



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



THE INTRODUCTION – Editor Robert Craven

I'd like to start this particular Newsletter by wishing all of our members a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

This time of the year is one of reflection, about where we are compared to last season. So, what was I writing about in December 2006?

Well, the Newsletter came hot on the heels of a 2-1 home victory over Southampton, and a mere month after the 1-0 Carling Cup victory over Manchester United.

Blues were picking up results against the top teams in the division – Stoke City had a good spell and Sunderland would eventually be promoted, despite a slow start – and losing against their rivals at the bottom.

So 2007/8 is completely different in that regard. At home, the Shrimpers have been beaten by Leyton Orient, Tranmere Rovers and Carlisle United this season, all three of whom were in the promotion places after their Roots Hall victories.

Away, the record has been even worse, going down heavily at Leeds United thanks to a late Tore Andre Flo flurry, then at Nottingham Forest after Leon Clarke was stupidly sent off, and, most recently, at Swansea City by three goals to nil.

Teams at the bottom have, generally, been dispatched with ease, not least Crewe Alexandra and Gillingham at home and the likes of Port Vale away.

The result has been that, instead of floating around the bottom echelons of the Coca-Cola Championship, Southend are in the top six of the League One table.

It perhaps shows up the gulf in the two divisions, that United can lose the 25-goals that Freddy Eastwood scored last time round at this level and still compete, albeit as yet not with clubs towards the top.

The loss of players was another subject up for discussion – Wayne Gray, Mark Bentley and Duncan Jupp had all turned down short-term contracts with the Shrimpers for the security of longer-term deals with Yeovil Town and Gillingham respectively.

To a certain extent, we could still have that debate. Gray would be the perfect foil for Leon Clarke up front at the moment, with the latter cast in the Eastwood role. It remains to be seen whether the Midlander will commit his future to southeast Essex ahead of any other offers that Sheffield Wednesday may attempt to entice.

Midfield is a strong suit at the club, but Mark Bentley's versatility and determination would be qualities that would have been useful in adversity against the likes of Leeds and Swansea.

And Duncan Jupp, always a hero for scoring the second goal in the League Two Play-Off final against Lincoln City, was usually preferred to Lewis Hunt at right-back. That said, Hunt has been one of the more consistent performers this term.

The management team, and whether they required any additional help, was another musing a year ago.

After the Swansea reverse, I could hear similar discussions in the crowd, with some even asking if Steve Tilson has taken Southend United as far as he can.

That is something of a cliché in the modern game, and everyone looks for a quick fix rather than sitting back and looking at the situation rationally.

When Steve Tilson and Paul Brush took over at Roots Hall, the club were one off of the bottom of the Football League. We are now just five points from the top of the third tier of the English game.

It is widely agreed that Blues went up too quickly into the Coca-Cola Championship for their natural evolution. So, to bounce back immediately may again prove to be a problem.

Not that I would turn it down if offered promotion in May, but a season of real stability may just increase Southend's chances of going up and staying up in the future. On the other hand, it may lead to players leaving the club and a general decline in fortunes, so you do have to be careful what you wish for.



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



The New Year is also a chance to look forwards to the coming months, and what you want the club to achieve in the future.

The first major decision will, of course, be whether the Government gives the Football Club permission to build on land at Fossetts Farm in order to craft a new stadium.

The club and the fans have done as much as they can to persuade the relevant parties to give the green light, and all we can do now is wait.

If given the go-ahead, then the future appears bright and rosy, with the possibility of the current Centre of Excellence being able to turn into an Academy.

Ricky Duncan has worked tremendously hard to give the club a fantastic youth set-up, and the fruits of his labour were realised, in part, when his Under-18 team defeated Derby County at Roots Hall on December 14.

That showed what the youngsters that this club are producing – of the starting line-up, only Peggy Lokando had not been at Boots & Laces for the duration of their two-year scholarship – are capable of.

It is now vital that the supporters turn out in force for the Fourth Round fixture against Stoke City at Roots Hall early in the New Year, to support the work that Ricky, Luke Hobbs, Mark Bonner and all of the backroom team at the training ground have put in.

It is also a great chance to see the future of the club, and hopefully a number of home-grown talents, play against more Academy opposition at a great price. It should be an excellent occasion.

Unfortunately, I have to mention pricing for the F.A. Cup replay against Oxford United, having contributed to a Trust statement given to the *Southend Echo*.

As predicted, and I take no pleasure out of this, the club's supporters did vote with their feet about prices which were higher than the original tie, the previous round's clash with higher division opposition in Rochdale, and the subsequent third round encounter with Dagenham & Redbridge.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Geoffrey King did not apologise for the pricing of the game, which

must mean that the club obtained its objectives of maximising money made from the match and winning through to the next round.

And whatever I, or others on the various supporters' forums, say is not going to change the club's collective minds.

It can only be hoped that, as they have done on occasions in the past, Southend decide to consult the Shrimpers Trust in the future, so that we can provide a counter-balance to their own views on ticket pricing.

There is a ray of light in this regard, with the Trust invited onto a new supporters' initiative by Garry Adamson. It can only be hoped that this new committee will have some clout.

The Shrimpers Trust will continue in the New Year, not only through that initiative but also with regular Liaison Meetings with SUFC, to attempt to represent its members in the best way possible.

We are dependent on our members getting in contact with us, through any of the details at the bottom of this page, and letting us know of the issues that they have.

This is a new era for us under the chairmanship of Paul FitzGerald, with Bryan Woodford as his vice-chairman and Trevor Bashford as secretary.

The committee is always looking to raise money for Southend United, to try to influence positively the way that the club works. We have recently donated £2,500 to John Stannard for physiotherapy equipment, and you can read an interview with him in this Newsletter.

There is also the latest update from assistant manager Paul Brush on his UEFA A-Licence Coaching Course, which he was able to undertake thanks partly to the £1000 of members' money donated in the summer.

And Ricky Duncan and the Centre of Excellence have received £10,000 to help continue the successful European Tours programme that is promoting the name of Southend United throughout the continent. All of these donations have positively made a difference. Thank-you.

Up The Shrimpers and enjoy the festive period,

Rob



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



SHRIMPERS PHYSIOTHERAPIST THANKS TRUST FOR EQUIPMENT

Southend United physio John Stannard was overjoyed as he unveiled his latest acquisitions in his Boots & Laces gym.

“These new cross-trainers are the first to be installed at a football club in this country,” he revealed to Shrimpers Trust duo Paul Yeomanson and Robert Craven last week as recuperating midfielder Alan McCormack was put through his paces. *“At least, that’s what the guy who delivered them told me!”*

The Trust donated nearly £2,500 to Southend United order to purchase the brand new STAR-TRAC cross-trainers but, as Stannard continued, they are not the only items that he and assistant Ben Clarkson have received from the organisation.

“We have built up a lot of stuff here now. The Trust have got a lot of the gear – there’s the exercise bikes, the old cross-trainers, the benches, mats, medicine balls. The gaffer, Steve Tilson, has also been great, getting hold of the weights, although we have to be careful on these floors,” the former Barnet employee explained.

“It is really good – we can get the whole squad up here now to do core-strength or weights circuits. The cross-trainers are very important as they help with cardio-vascular work. Che Wilson has been using the exercise bikes as he can’t go out and run at the moment.”

The new brand-new cross-trainers can be set to each individual’s particular requirements, with a specific distance or incline built-in to the programming of the equipment. Stannard and Clarkson can also input random hilly sections or ask players to complete alpine passes on a simulation section.

“This is really decent stuff,” Stannard declared. *“It will last 20 years, however long we want it to basically. And all of the good equipment that we have got here will hopefully move to the new stadium, providing the club get planning permission. I hope that I will have some input into the new physio room there!”*

“The Shrimpers Trust’s donations are really appreciated,” he added. *“A lot of people don’t get to see this area of the club, but it is important. Everything here gets used constantly – it is not just when players are injured.”*

“We can use it as part of the squad’s fitness drills it can be done individually – later on, for instance, I will have Darryl Flahavan up here working on his own. Some professional clubs have to travel to gyms to use this sort of equipment, but that is far from ideal. Although I’m sure most players would have the dedication not to abuse that, there are distractions at outside gyms.”

But, thanks partly to the Shrimpers Trust, Stannard does not have to worry about that: *“When I came here, there was next to nothing in this room. Practically all of this is what the Trust have brought in, and we really appreciate that.”*

In turn, the Trust is grateful to John and Ben for opening up their room to us, and for keeping the squad in such good shape as it attempts to bounce back into the Coca-Cola Championship at the first attempt.

This article first appeared on the Shrimpers Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, where you can find out all the latest news from the Trust

PAUL BRUSH PRO-LICENCE UPDATE

Shrimpers’ assistant manager Paul Brush is currently undertaking a Football Association course, initially based at Warwick University, to earn his Pro-Licence.

The Shrimpers Trust agreed to donate £1000 to the former West Ham United and Southend defender to help him achieve the qualifications, which we hope will help aid Blues in their efforts to get into the Coca-Cola Championship.

After that stint in the Midlands during the summer, Brush has been continuing his studies as the 2007/8 season starts to take shape: *“This is my second update on my year-long F.A. Pro-Licence Course - they say that it will last 240 hours in all!”*

“After a week’s residential stay at Warwick University there have been various tasks and modules sent by the F.A. for me to complete, and one new experience has been the conference calls. Two coaches on the course choose a topic, provide reading material and then supervise a discussion on their chosen topic. You are on-line and can listen and contribute to the 45-minute call.”



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



“Gary Ablett (Liverpool) and Brendan Rogers (Chelsea) discussed the reserve team philosophy at their respective clubs. They rarely play senior squad professionals. It is really an extension of their youth teams. Their first-team managers believe in keeping the senior squad together and that sharpness can be maintained by those not in first-team action with high-tempo training.”

This was a topic that Brush and Dean Austin, the Shrimpers' second-string coach, discussed in length at the Trust's Annual General Meeting, when the pair were special guests for a Question & Answer session. You can read more from Brush and Austin on that night by visiting www.shrimperstrust.co.uk.

“Meanwhile, Dean Smith from Leyton Orient and Rikki Hebert, of the New Zealand national team, discussed considerations in choosing a captain and Club captain at your Club. The traits included being inspirational, consistent, reliable, possessing an air of authority, being confident, respected and organised, and being a good communicator. The consensus was that age or position on the field should not be a reason not to be captain.”

“We have been given reading material on British managers and coaches and American sports coaches and we have also had to analyse at length a British Lions rugby tour DVD.” This further cements the cross-sport referencing that was evident on Brush's residential course, where a number of sporting luminaries gave talks.

“Personally, I have read a Bill Shankly biography: what a fascinating man he was. He built up a club, won Championships and was a great, charismatic motivator. In addition to that, he surrounded himself with a quality back-room staff; ‘the bootroom’ of Bill Paisley, Joe Fagan and Roy Evans.”

“I have downloaded information on leadership and management skills and compiled a personal leadership style profile. I am also in the process of working on a coaching-themed progressive set of practices on “Back Four Defending in the Defending Third” using session plans and video with achievable objectives and targets. I am really enjoying it. Thanks for the support,” he concluded.

SHRIMPERS TRUST SUFC YOUTH TEAM PLAYER OF THE MONTH

Left-back Johnny Herd followed in the footsteps of Richard Priest and Stuart O'Keefe when he was named the Shrimpers Trust SUFC Player of the Month for November.

Herd put in a number of excellent performances throughout the month for the Under-18 side as they progressed to the third round of the F.A. Youth Cup sponsored by E.On, and also made the trip to Northampton Town as cover for the first-team squad in Coca-Cola League One.

That was an achievement the second-year scholar as particularly pleased with when he chatted to the Shrimpers Trust's Robert Craven after picking up the trophy on the pitch at half-time in the League One match with Huddersfield Town.

“I have been really happy with my personal form this season. I was the first member of the youth team to travel with the first-team squad when I went to Northampton, and I have played a lot of reserve team football as well,” he said.

“It is really good to win the Player of the Month award,” Herd continued. *“It shows everyone else that you have been playing well, but it also tells you that you are doing things right. I have found a good level of consistency so that even if I have a bad game, I am still playing pretty well.”*

And that consistency will also help the defender meet his objective at the end of the campaign: *“My target is to get a professional contract at the end of the season. If I stay at the level I am, then I know that I am capable of achieving that.”*

Those are thoughts that his manager, Ricky Duncan, who was also on the pitch to present the award, concurs with. *“Johnny has done really well; he is a good left-back. The Under-18s are starting to become a little bit easy for him, and maybe he has pushed on the most. I am trying to encourage Steve Tilson and Paul Brush to take him away to train more often with the first-team.”*

“Before coming here, he had never been at a professional club apart from a couple of months at Cambridge United, and he has so much to give. Look where he has come in two years,” the Shrimpers Head of Youth concluded, alluding to Herd's quickfire progression from Sunday League football, in which he was participating during 2005.

Herd is the third nominee for the inaugural Tom Grace Memorial Shield for the Shrimpers Trust SUFC Youth Team Player of the Year award, which will be made at the Trust's End Of Season Review evening in May 2008.



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



THE SHRIMPERS TRUST KIDS

Blues' Youths Under-18s Results

Wed 21 Nov | F.A. Youth Cup | Barnet (h) | W7-3 | Henry 2, Herd, Lindie, O'Keefe, Forshaw, Hopkins

Match Report: http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/default.asp?page_id=416

Sat 24 Nov | Youth Alliance Cup | Peterborough United (a) | L1-2 | Henry

Match Report: http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/default.asp?page_id=417

Sat 01 Dec | Football League Youth Alliance | Colchester United (h) | L1-4 | Henry

Match Report: http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/default.asp?page_id=423

Sat 08 Dec | Football League Youth Alliance | Peterborough United (a) | L1-2 | Henry

Match Report: http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/default.asp?page_id=427

Fri 14 Dec | F.A. Youth Cup | Derby County (h) | W4-1 | Lindie 2, Henry 2

Match Report: http://www.shrimperstrust.co.uk/default.asp?page_id=430

An historic night at Roots Hall completed another mixed month for Southend United's Under-18 side, who progressed to the Fourth Round of the F.A. Youth Cup for just the second time since the competition was inaugurated in 1952.

At either end of the past five weeks have been tremendous F.A. Youth Cup evenings, starting with a 7-3 demolition of Barnet in the Second Round and then finishing with a 4-1 triumph against Derby County, who compete in Group D of the Premier Academy League.

In between, there was further woe in the Football League Youth Alliance, not least in a 4-1 Boots & Laces reverse against Colchester United, whilst two trips to Peterborough United's Huntingdon Town base ended in identical scorelines.

Barnet arrived in southeast Essex having failed to register a single win in 2007/8 – their First Round success came on penalties against Whyteleafe – and Southend began a destructive first half by opening the scoring in just the 12th minute, Rhys Henry dispatching Jamie Forshaw's pass into the bottom right-hand corner.

Four minutes later, Johnny Herd's inswinging corner found its way inside the far post after flicking defender William Mabbutt's head, but the Bees did pull one goal back when Oliver Kingonzila's 35-yard effort deceived Nathan McDonald.

James Lindie quickly replied, driving across Robbie Cook, but the Bees again brought themselves to within a goal of Blues' Youths as Max Turner hooked over the line from close-range. That just spurred Southend on to three goals in four minutes, Stuart O'Keefe drilling in from 12 yards, Forshaw rocketing home via the underside of the crossbar and Henry curling in. The second half brought skipper Tom Hopkins another headed goal, whilst Elliot Charles added a late consolation.

The first trip to Peterborough, in the Youth Alliance Cup, saw the Shrimpers' interest in that competition ended by a 2-1 defeat. Both goals were netted inside the first 15 minutes on a bobbly pitch on a bitter winter's day, with Scott Ginty and Kakeem Araba the scorers. Henry responded on 21 minutes, but despite enjoying the better of the play in the second half, there was no way through the Posh defence.

The 4-1 League defeat to Colchester has been described by Ricky Duncan as the worst that Blues have played since he returned to the club as Head of Youth. The U's were simply quicker and hungrier to win the match, and took the lead when Josh Oakley swept in a rebound after Nathan McDonald had made a good save.

Fabian Quintyn doubled the advantage, but Blues entered a good period of play, and Henry scored yet again, this time controlling Johnny Herd's centre to find the net from 20 yards. Unfortunately Russell Malton made it 3-1 by racing away just before the interval, and then Kyelan Marvell added a fourth shortly after the break to complete the scoring.



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



Another trip to Peterborough, this time in the League, looked as though it was going to bring about some much-needed cheer, but turned sour in the final ten minutes. Southend had been the better side, adjusting to their surroundings, and took a deserved lead six minutes after half-time through the prolific Henry, who curled a free-kick inside the far post.

Unfortunately, Ronnie Jones was adjudged to have tripped Jack Lyons in the penalty area in the 81st minute, and Posh captain Lewis Webb sent McDonald the wrong way from the spot, before substitute Declan Rogers eluded Herd's sliding tackle and cut back to swing a shot past the 'keeper in the dying seconds.

However, what was to follow compensated in a large way for the League travails in 2007. While Ricky Duncan will be hoping that his team can travel up the table in 2008, he will have been inspired by the way that his team played against their Derby County counterparts.

This was a tough fixture, and it did not look like being won by anyone other than Blues after just five minutes, by which time James Lindie had lofted Rhys Henry's square ball past Ross Atkins. Southend were determined to record a success, and outclassed their supposedly superior opposition in every department.

When Henry's 37th minute effort was palmed away by Atkins, Lindie pounced for his second of the night, and his strike partner gained reward just seconds before half-time with a fine finish after a sweeping Dan Harvey cross. Although Greg Mills did pull one goal back, Henry ensured that United would face Stoke City at Roots Hall in Round Four with another clinical finish after good work from Lindie and Jamie Forshaw.

Once again the Shrimpers Trust would like to place on record it's thanks to Mark O'Keefe for additional match information supplied over the past month.

THE TRUST – What We've Done

Committee Meeting (03 December 2007)

The Shrimpers Trust committee agreed that they should meet up with the new fan-based initiative, The Blue Voice. A meeting has since taken place, and the Trust are fully behind verbal encouragement for the squad. Further discussions will take place in due course. Southend United's Director of Commercial Services, Garry Adamson, has also approached the Trust about setting up a supporters' liaison group, involving committee members from the Trust and also regular supporters, and an initial meeting is yet to be rescheduled.

Phil Alsford has continued to be involved with Southend United F.C. regarding the arrangements for the Frankie Banks' second testimonial, although at the moment, plans are still at an early stage due to the need to arrange a date for Spencer Prior's benefit match. Phil will continue to work hard behind the scenes to ensure that Frankie is recognised, and has already secured some interesting items for auction.

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 of the regular meetings, in September 2002, and includes minutes right up to September 2007

Race Night

Our Race Night on 17 November 2007 raised a little under £500 for the Shrimpers Trust, with a brilliant evening enjoyed by all present. Aside from the usual races, there was a Pig Race to end the evening, sponsored races and horse ownership. There will be further Race Nights in the New Year, when the Shrimpers Trust hope to be able to run the event themselves.

Rayleigh Lights

Thursday 29 November saw members of the Southend United squad present in Rayleigh High Street as the Christmas lights were turned on in the town. The Shrimpers Trust were present as well, with committee



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



members Paul FitzGerald, Paul Yeomanson and Phil Alsford handing out sticks of rock and welcoming fans onto the SBC Leisure-owned Shrimpers Trust-liveried coach to obtain player signatures.

Swansea City Family Day

The Swans Trust invited us to the Coca-Cola League One fixture with Swansea City at the Liberty Stadium, where committee members Trevor Bashford and Bryan Woodford were involved in handing out sweets as part of the club's Family Fun Day. Although the result was disappointing, we hope to be able to return the favour later in the season, so please keep your eyes peeled on www.shrimperstrust.co.uk.

Shrimpers Trust Events List

Curry Night

Venue: The Maharajah, Benfleet | Date: Tuesday 29 January 2007 | Time: 7:00 p.m. | Price: £10 adults | Contact: Alan Perry (01702 476 458 or alanperry4@hotmail.com)

Our latest Curry Night takes place at the excellent Maharajah venue near Bread & Cheese Hill on the London Road. For just £10, you can sample all-you-can-eat buffet whilst chewing the cud with other Shrimpers on any subject you wish. And if you are lucky, a special guest from Southend United F.C. may turn up as well.

****STAR EVENT** Quiz Night**

Venue: The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall | Date: Saturday 09 February 2007 | Time: 7:30 p.m. | Admission: £8 adults, £5 concessions (including fish-and-chip supper) | Contact: Alan Perry (01702 476 458 or alanperry4@hotmail.com)

Please note a change of date for the latest instalment of our Quiz Nights, with quizmasters Guy and Nigel Rickard again in the chair for an excellent evening. Why not come down to the Shrimpers Bar on the night of the home Coca-Cola League One fixture with Hartlepool United and test your general knowledge brains against other Shrimpers?

100 Club

The latest winners in the scheme, pulled out of the hat during weekly draws in the past month were: Mrs C.A. Harvey, Charles Ball, Gordon Harvey, Mike Smith and Jack Bond, each collecting over £33 but the nature of the 100 Club means the more people that sign up, then the bigger the weekly prize.

To register your interest, you can still contact Alan Perry at alanperry4@hotmail.com or by calling 01702 476 458 and put yourself in with a chance of winning the weekly prize. Remember, the more people that sign up to the scheme, then the higher that prize will be. By setting up a standing order for just £5 a month (or just £60 a year), you put yourself in with a chance of winning over £30 at the present time.

Quid-a-Goal

Quid-a-Goal is back for the 2007/8 season, and we are still welcoming any pledges that members would like to set up. The money raised from the scheme this season will be solely directed towards Ricky Duncan and the Centre of Excellence at Southend United. The recent goal-glut – in home matches at least – has raised the total pledged so far this season past the £2000 mark.

You don't have to simply pledge a pound a goal, you can make it a little more interesting by sponsoring goals scored by a particular player or for clean sheets. All contributions are welcome; 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 to make a pledge for the 2007/8 Quid-a-Goal campaign.

Life Membership (total: 141)

This month we would like to welcome four new members to the Life Membership fray. If you are interested in joining this group, which now includes **Adam Bright, Adam Johnson, Simon Webber** and **Neil Whitehead** please contact Paul Yeomanson via email at info@shrimperstrust.co.uk or by meeting him at the stand in the Shrimpers Bar on any home matchday during the 2007/8 season. Postal applications can also be accepted via Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD.



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



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

Adam Bright, Terry Cornish, Peter Douglas, Dean Sales, Andrew Thompson and Paul Webb

Please note that the Shrimpers Trust would like to know if any of its members' addresses change, or if they have a new email address so that newsletters and other correspondence can be sent to the correct addresses. Please send any details to PO Box 5380, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD or info@shrimperstrust.co.uk

THE MATCHES – Blues In Review

sat 17 nov: cheltenham town (h) d2-2 (league one)

Despite coming back from two goals down at half-time, this will go down as two points dropped against the club that were sitting bottom of Coca-Cola League One before the match. Two slack pieces of marking in the penalty area inside the first 25 minutes gifted the Robins the lead, and despite quickfire strikes at the start of the second period, Southend could not find a third to complete a remarkable comeback.

On 14 minutes, Steven Gillespie nodded in from Ashley Vincent's cross, after a quick corner caught the Shrimpers unawares. Worse was to follow when Dean Sinclair was allowed the time to poke past Steve Collis, and Roots Hall was rocked rather than rocking on the day that the new Blue Voice initiative was launched.

Instead of 'backing the Blues', the ground booted the team off at the break, and while that was probably a slightly over-the-top reaction to team at the business level of the League One table, the second half did witness a marked improvement. First Mark Gower's deflected shot wrong-footed Shane Higgs, then Matt Harrold set up Steven Hammell to equalise. Blues dominated thereafter, but to no avail.

match in a sentence: Comeback fails to satisfy Roots Hall crowd

sat 24 nov: luton town (a) l0-1 (league one)

A turgid match at Kenilworth Road turned as early as the 14th minute when Gary Hooper was upended and Matt Harrold volunteered to take the resultant penalty kick. The under-fire front man had the character to step up, but lacked the mental aptitude to complete the job, allowing Dean Brill to keep out a very poor spot-kick.

Without the 1-0 lead that the penalty would have given them, Southend seemed unable to overcome a very poor Hatters side, who proved resilient in the face of adversity having just had ten points taken off them for falling into administration. Instead, with a little over 14 minutes left, Calvin Andrew was allowed far too much time to pick his spot at the far post and guide a header past Steve Collis.

match in a sentence: Penalty miss puts spotlight on Harrold

sat 01 dec: oxford united (a) d0-0 (f.a. cup second round)

There is very little to say about this insipid match. Although my mates have ribbed me that the 20 minutes I missed having been delayed on the train was the best of Southend United's 101-year history, the truth is apparent from the remaining 70. Without Leon Clarke, United lacked any cutting edge up front with Dean Morgan up front on his own, with just Mark Gower for company. The best chance arrived late in the game, Charlie MacDonald guiding a low shot into the goalkeeper's hands. All back to the Hall then.

match in a sentence: Blues draw blank at Kassam Stadium

wed 05 dec: huddersfield town (h) w4-1 (league one)

It took just three minutes for Leon Clarke to mark his comeback after suspension and ineligibility with the 2000th goal at Roots Hall Stadium and set the Shrimpers on the way back into the play-off mix. This was a polished display that, incredibly, could have brought more goals had it not been for the goalkeeping of Matty Glennon in the Huddersfield goal.

Clarke touched Kevin Maher's cross in at the back post to open the scoring, but he, the dangerous Dean Morgan and Mark Gower were all denied by spectacular stops from the Terriers' custodian in a first-half full of chances. It was no surprise when Morgan's tenacity ended with Alan McCormack skilfully controlling the ball before adding a second on 58 minutes.

A moment of madness saw Danny Schofield reduce the arrears, but with fifteen minutes to go, man-of-the-match Glennon was sent off having been adjudged the last man in just clipping the marauding Clarke. 17-year-old Alex Smithies came on for ten-man Town, but he barely touched the ball, being found wanting from Gower's beautiful strike, then watching as McCormack nodded in Maher's injury-time cross. Unfortunately the night was soured when the



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 25



experienced Frank Sinclair blatantly and crudely stamped on McCormack to receive his marching orders, but this was very much a case of job well done.

match in a sentence: Shrimpers welcome Clarke back with an historic bang

sat 08 dec: swindon town (h) w2-1 (league one)

There was another early goal at Roots Hall against Swindon Town, but this time it ended up in the wrong net. There was less than a minute on the clock when Steve Collis pushed Andy Nicholas' shot into the path of Simon Cox, who gratefully tapped the ball into an unguarded net.

Leon Clarke attempted to respond, but his thunderous effort from an acute angle smacked into the crossbar rather than arrowing into the net, and instead, in torrential rain, Southend had to wait until the half-hour mark to come back onto level terms, defender Adam Barrett heading Steven Hammell's free-kick in.

Barrett had to limp off with bruised ribs early in the second half, but the Shrimpers stuck to their task in the second half, although despite Clarke twice going close, they could find no way through. Mark Gower had not given up hope, and sent a beautiful effort into the corner of the net to hoist United clear of seventh place in the table.

match in a sentence: Gower seals fightback with final act

tues 11 dec: oxford united (h) w3-0 (f.a. cup second round replay)

With the support of just 2,740 fans – the result of three matches inside a week and poorly-priced tickets – Southend United cruised into a Third Round F.A. Cup clash with Dagenham & Redbridge and the chance to wreak revenge for the Johnstone's Paint Trophy defeat earlier this year.

Blues could easily have registered double figures as they ran riot, Oxford barely passing the halfway line for long periods of a one-sided fixture. Charlie MacDonald headed United in front early on from Mark Gower's cross, but he was as guilty as anyone of missing opportunities. Indeed, much of the time, Billy Turley in the U's goal was untroubled as effort rained in from all angles.

After Turley had brought down Dean Morgan inside the penalty area, MacDonald's penalty was parried out by the custodian, although Trevor Kettle afforded the hosts another chance to net from the spot just two minutes later, this time when MacDonald was brought down after darting into the area. Morgan dispatched the penalty to record his first goal for the club.

The second half saw the pair, inspired by Gower's excellent display and with Oxford gifting Blues possession at regular intervals, miss further chances, with Turley coming out on top against four shots whilst one-on-one in the last five minutes alone. He was beaten when Simon Francis' pinpoint cross was headed in by MacDonald from close range.

match in a sentence: Shrimpers spun cavalcade of chances in comfortable win

sat 15 dec: swansea city (a) l0-3 (league one)

Travelling to the Liberty Stadium was never going to be an easy assignment, but Southend contrived to heap more misery on themselves against a team at the top of the table, crashing to a 3-0 defeat. The lead arrived on 17 minutes when Warren Feeney was allowed far too much space to head past Collis, and the chances of a comeback were further reduced when Nicky Bailey was, albeit harshly, sent off a quarter-of-an-hour later.

In truth, though, the Shrimpers had been found wanting before being left with ten men, and it was no surprise that the Swans recorded a further two goals in the second period courtesy of further defensive shortcomings. Substitute Franck Moussa gifted Angel Rangel the ball in the penalty area to drive into the far corner then, in the closing stages, Thomas Butler was left unmarked to glance in the third. In between, Andy Robinson saw his penalty kick kept out by the exposed Collis, but Southend will have to improve greatly to stay with the leading pack in the New Year.

match in a sentence: League leaders teach Southend lesson