



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 19



THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

I did have a load of notes written down before the trip to Deepdale and our Coca-Cola Championship match against Preston North End, but upon my return I have ripped most of them up and am starting again!

I thought about criticising the side after the humiliations suffered at the hands of Hull City and Colchester United inside six days, even though that is generally not something that I like to do.

It was difficult to see a way out after those embarrassing, lacklustre defeats to two teams that it should not have been a problem getting worked up about.

But then the Shrimpers showed that they did have the character, the bottle and the team spirit to haul themselves out of the trouble in making what was essentially a treacherous trip into Lancashire.

And that leaves me just a little bit confused! After 180 minutes of poor football, when it seemed that Southend were not thinking about what they should be doing and playing a distinctly rustic game, they suddenly turn on the charm and start playing so well that the Preston supporters clapped the team off of the pitch.

After eight months of a rollercoaster ride, from a decent start to 17 matches without a win, through away victories at Cardiff, Birmingham, Ipswich and now Preston, the disasters of fixtures like Hull and Colchester, it all comes down to four fixtures and even then probably 90 minutes against Southampton.

I remember looking out at the start of the 2006/7 season and hoping for a campaign of mid-table mediocrity.

You know, the type of season that we endured for many a season whilst we were locked in the Football League's basement division. The type of season in which Southend United don't look like they are going to go up, but equally don't appear to be heading down either.

I would have quite happily taken that. If truth be told, I would have settled for that last season as well, but then I ended up with frayed nerves and uneven fingernails for the

final three months of 2005/6 as Blues searched for promotion.

Of course, anyone generally goes into a campaign hoping for the very best that the team can achieve, and that should always be promotion to the next level, but in this term, that probably was not going to be possible.

There will be those that baulk at that statement and point to the success that our neighbours from up the A12 have enjoyed this year, in their first season at the second tier of English football.

After Colchester's 3-0 victory at Roots Hall, the U's moved to within four points of the play-off places with just five fixtures left. There was still an outside chance that they could make it into the Promised Land of the Premiership.

And even though, much of the time, I am a real optimist, you have to be pragmatic sometimes, and for 2006/7, a nice 16th or 17th position come May 6th would have been brilliant. We had enough experience of that in the Third Division.

So, I'm now quite sick of being worried about something! Three years ago, when Steve Tilson and Paul Brush took control of the managerial side of the club, we all watched on in horror as Blues teetered on the edge of relegation to the Nationwide Conference.

It is quite easy to forget just how far the club have come since that 2003/4 campaign. I vividly recollect how I felt after the October defeat to Boston United, 2-0 at Roots Hall, and I have mentioned them in these notes before.

For what is, thus far, the only time in my years supporting the Shrimpers, my eyes welled up with tears and I genuinely thought that the club I loved was heading into the realm of the non-League game.

Thankfully, with Tilly and Brush being manoeuvred into the hotseat in place of Steve Wignall, that did not become a reality. But there were still moments that season when it looked ropery, and only after a 2-1 win at Carlisle United in late March did things really look safe.



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2004/5, of course, witnessed the great turnaround, a fine collection of sides at the top of the table seeing the Shrimpers just edged out into fourth spot on the final day of the regular season after a disappointing 1-1 draw at Grimsby Town.

There was the added excitement of three further weeks of the season, a tense play-off semi-final against Northampton Town settled by a single Freddy Eastwood penalty and then a third day out at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium in 15 months.

Our trip to Southampton this season could even be a repeat of that one-off day in the Welsh capital, or the emotions that ran through our heads at Blundell Park in the same season.

The game at St. Mary's against the Saints could decide our entire campaign, and it will more than likely, if that is the case, be a repeat of our day on the Lincolnshire coastline, when we will all have our transistor radios and WAP-capable phones tuned into events at other grounds in the Championship.

And if the 120 minutes at the Millennium Stadium against Lincoln City is anything to go by, then the final four fixtures of this season may be just like our last few games of 2005/6, another year in which we were written off as relegation fodder.

No-one gave the Shrimpers a chance, but after that 3-0 victory over Colchester in early March, the pressure was on to finish in the automatic promotion places, despite the fact that clubs like Bristol City and Nottingham Forest trailed Blues.

There were chances to wrap things up at Barnsley on Easter Monday, and at home to Gillingham and Doncaster Rovers, but it was finally left to a visit to our old friends at Swansea City to decide our fate.

A 2-2 draw was enough, thanks to Brentford conceding a late goal, and that left Roots Hall to celebrate a championship thanks courtesy of a late Wayne Gray strike against Bristol City.

So, after those three seasons, surely it was time to put our feet up and enjoy the fruits of our success?

It has been interesting to note, from the inside, the way in which many pundits on television and radio have said how exciting the Coca-Cola Championship has been this season at both the top and the bottom end.

But that has also meant that a number of clubs have been involved at the wrong, as well as the right, end of the table, and Southend United have been one of those.

It did seem that there would be one massive fillip to the football club in January when Southend Borough Council and Rochford District Council gave us the go-ahead to build a new stadium at Fossetts Farm.

Now, even that probability has been cast into doubt after the Secretary of State, Ruth Kelly, called in the stadium plans at her Government offices. It may be that this is a routine operation – it occurs in the case of most stadiums and the B&Q warehouse next door was also subject to a public enquiry – but that slight negativity has permeated into the playing side of matters.

We will, of course, at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk and through this newsletter, keep you, as Shrimpers Trust members, informed of what you can do to help the cause.

As supporters, we were terrific in helping to make sure that the stadium plans were passed through at local level. Now, in this new battle, we have an opportunity to play another part, and also from the stands as we try to maintain Championship status.

And as fans, you also have the chance within this newsletter to vote for your 1-2-3 for our Player of the Year Awards, tickets for which go on sale on Saturday before the home fixture against Barnsley.

And if once you have come up with those selections, choose the best goal of the campaign (and I reckon three of my top five were scored on Easter Monday!) and slip that on the voting slip before returning it all, via post or email, to Terry Jeffreys.

Up The Shrimpers – Keep the Faith,

Rob



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SHRIMPERS TRUST PLAYER OF THE YEAR – The Contenders

On Wednesday 9th May, the Shrimpers Bar will host the annual Shrimpers Trust Player of the Year Awards Evening. For more information on how to be there and how to vote for your favourite, see page 5 of this newsletter, but first, allow us to run through the main contenders.

Darryl FLAHAVAN | Goalkeeper | 50 games | 0 goals | 11 clean sheets

The Shrimpers' shotstopper has been in fine form all season, none more so than that momentous Carling Cup night in November when he almost single-handedly denied Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney from equalising Freddy Eastwood's free-kick. He also enjoyed memorable displays in both Cup fixtures against Tottenham Hotspur and without his eleven clean sheets in all competitions, there is little doubt that Blues would have been relegated long ago. There was once a doubt that he would be able to compete at Coca-Cola Championship level – this season he has well and truly quashed those thoughts.

Steven HAMMELL | Defender | 42+1 games | 2 goals

Left-back Hammell has probably been one of the unsung heroes of the Shrimpers' season in the Coca-Cola Championship, quietly going about his work and contributing a couple of goals from his wickedly-delivered free-kicks. Just given the nod at the start of the term in a narrow choice ahead of Che Wilson, the former Motherwell man has been solid if not spectacular, becoming a mainstay of the side and a reliable member of the back four.

Peter CLARKE | Defender | 36+5 games | 1 goal

It would be fair to say that former England Under-21 international Clarke did not make the best of starts to his Southend United career. The ex-Everton and Blackpool blocker looked shaky at centre-half as the Shrimpers started to lose games after a good start to the campaign, and was then moved to the centre of midfield when Luke Guttridge began to look out of place at the second tier of English football. But the Southport-born centre-back never let his head go down, and playing his own first full season at this level, has become a revelation at the back with his brave challenges and non-nonsense style. Clarke is now showing the form that made him such a firm favourite at Bloomfield Road and captaincy material with the Seaside.

Mark GOWER | Midfielder | 49 games | 9 goals

Mark Gower was always one of the players from Southend's double-promotion winning side that supporters never had a doubt would be good enough for the Coca-Cola Championship, and with nine goals in all representing one of his best seasons with the Blues, he has not disappointed. Some of those strikes have been absolutely vital – a late equaliser against Norwich City, another leveller at home to Plymouth Argyle and again away to Coventry City, as well as efforts in massive wins over Birmingham City and Queens Park Rangers. Always adaptable, switching flanks with Jamal Campbell-Ryce, even Gower's legendarily dodgy fitness has lasted a whole season.

Kevin MAHER | Midfielder | 45 games | 6 goals

Captain Kevin Maher has led from the front this season, proving that he does possess the necessary leadership credentials to skipper the Shrimpers. It always appeared to be the case that Maher got better the higher level that he was playing at, and so it has turned out, with a return of four goals from the centre of midfield his best personally tally for some time. Two came in the 5-0 thrashing of QPR and another in the memorable 2-0 F.A. Cup win at Barnsley, but it has been his calming influence on his troops in the middle of the park and his ability to spray the ball around the field that have won over many doubters. And who knows how important the brace against Preston North End might turn out?!

Freddy EASTWOOD | Forward | 47+1 games | 16 goals

16 goals – at this stage – may be a slightly lower number than he himself expected at the start of the season, but it is easy to forget exactly how far Eastwood has climbed since leaving Grays Athletic. His 11 League goals have earned United 8 points alone, but the one strike that will live longest in the memory will be the free-kick that he guided past Thomas Kuszczak in the Manchester United net to record one of the most famous goals in Southend United's history. In the final reckoning, it was only one strike, but it did prove the difference against a top-flight club.

*****You can vote for any one of these individuals, plus any other member of the Southend United squad, in the 1-2-3 format at the end of this newsletter, as well as nominate your Goal of the Season. Statistics correct as of 9th April 2007*****



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THE SHRIMPERS TRUST KIDS

Blues' Youths Results

Sat 10 Mar | Puma Youth Alliance League | Northampton Town (h) | W4-3

Sat 17 Mar | Puma Youth Alliance League | Queens Park Rangers (a) | D2-2

Sat 24 Mar | Puma Youth Alliance League | Wycombe Wanderers (h) | W1-0

Sat 31 Mar | Puma Youth Alliance League | Leyton Orient (a) | W3-1

Three wins and a draw in March have set up a terrific conclusion to the PUMA Youth Alliance league South-East Conference for Southend United's Under-18 team. Although, at the time of going to press, their fate is not entirely in their own hands after a 2-2 draw with Queens Park Rangers, if Blues Youths win their final two matches of the season, there is a good chance that they will claim the title.

The teenage Shrimpers started the month with a dramatic 4-3 victory over Northampton Town at Boots & Laces. The Cobblers were behind early on as Reiss Noel rose highest to head home Dan Harvey's cross, and shortly afterwards, Gary Bowes, a youngster on trial from West Ham United, set up Luke Thurlbourne for a well-directed finish.

Davis Abbey, an acquisition from Arsenal earlier in the campaign, set up Thurlbourne for his second soon after the half-time interval, and at that stage it appeared that Southend were in control. However, two goals from the visitors frayed nerves before Thurlbourne touched in another Bowes centre to secure the points despite another late goals.

United were not so fortunate seven days later as they travelled to Queens Park Rangers and threw away a two-goal lead that they still held 75 seconds from the end of the match. Tom Hopkins netted from Harvey's right-wing free-kick three minutes in and Charles Ademeno doubled the lead from Luke Thurlbourne's through-ball with seconds left of the first half.

Steffan Gaisie also struck the post for Blues, who were very much on top, but they allowed a previously subdued QPR to fight back, and what should have been nothing more than a scare when Joe Welch was beaten by a clinical finish became a real worry as Rangers piled on the pressure in an amazing 14 minutes of stoppage time. With eight of those gone, a close-range finish from a corner brought the scores level, although Ademeno had wasted a good chance when rounded the QPR keeper minutes earlier.

With those two points dropped, it was imperative that the Shrimpers picked up another maximum haul when they hosted Wycombe Wanderers at Boots & Laces on 24th March, and that they did when Gaisie, who only returned to the side this month after over 200 days out with an ankle injury picked up in pre-season, beat the Chairboys 'keeper for his first goal of the season.

Finally, United travelled to Leyton Orient intent on completing a 'double' over the side from just down the A13. A strong wind blew across the O's ground, but that did not faze Southend, who took the lead for the third game in four thanks to a free-kick from Dan Harvey, the right-back's set-piece finding its way through a crowded penalty area and directly into the net.

Harvey's precise delivery helped to double the lead when his cross was met by forward James Lindie, and a third free-kick was lobbed over the Orient 'keeper by centre-half Tom Hopkins. A second-half consolation left the Shrimpers second in the table, just three points behind Gillingham with a game in hand, and one ahead of QPR, who in turn have a fixture in hand over the Seaside.

Elsewhere in the Blues' youth team set-up, Charles Ademeno has followed Franck Moussa into the club's professional ranks. The powerful centre-forward, who has impressed with a plethora of goals in the Under-18s side and a number of head-strong displays for the reserve team, put pen to paper on a two-year contract, which starts in July 2007.



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THE TRUST – What We've Done

Liaison Meeting Minutes (February 2007)

The Shrimpers Trust continue to work with Southend United regarding the Centre of Excellence. The club are launching a Lottery Scheme to help raise funds for the Youth Department, and the Trust have been invited to have some representation on that board. Geoffrey King also allayed Trust fears over stewarding after difficulties experienced in the West Stand at the Carling Cup match against Manchester United.

Full Minutes of the Trust's Liaison Meetings with Southend United are available to download from the Shrimpers Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk. The archive goes right back to the very start, over five years ago, and includes meetings up to December 2006

Race Night (17 March 2007)

Paul Yeomanson took control of this event for the Trust, and the people in attendance helped to raise just under £600 for the Trust with the usual selection of Race Night activities, including the fun extra race, sponsorship of races and the ability to become a racehorse 'owner'. Look out in the new season for the next Shrimpers Trust Race Night.

Shrimpers Trust Events List

Quiz Night

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Date: Saturday 14 April 2007 | Time: 7:30 p.m. for an 8:00 p.m. start | Admission: £8 adults, £5 concessions (includes fish-and-chip supper) | Contact: Alan Perry on 01702 476 458 or at alanperry4@hotmail.com

Ten tables had been sold at the time of going to print, so please get in touch with Alan Perry as quickly as possible in order to make sure that there are spaces available. Teams consist of eight people each, but individuals or smaller groups can be accommodated if contact is made in advance. A choice of suppers from The Fish House are available, including fish, sausage or vegetarian options.

Roots Hall Football Programme Directory Annual Memorabilia Fair

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Date: Sunday 29 April 2007 | Time: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Admission: 50p.

David Stacey's Annual FPD Memorabilia Fair rolls into the Shrimpers Bar on Sunday 29 April, and the Shrimpers Trust stand, as ever, will be open. If you do not normally have an opportunity to visit the stand on a matchday, this is the perfect chance to obtain any item of our merchandise, including 'The Team We Call United' DVD, a range of Trust-branded shirts, mugs and publications.

Curry Night

Venue: The Maharajah Restaurant, London Road, Benfleet | Date: Tuesday 01 May 2007 | Time: 7:30 p.m. | Contact: Alan Perry on 01702 476 458 or at alanperry4@hotmail.com

Our new Curry Night home of The Maharajah, at the bottom of Bread & Cheese Hill on the London Road in Benfleet, will host the final Curry Night of the 2006/7 season. A number of Trust committee members will be present, so it is an opportunity to bend our ears on any issues you may want to bring up, but these are largely laid-back occasions, with a chance to relax in the company of fellow Southend United supporters. And in the past, Southend United F.C. employees and playing legends have also turned up, so you never know who you might be sharing your evening with...

****STAR EVENT** Shrimpers Trust Player Of The Year Awards Evening**

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Date: Wednesday 09 May 2007 | Time: 7:30 p.m. | Admission: via £2.50 bar voucher | Contact: vouchers on sale from Saturday 14 April 2007 at the Shrimpers Trust stand or via www.shrimperstrust.co.uk

The big event takes place on Wednesday 9th May, and you can be there by visiting the Shrimpers Trust stand before Saturday's match against Barnsley. Entry is once again via voucher, which can be redeemed for a drink at the bar on the night, and this year costs £2.50. Any remaining tickets will be made available via PayPal on our website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, after the match.



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AVAILABLE NOW: The Team We Call United DVD

The Shrimpers Trust made 'The Team We Call United' DVD available from Thursday 14 December 2006, and over a hundred copies had been sold by Christmas. If you would like a copy of the recording, which was made by the Bushell brothers in the late 1960s, please visit our website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk or come to the Shrimpers Trust Stand in the Shrimpers Bar on a matchday. There will also be a Question & Answer session, hopefully with Shrimpers legends Billy Best and Andy Smilie, although this event is unlikely to take place now before the summer. Keep checking the website for more information.

100 Club

Congratulations our most recent winners, who have been: Nigel Rickard, Terry Jeffreys, John Smith, Paul Richards and Paul Manning. There is still time to contact Alan Perry on alanperry4@hotmail.com or by calling 01702 476 458 to register your interest in the 100 Club and put yourself in with a chance of winning the weekly prize of just under £40. And remember, the more people that sign up to the scheme, then the higher the weekly prize.

Quid-a-Goal

Our Quid-a-Goal money is this season being directed towards Ricky Duncan and the Centre of Excellence at Southend United, and despite the Shrimpers not having hit the back of the net too regularly during March, providing that everyone who has pledged honours their word, we will be able to commit almost £3000 to the Youth Department come May.

Please get in touch with Alan Perry via the usual methods (01702 476 458 or alanperry4@hotmail.com) or download a form from our website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk if you wish to make a pledge, even at this late stage of the campaign.

Life Membership (total: 128)

This month, **Carl Barker, Victoria Jeeves, Chris Wilson** and **Steven Wilson** have become the latest to join the massed ranks of Life Members of the Shrimpers Trust. We welcome all four into the fold, and if you are interested in joining them, please contact Paul Yeomanson at info@shrimperstrust.co.uk or by meeting him at the stand in the Shrimpers Bar on any home matchday.

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

Anders Andersson, Steve Berry, Simon Fisher, Malcolm Francis, Eleanor Fuke, Kay Fuke, Nick Hammond, James Harradine, Michelle Hood, Patrick Horgan, Peter McCamley, Ephraim McCracken, John Partridge, Adam Paterson, David Poole, Fred Rivett, Paul Shaylor, April Sullivan, Simon Twinn and Dan Wright.

THE MATCHES – Blues In Review

sat 10 mar: ipswich town (a) w2-0 (championship)

Blues record in local derbies this season has been far from good – Colchester have completed a 'double', Ipswich won 3-1 at Roots Hall and the three meetings against Norwich City and Luton Town have so far all ended in draws – so this may even turn out to be the only victory that United secure over our fellow East Anglian outfits.

Strangely, it was not the Shrimpers best away display of the campaign, more a workmanlike performance against a club that should have been riding on the crest of a wave after disposing of Hull City 5-2 the previous Tuesday. Instead, the Tractor Boys have been dogged by inconsistency, and an apathetic home crowd seemed truly afraid of dropping points against Steve Tilson's men.

Freddy Eastwood had wasted a good chance to give Blues the lead in the opening five minutes, but it was Mark Gower that gave United the lead with a hopeful cross-come-shot 35 minutes in. Efe Sodje looked offside as he jumped over the ball, obscuring goalkeeper Lewis Price's view, but the referee allowed the fortunate strike to stand, and Kevin Maher proceeded to cross for Peter Clarke to stab



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home his first strike for the club just before half-time to make it 2-0. Owen Garvin struck a post for Town, who had Alan Lee sent off for blatantly punching the ball into the net late on.

tues 13 mar: burnley (h) w1-0 (championship)

The Clarets arrived at Roots Hall on the back of a truly awful run every bit as bad as the Shrimpers own four-month winless run in the Championship, and in the end, that fragility of mind told as Southend grabbed a late, late victory.

Burnley, to their credit, did not sit back and attempt to simply claim a point that would have greatly assisted their own relegation battle. Ade Akinbiyi sliced wide in the opening stages, whilst the visitors also failed to take toll of some indecision in the Blues' penalty area from a corner. Slowly, United came back into the game, Lee Bradbury and Alan McCormack firing wide in the first half.

The second period saw Burnley sit back more, and Peter Clarke and Efe Sodje easily dealt with any aerial threat. It looked as though both sides would have to settle for a point until the third and final minute of stoppage time, when substitute Richie Foran pounced on Kevin Maher's lofted through ball to turn the ball past Danny Coyne and into the bottom right-hand corner. The result hauled Blues up to 20th in the table and out of the relegation zone for the first time in six months.

sat 17 mar: leeds united (h) d1-1 (championship)

Just when it seemed as though Southend would take nine points out of nine in a massive run of fixtures, Northern Ireland international hotshot David Healy stepped up to the plate to deny the Shrimpers two precious points and leave both clubs back in the drop zone. Healy was allowed the space on the edge of the United box to collect a short free-kick and smash the ball into the top right-hand corner.

It just showed how football has a funny way of coming back to bite you, given that four days earlier Blues had delivered a similar hammer-blow to Burnley, but it could have been much worse for the hosts when referee N. Miller appeared to point to the penalty spot as Simon Francis appeared to handle a high cross, only then to reverse his decision for a push on the Shrimpers right-back.

That United became so nervy was a result of profligacy in front of goal – the game should never have been as close as it became after Mark Gower's low shot from a succinct Lee Bradbury pass beat the dive of Casper Ankergrén after 24 minutes. Freddy Eastwood was denied when his curling shot hit the foot of the post and Jamal Campbell-Ryce (chipping over) and Richie Foran (twice) shot off target with the goal gaping. Those missed opportunities proved all too costly.

sat 31 mar: hull city (a) l0-4 (championship)

Two weeks passed before Blues were afforded the chance to build on eight points from the previous four fixtures, and the international break did the club no favours as a distinctly lacklustre performance saw United mauled by the Tigers in humiliating fashion. At least the 100 Southend supporters given free tickets by Hull as a result of horrific treatment on our last visit to the Kingston Communications Stadium did not have to pay to watch the embarrassment.

Very rarely in Steve Tilson and Paul Brush's reign have the Shrimpers appeared so lifeless and clueless, but this display was almost unforgivable. Like the England team in Israel a week earlier, there was simply nothing to suggest that Southend were ever going to score.

There did seem to be a crumb of comfort in that it appeared that United would go in to half-time 0-0, only for Liverpool loanee Lee Peltier to throw himself to the floor under 'challenge' from Simon Francis and Dean Windass to mop up the rebound after Darryl Flahavan had saved his initial effort from the spot.

When it required some sustained fight in the second period, there was simply nothing from the white-shirted Shrimpers, who allowed Windass to complete a hat-trick with a tap-in at the back-post after Flahavan made a rare mistake in spilling an Andy Dawson corner and then drove home with a fine



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volley. Sam Ricketts made it four, and Nicky Forster also struck the crossbar in a frantic, if one-sided, conclusion.

fri 06 apr: colchester united (h) 10-3 (championship)

Remember what it felt like last March at Layer Road, Southend racing into a 3-0 win at Layer Road against their north Essex rivals, 1200 Shrimpers crammed into the tiny ground and a couple of thousand more back at Roots Hall watching a beam-back of the game that eventually secured the League One title for Blues over the U's?

Well, we now know how the home fans felt that day after another crushing defeat, this time at the hands of the worst possible opposition. If you came back from the KC Stadium, like me, thinking that it couldn't get any worse, then Good Friday proved that it could.

It took less than 45 seconds for Efe Sodje to mis-hit his back-pass to Darryl Flahavan and Jamie Cureton to pounce and chip the ball over the Shrimpers stopper. There were brief moments when it looked as though Freddy Eastwood might single-handed bring an equaliser to the hosts, but instead Cureton added a fine second-half strike and a little dink over Flahavan to complete a hat-trick, the second against Blues in six days. How different the season may have been if the former Norwich City man had chosen to come to the Hall in the summer?

mon 09 apr: preston north end (a) w3-2 (championship)

And after two embarrassing fixtures comes the mandatory match that raises hopes again. OK, so Preston North End had lost their last three, all on their travels, but they did hold the best home record not just in the Championship, but the entire Football League. The Lilywhites always looked vulnerable at the back, and despite Freddy Eastwood limping off with back spasms, United took the lead when Kevin Maher found his range from just outside the penalty area five minutes before half-time.

Blues held on until the break, but could sustain the lead for just five measly minutes after the interval, Sean St. Ledger heading home unmarked from a corner to equalise. Despite massive pressure, during which time numerous corners and free-kicks flew into the Preston box without return, Matt Harrold coming closest when he tripped over the ball on the goal-line, the hosts took the lead when the ball struck Steve Hammell's arm and referee Andy Hall pointed to the penalty spot. Skipper Graham Alexander did the rest 12 minutes from the end.

It seemed that the game was up. Leeds were leading Colchester, Luton headed QPR and the Shrimpers appeared all but down. Up stepped Alan McCormack against his old club, and then Kevin Maher with two sumptuous finishes, and the result was turned on its head. Game on once again!

Up the Shrimpers! Rob Craven (10 April 2007)

SHRIMPERS TRUST PLAYER OF THE YEAR 2006-07 VOTING FORM

A) My vote for the 2006-07 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:

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