

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 7 Iss. 03. – October 2011

THE INTRODUCTION – Paul FitzGerald

What a difference a Month makes



As I write, we no longer sit at the top of the league following, what hopefully, is no more than a hiccup on Saturday against Morecombe. Torquay beckons and let's hope we continue this wonderful string of results. It was great to see a bit of atmosphere back at the Hall for the Friday night game and hopefully the increased crowds and atmosphere will continue, as we fight our way out of this league. Moments like these are rare for clubs like us - so let's enjoy it while we can.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Trust ran a Fans Forum recently with the intention of helping us understand what supporters want from the Trust. Whilst the turnout was not great, we had a lively discussion on several topics and we think the evening was a success – (more on this lower down). Additionally, one attendee offered his services, which were quickly accepted and therefore I'd like to welcome Gareth Pummery as a new addition to our group.

His role will be formally accepted at our AGM which is scheduled for November 24th and I look forward to seeing some of you there.

One key item that was discussed affecting Trust strategy is the promised, but not delivered, board appointment (which Tara is still "thinking about"). ALL present felt that it was required and we should continue to strive for it...although it would be fair to say some did not believe it would ever happen. What is interesting and timely is that the government have published their response to the Culture Secretary's governance enquiry into the way football is managed. This document makes it clear that Football Clubs should formally involve supporter representatives and suggests several target guidelines to achieve that. In fact, the recommendations go further, they propose a licensing system to mandate the ideas – what a shame the duo at the top can't see the benefits of involving supporters in the decisions that affect our football club. It will be interesting to see what they make of the report, if anything.

Following the Fans Forum – Ricky Duncan was on hand and as usual, impressed us with his enthusiasm and professionalism. One specific point of interest is that he is very keen to get his youth set-up closer to the fans. As he said so eloquently, this is our club and anything he can do to increase the youth team's exposure and appeal has to be good for all parties. This is another action we took from the meeting and are currently considering.

One of the requests I made at the Fans Forum and indeed have regularly in the newsletter, was for feedback. Sadly, I got some feedback this month from a disgruntled fan who has decided not to renew his membership. He wrote a letter to the membership secretary explaining his reasons, but the sad thing is that he'd never mentioned them before...surely if someone has a gripe with what we do, it would be better to come forward. We are always willing to take criticism and will try to address any issues if brought to our attention. On a more positive note, another fan contacted me to suggest a special charity football game – we are taking his ideas on board and will try to develop them next year, perhaps for "meet the blues day"

And finally – fellow Ron Pountney Testimonial committee member and long time Trust supporter John Walton approaches the 92 Club milestone – good luck with the last few matches John – we will be featuring this achievement in a future note.

As ever, if anyone ever wants to comment on any Trust matter or indeed, anything Southend United related, don't hesitate to contact me, I do try to reply to all e-mails. (pfitz666@aol.com)

XMAS DRAW

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find several books of Tickets for our Xmas Draw and there are some great prizes up for grabs including 3 cash prizes of £500, £250 and £100 plus a chance to win two Blues Lounge Packages for an SUFC Home Game of your choice.



The Draw is one of our major fundraisers of the season so please try to sell the tickets if you can.

Please return Ticket Stubs and your Payment to: **Xmas Draw, Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD** or to the **Promoters Address on the Ticket**. Please make Cheques Payable to **The Shrimpers Trust**.

Alternatively you can drop them off at the Trust Info Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any Home Game.

Closing date for entries is **2nd January 2012**.

SHRIMPERS TRUST AGM



The Shrimpers Trust AGM will be held on **Thursday 24th November 2011** in the Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall with doors opening at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm prompt start.

This will be followed by a Q&A Session with the SUFC Management duo of Paul Sturrock and Graham Coughlan.

The Notice and Agenda for the AGM has been enclosed with this Newsletter.

FORTHCOMING FUNDRAISERS

BINGO NIGHT

Thursday 27th October 2011
Mecca Bingo, Greyhound Trading Estate, Sutton Road, Southend on Sea

For further details contact Clare Brooks: (07980 363092 or travel@shrimperstrust.co.uk)



The Shrimpers Trust are holding a Bingo Night at Mecca Bingo, Greyhound Trading Estate, Sutton Road, Southend on Thursday 27th October 2011.

Tickets for an evening's Bingo will cost just £10.00 and includes the late evening Dark Binglo Rock & Roll Bingo Session.

The early session starts at 7.00pm (if you are not already members you would need to arrive by 6.45pm or complete and return a Membership Application Form prior to the Event).

If you cannot make it this early then arrive by 7.15pm for the main session at 7.30pm.

There will be no need to buy additional tickets on the night as your ticket will cover all three sessions.

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ONE FOR THE LADIES - BODY SHOP EVENING

Monday 28th November 2011
The Platinum Suite, Roots Hall



For further details contact Kay Searle: (01268 569697 or sjs@shrimperstrust.co.uk)

The Shrimpers Trust are holding a Body Shop Fundraising evening on Monday 28th November 2011 in the Platinum Suite, Roots Hall, Southend on Sea.

The Bar will be open from 7.30pm with the demonstrations starting at 8.00pm.

We welcome Members and Non Members alike so why not come along and sample some of the fantastic range of Body Shop products.

There will also be a Raffle during the evening where you will get the chance to win some fantastic Body Shop prizes.

Please note that payment can be made by cash or credit/debit cards. Cheques are not accepted.

SUPPORTERS FORUM and RICKY DUNCAN Q&A

A Supporters' Forum hosted by the Shrimpers Trust was held on 19th September in the Shrimpers Bar at Roots Hall.

At the recent MTBD the Trust had conducted a supporters' mini survey in order to get feedback from the Club's fan base on how it was felt they were doing. The Forum on the 19th which was open to both Trust and non members was seen as a chance to build on this feedback, as well as providing an opportunity for the Trust to strengthen working relationships with other Southend United supporter groups.

Despite a disappointing turnout from supporters, the evening was overall hailed to have been a success. A full range of topics covering both Trust and other Southend United related matters were discussed, with Paul FitzGerald, as Trust Chairman and the Trust Committee receiving some open and at times direct feedback from the floor regarding how things were and what it was felt needed to change. There were a number of useful suggestions and ideas flagged for further consideration.

The evening concluded with an informative Q&A session with Ricky Duncan: Southend United, Head of Youth.

Trust History to Date:

Following a customary welcome and introductions, the evening kicked off with a brief history of the Trust. This detailed its start up back in 2000 at a membership of just 150, onto 2006 when with over 1,500 supporters on its books Trust membership was at its highest, through to current numbers of just under 1,000.

It was confirmed that the current Trust Committee comprised of 18 individuals who came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, each bringing different skills to the table. It was recognised however that the current group was somewhat light on youth!

Bryan Woodford as Trust Vice Chairman at this point took the opportunity to introduce to supporters those Committee members who had been able to attend on the night.

Paul FitzGerald then went on to say that everyone on the Committee was volunteering their time and that he fully recognised that each would have differing priorities to balance, with various pulls on their time. On that basis whatever contribution individuals could manage in support of Trust activities no matter how small, was much appreciated. He covered that the Committee were always looking for more volunteers to help share the load.

Paul emphasised that he and the rest of the Committee were all just ordinary folk trying to do their best. He said that whilst the Committee would at all times strive to ensure that decisions made were considered and reasonable, it was recognised that at times as a group and as individuals they might get things wrong. What was important however was that the Committee was receptive to any feedback provided, so that lessons could



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be learnt and that they would therefore hopefully do better next time! An important part of the evening was therefore to listen to any feedback given by supporters and to take this on board.

Supporters were informed that over the last 5 years the Trust had donated just under £100,000 to what had been primarily Southend United related causes, with the biggest current beneficiary being the Youth Department. Other donations made had been to charity including Haven Hospices and other local charities that had benefited through the Trust Player of the Month awards. That said over the last few years it had proved increasingly more difficult for the Trust to maintain a healthy balance sheet. It was highlighted that with membership subscriptions and away travel at break even, profit was primarily generated via fund raising and donations. It was therefore essential that the Trust identified new ways in which it could keep the funds flowing. It was hoped that supporters in attendance today might provide some ideas and pointers.

Supporter Feedback:

From feedback collated at MTBD it was felt that the Trust Committee did a reasonable job, however in terms of communication with fellow Trust members and other supporters there was room for improvement. The feedback here had been that more could be done by the Trust to advertise what it was working on and was involved in. A re-refreshment of the Trust website had been suggested and it was confirmed to supporters on the night that this action was already underway. Feedback from the floor was that currently whilst the site was available as a source of reference and information; it was viewed as being static and in need of updating with more topical features being added so as to encourage supporters to regularly visit the site.

In terms of approachability and accessibility, feedback from supporters at MTBD was that the Committee had some work to do here and could do more to raise their profile amongst supporters. It was mentioned that excluding the longer serving Committee members, very few supporters at MTBD said that they knew who the Committee were. An action already taken here was to have the personal profiles of all Committee members posted on the Trust website. A number of attendees on the night said that it was their perception that the Trust Committee members were elitist. There were some discussions around the context of this comment, with agreement that if this was the perception of supporters, it was important that steps were put in place to change this view. To this end Paul FitzGerald again stressed that joining the Committee was open to all Trust members, with there being no restriction on the number of individuals forming the group. The appeal for new blood to join the team indeed proved successful on the night, with Gareth Pummery confirming he was up for the challenge. Gareth's offer was speedily accepted with his addition to the Committee seen as adding to the diversity of the group.

Feedback on the night was sought as to how the Trust could improve its communication with members. It was suggested here that the current newsletter could be supplemented with interim one page editions, giving supporters relevant updates including information relating to meetings with the Club. It was also suggested that twitter could be used to good affect.

The Trust's social and fund raising calendar was also covered when it was detailed that as a general rule social and fund raising events organised by the Trust would be poorly attended, with these largely being only supported by the Trust Committee and their friends and families. Supporters were advised that if they had any suggestions as to any potential activities that might be explored, that this feedback would be greatly appreciated.

In respect of away travel, there had been some feedback at MTBD regarding the arrangements provided by the Trust. Comments made here related to price competitiveness and the fact that with current pick up points, supporters could find it difficult getting home from evening matches if they didn't drive.

The coach travel options provided by both the Trust and TravelZone were discussed and following some debate the consensus was that both provided a different type of travel experience and it was good that supporters were able to choose whichever option suited them best. Everyone was however in agreement that regardless of which travel provider supporters went with, everyone should unite together in the common objective of supporting the team get maximum points away.

In relation to price there were discussions around the Trust's known lack of competitiveness when compared to TravelZone. It was recognised that the key challenge here was that with no current sponsor for away travel it was difficult for the Trust to reduce prices in line with TZ's subsidised levels, without moving the travel account into the red. It was confirmed that to date no travel sponsor partner had been identified by the Trust, with a current barrier being the reputation Southend United have in the local area as being a bad payer. Securing a travel partner(s) however remained a priority for the Trust and it was confirmed that this work was ongoing. It was stressed that any help the membership or other supporters could offer, either in terms of providing names of potential targets or supporting the tender process with prospective partners, would be greatly appreciated. It was in the meantime confirmed that away travel should not be subsidised out of general Trust funds and on that basis until sponsorship for travel was secured, prices would continue to be set so as to break even.

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Moving Forward:

Paul FitzGerald spoke about the Trust's role as liaison between supporters and Southend United. He said that arguably the ongoing lack of information from the Club on Southend United's financial state had led to there being mistrust of the Club on the part of a large number of supporters. It was felt that this had manifested itself in the relationship between some supporters and the Trust.

Paul said that Tara Brady's input to the Club was clearly to run it from a business perspective and that he was therefore not seen as having any real interest in Southend United from a supporter perspective. Indeed he supported Portsmouth! Paul touched on Tara's current approach of contacting different supporter groups at various points to get any specific feedback that he was after. Paul confirmed that he had no issue with Tara speaking to any other supporter group, but it was important that the various groups worked together so as to ensure that at all times, as a whole, supporters remained in the strongest and best informed position possible. From a Trust perspective it was recognised that the Club needed to take the Liaison Meetings more seriously, as currently it was not uncommon for actions on the part of the Club to remain open.

Supporters present were asked as to whether it was thought that Board representation was important. The vast majority confirmed that they felt it was. It was however recognised that with Ron Martin as majority shareholder, it was doubtful whether any of the Directors ultimately had any real influence or control over what decisions were made at the Football Club. The consensus was however that whether or not supporter representation on the Board proved to bring any authority with it, the seat on the Board would mean that supporter views and opinions would at least get to the table and would not be misconstrued or diluted on the way. Exactly what the "seat" would look like, if it ever happened, was still not clear.

Whilst as the Forum was brought to a conclusion it was fair to say that there remained some differences of opinion, a positive of the evening was that those present had however agreed the first steps to enable the various supporter groups to work more closely together going forward.

Ricky Duncan Q&A

Paul Yeomanson as the Trust's Club Liaison Officer introduced Ricky Duncan, extending a warm welcome to him. Paul noted with disappointment the low turn out for the evening remarking that Ricky's sessions for supporters regarding Youth Development and Southend United were always value for money and supporters who were absent didn't know what they were missing.



In answer to questions from the floor Ricky spoke passionately about the Youth structure. He confirmed his main objective being to produce as many players as possible that made it into Southend United's first team. Ricky acknowledged the frustrations for supporters when on occasions decisions would be made to sell players deemed of high potential to bigger clubs. If it was however deemed to be good business for the Club and the player wanted to go, this was often seen as the optimum route to take. Ricky confirmed that sell on or other similar clauses would be put in place so that the Club would benefit financially when any boy achieved future success. It often proved difficult to keep players when the bigger clubs were interested.

Ricky spoke about the fact that despite the financial challenges faced by Southend United over recent years, he was appreciative that his budget had not been cut with investment in the Youth Department remaining strong. He spoke of the fact that both Ron Martin and Tara Brady saw clear value and worth in such investment and providing any requests for funding were sound, in general he would be supported.

Ricky was extremely complementary of the team of support staff working around him and identified that the fact this team had been in place long term gave stability and this was seen to have advantage. Ricky said it had taken him and his team five years plus to get the Youth structure to where it was now, but with a lot of hard work and commitment by this team, over time the reputation of Southend United's Youth policy had been built up from what had been a position of poor perception, to a place where the Club now had an excellent name in Youth Team football. There were good links in place with Premiership clubs, as well as other bigger clubs and that often because of Southend's renowned Youth set up, youngsters would choose the Club over some Academy sides – so we must be doing something right! Trials and other player recruitment events would be well attended, with parents who had done their homework often deciding their youngster should choose this Club.

With a number of former Youth players now having broken into the first team squad over the last year, Ricky spoke with pride about his current group of players saying that this included a number of excellent prospects

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for the future. The players offered scholarships this year had been signed at the start of Ricky's time at the Club and he was very excited at what the future could bring, providing that we could hold onto these players and successfully support their transition into the first team.

Ricky said that he was particularly keen to foster links between the Youth team and supporters. He told those present that this was their club and that the Youth team was a key part of its future. A number of options were discussed that might help bring this relationship to fruition. These included changing the time/location of Youth team matches to encourage more supporters to attend these games, Ricky and his backroom team giving a presentation to fans after a first team match and also getting some of the Youth team youngsters involved in a Q&A session or Trust social events. These suggestions were well received by those in attendance and it was agreed that these should be further discussed off line with Ricky to agree the best way forward.

As part of the consultation process the Trust has already sent out a survey to its members and other supporter organisations to gauge their feelings regarding kick off times for Youth Team matches and what interest there would be in Youth Team specific fundraising events.

Following a very interesting session with Ricky and him having been thanked for his contribution in taking the time to come and speak to supporters, the evening was rounded off. It was confirmed that a record of discussions and any associated actions agreed would be made available to all supporters.

A LETTER FROM CRAIG...

Hi Paul,

Thank you so much for the kind letter you sent me on behalf of the Trust.

I really enjoyed getting to know some of the members and have a lot of happy memories from the last year.

I think the work you do is invaluable to the football club and I thank you for all your help throughout last season which was a time of rebuilding for the club. I know what you have done in the past to help keep the club going, especially during the season before last, and it would have been understandable had you decided to take a step back after the decimation of the squad that happened as a result.

The backing I received as Captain last season made my job a lot easier than it might have been and I thank you for giving us a chance to put the club back on an even keel.

I think you are in a good position to progress and challenge for promotion and I would have loved to have been a part of it, but ultimately I had to make a tough decision in light of the contract I was offered and the way it was put forward to me.

Once again thank you for your support, I wish you every success for the future,

Craig



FUNDRAISING

100 Club

The latest winners in the scheme, pulled out of the hat during weekly draws since the last newsletter were Clare Brooks (twice), Chris Karkoski, Bryan Woodford, Paul Yeomanson, Rick Napper, John Cornwell and Phillipa Guest each winning around £28.00.

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 476458 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 around £28.00 per week at the present time.

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Quid-a-Goal

This Season's Quid A Goal scheme is now up and running and with numerous pledges made so far the current running total after the away game vs Morecambe is £600.50

Once again for the 2011/12 season part of the funds raised from the QAG scheme will be given to the Southend United Community & Educational Trust (SUCET) to help fund their Bodycare Programme. This programme is delivered to young children of both Infant and Junior school age to help them get a healthy start in life with the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating being covered as well as mental and social health.

If you would like to help raise funds for this worthy cause you can do so by completing the QAG Entry Forms that are available from the Trust Stand in the Shrimpers Bar.

Application forms are also available for download from the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk



MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to New Life Members (Total 200)

Giovanni Quaglia.



Life Membership of the Trust currently costs £75.00 if you have an email account or £100.00 if you prefer to receive Trust Mailings by post.

If you are interested in joining this group please contact our Membership Secretary, Paul Yeomanson via email at membership@shrimperstrust.co.uk.

You can also join up as a Life Member in the Membership Section of the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, and postal applications will also be accepted at **Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD.**

Welcome to New Members since the last Newsletter

Nick Beckwith, Stewart Blackett, Edward Foong, Jim Ling, Giovanni Quaglia, Joseph Rutter and Kevin Saunders.

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 address. Please send any change of address details to **The Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend on Sea, SS1 9FD, or alternatively fill in our on-line contact details form which can be found in the Membership Section of the Trust Website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk **

PROGRAMMES WANTED.....

Trust Member Alan Liles is looking for several programmes to fill some gaps in his collection.

In particular he is looking for Away Programmes for the following matches in the 2006/07 Season: Crystal Palace, W.B.A., Derby, Burnley, Colchester, Barnsley, Luton, Cardiff, Stoke, Preston and Plymouth.

Alan is also interested in collecting any Ticket Stubs both Home and Away for that and any other season.

**If you can help please contact Alan in writing at:
Alan Liles, 14 The Poplars, Basildon, Essex, SS13 2ER.**



SUFC STEWARDS – A BIG THANKS...

The Trust would like to thank Roger French and all the SUFC Match Stewards who lined up for a pre-season photograph.



Copies of the pictures were sold raising £45.00 for the Trust.

FANCY A FLUTTER?



After a successful start to the season, Southend United find themselves firmly placed in the automatic promotion places. At the start of the season you could have got 22/1 on the Shrimpers to win the title, however, the odds are now down to as low as 9/1 at Ladbrokes.

If you were an optimist at the start of the season and fancied Southend United to win promotion and you want to sell your bet for profit, get onto betfair and sell at 3.15 (promotion) or 12.4 (champions).

Other good value bets throughout the division are as follows:

Leicester City to win the Championship 6/1 – The pre-season favourites are now out to 6/1 to win the Championship. With so many players jelling together they were never going to start brightly and after starting to pick up the form along with the guarantee more signings will come in January, could be worth a shot.

BARBER'S BLURB – TERRACE TALK MATCH REPORTS

Saturday 3rd September 2011



**Southend United 2 (Mohsni 27, Hall 59)
Northampton Town 2**

The win over Crawley in midweek after the three points away at Port Vale put us in good stead for the game today. I was feeling confident of getting something from the match even though we had a striker shortage.

Blair Sturrock and Bilel Mohsni got the nod to start and in the opening half of football we were by far the better team and it was just down to the fact whether we would be able to score or not.

Free flowing football from Southend with the rejuvenated Anthony Grant and Kane Ferdinand alongside Hall and Leonard in the midfield playing well. Sturrock was holding the ball up well and showing off neat touches.

I could sense a goal coming for The Blues after the keeper saved well from Grant and Leonard. The goal did come in the 27th minute and it is a contender for goal of the season already!

Bilel Mohsni picked the ball up on the half-way line, turned and ran towards the visiting goal. The Cobblers defenders backed off the Tunisian, who after weighing up his options, took a shot from 35 yards out. The ball dipped and flew past the goalkeeper and into the top corner of the goal, the whole of Roots Hall were on their feet, stunning strike!

Another stunning strike from Ryan Hall in the second half doubled our advantage and I felt very confident in my pre-match prediction of a 2-1 victory for Southend.

However seconds after Northampton restarted the game the ball fell kindly for Akinfenwa and the big forward unleashed an unstoppable thunderbolt past Morris, with a little helping hand from the crossbar.

Arron Davies then turned two Blues defenders before slipping the ball into the near post to get the score level at 2-2. Despite the visitors getting back into the game, we still dominated large periods of the match.

We had a few half chances to try and claim the winning goal that we deserved. We all thought cult-hero Bilel Mohsni clinched the winning goal when he prodded home from close range but the officials flag was up and the goal had been ruled out.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Luke Prosser, Ryan Leonard, Ryan Hall, Anthony Grant, Kane Ferdinand, Bilel Moshni and Blair Sturrock.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Anthony Grant.

Saturday 10th September 2011



**Swindon Town 2
Southend United 0**

So after being unbeaten last week with wins against Port Vale and Crawley Town following those up with a draw against Northampton, I was in high spirits about this game at The County Ground.

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Unfortunately the fans turned up (3-2-4 I believe) but the team didn't. After having something to eat and drink in the 71 Club, we headed into the ground ready to cheer on the boys in blue. I was very confident of beating Paolo Di Canio's team, an early goal would have been a treat. It didn't happen.

The game started slowly to be fair which probably helped us as the away team. The on-rushing Swindon goalkeeper chopped down Blair Sturrock then he saw a half volley just go wide of the goal as Southend looked to open the scoring.

Luke Prosser and Mark Phillips both headed over the bar before Blair's attempt at an over-head kick was easily saved. However, the goal just before half-time changed the swing of the match, it was scored by substitute Smith.

The ball came into the box and it was only cleared to the edge of the area, where Smith latched onto it before smashing a shot into the corner of the goal to spark wild celebrations with the home faithful.

The score line wasn't disastrous so we had to come out in the second half confident we could achieve something. All hopes of that were dashed went defensive mistakes let in Kerrouche, who curled home a great finish past Morris to leave United with a huge mountain to climb.

In all fairness the home side didn't have many shots on target, but they controlled the game against a very lacklustre Southend team, and we hardly had a shot on goal throughout the whole game.

The three previous results have been very positive, but this was a tough fixture and there are plenty more of them to come in the next few weeks. We have got two home games on the bounce now so it is all about bouncing back and trying to claim all three points on Tuesday night.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Luke Prosser, Ryan Leonard, Ryan Hall, Anthony Grant, Kane Ferdinand, Bilel Moshni and Blair Sturrock.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Chris Barker

Tuesday 13th September 2011



**Southend United 1 (Phillips 87)
Gillingham 0**

The result I hoped for before the match was to become true as Southend United beat Gillingham 1-0 at Roots Hall. After the dismal performance away at Swindon it was vital to get back on track.

Manager Paul Sturrock made two changes to the side that last at The Robins. He brought in Peter Gilbert and Michael Timlin for Luke Prosser and Ryan Leonard, both were on the bench.

Whenever we play at home I always fancy our chances and tonight was no different. Gillingham haven't been as lethal as they usually are in this division so even if they were to have the majority of possession, I was confident our back line would deal with any threat.

That is what the game panned out like. We had the better of the early chances and they fell to the impressive Blair Sturrock. The forward first lashed a 25 yard effort just wide of the post before seeing his superb volley rebound off the crossbar after good work by Bilel Moshni.

The Gills then started to get into the game and to be honest they did enjoy large spells of possession, however, their only efforts on goal were from distance that Morris handled well.

The second half was more of the same and our chances of winning the game looked smaller once Bilel was sent off for two harsh bookings. We rolled our sleeves up and got on with the game as we looked to win the game on the counter.

Glenn Morris was in superb form saving well from Rooney, Kedwell, as well as handling well when under pressure. Then three minutes from time Paul Sturrock's Barmy Army clinched the victory and all three points.

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Blair Sturrock's hard work down the right forced a corner that was to be taken by Ryan Hall. The former Palace winger curled in a dangerous cross to the near post that was met by the head of Phillips, the ball smashed into the net via the crossbar to give The Shrimpers the win.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin, Ryan Hall, Anthony Grant, Kane Ferdinand, Bilel Moshni and Blair Sturrock.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Blair Sturrock.
Saturday 17th September 2011



Southend United 2 (Dickinson pen 4, Gilbert 80)
Plymouth Argyle 0

The win against Gillingham in midweek couldn't have been a bigger boost ahead of this game against Sturrock's old club Plymouth Argyle. The game today is almost a lose-lose situation, because even if you win the game the fans would expect us to have won by a larger margin, and if we were to lose people would be up in arms.

Fortunately we got the win and despite not playing to the best of our ability, partly due to Argyle's heart, we were never really in great threat of losing the game and were the better side when it mattered.

Liam Dickinson returned to the starting line-up looking to prove a point to his brief employers over the summer. He partnered Blair Sturrock up front before the managers son being replaced by Harris, who looked lively upon his return to the side.

One has to feel for Plymouth's plight. Just under 2 years ago they were a mid-table Championship side with average gates of 17,000-18,000 week in week out, so it is a shame to see a side crumble like they have. All sentiment was to go out of the window during the 90 minutes though as we needed the points to climb closer to the summit of the league.

Southend eventually took the lead, after a dire first half, it was Michael Timlin that collected a quick free-kick before being chopped down in the penalty area. Ryan Hall, Liam Dickinson and Neil Harris all wanted the spot kick, Dicko getting the nod in the end, he coolly dispatched.

The visitors then had former West Ham and Crystal Palace midfielder Carl Fletcher sent off after grabbing the throat of Blues midfielder Michael Timlin. A second goal for Blues now would kill the game off for good.

The second did eventually come in the 80th minute when Peter Gilbert headed home his first goal in 8 years after a neat corner involving Timlin and Hall.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin, Ryan Hall, Anthony Grant, Kane Ferdinand, Liam Dickinson and Blair Sturrock.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Mark Phillips

Saturday 24th September 2011



Rotherham United 0
Southend United 4 (Gilbert 10, Timlin 47 & 60, Harris 64)

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After back to back home wins in a week we headed up the motorway to Yorkshire to challenge one of the early pace setters in the division, Rotherham United. They named former Blues striker Alex Revell as skipper in their starting line up.

The wins against Gillingham and Plymouth fired us up to 6th in the league, sitting in the play-off places, and a positive result today would almost guarantee a further climb up the league.

After a good coach journey to the game with good company, a few drinks in the pub opposite the ground, we made our way into the Don Valley Stadium. However I don't think any Blues fan inside the ground would have thought we would win the game so comfortably. I was confident we could get a victory, but the way we played was fantastic.

Peter Gilbert fired in a neat strike from the edge of the box after a well-worked corner involving Timlin and Ferdinand. Michael Timlin, after seeing an earlier effort saved, should have doubled the lead when he shot straight at the keeper after a great move involving Dickinson and Harris.

The hosts came back at us after we scored but 3 minutes into the second half and we were cheering again. Blues won a throw-in on the far side, and whilst I was watching in the stands I called that we would score from it, and we did. A ball from Leonard was missed by everyone and Timlin lashed a volley low into the corner of the net.

The Swindon Town loanee then added a third for Southend United after he connected superbly with his left foot and the ball flew into the top corner of the goal. It was another goal I called from the stands after another Leonard long throw.

The match was complete when lifelong Southend fan Neil Harris scored his first goal for the club. After impressive performances in his last three games the former Millwall forward tucked the ball away neatly from 12 yards after good work from Dickinson and Leonard.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin Ryan Leonard, Jean-Paul Kalala, Kane Ferdinand, Liam Dickinson and Neil Harris.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Liam Dickinson/Michael Timlin

Friday 30th September 2011



**Southend United 3 (Dickinson pen 27, Phillips 90+1, Harris pen 90+5)
Shrewsbury Town 0**

A football match under the lights at Roots Hall on a Friday night, it doesn't get better than this, in my opinion. After three straight victories and three clean sheets, we hosted 2nd placed Shrewsbury Town, knowing a win for either side would fire them to the top of the league.

Manager Paul Sturrock named the same side that beat Rotherham by 4 goals to 0 last week and that meant a first Friday night game for Blues striker Neil Harris. He was hoping to add to his first goal he netted last week.

It was the former Millwall man that played a role in the first goal. The striker was hauled to the ground off the ball and the referee had no option than to point to the spot. Up stepped Liam Dickinson to coolly place a shot past the goalkeeper Smith and into the bottom corner of the net.

The Blues were in control in the first half and I was confident of going top of the league, however, the visitors nearly made it a nervy finish. They had most of the possession in the second half but hardly threatened the Blues goal until 8 minutes from time when they saw an effort rebound off the bar.

Sturrock brought on Hall and Grant and it was Ryan Hall who played a role in what proved the goal that would win the game. His free-kick was attacked by Phillips and even though the defender missed it, keeper Smith punched the ball against him and it bounced into the empty net.

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I was over the moon as I put my last pound on Dickinson to score the first goal and Southend to win 2-0, it was all happening, until this. Ryan Hall collected the ball from Grant, he hurdled a few changes before slipping in Neill Harris. The striker was fouled and the referee pointed to the spot.

Up stepped Harris and he lashed home the penalty straight down the middle of the North Bank goal to send Southend United top of the league, where we have stayed after the full weekends results.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin Ryan Leonard, Jean-Paul Kalala, Kane Ferdinand, Liam Dickinson and Neil Harris.

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Jean-Paul Kalala.

Tuesday 4th October 2011



**Dagenham & Redbridge 1
Southend United 3 (Hall 30 & 74, Harris 90+4)**

Southend United left Dagenham with a deserved victory as they brushed aside their London neighbours. Two goals from the recalled Ryan Hall and Neil Harris' third goal in as many games made the Blues' passage to the area quarter finals.

Manager Paul Sturrock made four changes to the side that beat Shrewsbury 3-0 with starts for Bilel Moshni instead of Mark Phillips, Anthony Grant in for Ferdinand, Hall and Sturrock in for Harris and Dickinson.

Southend started the much brighter side and Anthony Grant saw his long range shot drift narrowly wide of the target. We were still the much better side and Ryan Hall joined the Blues in having a go from distance, but his curling effort flew over the bar.

In the 30th minute Southend did take the lead when Ryan Leonard's long throw was controlled superbly by Ryan Hall on his thigh before turning and volleying his effort all in one movement.

Dagenham hardly threatened the Blues' goal and it was The Shrimpers who should have scored the second goal of the game when Leonard was chopped down in the area but Ryan Hall saw his penalty saved by Lewington.

Daggers equalised in the 66th minute against the run of play when McCrory saw his free kick deflected off JP Kalala to leave Morris with no chance. However, 14 minutes later Ryan Hall's superb piece of skill, turn and shot put Blues back in front, deservedly.

Substitute Neil Harris broke the offside trap, beat the defender before seeing his shot saved by Lewington, but the keeper could only parry it out to Harris who took his time before stroking the ball home for his 3rd goal in as many games.

The road to Wembley is getting shorter!

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Bilel Moshni, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin Ryan Leonard, Jean-Paul Kalala, Anthony Grant, Ryan Hall and Blair Sturrock

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Ryan Hall

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Saturday 8th October 2011



Crewe Alexandra 1
Southend United 3 (Ferdinand 37, Mohsni 88 & 90+1)

So two late goals from super Bilel Mohsni fired Southend back to the top of the division. The French defender came on in the 85th minute of the right wing before scoring with a finer header and he followed that up with a superb controlled finish to seal the victory for Paul Sturrock's men.

After the dominating performance away at Dagenham, Sturrock reverted back to the same side that beat Shrewsbury last Friday at Roots Hall, as we looked to go back to the top of the league. After watching the Crawley game in the bar, we knew we had to claim all three points if we were to go back to the summit of the division.

The game was not the greatest to be honest but it was the mighty Shrimpers that took the lead in the 37th minute of the game. After Crewe saw a long range shot rebound off the post, a flowing move from Southend involving Neil Harris led to Michael Timlin having a shot on goal. The keeper Phillips saved well but the ball could only rebound to Ferdinand who tucked away his first of the season.

The home side upped the tempo in the second half and they forced Glenn Morris into a stunning save on the hour mark. The former Orient shot stopper produced a fine save as his tipped a long-range effort from the winger that took a deflection, just wide of the post. The home side were seeing a lot more of the ball and they did equalise in the 75th minute when the ball was squared across the box and Harry Davis tucked away from close range.

The inspired substitutions from Paul Sturrock, fresh from winning Manager of the Month, bringing on Grant, Hall and Mohsni, and the latter two combined in the 88th minute when Hall's cross was powered home from the versatile Bilel.

The big defender was not finished there though, he completed the game for Southend and earned all three points when he beautifully controlled Dickinson's flick on before clipping past the keeper to send Southend back to the top of the division.

Up The Blues!
Scott Barber

Blues Team: Glenn Morris, Sean Clohessy, Mark Phillips, Chris Barker ©, Peter Gilbert, Michael Timlin Ryan Leonard, Jean-Paul Kalala, Kane Ferdinand, Liam Dickinson and Neil Harris

Barber's Blues M.O.T.M: Bilel Moshni

20th October 2011