



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 12



THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

SO, IT'S NEARLY HERE! I'm writing this just over a week away from the start of the season, and by the time that you read this we'll be just days away...

There's been an ever-growing excitement around Roots Hall and Southend United ever since the pre-season campaign started, and with just a first-team run-out at Dagenham & Redbridge and a trialist fixture at Canvey Island to come, we are just over 180 minutes away from 2006/7 – in the Championship.

Much as I love pre-season friendlies – well, the away ones anyway – I can't wait for us to walk out onto the pitch against Stoke City now on August 5th.

It's not every day you get the chance to go to the likes of Chelmsford City – who definitely have the potential if not the means to be the second biggest club in Essex after the Shrimpers – and Great Wakering Rovers, so it's nice to do that, but when it comes to August 8th, it will be brilliant to watch Southend at Crystal Palace, especially since we will be united with former favourites Peter Taylor and Leon Cort.

The first five matches of the new season are going to give us all an indication of where we can expect to finish at the end. Of course it will not all be decided by the end of August, but we can look at the games and see what we are up against.

Stoke as an opener is as good as it was ever likely to be, but Blues have seen from first-day reverses to Cheltenham Town and Port Vale in 2004/5 and 2005/6 that just because they are facing unfancied outfits will their opposition roll-over.

The aforementioned Palace are the flip side of the coin. The Eagles will be hoping to go one step further than last year and dodge the play-offs by dint of getting into the automatic promotion spots. Facing them at Selhurst Park will not be easy.

For myself, August 12th posed a real dilemma. I haven't missed a Shrimpers fixture, home or away, for almost four years, but if I was going to, it would be to watch Essex Eagles in their first appearance at Twenty20 Finals Day at Trent Bridge. Having turned that trip down, I'll

be at Loftus Road to see Blues play Queens Park Rangers, one of the few teams that are tipped to struggle more than Southend this season.

After that, the Shrimpers entertain Sunderland in what could easily have been a SKY-televised clash (how does newly-promoted team versus recently-relegated outfit compare unfavourably to Southend versus Cardiff City?!). Niall Quinn's takeover will have given the Mackems hope, but Blues will be looking to inflict more misery on the northerners.

And the five are rounded off with a trip to the Walkers Stadium and Leicester City, a side that struggled last term, but a once-great club that will be hoping to resurrect past glories. As I said last month, there is so much top-flight history in the Coca-Cola Championship this year.

In theory, Southend United will be shrouded in history this season, as the club celebrate 100 Years. The Centenary has been handily marked with promotion the previous season to a level only tasted for six of the hundred years prior.

We all at the Shrimpers Trust hope that the Club celebrate this event in style, and to that end we have been helping with regular Centenary Meetings every month to six weeks over the last two years.

Of course, we now await to see who SUFC can manage to invite to the Hall for the "official" Centenary fixture. Many of the big clubs turned the Shrimpers down for a pre-season jaunt to the seaside, so it is to be hoped that the end of term will yield better results.

On the subject of better results, it has to be hoped that Steve McLaren makes a better fist of managing England than his predecessor. I, like at least a few others, thought that we had a genuine opportunity to win the World Cup in Germany during June and July.

The dreaded penalty shoot-out was the stage at which the national team fell again, but it is no good blaming our fallibility from twelve yards, or for that matter the hot-headedness of Wayne Rooney.

Rooney would never have been running around like a decapitated chicken had he not been



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asked to perform a lone striker's role so unsuitable for his play and one that he was so unused to.

Rooney would not have been asked to play as a lone striker had Sven-Goran Eriksson: a) had faith in a forward – Peter Crouch – that had scored six goals in ten internationals, or b) taken Jermain Defoe, a ready-made replacement for the injured Michael Owen, in place of Jermaine Jenas.

Contrary to popular belief, I actually think that the decision to take Theo Walcott was a good one. He should be a better player for the experience.

The tournament did get the finale that it deserved when Zinedine Zidane, one of the world's great players, floored Marco Materazzi, blatantly not, with a head-butt after extreme provocation.

In a competition marred by 'simulation', sly elbows and ill-discipline, it was fitting that Italy tempted a class talent into being sent off in textbook style, thus securing a win for the cheats (the Azzuri's spot-kick against Australia anyone?) over another set of cheats (Thierry 'halo' Henry, Franck Ribery and Zidane all acted to get players booked during the month.

I've even managed to write a third of a page on cheating at the World Cup without mentioning Cristiano Ronaldo!

My only hope is that this disease does not continue to come and blight the English game. We already have to put up the likes of Ronaldo and Drogba, but what I don't want to see it Freddy Eastwood and Mark Gower doing likewise.

Wayne Gray replaces another well-known simulator, Phil Jevons, at Yeovil Town, but he was the main protagonist at Roots Hall. Unfortunately, I did spot Gower and James Lawson throwing themselves to the floor rather too easily at Chelmsford in the first pre-season fixture, so I hope that this is wiped out quickly.

On the subject of Cup competitions, it was with great sadness that I learned that Southend United would not be entering a side into the Essex Senior Cup this season.

It's not even because I work for the Essex FA that I feel this – I just passionately believe that all clubs in the county should take part in that county's Senior Cup. If Manchester United can enter both the Manchester Senior Cup and the Lancashire version, then surely the Shrimpers can?

I am aware that the excuse is that the squad is not big enough, and at 18 men, it is light. We cannot afford injuries. But it would be the perfect chance for the youngsters in the youth team at Southend to play against well-worn semi-professionals in a proper football stadium, whether that is Roots Hall or in the non-League pyramid.

We also bid farewell to the LDV Vans Trophy this season by virtue of performing in the second tier of English football. No doubt come August 23rd we will be out of the Carling Cup as well, given our torrid record in that knock-out competition over the past decade!

Other than the Carling Cup, I am mildly optimistic about 2006/7. The Club appears to be moving in the right direction, certainly on the pitch. Successive promotions leave Blues in the Championship, and I actually feel better about surviving at this level than I did in League One twelve months ago.

In Steve Tilson and Paul Brush, we have an excellent managerial duo, and in Ricky Duncan, whose thoughts you can read below, we have a dynamic leader at youth team level. Ron Martin has said that he will give supporters a Question & Answer session in the opening months of the campaign to discuss the move to Fossetts Farm.

How great it would be to celebrate the closing of the Club's Centenary in ten months time with the news that we were definitely moving to a new stadium?

We can only dream – that is what we have done for the past couple of years, and now we set our sights higher.

Up The Shrimpers,

Rob



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THE INTERVIEW – Ricky Duncan

Ricky Duncan is a man who knows what he wants. "I have a plan up here," he says, pointing to his forehead, "but we will take one step at a time. I'm not going to run before I can walk."

It is twelve months since the Shrimpers Trust's Robert Craven and Terry Jeffreys both met Ricky at a pre-season clash against Bowers & Pitsea, and nine since the Head of Youth Development at Southend United spoke reassuringly at the Trust's Annual General Meeting.

"I knew this was going to be a big job when I walked in here," Duncan begins. "I knew that I would have to come in and change things around. I'm pleased with what has happened, but there are still lots of things to do." From the outset, he is eager to shift the emphasis away from his own work, and praise that of others: "Myself, Luke Hobbs and Mark Bonner have built the first brick. We have the backing of Steve Tilson and the chairman, Ron Martin, and so this season we will be looking to enhance what we have done and keep attracting youngsters."

At that October AGM, Duncan declared that Southend United were two years behind where they should be with regards to youth development, and now they find themselves in the second tier of English football. "I'd say we are still a year behind where I would like us to be. Now we have to look to produce Championship and even Premiership footballers," is the philosophical answer. "We have got to have better facilities. Ultimately, we should aim to be an Academy club, which should not be a pipedream. As you look to that sort of level, the staffing costs go up, there is a requirement for an indoor hall and there are strict guidelines on youngsters to coaches ratios. Everything has to be lifted."

One major improvement that has already been made is in the recruitment process. "The Football Development Programme is progressing very well. Luke and Mark have been able to set up centres in Redbridge, Harlow, Cambridge and Romford, and we are looking at initiating another in inner-city London. Here we can train kids and let them go on a tour,"

It all comes back to Duncan's big plan. He is confident in his actions, and although he is guarded in his comments and does not want to criticise those who have held his position in the past, it is clear that he was in no doubt as to the job that he has undertaken. "Trialists used to come in five or six at a time," he explains, "but once this season starts, we will be strict at that level being only two or three so that we do not unsettle the team. During pre-season, we may have a few more but then we will be more selective."

Despite all of his best efforts, the coach, now in his second spell with the Shrimpers, knows that Southend United have their limitations. "Kids will always go to West Ham United; they are an Academy clubs, and it is the same with just about all the clubs in London. They will always attract the cream of the talent. I think there are 17 clubs in the Coca-Cola Championship whose youth-team is at Academy status."

"Everything so far has been positive. Luke Hobbs and Mark Bonner have been working here for six months, and Laurie Carter is still here. Laurie has been at Southend for a long time; he is knowledgeable and he knows the area well. They will all take this club to a new level – they know what is wanted. The pre-season programme at Under-16s down this year will see us playing Arsenal and Manchester United. This a massive step for this football club; sides like that simply would not have entertained the idea last season. And it will help to sign players – they will be attracted to the club because we are playing teams like that."

"I think Ricky Byrne's selection for Eire Under-17s is the biggest statement for the youth department and for Southend United. He is a player that was already here before I came in, and he has responded to the extra competition that new players have brought to the club. He now has a chance to play for Ireland, to pull a shirt on for his country, and that is the biggest honour in football. It shows that we are here to produce players and make it our tradition to achieve."



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In the past, Southend's youth department has not produced. The slow trickle of talent coming through the ranks after the likes of Spencer Prior and Andy Edwards made it big in the early 1990s has stretched to Leon Johnson, David McSweeney and Michael Kightly, all of whom have since left the club. Last year, James Lawson burst onto the scene with a goal against arch-rivals Colchester United, but Shrimpers supporters still look at the youth department with trepidation.

"We are trying to break down people's preconceptions," Duncan declares on the matter. "I don't like harping back to my time at Cambridge, but when I was there, I wanted fans to feel a part of what I was doing. The fans of Cambridge believed that it was the future of the club, and if you do it right, then the players will come through. Here we must be constantly developing over the next five or ten years. We are looking at recruiting eight-year-olds at the moment, so I say, 'Judge me when he's 18'. It is a long-term investment."

So, Ricky Duncan's plan cannot be judged conclusively for another five to ten seasons, but what are the immediate signs that the club are heading in the right direction? "When I talk to Ron Martin or Steve Tilson, they are really supportive, even though it isn't an area that we have achieved in before."

"With the hard work that we have put in, with the support from the Shrimpers Trust and Safe & Secure, who sponsor the youth team shirts, we have started to achieve. Players are coming through, and that is our aim. Our players all want to play for the club. Maybe before they wanted to play football, but now they actually want to play for Southend United."

In December 2005, Southend United's Under-18 side reached the third round of the FA Youth Cup, the pinnacle knock-out competition for youth teams. It gave them a chance to visit Hillsborough, the home of Sheffield Wednesday, one of the oldest clubs in world football. "Sheffield Wednesday was another big statement. I'd been there before, a year earlier, but for the players it was a great experience. The result was a disappointment in the end, but all the players bar one will be eligible to play in the competition again this time. I told the players to look to play at another big ground this year, to set your dream and go for it. It won't come easy, it is hard work, but you can achieve."

Last month, the Shrimpers Trust sponsored a tour to Norhalne, a prestigious tournament involving 524 teams from across Europe. Southend United made the journey to Denmark for the first time, but the signs are that there will be many more trips to the continent in the future.

"We took two teams: the Under-13s and the Under-15s. For both groups, it was a two-way thing," Duncan explains. "We get to take them away from their natural environment and get to know them better. We have a chance to tell them what we expect of them. But most of all it puts Southend United on the map at one of the biggest tournaments in Europe."

"The Under-13s were in a group of 19 professional teams, and they topped their group which put them in the top six. In the end they finished fourth. The Under-15s were in a group of 10, and only got knocked out on penalties, which they were disappointed with, in the semi-finals."

Their performances hadn't gone unnoticed. "Henrik, who is our guy in Europe, was amazed that the Under-13s had finished fourth, considering that they were younger than most of the other teams in their group. We will set up a structure accordingly for this season, going to Denmark again, playing indoors in Germany and on a couple of occasions to Spain."

And it isn't just the organisers of large tournaments that were impressed by Southend's displays. "We have got invited to even higher level competitions, including those organised by other clubs, though it is probably a little too soon. Maybe next year they will be ready".

"Most clubs were surprised by the standard of play we produced. I think a lot of clubs still had preconceptions about the English game, thinking that we would just lump the ball in a direct style to the front men. But we are changing that style, and we competed by passing it around."



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On an individual level, as well as a club level, the trip was a huge success. "It was a massive learning curve. There were some players that we maybe were not sure of to start with, but now we know as they get older we can cope. 14 of our players are living in digs, so they have to get used to being away from home."

"We made a lot of friends in Denmark. It is a massive tournament, and it has got bigger and bigger and bigger, with 2000 games taking place in four days. Most of our games were at Aalborg, who have played in the European Champions League. They have a massive training ground, with tens of pitches, and they operate on a similar level to Southend United in terms of finance."

The tour to Denmark proved that the youth department at Southend is not a one-man role. Duncan is ably assisted by Luke Hobbs and Mark Bonner, and there are many other who warrant a mention. "I have known Luke since he was a young coach – he is ambitious and he wants to succeed. He has an eye for a young player and he knows how I like to run a Centre of Excellence. He is already showing that his recruitment is very strong. Mark is another young lad – he is on 21 – and although he is at the 'bottom end' looking at the younger players, mainly the Under-8s and Under-9s, he has a good balance. He puts his heart and soul into Southend United."

With the basic infrastructure taking shape, Duncan now has his sights set on little things that can further improve the squad. "One area that I would like to improve is the diet for the youth team, and I'd like to bring in a sports fitness expert purely to work with them. There is nothing better than expertise in specialist subjects."

"Eventually we want to become an Academy side, where there is a better games programme and we could look to play more matches in Europe. At this stage, it is just a case of wanting to be the best Centre of Excellence, and I firmly believe that we won't be too far away this season."

And what of the Shrimpers Trust's role? "Since I've come back, the Shrimpers Trust have proved that they would like to be involved. At any club, the fan base is important, and anything is greatly welcomed. Steve Tilson and Ron Martin can see that this is a great opportunity, but why can't fans play a part in the future of this club in a direct sense. It is important for them to do so, and we have showed that we are achieving so far. We'd love it for more fans to come and have a look at what we're doing, and get involved. The Under-18s play here every other Saturday and the Centre's side play on a Sunday morning."

Hopefully, that will give Southend United supporters all the proof that they need that Ricky Duncan has a vision for the youth department. It is starting to achieve; it is not being abused. And Ricky has a long-term plan, up there, in his head.

For the full interview with Ricky Duncan over two parts, please visit the re-launched Shrimpers Trust website – www.shrimperstrust.co.uk



Last month, the Shrimpers Trust re-launched their website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk. Please give us a visit and discover our new features, including a designated section for the Shrimpers Trust's support of the youth department at Southend United.



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THE SHRIMPERS TRUST KIDS

The Shrimpers Trust talk to Reiss Noel

Reiss Noel is the second Shrimpers Trust Kid, following in the footsteps of Joel Ledgister. He spoke to Robert Craven at the club's Boots & Laces training ground:

Profile

Age: **17**

Position: **Central defender**

Previous club: **Waltham Forest**

Tall central defender Reiss Noel has trodden an established path towards stardom, although by his own admission he is surprised to have found himself concentrating on his football rather than his mathematics A-levels. Progressing through the semi-professional ranks, Noel represented the acclaimed academy at Barking Abbey and the Essex County FA Under-16 schools representative sides before joining Waltham Forest. He was spotted by Southend United just months before the Walthamstow-based outfit reached the fifth round of the FA Youth Cup, defeating Yeovil Town and West Bromwich Albion along the way.

"I was nervy on my first day at the club," Noel, who has been the subject of Shrimpers Trust funding to help with his daily travelling from Stratford in East London, proclaims. "But I quickly fitted in with my team-mates. All of the lads are very easy to get on with and there's a great spirit around the club."

The 17-year-old, who has accepted a second-year scholarship with Southend for the 2006/7 term "wasn't expecting" to break into the Under-18s side as quickly as he did. "I couldn't believe that I was starting every game, and I think I got ninety minutes in just about every game that I played. Even though I didn't get offered a contract until the end of the season, I did get a taster of the reserves when I came on as a substitute against Colchester United and then played again at Barnet."

Noel will be hoping to continue to make progress through the ranks at the pace that he experienced last year. "I just have to carry on," he says. "My first impressions were good last year, and although this is a higher level to what I have been used to, I think that the professional game suits me more in what I can show."

And the central defender could not avoid, in this World Cup year, looking at the highest stage. "I've been watching the World Cup intently. A lot of people compare me to Rio Ferdinand, which is good because he's a Premiership player. I've been watching the defences in Germany, and they are so calm on the ball, especially the Italians. They bring the ball out so well."

"I'm really grateful for what the Shrimpers Trust have done for me," Noel adds. "If it had not been for them, then I would've been really struggling to make it here. Hopefully this season I will continue to play well, build up my confidence and then put in some good performances. That will help me to try new things."

Who knows, he might then get closer to the World Cup action that he has witnessed this last month?

Interviews with Danny Cowley, Callum Kearns, Jamie Fulshaw and Lee Smyth will also appear on the Shrimpers Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk over the next month, along with introductions to Ricky Duncan's two coaches, Luke Hobbs and Mark Bonner



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IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR COACH TRAVELLERS

From Shrimpers Trust Travel Supremo Chris Berry

During previous seasons there has been an increasing trend for fans travelling on SUSCT coaches, to goad supporters of the home club from the vehicle. We are no longer in the depths of League 2 and therefore the home supporters are more likely to respond to these actions with violence, endangering all passengers that are travelling on the official Trust coaches. Anybody that continually gesticulates or verbally abuses home supporters and children will be banned from travelling to future games on Trust coaches.

There has also been a growing trend for passengers travelling on the coaches under the heavy influence of alcohol. During the past season we have had a number of complaints from passengers, coach company staff and the police about this matter.

For the 2006-07 season we are not prepared to take supporters who are showing signs of being heavily 'under the influence', this applies both on the way to and from games. It has been considered dropping some of the pick-up points in order to combat this problem but instead the situation will be monitored for the early games before a decision on what pick-up points need to be dropped.

THE TRUST – What We've Done

Committee Meeting Minutes (03/07/2006)

The Trust have taken the decision to make their Committee Meetings monthly rather than once every three weeks as we attempt to thrash out the issues important to you, our members. If anyone has any issues that they want raised by the Committee, then please see one of us in the Shrimpers Bar on a home matchday, or contact us via email at info@shrimperstrust.co.uk.

The last meeting started with plans for Meet The Blues Day, of which we will bring you a comprehensive review in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile, plans for another Trust presence, this time in the Eastgate Centre in Basildon, were also tentatively made. All being well, with the help of Paul Marshall, the Shrimpers Trust will be selling merchandise on the weekend of 6th, 7th and 8th October 2006, a weekend that the Shrimpers are without a fixture due to Championship international commitments.

Look out shortly also for a questionnaire coming your way, either with this newsletter, or on our website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, asking for your opinions on how the Trust can better represent you, and also on what questions we can ask of Southend United FC.

Shrimpers Trust Events List

Saturday 9 September: Shrimpers Trust Quiz Night

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Time: 7:30 for an 8:00 p.m. start | Contact: Alan Perry on 01702 476458 or at alanperry4@hotmail.com | Tickets: £8 including choice of supper from The Fish House.

Thursday 19 October: Shrimpers Trust Annual General Meeting

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Time: 7:30 p.m. | For more information: email info@shrimperstrust.co.uk or visit www.shrimperstrust.co.uk

Saturday 21 October: Shrimpers Trust Race Night

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Time: 7:30 for an 8:00 p.m. start | Contact: Paul Yeomanson at info@shrimperstrust.co.uk or at the Shrimpers Trust stand. Ticket information to follow.



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100 Club

Alan Perry is still looking for members of the 100 Club to bring us up to our own century. At the moment the weekly prize is a tad over £40, but that would increase by a tenner should we get up to the ton. Please contact Alan Perry on alanperry4@hotmail.com or call him on 01702 476458 for more information. Recent winners have included Graham Hilder, Victor Peretti and Linda Strachan.

Quid-a-Goal

A massive thank-you to all who have already honoured their pledges for the 2005/6 season Quid-a-Goal campaign. We have now raised over £4000 of the £4717 total, so we are well over three-quarters of the way towards our target as we approach the start of the new season.

And that is an ideal time to make a pledge for the upcoming campaign. The money raised next season will be going solely towards the club's youth department, and after helping the likes of Joel Ledgister and Reiss Noel last season, it is an opportunity to really help Southend United produce quality youngsters to push for first-team places in the Coca-Cola Championship.

Kings Field Casuals Tour

Sceptre Sunday League outfit Kings Field Casuals made their annual pilgrimage to Cochem in Germany in late June to help FC Faid celebrate their 60th anniversary. The tour was led by Trust member Brian Jeeves, and there were a number of other Shrimpers Trust representatives, including Adam Duffill and my very own brother, Terry! The 45-strong party even travelled on the Shrimpers Trust liveried SBC Leisure coach.

The club wore the silver LDV kit, which was supplied by Southend United, and took part in the tournament organised by Faid, who plan to travel to Britain next May. Although the tournament was not a success on the pitch for the Southend-based club, goodies from the Shrimpers, Canvey Island and Colchester United were all handed out, as they spread the word of Essex football to the children of Germany.

Shrimpers On-Line Family Fun Day

Sunday 16 July saw the second annual Shrimpers On-Line Family Fun Day at Pitsea's Wat Tyler Park. Largely organised by Shrimpers Trust member and coach regular Paul Marshall, the day was a great success, with Paul Yeomanson heading the Trust presence at the event. Goalkeeper Darryl Flahavan and defender Adam Barrett both made surprise appearances, helping to support the Day, which raised money for the Little Havens charity.

Programme Sales

Shrimpers Trust member David Spriggs has a collection of SUFC programmes, both from home & away matches dating back to the late 40's. He is in the process of selling them and would like anyone with a wants list to forward it too him by email at ds006f3771@blueyonder.co.uk or post to: David Spriggs, 40 Alicia Avenue, Shotgate, Wickford, Essex. SS11 8PJ

10% of all sales will go to the Trust, but David would like it to be pointed out that he will not sell the collection as a whole – he is looking to cater for collectors needs.

Shrimpers Trust Centenary Memorabilia

At the outset of 2006, the Shrimpers Trust were at the forefront of a project with Southend United to design a First Day Cover to commemorate the club's Centenary. The winner was 10-year-old Lottie Prickler, who received a signed copy of her final design from Blues boss Steve Tilson on the Roots Hall pitch prior to the pre-season friendly against Portsmouth. The design is now available from the Shrimpers Trust, either at the Shrimpers Trust stand in the Shrimpers Bar on home



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matchdays, or on the Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, for £4. The Trust would like to once again thank Sheila White for her hard work on the production of the First Day Cover.

Another item newly available is the Simon Dodd-designed 'Legends' shirt. This will set you back just £16, and depicts the names of some of the greats of Southend United on the back, whilst declaring: 'Southend United: Legends: 100 not out' on the front, along with a gold Trust badge on the sleeves. The t-shirt is white with a navy blue trim.

New Life Members (total: 110)

The Shrimpers Trust are pleased to announce two new Life Members this month: **Mark Emmett** and **Pete Gibbons**.

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

David Andrews, Jean Claude Barralis, Susan Bowman, Gary Christie, Phil Dobinson, Mark Emmett, Pete Gibbons, Neil Lamb, Edward McNally, Jonathan Meaney, Louisa Powell, Margaret Powell, Mr. Reed, Malcolm Roberts, Christine Roe, Nicola Slater, Garry Smith, Karen Thompson, Stacey Wildish, and Simon Wooding.

THE MATCHES – Blues In Review

sat 15 july: chelmsford city (a) w1-0 [friendly]

Chelmsford City's Melbourne Stadium played host to the Shrimpers first pre-season friendly of 2006. With the likes of Steve Collis, Simon Francis, Steve Hammell and Michael Ricketts, it was the first opportunity for many Blues followers to grab a look at their club's new signings. Collis, Francis and Hammell all impressed, with Ricketts also showing sparks of what he used to produce during his heyday with Bolton Wanderers.

Star striker Freddy Eastwood hit a post during the first half, but it was left to his understudy, James Lawson, to provide the only goal of the game 18 minutes into the second period when he rose highest to nod home Hammell's left-sided set-piece. Abdi Massissi was first trialist on show, playing in the centre of midfield and generally making a good impression.

wed 19 july: great wakering rovers (a) w7-0

Essex Police originally decreed that this fixture should be all-ticket, but eventually it was left to the stranglers turning up on the day to bolster the Burroughs Park crowd above the 671 record held for an FA Vase fixture with Potters Bar Town.

As the Shrimpers contingent took up every vantage point, they were treated to a first half strike from Massissi, who was joined by Kamal Oujdide in the trialists' stakes. 1-0 at half-time, it took braces from Luke Guttridge and Ricketts (both headers from close range) as well as efforts by Mitchell Cole and Kevin Maher to allow Southend to romp to such a comfortable success over the Ryman Division One North outfit.

sat 22 july: leyton orient (h) w2-1

The bigger tests were always going to come from home fixtures, and the first of the double-header was against newly-promoted League One outfit Orient. The East Londoners put on a decent performance, and tested United in the opening 45 minutes, although Eastwood again struck woodwork and had a further effort ruled out for offside. Gary Alexander put the O's in front midway through the half.

It took fully half-an-hour for a Ricketts-less Southend to respond after an 'exhibition' by SKY One's *Dream Team* 'talents' during the interval saw the actors take fully nine attempts to beat Darryl



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Flahavan, who even attempted to dive out of the way of some shots. When the goal came, it was finally Eastwood, who was promptly taken off after slamming the ball into the top right-hand corner. His replacement, former Grays Athletic front man Gary Hooper, scored the winner, driving low into the goal in stoppage time.

wed 26 july: portsmouth (h) w2-1

Southend United's reticence to celebrate the club's Centenary – announcer Brian Wheelers astounding statement that they were enjoying a "100th Centenary" apart – meant that this was merely a match to 'kick off' the Centenary. Much credit must go to Brian Dear for encouraging his old pal Harry Redknapp to bring virtually a full-strength Pompey to the Hall for what was actually an exciting pre-season clash.

It took just 15 seconds for Eastwood to score – making it two inside a minute of time on the pitch – collecting a pass from Kevin Maher to drill past Dean Kiely. Guttridge should have made it 2-0, but he kneed wide after Jamal Campbell-Ryce had broke free on the right flank. Svetoslav Todorov had an effort ruled out after straying offside, and he then stood beyond the last defender when Matthew Taylor fired in.

Former Pompey man Lee Bradbury made him pay when he nodded home from Hammell's left-wing corner kick, the ball defeating Kiely with the help of a deflection from a Portsmouth defender. He could have added a second early in the second half but he sliced wide, and Ivica Mornar, a substitute, reacted quickest when Romano Tresor LuaLua's free-kick cannoned off of the underside of the crossbar. Blues held on, though, and claimed a notable scalp.

Up the Shrimpers!
Rob Craven (29 July 2006)