



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 9



THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

I'M SURE THAT I can't be the only person that thinks things are going a little too well at the moment...

Eight points clear at the top of the table, and nine points ahead of the third-placed team with just five games to go means that Southend United have a realistic chance of doing exactly what Steve Tilson, Spencer Prior and Andy Edwards did fifteen years earlier.

However, any mention of the p-word is strictly banned from my keyboard at the moment, as I'm trying really hard not to tempt fate. Over the next nine pages I'll probably use a lot of words starting with that letter, but a certain nine-letter effort ending in -tion will not be one of them.

The most recent 2-1 success over Blackpool again proved just how resilient the Shrimpers have become under Steve Tilson. Even at the end of last season, trailing 1-0 at the break and then into the second period may have led to a one-goal defeat or a draw. Slowly but surely, Tilly and Brush have pieced together a side that are strong in mind as well as body.

It started last year, admittedly, grinding out results in the two Play-Off matches against Northampton Town, and in last-gasp triumphs like Chester City, where Lawrie Dudfield popped up in the closing stages to seal a 1-0 win.

This year seems to have had an awful lot of them though, and the two matches against the other Seasideers have seen the Lancastrians be mightily unlucky against the Shrimpers. Firstly, Freddy Eastwood, on as a substitute at Bloomfield Road, pops up with a sublime strike of real quality to give a tiring south Essex side the three points away from home, and then in the return clash, it was Luke Guttridge's turn to get lucky with a low drive that dropping into the net via the legs of goalkeeper Lee Jones.

Guttridge has been a revelation this season, and even though his recent performances have not matched those of earlier in the campaign, he still very much deserves to be in the running for the Player of the Year awards at the end of the year.

But nearly every one of Tilly's acquisitions have turned to gold. Look at Mark Bentley, a

journeyman non-League battler plying his trade with Dagenham & Redbridge a couple of years ago, now finding himself sitting atop the League One table. His tenacious displays have given United real impetus at times when a driving force is required.

Then there is Lee Bradbury. Out of favour on the right wing at League Two Oxford United, Tilson snaps him up on a free transfer at the end of the transfer window, restores belief in the former Manchester City team-mate of Shaun Goater, and stops running up and down the right flank from being a chore any more. He must have been very close to the Player of the Month award for March from the Southend Junior Shrimpers.

Ironically, perhaps the only player not to have hit it off for the Shrimpers is Jamal Campbell-Ryce, who, it has been announced, will join Blues at the end of the season after a protracted transfer saga with former club Rotherham United.

Campbell-Ryce, after a number of weeks sitting around on matchday after training with the Shrimpers, unbelievably joined Colchester United on loan from the Millers in March, scoring against Southend in a reserve match at Roots Hall.

According to agent Richard Cody, Campbell-Ryce's heart has always been in south Essex. Unfortunately, anything that person says can be taken with a pinch of salt. Footballers' agents are often either extremely misguided individuals, people with over-inflated egos or contain a massive amount of greed.

Cody represents many of the players on the staff at United, although if he had his way he would probably like to see them move on to further line his pockets. Remember the Darryl Flahavan fiascos?

Season-upon-season, Darryl stalled on his contract, refusing to sign unless a higher-division side might come in for him. When Steve Wignall (and you won't find me praising him very often) lost patience with Flavs, he ended up training – only training – with Wimbledon/Franchise FC/MKDonalds for a few months before being slung a lifeline at Roots Hall. Is it any coincidence that Darryl's best form has come about because he has stopped



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throwing his toys prematurely out of the pram?

Another thought to ponder – where is Lawrie Dudfield now? Instead of contributing to a table-heading League One side's fantastic season, he is popping up now and then at Boston United after a spell at Northampton Town on trial. The grass is always greener, eh?

Thankfully, the Football Association appear to be starting action by charging Jonathan Barnett, Ashley Cole's agent, after his role in the Chelsea tapping-up affair. The sooner football players start to cut out the middle man, the better.

And while I talk about the negative side of the game briefly, our trip to MK Dons and the NHS only served to prove what a lifeless, soulless club that is. They may be building a new stadium, but they will never be able to reverse the actions of the individuals who pulled the heart out of Wimbledon FC in moving them to leafy Buckinghamshire.

What is most galling about the whole incident is that the club try to claim that Wimbledon's 1988 FA Cup success, and the promotions that preceded it, were somehow connected to the hollow shell of a football club that remains. Wimbledon FC died in 2003, MK Dons are a club shrouded in failure. How long before the Dons is dropped and a replacement sold for money is instigated?

Returning to the theme of Steve Tilson's magnificent record in the transfer market, and the most notable signing without a shadow of a doubt has been Freddy Eastwood.

It is difficult to measure just how much influence Eastwood has had since his move from Grays Athletic in October 2004. If you measure it in terms of goals, then his return of 46 strikes in just 70 starts is simply phenomenal. Even if you factor in a further 11 substitute appearances, his strike rate is still much better than a goal every other game.

The importance of possessing a 20-goal a season top scorer cannot be underestimated either. The Shrimpers, while languishing in the lower echelons of what is now League Two for so long, craved someone who would bag more than 20 goals every season.

I firmly believe that Leon Constantine's return in 2003/4 kept the Shrimpers in the Football League, and after he sought Barry Fry's riches at Peterborough United (when will they ever learn?), and Eastwood now means that Southend's top striker in each of the last three seasons has passed 20 goals.

What is more, Eastwood, in the style of someone like David Beckham, is also vital in that he raises team spirit through his own performances. In this respect, he has improved a lot in 2005/6. He now works harder for the team, racing for lost causes, putting in more challenges, and reaping the rewards (see his first goal against Hartlepool United for categorical proof).

Eastwood has stepped in Stanley Collymore's shoes in being a truly exciting player to watch at Roots Hall. The Epsom-born front man puts bums on seats and makes sure that attendances have topped seven or eight thousand regularly.

If a club in the top two divisions wanted to sign Eastwood now, they would have to pay significantly more than the £50,000 rumoured to have brought him to Roots Hall from Grays. Perhaps he, like Lee Trundle, will sign a rights deal with his club given his influence.

Trundle, meanwhile, will have to face the consequences of his actions after being pictured in a t-shirt depicting a Swansea fan carrying out lewd actions over a Cardiff supporter, and carrying, with Alan Tate, a flag saying 'F*&k Off Cardiff'. If a supporter was found with those items on the streets of the Welsh principality, he would surely have been arrested on the spot – it seems that they weren't before handing them to the Scouser – so his arrest last week is not surprising.

Trundle has been the League One role model to supporters for much of the campaign, coming fourth in *FourFourTwo's* study of the top fifty players outside of the Premiership. Although Darryl Flahavan and Luke Guttridge were in the forties, Freddy was nowhere to be seen. It is unlikely that the publication will make such a mistake next season.

Up The Shrimpers,

Rob



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THE TRUST MEETS...Chris Baker

The Shrimpers Trust were delighted to welcome Chris Baker to our committee meeting on 13th March 2006. Both Chris and the Trust had made comments in the light of recent statements about the issue of standing at Roots Hall, and Chris wanted to attend a meeting to hear our thoughts and also put the record straight over an article that had appeared on the official Southend United website.

On the issue of away supporters at the Hall, Blues' Stadium Manager revealed that SUFC are responsible for all supporters at the ground, and that anyone misbehaving would be thrown out of the ground. However, punishments for individuals supporting our visitors would be dealt out by their clubs; SUFC is only fined for the actions of home supporters.

Southend United always offer the services of their own 77-strong army of stewards to opposition clubs when travelling away, but most clubs refuse this. Back at the Hall, Chris has been "very impressed with Southend supporters" since his arrival from Gravesend & Northfleet.

There are regular "sweeps" of the ground to ask supporters to sit down, and many point to those standing at the back of the East Stand as justification for their actions. However, there is jurisdiction from the Football Licensing Authority for these fans to stand given the paltry leg-room in the row below the Executive Boxes.

A procedure has been put in place since Chris' arrival, and the old security guards have been replaced with trained personnel that are able to communicate with supporters. The protocol sees stewards talk to supporters first, then a safety supervisor. If this does not work, then three security guards will be called in to eject the person.

One of the largest problems remaining at Roots Hall is standing at the back of the West Stand. Chris met with Karl Dawn to see if older supporters could 'police' the younger elements in the X block of the West Stand, and this had been a great success. However, if people continue to mill around at the back of this stand, it could cause safety issues in the event of an emergency.

Chris is working hard at the other end of the West Stand to stamp out the foul and abusive language that has been reported from the Family Enclosure. The levels of this are being monitored, and the situation is beginning to pick up as the season approaches its conclusion.

Positively, Southend supporters could be housed in the North Bank on a more regular basis if entry issues can be resolved. Chris revealed that the Football League state that only ten percent of the ground has to be given up to away supporters (at the Hall this is 1200 seats), and that he would like to see Southend fans take up the largest possible allocation.

There would have to be entry adjustments, but Chris has plans that he is discussing with Geoffrey King in order to implement this operation. At present, a large flag is covering 400 seats behind the goal, and this provides an aesthetic, if not totally practical, barrier until the end of 2005/6. If Southend supporters will take up the extra 1600 places that can be allocated in the northwest half of the North Bank, then he is happy to sell those tickets to Shrimpers.

Although SUFC are not a heavily-charged police club, Chris has met his target of having a police-free match two months ahead of schedule. At the time of the meeting, the previous three home games had been police-free, and he is already looking at what fixtures this could be implemented for, whatever division we are in, for 2006/7.

Chris revealed, on the issue of safe-standing at football grounds, that "if other countries manage safe-standing areas, then why shouldn't England?" If safe-loading barriers could be brought in, then he thought proposals could be put in place, and a number of his fellow Safety Managers felt the same.



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All of the Club's safety personnel had seen footage of the 1985 Bradford City fire, and this had had a great effect on them all. He mentioned that if those people who flouted the rules regarding smoking also saw it, then they may think differently about lighting up at Roots Hall.

Finally, Chris left by stating his aims as Safety and Stadium Manager Bar at Roots Hall:

- To have more police-free matches at the Hall to make SUFC a more family-orientated club
- To promote a friendly atmosphere
- To have more customer-friendly stewards
- To increase areas for families to attend
- To increase the home supporters' capacity
- To improve the Club's matchday service

Our many thanks are extended to Chris Baker for attending our meeting and giving up his time and insight into his role at Southend United Football Club

THE SHRIMPERS TRUST KIDS

Blues' Youths Results

Sat 11 Mar | Leyton Orient (a) | D1-1

Sat 18 Mar | Wycombe Wanderers (h) | W2-1

Sat 25 Mar | Northampton Town (h) | W2-0

Sat 1 Apr | Rushden & Diamonds (h) | W1-0

Sat 8 Apr | Luton Town (a) | W4-1

Southend United's Under-18 side continued have continued their recent run, and extended their unbeaten trot to nine matches, with an incredible four successive victories over the past four weeks. Joel Ledgister, the original 'Shrimpers Trust Kid', missed out on the 1-1 draw at Leyton Orient, although Reiss Noel did feature as Charles Ademeno put United in front at Ford Sports Ground in Newbury Park. Against ten men, Blues conceded late on to draw.

Both played in the 2-1 win at home to Wycombe Wanderers, Ledgister firing just past the post, although Steffan Gaisie and Lee Smyth did manage to hit the target. Ledgister netted the first of two second-half goals with midfielder Callum Kearnes adding the other as United defeated Northampton Town 2-0, and the winger set up Franck Moussa for the only goal of the game against Rushden & Diamonds a week later. Before the 4-1 thrashing of Luton, the young Shrimpers lay sixth in the twelve-team table, but could have now moved to fourth.

THE TRUST – What We've Done

Committee Meeting Minutes (13/03/2006)

Aside from the dialogue with Stadium Manager Chris Baker above and discussions surrounding the Liaison Meeting with SUFC detailed below, there was talk of how to help Rotherham United FC in their current plight. It was agreed to donate the £265 raised from the 4-2 win at Millmoor to Rotherham United Supporters Trust (RUST) as an initial donation.

In the ensuing days, we tried to contact both Milton Keynes Dons and Southend United to see if we could host bucket collections at the two grounds. The response from the football clubs was astounding! MK Dons, a detestable club at the best of times, failed to respond at all – presumably due to their already implemented collections for the McMillan Cancer Research Trust.

However, SUFC came back to Paul Yeomanson by saying that the eight collecting allocations had already been taken up for the season, and that supporters would be annoyed if they were asked to contribute to a ninth. Of course, some fans, for whatever reason, would not want to donate, but surely they should be given the choice? From a fellow football club, and one that only a few seasons ago was in pretty major financial trouble itself, it was an incredibly self-centred reply.



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On a positive note, I'd like to thank the supporters again on my coach that added a further £34 to RUST's coffers. Recent reports suggest that the Millers may have scaled the mountain and are on their way back down, and that is thanks to the many genuine football supporters who helped RUST to raise hundreds of thousands of pounds in a short space of time. Well done to you all.

Committee Meeting Minutes (03/04/2006)

Our most recent Committee Meeting saw former SUFC Club Shop manager Clare Brooks invited to see if she would like to become involved as our latest Committee member. Hopefully Clare will become more involved over the next few weeks and months.

One of our members, Brian Collins, has submitted a World Cup Prediction Game, which those who visited the Shrimpers Bar on Saturday will have seen. Its principles are simple – basically you get maximum points for getting the scoreline correct and a point less for the outcome, and then staggered points for predicted which countries will travel furthest in the competition. Entry is £5, with half going to the Shrimpers Trust and half to the prize pool, which will see 60% go to the overall winner, 30% to the runner-up and 10% to the third-placed person. The more people that enter, the more money for the winner.

Supporters who want to travel to Swansea City's Liberty Stadium will have to phone Chris Berry in person in order to go to South Wales on a coach. Under-16s will not be allowed to travel without the supervision of a responsible adult due to the possible importance of our last away fixture of 2005/6. 719 people have now travelled on Shrimpers Trust coaches this season.

The leg-waxing event at Roots Hall raised in excess of £450 despite the problems of those having the hairs ripped from their bodies. Well done to all involved. Unfortunately, 'The Team We Call United' has seen some problems with production, and will not be available until the start of next season. The Trust are hoping to tie in the release with a Question & Answer session with former sharpshooter Billy Best.

Liaison Meeting Minutes (08/03/2006)

Paul Yeomanson, Terry Jeffreys and Bryan Woodford attended the Liaison meeting on behalf of the Trust, where a number of issues were discussed. The first was the potential for a voucher system to be implemented for any possible Play-Off matches at the end of the season. Although director Derek Wilshire saw no problem in this, it was revealed that Barnsley would not be sending down any advanced tickets, so a priority system for away supporters who were also Season Ticket Holders could not be put in place.

There was a big communication problem over the Trust's sponsored leg-waxing event, where the leg-waxing did not take place on the pitch. SUFC promised to look into the fiasco, as well as the crazy incident at Layer Road where neither of Southend mascots were permitted to attend on incitement grounds according to persistent rumours.

Southend United's letters to Bradford City over the alleged racist incident in December had not been replied to at all, but with the onus on SUFC, they were unable to establish any possible date for a Question & Answer session with Ron Martin for Trust members or for 2006's Meet The Blues Day.

As a general rule, anyone attending a match in the Executive Boxes will not be allowed to leave the area once they are admitted in. There will be exceptions, but Ray Davy had been instructed not to allow this to happen. Paul Y expressed his concerns over this situation.

Full Minutes of the Trust's Liaison Meetings with Southend United are available to download from the Shrimpers Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk



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Race Night

Well done to everyone who attended another great evening on 11 March. It was an interesting experience since this was held on a non-matchday for the first time, and this did not seem to hinder the attendance. The total raised by the evening was comparable to previous events at £617, so thanks to everyone who came along, to Brian Dear and his bar staff at the Shrimpers Bar and to 'On Course' Race Nights from South Woodham Ferrers, who supplied the all-important race coverage itself.

Shrimpers Trust/BBC Essex Commentary Auction

Congratulations are in order to James 'Finny' Finlinson, our 38-year-old winner of the Trust auction for a summariser's spot on BBC Essex's radio coverage of the massive League One clash against Blackpool. James was asked for his thoughts every fifteen minutes or so on the progress of the Shrimpers' vital encounter, talking listeners throughout the county through Gareth Williams' opener, Freddy Eastwood's equaliser and Luke Guttridge's late winner. The Southend-based Shrimpers fanatic will have been especially pleased with Freddy's contribution, having listed him as Blues' most natural front runner since 'Sir Stanley Collymore'. Thanks very much to BBC Essex for giving James his five minutes of fame in the Southend spotlight.

100 Club

Alan Perry is still looking for new members of this initiative, and will welcome emails at alanperry4@hotmail.com or calls to him on 01702 476 458 for more details on how to become a winner in the weekly draw. At the moment there are 84 members, meaning a weekly pay-out of £42. Charles Ball, Richard Harrington, Mike Roles and Valerie Fane have scooped the money in the last four weeks, but you've got to be in it to win it, and as more people subscribe, then the prizes go up. Please contact Alan if you are interested.

Quid-a-Goal

Following the 1-1 draw at AFC Bournemouth a week ago, our grand total of pledges had broken the four thousand pound barrier at £4037. Given that, with six matches to go of last season, we had raised £141 less, and that there were a further two goals netted against Blackpool, we are on target to smash last year's total.

New Life Members (total: 106)

Welcome to our one new Life Member this month: **Mark Folwell**

The Shrimpers Trust would like to welcome the following new members this month:

Alan Bakewell, Dave Bunker, Keith Cammidge, Stephen Choat, Ian Clarke, Brenda Coughlan, Lauren Cunningham, Peter Garland, Richard Groves, J. Hammond, Richard Harrington, Stephen Jones, Daniel Lamb, Christopher Moone, Graham Muncey, Nick Pullen, Glenn Purcell, David Scott, Ron Spencer, Shaw Stretton, Ladislav Szabo, Graham Tuttlebury and Katherine Vogelsang.

COMING UP – The Trust Events Schedule

Question & Answer Session with Garry Nelson (20/04/2006)

Contact Paul Yeomanson at p.yeomanson@blueyonder.co.uk or visit the Shrimpers Trust stand for more details

On Thursday 20 April, the Shrimpers Bar will be hosting a Question & Answer session with former Shrimper Garry Nelson. The one-time left-sided midfielder made 144 appearances for Blues, scoring 18 goals before moving to Swindon Town for £10,000 in 1983. Nelson later featured for Brighton & Hove Albion and Charlton Athletic, becoming player-coach with Torquay United in 1996.



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Garry is sure to have many stories to tell, having featured in United's record-breaking promotion winning season of 1980/1, as well as writing two best-selling books, 'Left Foot Forward: A Year In The Life Of A Journeyman Footballer' (nominated for the William Hill Sports Book of the Year award in 1996 and then 'Left Foot In The Grave'. He still lives in the area and inspired Ford (Basildon) to the 2006 Essex Sunday Veterans Cup just a fortnight ago.

Entry is free, and doors open at 7:30 p.m. for an eight o'clock start – we hope to see as many Trust members there as possible!

Football Programme Directory Annual Southend United Programme Fair (23/04/2006)

Contact: David Stacey of the FPD for more details – information available from the Shrimpers Trust stand

Sunday 23rd April will see the Shrimpers Bar host the annual FPD programme and memorabilia fair at Roots Hall. David Stacey has organised the yearly event, which gets underway at ten o'clock. Admission is 50p. and the Shrimpers Trust will be situated, as usual, in the far corner of the room. These events are always well attended, and for any football collector, bargains can be found aplenty.

In other FPD news, Southend United's official matchday programme, 'The Blues', has been awarded the Coca-Cola League One programme of the year award, ahead of Scunthorpe United and Swansea City. 21 out of the 24 League One clubs sent in entries, and out of the 77 League sides entering, the Shrimpers came sixth in the eyes of three independent judges.

Shrimpers Trust Player of the Year Night (11/05/2006)

See www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or visit the Shrimpers Trust stand for more details

This year's annual End of Season Review event will this year take place in the Shrimpers Bar on Thursday 11 May 2006. Doors will open at seven o'clock for an eight o'clock start, from which Kevin Feasey will unleash a DVD review of the season.

After the recording of the televised 1-0 victory over Nottingham Forest, the Trust will make a presentation of a glass decanter set to management duo Steve Tilson and Paul Brush to commemorate the club's record eight consecutive victories.

Awards to be handed out on the night will include the Southend Junior Shrimper Player of the Year award and the naming of the Goal of the Season. As ever, there are plenty of candidates, from Mitchell Cole's winding run at home to Colchester, through Luke Guttridge's searing drive against AFC Bournemouth to Freddy Eastwood's jinxing effort just the other day against Blackpool.

There are two ways to vote for the award. If you receive this newsletter electronically, then simply e-mail your 1-2-3 to Terry Jeffreys at terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com. If you get this through the post, then cut out the form at the end of the newsletter and return in person at the Shrimpers Bar or in the post to Terry Jeffreys, 32 Herondale, Basildon, Essex. SS14 1RR.

Once again, vouchers will be available by way of admission to the event. 175 vouchers will be made available from pre-match in the Shrimpers Bar on Good Friday before the clash with Gillingham at Roots Hall. They will also be made available on the Shrimpers Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, via our PayPal system from directly after the Gills match. The vouchers cost £2 and can be redeemed for a drink on the night.

THE NEWS – Away from Home

Wrexham Supporters Trust

Back in mid-March, the Wrexham Supporters Trust were delighted to announce that they had won the legal case to get ownership of the Racecourse Ground. The club, currently in Coca-Cola League Two, are now looking to come to an arrangement for the sale of the Club by the Football League



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deadline of 3 June 2006. All parties looking to purchase the Club have been requested to submit, or resubmit their bids with details of their forward-planning.

THE MATCHES – Blues in Review

fri 10 mar: scunthorpe united (h) w3-0 [league one]

The honest truth is, like the later win against Hartlepool United, the Shrimpers were not particularly impressive during this win, despite the one-sided scoreline. However, coming on the back of yet another three-goal triumph, at Colchester United, it was important in that it retained momentum on the promotion charge.

If nothing else, Freddy Eastwood's opener deserved to win the game on its own. Picking up the ball on the left wing, he characteristically cut inside, dropped his shoulders a couple of times and then firmly but sweetly stuck the ball in the corner of Paul Musselwhite's goal after just seven minutes.

Blues fans in the South Upper generally enjoyed annoying Musselwhite, reminding him of his antics in the return game at Glanford Park earlier in the campaign, but the action was at the other end, where Cleveland Taylor and Ian Baraclough consistently fed Andy Keogh and Steve Torpey with the ammunition to test Darryl Flahavan.

Flavs, as usual, was on top form, and instead of being level, or worst still behind, at the break, Southend were in front. In the second period, the hosts pulled away with ease, Bradbury tapping in Efe Sodje's nod-down and Shaun Goater also faced with the simplest of tap-ins after Mark Gower had surprisingly sprung the offside trap.

sat 18 mar: milton keynes dons (a) 1-2 [league one]

Every club has their bogey side, and MK Dons, it would appear, are Southend's. A fortunate FA Cup win and dour goalless draw back in December at Roots Hall, and now a 2-1 win at the National Hockey Stadium. Thankfully Blues rivals stumbled, so any talk of a revival being required after the NHS was restricted.

It looked so good after 13 minutes. Shaun Goater continued his goalscoring form by converting Lee Bradbury's manfully-crafted cross from the edge of the box, scuffing the ball over Ricardo Batista. Four minutes later, and with Goater having failed to convert an easier chance, Dons were level as Garry Smith smashed home a one-in-a-hundred pot-shot from 25 yards.

Scott Taylor was a constant threat, and could have nabbed a hat-trick had he brought his shooting boots, but had to settle for a 78th minute winner, tucking home from Smith's simple square ball. *C'est la vie.*

sat 25 mar: hartlepool united (h) w3-0 [league one]

It was déjà vu all over again at the Mecca of Essex football. For the second time in a fortnight, Blues defeated their visitors 3-0 despite coming under a lot of pressure in the first half. This time the lead took just a minute to establish, with Kevin Maher and Luke Guttridge doing the hard work to assist Mark Gower in coolly slotting home.

Goater was adjudged offside and Bradbury set him up for what could have been a second minutes later, and from then on the Monkeyhangers caused Blues trouble. Michael Proctor struck the crossbar and Joel Porter and Stephen Turnbull also wasted chances to bring Hartlepool level.

They, like Scunny before them, were punished after the break and Eastwood registered his 19th and 20th goals of the campaign. The first was a magical moment as 'Pool 'keeper Dimitrios Konstantopoulos surrendered possession to the striker by the corner flag, and the 22-year-old knocked the ball in from an unbelievably acute angle. The second was a crisp left-footed drive from distance.



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sat 1 apr: AFC Bournemouth (a) 1-1 [League One]

After 21 minutes of this match, it appeared that normal service had been resumed once again. Goater had, by that time, already had another strike ruled out for offside and Eastwood had just registered yet another goal in yet another fantastic season for the youngster. Mark Bentley's close range shot hit the crossbar and Eastwood pounced to convert from feet outside the goal.

And, unfortunately, that led to United sitting back on a one-goal lead. There is only so much of that possible before a side with the attacking qualities of the Cherries will punish you, and James Hayter, a transfer target for Blues at Christmas, was the man to deliver, heading home at the back post just minutes after Efe Sodje had been stretchered from the field with an ankle injury.

sat 8 apr: Blackpool (h) 2-1 [League One]

This was the match that could go on to define our season. At half-time, the Shrimpers trailed by a goal to nil, Col U reject Gareth Williams turning Lewis Hunt to fire past Darryl Flahavan's left hand. Shaun Goater had earlier rounded Lee Jones, only to hit a weak shot towards an open goal that was easily cleared by Peter Clarke.

The Roots Hall crowd was deadly quiet; the run of the ball went towards Blackpool. Then came that flash of inspiration, the catalyst, as ever, was top goalscorer Freddy Eastwood. Cutting in from the right, he toyed with three or four 'Pool defenders before striking low into the bottom right-hand corner with his left foot. Game on.

Still, the ball would not run for Blues, with Adam Barrett and Hunt always having to be vigilant at the back against the dangerous Keigan Parker. Eastwood beat Jones, but struck against a post and the ball bobbed along the line for the 'keeper to gather.

Then, with six minutes to go, substitute Mitchell Cole, returning from injury amidst a huge gamble by Steve Tilson, who brought off Mark Gower, burst into the box, Luke Guttridge stealing the ball from his toes to fire at Jones. The custodian's right leg connected with the shot, but it bobbed through and into the net. Cue pandemonium. The Roots Hall Roar was back with a vengeance. Three points closer.

Up the Shrimpers!
Rob Craven (8 April 2006)

SHRIMPERS TRUST PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2005-06 VOTING FORM

A) My vote for the 2005-06 Shrimpers Trust Player of the Year goes to:

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

B) My Shrimpers Trust Goal of the Season was scored by:

.....vs.....

Please return as soon as possible to:
 Terry Jeffreys, 32 Herondale, Basildon, Essex. SS14 1RR
 or terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com