think, when we went absolutely mad as Freddy Eastwood scored in front of the North End, as Duncan Jupp slotted home right underneath our very eyes and then referee Mark Atkinson blew the final whistle on 120 minutes of exhilarating action, it wasn’t just the culmination of a fantastic season but also the realisation that we were heading back to the third tier of English football.

For some of us, the younger generation of supporters, we had had to sit through a decade of failure, the like of which has only been matched by Coventry City in the same period of time. I, like many others, had never witnessed a promotion campaign. Even those that have perhaps had not seen one quite like this, with the denouement coming with two sides, intrinsically different in style but equal in determination, clashing over ninety, or in this case 120, minutes.

So, as we celebrate fifty years of Roots Hall this summer with a pre-season friendly against Norwich City, could we just celebrate one hundred years of Southend United with a repeat of the achievements of the 1989/90 and 1990/91 double-promotion winning sides? Even with Steve Tilson, Andy Edwards and Spencer Prior constants in both generations, I don’t even want to contemplate the possibility.

And all of those nasty memories of Blackpool and Wrexham, where many of us had great experiences nonetheless, have been wiped out. The Tangerines, the Red Dragons and now the Shrimpers all had their day in Cardiff. I can live with not having won the LDV Vans Trophy final. Misery in the play-off final would have been hard to take.

Whilst on the subject of Cup finals, a big well done is due to Liverpool for doing it for the little guys in the Champions League final last month. Gone are the days when the Reds were the Manchester United, Arsenal or Chelsea of their day, hated by all of the land. Now Raphael Benitez’s men are the toast on the town - on Merseyside at least - and Steven Gerrard and his team deserve all the plaudits that come their way after a magnificent fightback.

At the time of going to print, it seems as though the big-wigs at UEFA’s top table are going to deny the Scousers their rightful place in next season’s Champions League. Just like the glory days at Anfield, gone are the times when only the top side in each country compete for the European Cup - if Everton, who finished closer to the relegation zone than to Premiership winners Chelsea, can be afforded a spot in the ‘Champions’ League, then surely the winners of the competition can also be accommodated?

Liverpool, of course, celebrated their success in an open-top bus parade around the streets of the city just hours after claiming the old trophy. Unfortunately, because of the timing of the play-offs at the very end of the season, this was just not possible for the Shrimpers to organise. A date during pre-season, ahead of the ever-popular Meet The Blues Day, seems likely.



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This will represent an excellent chance for the people of Southend to get onto the streets and see their heroes from the 2004/5 campaign ahead of the 2005/6 version, also acting as a massive confidence boost for those players just gearing up for a tough schedule of matches. Get out and show the lads what they have achieved!

Unfortunately, the last month or so has not all been fun. Following the last Newsletter, it has been brought to my attention that my statement regarding those with grievances towards the Trust may be misconstrued. I wish to make it clear that in no way was I insinuating that members are not entitled to take issues up with other organisations off of their own back. However, when those issues may, directly or inadvertently, affect the workings of the Trust, it would be preferable that those members approached us in order to ascertain our view.

We would also like to call on all members who have the facility to receive the newsletter by email to do so, unless this really is not convenient. If, meanwhile, you are having difficulties receiving your newsletter via email, please contact our secretary, Terry Jeffreys, on Terry.Jeffreys@btinternet.com. It may be worth checking your bulk folders or trashcans to see if it is being dumped into the wrong place, and if possible, then get in touch with Terry and give him another email address.

Some of our members, whether they receive the newsletter through email or in the post, are absolutely fantastic. One emailed our Treasurer last month and pledged £50. For fear of embarrassment, I will not name and shame him, but as he said that we are lucky to have a Trust such as ours, we return the compliment in saying that we are only as good as our members allow us to be.

And a certain Bob Sills, of Yahoo! Mailing List fame, also had to make a donation to ourselves after foolishly making predictions on the said list. Thanks very much Bob!

Now we are well and truly into the close season, it is the time that some players are allowed to leave the club. A couple of supporters of Shrimpers Trust initiatives have recently been released, and after their efforts at the Bowling Night during the previous campaign, we wish both Michael Husbands and Michael Kightly all the very best for the future, wherever they may end up. In Kightly's case, there must be a number of local sides interested in pursuing his services.

The run-in to the regular League season brought an interesting development in the North Bank debate. Now for many, this has been a bone of contention

for a long time - just why can't Southend United supporters share their 'spiritual home' with the away fans like we have to do at, say, Lincoln or even Colchester United?

In what was supposed to be the final Roots Hall fixture of 2004/5, Yeovil Town were allocated roughly one-and-a-half thousand tickets. In order for the match to be a technical sell-out (due to police restrictions and limited view seats we will never see it hold 12,306 as our Treasurer (and Seat-Counter) Darren Posnack reliably informs us the ground holds), Ron Martin, Geoffrey King, Dave Jobson and whoever else sits on such committees regarding ground safety, allowed a substantial number of home supporters into the north-western side of the North Bank.

And not just the North-West corner. So, if it is safe to do this when 1500 jubilant (and very well-behaved) Yeovil fans are in town for what could have been a volatile match, why on earth is it not permitted when 20 meek Macclesfield followers journey down from Cheshire? Sadly, because of the likes of Nottingham Forest, Col U, Gillingham and Brentford bringing increased away followings to the Hall, we are unlikely to ever really find out, for the immediate future at least.

Now that the SKY Television hoodoo has been put to rest with wins over Northampton Town and Lincoln City in front of Chris Kamara and co., what price the Shrimpers having significantly fewer than the five matches on offer this time around?

What price also on yours truly, and others, being invited back onto SKY Sports' Soccer AM after messing up the opening song last time out on the morning of the Yeovil Town match? Who could blame us on the day of such an important encounter? You can read how Membership Secretary Paul Yeomanson, Travel Supremo Chris Berry and I, as well as the self-styled 'Team Judas' got on, as well as see pictures of the day on www.thelittlegazette.com.

You may also find a picture of myself in front of the City Ground on there one day, taken whilst I visited Nottingham to watch Essex County Cricket Club at Trent Bridge in late May. That ground oozes history, and as of next season, we will once again be a part of it.

So, for now, enjoy the read, and please do get in touch if you have anything to add on my round-up of all things Trust-related,

Rob



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THE FINAL – CARDIFF 2005 Mk II

The Date: Saturday 28th May 2005

The Time: 15:00

The Score: Lincoln City 0 Southend United 2 (aet)

BACK AGAIN, for the second time in six weeks and for the third time in fourteen months. This time, we finally came, saw and conquered Cardiff.

Much has been made of the lack of supporters at the Millennium Stadium this time around. True, the Shrimpers contingent may only have numbered 6,500 or so, but at least this was the hard core. These were the people who take the Trust coach, board the Kings Cross express or bomb up the A1(M) week-in, week-out, and they were rewarded at last.

Don't get me wrong - I want Southend United to command big crowds every seven days and for the people of the town to get behind the club in a fashion that has been beyond them for many years. I want us to run five or more coaches to every away game (even if Mr, Berry doesn't fancy it!), and I want more members of the Shrimpers Trust than ever before.

And I feel sorry for those consistent supporters that have been to many a cold night at Darlington or experienced the teas at Swansea but couldn't have been there last week. But there was also that great camaraderie that had been missing from the last two Cardiff occasions - the sense that whenever you turned a corner, there was someone there that you knew.

The coach travel this time back at Roots Hall and Basildon's Trafford House was much less frenetic. There were only fifteen coaches, carrying 700 people, as opposed to the massive 26 and 28 coach operations that had encountered us for the LDV Vans Trophy. You wouldn't believe that this was a bigger game!

Chris Berry had managed this time to secure the services of, well, Membury Services. They were, almost, decked out in blue-and-white to meet the coaches on arrival at around half-past-nine, and there were freebies and Coca-Cola merchandise available at every stall. This was a special day.

Two hours or so later, in the Welsh principality, there we were again, in the same M19 Shrimpers Trust block as ever, occupying the same seats as we had against Wrexham and Blackpool. Then we had outnumbered the opposition, this time it was 3:1 in Lincoln's favour.

And as the teams entered the pitch, the dulcet tones of Jeff Allen ringing in their ears, thoughts turned to the very first away game of the season, at Sincil Bank, when Red Imps boss Keith Alexander proclaimed that Southend United would not be "there or thereabouts" come May. It was time for justice to be done.

The first half was eminently forgettable. Simon Yeo arguably came closest to scoring with an offside 'goal' ruled out, as it proved, incorrectly. Mark Bentley was also called upon to clear a header from Jamie McCombe from off of the goalline as Darryl Flahavan's frailties on crosses came back to haunt us.

At half-time, we chewed our nails. During the second period, we had plenty of opportunities to bite down to the quicks. This was end-to-end football, the stuff that those watching from the comfort of their armchair love, and those at the ground hate.

Freddy Eastwood, Mark Bentley and Nicky Nicolau all shot wide. Yeo hit the target for the Imps, but Flahavan was on hand to parry away brilliantly at his near post. When the custodian was beaten again in the air, Francis Green was denied by Che Wilson. A bicycle kick from the same player saw Flahavan palm the ball off of the head of Yeo.

Bentley was shoved over in the dying seconds, but Blues fans headed for the exits and the loos as referee Mark Atkinson waved the appeals away and signalled extra time.

We need not have worried. Lincoln were tiring, whereas our 120 minutes against Wrexham earlier in the year had taught us to pace ourselves. Still it looked as though we would complete another fifteen minutes goalless, Eastwood, Bentley and Nicolau again the guilty trio.

And then came the goal - Kevin Maher's corner, Matt Bloomer's goalline clearance and Eastwood's volley. 1-0, fifteen minutes to play and pandemonium in the Southern End of the ground. At last we had scored at Cardiff. The curse was broken.

Duncan Jupp doesn't score many goals, but how fitting it was that he popped up five minutes later to settle the tie with a cool finish from an Eastwood pass. Ten years he had waited for his next goal - fourteen we had waited for a promotion season. Years of misery wiped out in a flash, and Steve Tilson rightly regarded as a modern-day legend.



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THE TRUST – What We've Done

Thank-you once again to those who helped get supporters to Cardiff:

(in no particular order) Chris “The Late One”, Rosemary, Tom & Ben Berry, Paul “Beaver” & Jenny Yeomanson, Alan Perry, Victor “Rocket” Peretti, Richard Coxall, Nigel Rickard, Paul FitzGerald, Roy Keyes, Steve Hodis, Steve Wilson, Clare Brooks, David Ford, Roy Rice, Roy Cottis, Trevor “Mr Burns” Bashford, Paul “Wino Wagon” Marshall, Craig Fillary, Terry Jeffreys, Bryan Woodford, Matt Donahue, Adam Pickering, Reece Lawrence, Staff & Drivers at Supreme Travel, Anita's & Chalkwell Coaches, and Brian Wheeler & all in the SUFC Commercial Department.

Committee Meeting (02/05/2005)

The main talking point for those present at the first meeting in May was how the Trust was to move forward in light of recent events. It was agreed that we should be looking for more volunteers to help on the Trust committee, figures for which had remained constant whilst the Trust grew by a thousand people or more.

One of the focal points for the Committee has been the Shrimpers Bar, where we have a big presence with the largely Paul Yeomanson-led stand. In light of further restrictions being placed on the Trust and security issues arising from the Northampton game (a couple of weeks later), it was decided that a review of the situation was imperative in the summer, and our chairman Trevor Bashford, as well as the liaison committee, are sure to take this further.

It was also agreed that Sir Teddy Taylor, the recently-resigned conservative member of parliament for Southend East, should remain as the Trust's President. Whilst many will not agree with his party politics, he has been an important member of the community in Southend over the past decade and more.

John Stannard, the club physiotherapist, has got in touch and ordered £3,000-worth of equipment, mainly a cross-trainer and rowing machine. It was agreed that the extra £500 could be covered within the Quid-a-Goal budget, and as such, the Trust were delighted to help John and squad out.

44 out of 54 Dave Goody books had been sold after the recent Programme Fair at the start of May. There may still be a few left, so contact Paul Yeomanson on p.yeomanson@blueyonder.co.uk to get your hands on a discounted Trust copy. And on that subject, my many apologies to David Stacey for not mentioning the fair in the last newsletter. David does an excellent job, and will no doubt be back again with lots of football memorabilia in the Shrimpers Bar next season.

Committee Meeting (23/05/2005)

Just a couple of weeks ago we were back in the Spread Eagle again and in the company of two extra Trust members, Bryan Woodford and Lee Bird, who had either been in contact with us, or had been ‘tapped up’, Chelsea-style, by members of the existing committee. This was in an observer's role, but hopefully the experience was not too chastening, and they will come back on board next time.

Travel-wise, with Cardiff '05 Mk II impending, there was plenty to talk about, but it is next season that primarily concerns us now. For the first away match of next season (fixtures to be released in just over a fortnight on June 23rd), the Shrimpers Trust are pleased to announce that the top twenty travellers from 2004/5 will go free. The next ten down will travel half-price as a thank-you to all of those that come with us regularly.

The main matter to come out of the liaison meeting with the club that had taken place a week or so before was the wrenching of the toilets from the wall in the North Bank before, during, or after, the aforementioned Yeovil Town match. Geoffrey King stated that he does not expect this to be repeated.

Liaison Meeting (04/05/2005)

The problem with the trains on the way back from Cardiff '05 Mk I is obviously still a sore point for the club - neither party are accepting responsibility, but it would be nice if those inconvenienced were given a bit of honesty from both groups instead of the widespread silence that remains.



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You may have noticed that the Club Shop - Blues Superstore if you prefer - has no roof at the moment. That is because Geoffrey King has been on his travels and seen some more updated models that he likes- the 2005/6 version promises to be bigger and better than ever, with hopefully the club listening to what supporters want in terms of stock.

The Shrimpers Bar atmosphere issue continues. At the Player of the Year night, smoking was banned from the bar, and this policy looks likely to continue in the absence of air conditioning in the confined area. We did our best by keeping doors open before the Northampton game, but without ventilation there is only so much that can be done.

Well done to the club for keeping ticket prices at a constant level into 2005/6 however. With the prospect of promotion, the tendency and temptation must have been to push them up, but to their credit, League One football will cost just £305 if you are an adult next season, and if you pay in advance, a match ticket is only £16.50 again. £18 makes sense for matchday sales, although provisions must be in place for exiled supporters.

*** Full details of these meetings are available online at www.shrimpertrust.co.uk ***

Centenary Meeting (05/05/2005)

With just over a year until the club's centenary, plans are still in motion between the club and the Trust. Unfortunately a series of clubs have turned down our advances for a match, so the prospect of Swindon Town Reserves (our first opposition way back in 1906) looms ever larger. The latest attempt sees an enquiry over the availability of foreign clubs touring in that summer.

Dave Goody hopes to produce a book to celebrate the Centenary, largely updating and improving his exhaustive history of the Blues, published in 1992. The planned date for release would be May 2006. Both Swansea City and Dundee have declared problems with printing season ticket holders names into shirts, so that may be one idea with regards to attire that will be scrapped.

Player of the Year Night 2005

As usual, this evening, held just after the regular season had ended on May 11th, proved very successful with both players - all of whom turned up for at least some of the proceedings - and supporters alike. Our grateful thanks go to Kevin Feasey for his wonderful presentation of the Season in Review, and to Southend United's Brian Wheeler for hosting the event again.

There were prizes for Rosemary Berry and Jenny Yeomanson (long-suffering wives of Chris and Paul respectively), as well as a meeting with their heroes, Darryl Flahavan and Lawrie Dudfield. Steve Tilson made congratulated our four top travellers (Lee Tanner, Terry Boulter and David Ford on the wrong side of 16 and Tom Berry as the youngster) who had made it to 8,000 miles worth of matches on Shrimpers Trust coaches, and lived to tell the tale. Kevin received a signed and framed shirt for all of his efforts.

In the awards proper, Freddy Eastwood obtained the accolade of Southend Junior Shrimpers Player of the Year, and Mark Gower an award for Goal of the Season after that scorcher in the LDV Vans Trophy against Bristol Rovers at the Memorial Ground. In reverse order, the winners in the voting for Player of the Season were captain Kevin Maher, top goalscorer Freddy Eastwood and defensive colossus, Adam Barrett, who also scooped the ShrimperZone Player of the Year Award. Che Wilson was handed the Shrimpers-Online Most Improved Player award.

Barrett, Steve Tilson and even Ron Martin all had their say on the season as it was, and promised better things for the play-offs and beyond. All of their dreams came true, eventually, at Cardiff, and you can read their thoughts, and a thorough review of the evening, at www.shrimpertrust.org.uk.

End of Season Draw Winners

- 1st Prize: £500 to Ben Tandy
- 2nd Prize: £250 to Mr/Mrs Lewis
- 3rd Prize: £100 to Patrick Dalton
- 4th Prize: SUFC Signed Ball to Brian Collins
- 5th Prize: Bottle of Scotch to Colin Westrop



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6th Prize: Bottle of Champagne to Carolyn Mason

If you have not been contacted yet, you soon will be!

100 Club

Peter Brock, Paul Claydon (yes, him again!), David Mason, Gill Manning and Paul Clancy have all been winners in the 100 Club during the past few weeks, so to join them, you know the drill: the prize fund is 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 now, is it?

Quid-a-Goal

The initiative should raise in excess of £4000 if everyone who has committed to paying Alan Perry does so after his massive mailing last week. Those people who laid down £75 for Duncan Jupp scoring this season almost got away with it, but his strike at Cardiff has meant that they will now be digging into their pockets...and perhaps backing Che Wilson if he sticks around for next season! At the time of writing, 17 people have already got in contact, and the majority are pledging again for next season, so thanks very much.

LDV Pennant Around The World

Ian Kittle was the proud recipient of the pennant in Brampton, Ontario, in Canada after a short inter-state hop. He has passed it on to David Kenley in Quebec, who astoundingly last saw the Shrimpers play in 1949! From there, Paul Cannin has taken the memorabilia on in South Carolina, and it even had an outing in what the Americans would call a 'soccer' stadium. The 8,000-capacity Clemson University was the venue, and it is now on it's way south to Mexico. Don't forget to track the latest progress via the interactive map at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk.

New Life Members (total: 89)

David Bear, Ashlin Brown, Roy Davis, James Welham

The Shrimpers Trust wish to welcome these new members to the fold:

Mr. J.S. Ayres, Jillian Baker, Daniel Barrick, Natalie Barwick, David Bear, Patricia Beecroft, Giuseppe Berardinelli, John Blyth, Colin & Stephen Brind, Vic Bruce, Susan Bullock, Gary & Paul Button, Anthony Chappel, Tony Chisam, Steven Collins, Mr. C & Mr. C.R. Compton, Malcolm Crane, Sarah Crane, Joe Cunningham, Dean Curtis, Ed & Will Davis, Ashley Day, Chris Diaper, Frederick Dye, Margaret Figg, Avril Franklin, Paul Fuller, Dean Grostate, Peter Hall, Greg Hammond, Barry Harris, Simon Harris, Kevin Harvey, Steven Hurren, Graham Keyes, Shannon Law, Barry Lawrence, Lesley Lodge, Simon MacDonald, David & Sheila Mallam, Stephan Marshall, Mark McHugh, Amy Morris, Chris & Katherine Nice, David Nicholls, Rachel Orchover, Graham Overall, Mr. J.W. Pearce, Marc Pettengell, Karl Pilgrim, Ian Pilling, David Pither, Gary, Linda, Terry & Sylvia Prickler, Robert Quested, Philip Ransom, Martin Robbins, Nick Rodwell, Del & Ben Rudd, Kevin Saunders, Jamie Sinclair, Darryl Smith, Lindsay Sorrell, Trevor Stanbridge, Richard Stone, Andrew Styles, Adam Swan, Ken & Francis Taylor, Mark Townsend, John Wise, Mark Withers.

THE NEWS – Away from Home

Rushden & Diamonds

The Diamonds, who narrowly avoided relegation to the Nationwide Conference this season, now find themselves celebrating after the Griggs family, who did so much to make them a Football League club, helped to secure their future by handing the club over to the supporters last week. The Griggs, who own the Dr. Marten's group, have given the supporters £20 million of assets and over 20 acres of land, which house the state of the art stadium complex at Nene Park.

This unprecedented handover is further sweetened by the Griggs' promise to invest over £750,000 into the club over the next two seasons. There will be no debt for the supporters to take on, with Mssrs. Max and Stephen



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Griggs handing them control of the stadium, the conference centre, three car parks, a restaurant and a bar, as well as office space.

David Suddens, chief executive of the club and CEO at Dr. Martens, said: *“Today’s transfer of ownership to supporters, free of debt, with commitments to further financial support is an amazing gesture of support by Max and Stephen Griggs. At a time when football is often maligned, and the intentions of those at the top of football ownership often much criticised, this deal is truly groundbreaking.”*

Helen Thompson, a member of the Trust and now the club’s managing director, concurred, *“This is a magnanimous gesture by the Griggs Family to the local community of East Northamptonshire and neighbouring areas. We are so proud of this five star palace of sport which has no comparison outside of the Premiership, in our opinion. And to be vested with the responsibility of sustaining this superb facility for forthcoming generations is such an honour.”*

Stockport County

In just over one month, the Hatters will be under the control of the Supporters Trust after an agreement was made with current incumbents, Cheshire Sport. They had invited the Trust to consider making a bid for the struggling club, relegated to Coca-Cola League Two last season, revealing in a statement that they believed that this would be best for County in the long term.

The chairman of the Supporters Trust, Norman Beverley, said, *“This is a very important day in the history of Stockport County Football Club. It marks the beginning of the process that will mean that from next season, the club will be run by the fans for the fans, and by the community for the people of Stockport.”* Beverley continued to praise Brian Kennedy of Cheshire Sport for contributing a personal investment of £4 million pounds to keep the club afloat and set up a viable business plan.

Interestingly for Shrimpers supporters, Kennedy has also helped Stockport in terms of their ground at Edgeley Park. Beverley revealed, *“Mr Kennedy has offered the Trust a fair deal which confirms and guarantees that the shareholding will be freely gifted to the Trust, along with a 25 year rent free lease to play at Edgeley Park. He has also accepted that the Trust should have the right to buy back the freehold of Edgeley Park in the future. To this effect Mr Kennedy has agreed to give the Trust a ten year period in which to raise the funds to do so.”*

Tellingly, Kennedy was quick to praise the Trust in its wider context: *“I believe that football clubs at this level should be owned by their fans and their community - a view I have held from the outset when I took control of County and made the pledge that within three years the club would be self funding within its community. The reason I have agreed to pass on the ownership of the shares at this time is that I believe the club will perform better financially as a stand-alone business run by the community and the fans.”*

Wrexham

Just prior to the end of the regular season, we received the following message of thanks from Welsh club Wrexham, who find themselves in a situation not a million miles from a possible scenario at Roots Hall:

“We salute ALL fans who have visited the Racecourse this season, who have donated to the Supporters Trust, who have joined in events such as the Wear Red For Wrexham Day, or who have helped us in any other way. The football fans of the UK can stand proud in knowing that they have taken on greedy property developers and other businessmen, and will continue to do so whenever they appear at any club.”

Remember - Fans United Will Never Be Defeated.”

THE MATCHES – Blues in Review

apr 30: yeovil town (h) 10-1 [league two]

It was supposed to be the battle for the number one spot, and a battle that Southend United were ready to win. It didn’t quite turn out the way that we wanted it in the end, although those from the green-and-white side of North Bank were eventually able to celebrate a title-winning season with a thrashing of Lincoln City at Huish Park seven days after this slug-fest.



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In front of 11,735, the encounter was settled by greasy-booted forward Phil Jevons scoring a legitimate goal for once this season! With just seven minutes of the clash remaining, he latched onto a luckily deflected shot from Aaron Davies to tuck the ball underneath Darryl Flahavan and into the South Stand net. There were few chances for the home fans to get going, and despite various laps of honour and awards at the conclusion of the game, all watched peacefully by the Glovers supporters, there was still a sense that United now had some tricky business in front of them.

may 07: grimsby town (a) d1-1 [league two]

Blundell Park is not the favourite venue for Southend supporters, and so it proved again in what was altogether a rotten day for the two thousand-odd Blues fans who made the trip to the land of Cod. Some only just made it, with Harlow-based Olympian Coaches letting both the Trust and Supreme down by committing the cardinal sin of not taking enough fuel on board. I only hope that they do not start organising flights out of Southend Airport when the redevelopment there is completed.

The game itself was against a disappointment, and an event that must leave the authorities questioning their behaviour. Carl Pettefer wasted the best chance of the opening period, blazing over from ten yards out with an open goal gaping. It was one of those days. A series of lucky breaks culminated in Michael Reddy driving past Darryl Flahavan off of an upright.

The response, as it had to be with Swansea City 1-0 up at Gigg Lane, where they needed to better Blues result against Bury, was swift; Freddy Eastwood headed into the net from a Kevin Maher corner to restore parity. Marl Bentley had earlier struck the crossbar, and Eastwood shot inches wide as time went on. Sadly, at both Blundell Park and in Lancashire, the matches involving third and fourth in the League were called to a halt prematurely as the crowds encroached on the pitch.

In the pouring rain, one supporter started a rumour that Bury had levelled. We were going up... Alas, it was false, even if it had come from the BBC. We weren't, and in the final analysis, we had ourselves to blame.

may 15: northampton town (a) d0-0 [league two play-off semi-final first leg]

Back to Sixfields, on SKY Television, and having gained just one point from three games after heading the table thanks to a 2-1 win at high-flying Macclesfield, who had just taken a whole 579 fans to Lincoln to witness a 1-0 defeat in the other tie. No problems with the coaches - we were there nearly three hours before kick-off this time - and beautiful sunny day awaited Blues up the M1.

This was a job well done in the scheme of things; a rocky patch needed to be halted and with the momentum on their side, the Cobblers could have run riot had the Shrimpers not defended stoutly and typically. Scott McGleish came closest to breaking the deadlock, a diving header directed just over, and Luke Guttridge could have won it against his old adversaries when he nodded into the side-netting. 0-0, and all was to play for.

may 21: northampton town (h) w1-0 [league two play-off semi-final second leg]

Cagey again, maybe, but this 1-0 win was all that mattered. Another trip to Cardiff beckoned again, this one immeasurably more important than the last two. And how sweet it was for the Seasiders' top goalscorer, Freddy Eastwood, to make sure that Blues halted over 400 minutes on SKY without a goal and without a win, sliding home a penalty early in the second period after man-of-the-match Nicky Nicolau had been felled by Chris Willmott.

Andy Kirk and McGleish, of course, were threats, but in between Mark Bentley tested Lee Harper with a stinging shot. The majority of the pressure came in front of the Cobblers goal, and they were destined to lose their fourth match out of five against Blues once Eastwood had done the business from the spot. Che Wilson hit the crossbar with a speculative lobbed cross, and Eric Sabin had penalty appeals waved away, but fittingly it was Darryl Flahavan who saved the day with a stunning save from McGleish in the last minute. The rest, as they say, is history.

Up the Shrimpers!

Robert Craven (05/06/2005)