Cambridge Fans United

CFU

"Uniting Our Community"

AMBER NEWS

Special
'This is Our Season!'
Edition

August 2024



Opening Impressions,

"Optimism doesn't mean that you are blind to the reality of the situation. It means that you remain motivated to seek a solution to whatever problems arise."
Dalai Lama.

If we had any doubts about our team's potential following a disappointing performance at Stockport on the opening day of the season, they were quickly forgotten after an exhilarating second half performance against Championship side Queens Park



Rangers three days later. Losing 2-0 at half time , a rousing come back resulted in a goal and a number of chances. Maybe we could have had a couple of penalties. Certainly a number of Rangers fans thought so. My only disappointment was with some of our fans who barracked Jack Stevens after Rangers' second goal. As far as I'm concerned, any player in a United shirt gets our support no matter what. I was pleased that others in the crowd stood up for our keeper and shamed the boo boys into silence. The lasting memory will be a half in which United played some of the best football I've seen at the Abbey for years. This is a team going places. Monk knows what he wants and has recruited well. He also gives youngsters a chance. Dan Barton looks like he's going to be some player. We have Jobe, Mconnell ,Hoddle and Bennett too. The youth system is producing real talent. And now we have a manager happy to play someone as soon as they are good enough. It has not always been so. I am looking forward to seeing how Gary Gardner shapes up for us. He has real pedigree and our midfield at full strength shouldn't struggle against anyone. Our new style of play will work much better with a little more time and following the return of a number of players who have proved themselves at a higher level.

What we need most of course is an accomplished number 9. Who doesn't? But I am intrigued to see that that number has yet to be allocated. I wonder if we have someone in mind? Maybe a right back too. As the window draws to a close, decisions have to be made. I suspect that, with a capable target man, we could batter some teams this season. We looked better moving forward and in possession against QPR. The season has barely begun but already I can smell the optimism. Crowds are up and if that trend continues, expanding and improving the ground will become essential. That process is well under way and the palpable sense of expectation is another sign of a club going places.

I am delighted to see that the new Government appears to be prepared to enact the proposals which emerged from the Fans Led Review, which the club were so involved in. It's vitally important that all our MPs are encouraged to support the drive to changing Football Governance in order to make sure that the immense wealth generated by football is distributed more evenly and more fairly. It's in everyone's interests that there is real and meaningful competition amongst the clubs in the pyramid and that all clubs can have legitimate ambitions to progress without being blocked by those with vested interests. We need an Independent Regulator, proper tests for owners to make sure that stringent fit and proper ownership criteria are applied meaningfully and that the grassroots of the game are properly nurtured. There is no meaningful future for the game without this last proposal being accepted.

A new Government Bill must ensure that fairness is the principle which governs every decision made about football. Can we say that all the decisions made by the FA or the EFL have been fair to all or fully divorced from the endless desire for profit exhibited by the TV companies or the so called big clubs? Ask fans of Nottingham Forest, Leicester and Everton, amongst others, if they have been treated in the same way as all conquering Manchester City, who stand accused of over one hundred breaches of financial rules. Why has it taken so long to consider these breaches seriously? Is it because governing bodies realise that the effect of finding the club guilty might mean more than a fine or a deduction of points? Perhaps relegation or being stripped of titles might stretch the credibility of the game? Perhaps it would restore it? Perhaps the FA are frightened that Manchester City can afford better lawyers? Watch this space.

It is a good sign of how the club feels that a Shadow Board has been created. It is still evolving and finding its way but it exists as a real voice for the fans and includes all the major fans' groups. At a time when the proposed change of badge has been so contentious, as it was bound to be, I believe the club has found it very useful talking to the Shadow Board about the need for consultation. Whatever our feelings about the need for change, this consultation process has been so much more sensitive and comprehensive than the last. We all learn and that is another good sign of a club wanting to be aligned with its community. The commercial value of changing a brand mark is obvious. The value of tradition is obvious. Good clubs find ways of marrying the two. The debate has been lively and worthwhile. Once upon a time badges were changed without a word. In the future the views of fans on Heritage matters will always be heeded and that is a huge step forward.



1975



1996

Football Governance Bill

The Football Supporters Association (FSA) will be in Parliament to host **"Football Governance Bill: What next?"** on Tuesday 3rd September 2024 (5.30-7pm, Committee Room 10) with guest speaker EFL chair Rick Parry – and the FSA would like supporter groups to contact local MPs to encourage their attendance.

The Football Governance Bill is a huge opportunity to change football for the better and, with its inclusion in last month's King's Speech, the FSA want to make sure the legislation is as strong as possible to protect clubs and give fans more of a say in how the game is run.

The FSA will seek to reestablish our All-Party Parliamentary Group for Football Supporters in the new Parliament. If your local MP has an interest in football we'd love to get them involved so please do send them the link. The APPG aims "to represent the interests of match-going football fans and to support the aims and objectives of the Football Supporters' Association" and they can join by emailing appg@thefsa.org.uk

Please contact your local MP and ask them to attend the meeting.

Here are links to the details of local MPs:

North East Cambridgeshire – The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP (Conservative)

North West Cambridgeshire – Sam Carling MP (Labour)

St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire – Ian Sollom MP (Liberal Democrat)

South Cambridgeshire – Pippa Heylings MP (Liberal Democrat)

Below is the FSA letter of invitation:

Football Governance Bill: What next? Tuesday 3rd September 2024 (5.30-7pm, Committee Room 10) Speakers to include: Rick Parry (EFL chair) and Tom Greatrex (FSA chair) The long-awaited Football



Governance Bill might have been delayed thanks to July's general election but new culture minister Lisa Nandy has already said it is "personal" for her and a "top priority" - this was further confirmed by its inclusion in last month's King's Speech. This Parliamentary event will look at the previous Bill's strengths and weaknesses while looking at ways in which MPs, Peers, clubs and football supporters can help ensure the Bill delivers upon its promises by protecting the game and strengthening the fans' voice. This is a huge, generational opportunity to change football for the better and we look forward to catching up with previous APPG members and welcoming new MPs into the fold - the Football Supporters' Association (FSA) is here to help MPs with football matters which arise within their communities. We would also encourage MPs to invite newly-elected colleagues to this meeting so we can introduce them to the work of the FSA and any new APPG for Football Supporters. This meeting will be hosted and chaired by Ian Lavery MP (vice chair of the former APPG for Football Supporters to which the FSA acted as secretariat). ● If you are an MP/Peer and would like to register email: appg@thefsa.org.uk Please note: APPGs cease to exist when a general election is called so this will act as the inaugural meeting for the new APPG for Football

Supporters which aims “to represent the interests of match-going football fans and to support the aims and objectives of the FSA”. If you would like to hear more about the previous APPG’s work please contact the FSA via the above email address.

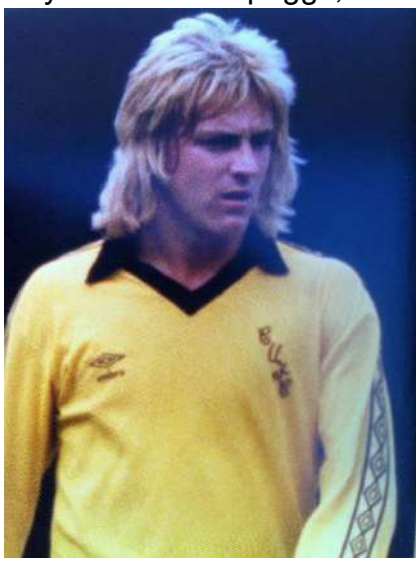


I am delighted that the FSA have promoted the campaign to persuade MPs to get behind this opportunity to promote the legislation we so desperately need. I’ve taken this article from the CFU website, which shows how committed we are to promote the proposals recommended by the Fans’ Led Review. We cannot allow the powerful and the wealthy to dictate the way football has been organised. It threatens the long term future of the game and the interests of all fans. Whatever size football club you support, they must have legitimate aspirations to climb the pyramid. Success should be earned and not bought. Some clubs are now charging such high prices for tickets that only the very wealthy can afford to go and watch them. This is absolutely immoral. It is a betrayal of the origins of the people’s game. (Andrew)



Just Supposing

I noted that, almost 50 years ago, on 16th August 1975, two United legends made their debuts against Doncaster Rovers. Their names? Alan Biley and Steve Spriggs, both of whom would get into any greatest United XI of all time. We won 2-0 and of course Biley scored. What a difference they made to our fortunes and what a joy they were to watch.



Last week, a Facebook post was asking the question ,Which former United players, at the peak of their fitness, would you like to have in the current team? The answers produced a flood of names but, asked for three, I suggested Biley, Finney and Stringer. Why?

Biley scored for us even when we were poor. Once against Burnley, he scored three even when we were down to nine men. He should have played for England and probably would have done, had he not gone to Derby County where Manchester United’s Jim Holton broke his leg, having been given

the run around. Anyone who scores regularly in an ordinary team is gold dust. What would he be worth now?

Tom Finney was tough in the proper sense. He was fearless, hard and didn't like losing. He was also very skilful and never quite got the credit he deserved for that. We were lucky to have him twice.

Dave Stringer may seem like an odd choice but he was the best defender I ever saw at the Abbey. He was nearing the end of his career but oozed class. He made us look better and organised the rest of the players. Every team needs a player like him.

Who else should be considered?

Ian Hutchinson, obviously.

What about a midfield of Spriggs, Hoolahan and Wanless ?-all the midfield talents there.

In goal? For me John Filan but Webster, Vaughan and Perez all have valid claims. If Trevor Roberts hadn't been tragically struck down by illness, I suspect he would have been in the mix. People my age would argue for Rodney Slack too. A wonderful Goalie.

What about Steve Fallon and Liam Daish as twin centre halves? We all thought Steve's real name was Sean. That's the Cambridge Evening News for you. Forwards would struggle against those two.

I haven't mentioned Claridge or Dublin who would also have been great in any side. One we forget though is Peter Leggatt, whose eccentricity meant that he was often dropped. He wouldn't follow instructions but was probably one of the most gifted players I saw. What would John Beck have done with him? I shudder to think.



We've had a lot of very good full backs but none better than Jamie Murray and Gary Kimble. You could argue for Brendon Batson, a classy player with great leadership skills but Murray and Kimble could attack and keep the best wingers quiet.

Nostalgia leads me to mention George Harris, Robin Hardy and John Gregson, a hugely skilled midfielder, who were in the first United side I saw play regularly. Harris was much too good for the Southern League. Like Cliff Jones, he was a quick and elusive winger but great in the air too. Not often you see that.

If I asked Colin Proctor, he would insist on Len Saward and Wilf Mannion, players who got us to the next level but I can only comment on players I saw play for us. George Reilly made a huge difference when he came to us and I ought to mention Andy Sinton, Trevor Benjamin and "Shaggy". Your choices will almost say something about your age and when you were watching us winning. I know there are many other players I was glad to see in our team but, today, here is my best ever United team:

Filan

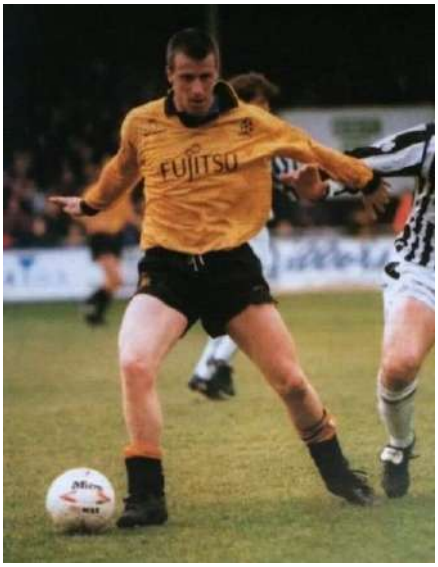
Kimble Fallon Stringer Murray

Spriggs Wanless Hoolahan

Claridge Dublin Biley

Subs; Taylor, Finney, Mannion, Batson, Reilly.

Ask me again tomorrow!



KIT FOR NOTHING

I was walking down Newmarket Road the other Friday evening, to see the Cambridge Aces obviously, and a conversation with a couple of young lads merely served to reinforce a growing concern of mine around this multiplicity of new shirts every season. I said to the first lad, so what are Cambridge Utd's colours ?and of course he pointed to the shirt he's wearing and said blue. Only to be rudely interrupted by his mate in green(and gold) who insisted he was wearing the club colours. I did say to them well what's the connection between blue and green to Cambridge United exactly? and basically they both said well we bought the shirts from there and they've got the "badge" on. So there. You'll forgive a tiny bit of poetic licence on my part there but my concern is around the identity, not just of United but every club who has had about 30 different shirts in the past ten seasons. How many times have you cursorily glanced at the telly to see a game and wondered who the hell the visitors are? You know, playing in a green, sky and yellow paisley formation, probably. Be honest now! If you look at the EFL database, each of the 72 sides have a profile including 'club colours' and, tellingly of course, only the home colours are listed. Well where would you start with the away colours?! The Utd entry says amber and black which of course is incorrect. It should say black and amber. I hear you tut but this is a phonetic and aesthetic thing. Black is an awful sounding word but self-descriptive so you get it out of the way



first, yeah? Amber is the absolute opposite so you leave it hanging ..people have paid me for this rubbish in the past, you know. Back on topic, you cannot escape the sensation that actually a club's primary colours are no longer that, they are literally the home colours and the plethora of alternative kits serve to fulfil the other 50% of the fixtures. Mind you whatever happened at Stockport on Saturday? Following this protocol we should have been in green but rocked up in black and amber. As uplifting as it was to witness(unlike the performance), it struck me, how many bloody kits do you need these days? Before you all shout at me, I know the bottom line in all this is, funnily enough, the bottom line. And the "commercial imperative". And replica shirt sales increase exponentially. I don't know how many suppliers Mr. Daniels(jnr) has been through in his tenure but I'm sure the numbers speak for themselves. At what price, I wonder. I am the foil to this you know. I haven't bought a replica shirt since 1998, the 50th anniversary jersey excepting. There isn't much chance of me falling in now as I hit 60 and try to cover up the girth scarring of years and years of Real Ale consumption. XXXXL was but a beer in my day, I recall. A member of a very well-known Utd family who were forced to jet around the globe a bit in their day but mercifully settled in Fairfax Road in Romsey Town, once famously said to me, railing against all the current trends of the 21st century, "the U's should wear black and amber unless the ref orders us otherwise". Hear, hear. Just remember, it's all your fault for buying the shirts, and if it wasn't for old farts like me clinging on to the coattails of the past then you'd have nobody to scoff at in your half paisley, half refresher lemon sherbert garment. Reminds me, have you seen Carlisle's away shirt? Blimey.

Nutsaboutamber Aug '24 E Barnwell

An interesting topic , the balance between tradition and creating a wider appeal. I suppose that, as crowds become more diverse, expectations change and, much to my chagrin, as we get older



everything insists on changing. As an ex resident of Fairfax Road, I am firmly in the traditionalist camp. Having said that, I bought one of this season's away shirts, the Blue one. And a bucket hat to boot. Why? Because I liked them. Yesterday I was mocked on Stanesfield Road for wearing them. "That badge is blue. It could be Borough!" my critic spluttered. We have worn light blue away shirts before and other colours of course, but light Blue is forever associated with Cambridge. And some of those shirts were lovely in their blueness. I pointed out that Peterborough have a P in their badge whereas we have a C….but I wasn't convincing anyone. Commercially, the shirts have been a huge success and which responsible club is going to turn down revenue? The same argument is raging about the proposal to change the badge. The commercial argument for change is overwhelming but football fans love, more than anyone, to hold on to the familiar. Of course if we were to get promoted, the shirts we were wearing would become part of the story as indeed we are. (Andrew)

Andrew,

Please find an enclosed a review of the Cambridge United Greatest Moments that Russell Greaves has written. I also have a copy of your poetry anthology which I will bring to the Crawley game for you to sign. My Mum has just shown me a poem that I wrote as a six year old back in 1967. I will show you later. Enjoy the Summer.

Best Wishes,

William (Arnold)

Cambridge United's Greatest Moments

The book starts with the "Lockdown League" and tributes to Mark Bonner, including one from Liam ONeil who first encountered Mark as a 6 year old and also describes other great relationships Mark had with players ,including Wes Hoolahan (3 years older than Mark.) Further articles I enjoyed reading included descriptions of the John Docherty era (from my teenage years) with both England international Andy Sinton and former defender David Moyes, details of the signing of Luke Chadwick and his memorable goal at the Newmarket Road end, the Ron Atkinson era and the contribution of Brendan Batson and the amazing goal scored by Lee Phillpott in the F A Cup win v Bristol City.

Further chapters I read with great interest included those of Josh Coulson scoring the winner v Plymouth Argyle in the return to league first game, the comeback against Nottingham Forest in 1998 and the play-off win v Stevenage in 2009.



Further great events are described which include the memorable Cup and League exploits in 1990 and 1991 including the Wembley game and Arsenal Cup tie and also a win v Ipswich Town at Portman Road taking United to the top of the league.

The election to the Football League back in 1970 is also very well described.

In recent times the memorable events including the Cup Ties with Manchester United, the COVID promotion, the win at Newcastle and the great escape are all of course memorable events in the clubs recent history and are beautifully described. Russell has again produced a superb book which has been brilliantly researched with outstanding pictures and illustrations to supplement the prose. Highly recommended and essential reading for any United fan!

William Arnold July 2024

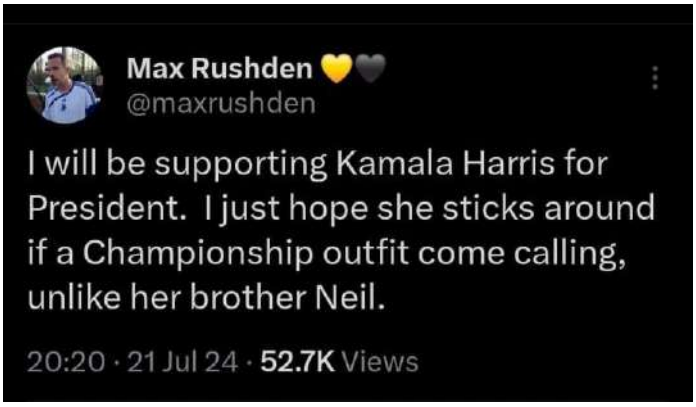
It is a superb book because the United story is a superb story! (Andrew)

My thought on Euro 2024.

Euro 24

The best team won. Spain are masters of the current trend of Tippy Tappy football, the passing to and from at the back is to make space for something to happen at the front. England (and many other teams) try to do the same, but it looks laboured and without much purpose. I found many of the games quite boring with only a few moments of excitement when a goal was eventually scored.

I did enjoy watching Georgia though, they seemed to play as if they were having fun. When they got the ball they would run forward to take on defenders or play long ball into space for willing runners to chase, and they were not afraid to shoot from outside the penalty area. Football from an earlier period?



VAR. Isn't it wonderful!

There were a number of contentious issues at Euro 24, and it seems to be agreed by the refereeing pundits that all the decisions were correct using the current interpretation of the Laws of the Game.

Fair enough, rules are rules, and when it comes to things like ball over the line, or offside, the technology available means decisions can be made with millimetre accuracy. A finger or toe beyond the line of the last defender means a goal ruled out.

There were a number of incidences where the subjective view came into the decision, in particular handball in the penalty area.

I recall 2 decisions where I think the current interpretation gave the wrong decision.

Firstly a Danish defender towards the outside of the penalty area was trying to stop a cross. The ball brushed his fingers but didn't really change the direction of the ball. His arm was outstretched a little. The cross was not headed in, and after VAR review a penalty was awarded because his arm was in an unnatural position.

In another match (Spain v Germany I think) a German forward had a shot from just outside the penalty area which hit the hand of the Spanish defender, his hand was a little away from his body. The ball looked to be on target. No penalty awarded because the defenders arm was not in an unnatural position.

I think the referee/VAR should look to see if an advantage occurred due to the handball. In the first example there was no advantage gained by the defender as the ball still went into the penalty area at roughly the same place where it would have gone if the ball had not brushed his fingers, so no penalty.

In the second example the ball might have gone in the net, so an advantage was gained by the defender, so a penalty would have been awarded.

England

An embarrassment of world class players in some areas, just embarrassing in other areas!

We all have our views on players, but it does seem odd to go into a tournament with only one left back, and he wasn't fit to play until the latter stages. Trippier did OK on the left defensively but offered little going forward. The "flair" players did well at times, but too often reverted to a safe pass backwards. The centre of defence was my biggest worry, but actually they did Ok for what was pretty much an untested partnership, but allowing a forward to run in front of you for what turned out to be the winning Spain goal shows inexperience. One of the pundits reckoned we missed Maguire, not for his defensive skills but when attacking with set pieces!



We don't have a creative midfielder, someone like Modric or De-Bryner. Actually that is not quite true, players who are creative for their Premier League club do not seem to be able to do so well when playing for England. Foden is a good example, but not the only one. Luckily we had Bellingham to win us some games!

Harry Kane scored loads of goals for Bayern Munich, but ended the season again with no silverware, and looked a shadow of what we expected. Maybe his lack of silverware is the jinx holding back England from winning?

I believe the number of foreign players in the Premier league restricts the opportunities for young players to get top level experience

With Gareth gone, who will take his place? I would go for Graham Potter. He is English and has a great deal of experience.



At least Euro 2024 gave us something to watch over the summer while waiting for some CUFC matches.

Terry Wilby

Great analysis, as always. This competition made me long for the return of "Real" football! I felt that England's problem, and the reason we were so dreadful to watch, was Gareth Southgate. With the players we had, we should have been attacking and not passing back to Pickford constantly. Winning matters, not that we did, but football should be entertaining and teams we identify with should be brave. My choice of manager would have been Pochettino but it looks like he will manage USA now. Most of Brighton's recent managers could be considered. They don't spend much but they are great to watch-even yesterday. (Andrew)

Wemberley

34 years later I still can't believe that we played under the twin towers in the world's most famous stadium in an attempt to be promoted from the fourth division-as it was called then . We and Chesterfield were the first clubs to play there in a play-off final-originally conceived of as a way of preserving interest until late in the season and as a money maker. We made history that day and many of us would admit to feeling as emotional as Elton John as we saw our little team walk onto the hallowed turf where

England had won the World Cup, Matthews finally had his day and thousands of hearts had been broken by defeat. It was a cruel place to lose and a wonderful place to win.

I had little doubt that we would win and I think the team under Beck felt the same. As I travelled back to Nottingham on a National Coach packed with Chesterfield fans, I found it hard to conceal my emotions. They couldn't conceal theirs. We travelled the whole way back in silence. I felt their pain but nonetheless, within minutes of getting off the bus, I was in my customary seat in the Peacock consuming the first of several pints. It was hard not to yell and race around but I managed it before walking home to West Bridgford, tired but elated.



A few days later, I was told that the Headmaster of the school where I taught had been delayed. Could I occupy a few minutes of Assembly? I could. I spoke for half an hour, about dreams and how they could come true. About how my little club had struggled to get into the league and how proud we were to see them matched with famous names and to travel to bigger and more impressive grounds. Those who saw Cambridge promoted to the league and then promoted and relegated almost more often than anyone else, never dreamed of a moment like this when Cambridge United were playing somewhere where every other club in the country would love to be. The pupils of Glaisdale School were nearly all Forest fans. Some supported Notts County and a few eccentrics supported Mansfield Town, although I was never sure why.



I told them about how you should support the team nearest to where you are born and not simply become a glory hunter because all too many people do just that. You should be proud of your team because supporting your team becomes part of who you are and you become part of a family of people who have that one, very important thing , in common. I probably went on a bit. I was very popular with the staff because I had shaved twenty minutes off their lesson. And the pupils? Astonishingly, they applauded me for several minutes. They got it. They understood. Our teams matter to us and real fans respect it in others, whichever team they support. Which is why Football Governance must be sorted out, so that we can all dream, not just those clubs who seek to control and run the game for their own benefit. The game belongs to us.

ENDLESS RIVER POEMS OF ANDREW STEPHEN A REVIEW

I very much enjoyed reading Andrew's memoirs and was very excited when he mentioned plans to publish a collection of his poems. I have had great pleasure reading much of his work which is from material composed over a long period of time from his schooldays up to the current era. Many different topics are included with reference to his time at schools and tributes to Andrew's children and Mother. My favourite poem is the one relating to Cambridge United with a reference to Bradford Park Avenue and a picture of the Abbey Stadium lights. Andrew has inspired me to read and research some poetry myself in particular related to my love of football and passion for Mathematics. The foreword written to the book by Andrew is also very enjoyable reading and Dave Phillips the publisher also deserves many congratulations for his collaboration in producing the book and for writing an excellent end piece.
William Arnold July 2024



I am grateful to William for his kind words and to CFU for continuing plug my books . Too often , football fans are stereotyped in very unhelpful ways. Many of us have passion and belief in something bigger than ourselves. That is no bad thing.(Andrew)
The following poem was written after Endless River was published. Many United fans have suffered from Cancer or lost loved ones to it. We can all relate to the damage it does and to the feeling of loss it leaves for ever . My brother Richard has been a United fan almost as long as me. He is known for his match reports and for his contributions to the Amber News. Oh, and his vigorous encouragement of Referees… He has been fighting cancer for five years and, following a number of operations and a course of Immunotherapy is currently in remission. His courage and his treatment encouraged me to do a Macmillan great hike of 14 and a half miles earlier this year. I also wrote this for him and for anyone who has suffered from the effects of Cancer. One day we will beat it.

The Thief in the Night

You whisper our own mortality

Into our Ear

While shredding our defences

Like a coward

Using stealth

And betraying our beliefs in fairness

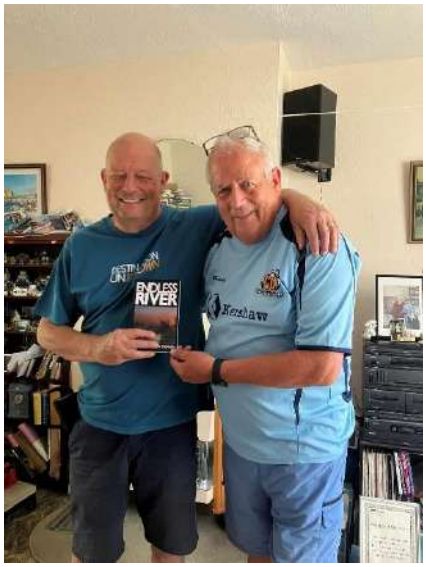
And justice

Your dark shadow betrays our friends

Undermines the healthy and the indifferent

Attacks the best of us
And the worst
Without favour or remorse.

You are the sneak thief
Which cons our bodies
Into fighting with themselves
And reduces those who love us
To despair.
You lurk inside us all
Waiting to escape,
To spread your poison
And steal our dreams.



And sometimes
You cannot break us
Or take what isn't yours.
Sometimes you are thwarted
By the visionaries
The big hearted
And those who won't go quietly.

We've got your number,
One day the nightmare will end,
The unnatural pestilence
And destruction of lives
Will be but a footnote in the History books.

Andrew Stephen



Hot off the Habbin

[programme articles]

Crawley Town

"Some people grumble that roses have thorns; I am grateful that thorns have roses."
Alphonse Karr

It's that time of year when fans everywhere assume that this will be their year, promotion a cup run, non-stop entertainment, the things we all dream of. Or is it?



Habbinites ,I know, dread a good start to the season, suggesting that our times of triumph have always followed a woeful start to the season. I've never seen the evidence but I remember beating Oxford early last season and they did all right. Someone somewhere will have the statistics to prove and to disprove the argument.

Anyway, there seems good reason for optimism this season, some great signings, crowd numbers on the up and the knowledge that our venerable stadium is about to be improved and expanded because the club is responsibly and sustainably run. Of course losing at Stockport has sent many fans into a decline worthy of Plymouth fans.

We have already had our usual luck with injuries and the team are adapting to a new system of playing out from the back. We will be easier on the eye and much more of a test for our opponents this season. Of that I am sure.

Crawley fans have had plenty to worry about too. Eight of last year's promotion team have moved on since the 8-1 demolition of Milton Keynes last season. They began by beating Blackpool and will come here full of confidence. I have more time for them now they are no longer led by sporting legends Steve Evans and Paul -it's not fair- Raynor. Jack Roles is with them now having shone for us while on loan from Tottenham. He has much to prove. The Red Devils were last in League One nine years ago and, like us, have a distinguished non-league background . Like us, it could be argued that they punch above their weight.



As I write I see that we have signed Connor O'Riordan for the season. The loss of Jobe before the season even began was a grievous blow. His performance at Blackpool was one of the best in a United shirt all season. He will be some player. Corey Smith was the star against Stockport but there will be others. When we are at full strength our midfield looks very strong. Will we see Liam Bennett playing further forward? I do hope so.

Finally, after the awful tragedy in Southport, how good to see the football club taking a lead in supporting the community. Football clubs are at the centre of the communities they serve and have huge potential to bring people together and that alone is reason for optimism isn't it?

Andrew Stephen

Match Reports

CAMBRIDGE UNITED V WBA



A brief report on last night's pre-season friendly at the Abbey stadium against championship side West Bromwich Albion. A crowd of around 3300 attended with about 650 from the West Midlands in the new South Habbin area set aside for visitors. There was a small number of home fans in the south stand with the NRE and main stand both holding decent numbers. United kicked off with 6 newly signed players with the visitors playing what looked like some first teamers and youth players including some big chaps indeed.

Playing toward the South stand, united had an early let off when a header found the net after only a few moments. The alert lady Lino already had her flag up for offside. The U's took the lead shortly after on 11 mins as the visitors defence overdid a simple clearance and Lavery was cut down in the box, referee Neil Hair awarding the penalty. Lavery sent keeper Wildsmith the wrong way for 1-0. United played some impressive stuff at times with the passing being a big improvement on last season. Lavery looked lively on the break, new keeper Vincenti Reyes looked confident although wandered out of his goal too much for my liking. The back 3 played well together and the wing backs dropped back to cover as a back 5 when needed. Korey Smith was a big influence in midfield. WBA despite their slick passing never made any sort of chance in the first half which finished 1-0.

The second half started with Holmes on for the impressive Smith. To be honest the U's played some good passing football without hitting the heights of the first half. The Baggies did enjoy more possession but despite some great support, overdid the passing and only created one real chance saved at full stretch by Reyes The game finished 1-0 and for me it was really a case of who didn't play tonight and hopefully lengthy injuries are not involved. Solid start by the whole team. MOTM was James Brophy, he seemed to be everywhere.


The Doncaster attack are once more thwarted as Terry

STOCKPORT COUNTY V CAMBRIDGE UNITED

It goes without saying I suppose that a somewhat lacklustre performance at Stockport resulting in a 0-2 defeat was not the start we wanted. Defensively we were never at our best as both centre halves were being out jumped as a matter of course. Losing such a poor goal after 5 minutes gave the home team a leg up but really the high ball should have been cleared before Barry got his shot on target. I had thought keeper Reyes had wandered off his line too often against WBA. It was well a well taken goal, but still a gift.



We took our time to get back in the game but the men in amber showed they could play some good passing football at times. However once again the lack of penetration up front was noticeable. James Brophy fired in a fine effort following a poor clearance from the home keeper who redeemed himself with a decent save. The main stand Lino seemed to miss a clear offside when following a good move Stockport hit the post. Really though at half time United were still in the game but we could do much, much better.



Changes to the line-up, although my Sky coverage kept freezing, saw the U's get right back into the game but a couple of chances for lone striker Lavery could have brought the men in amber level but in truth they were isolated attacks. Diamond missed a good chance for the hosts before more poor defending saw Wooton leap unchallenged to kill the game off at 2-0. Like many I did not see the last 5 minutes nor any stoppage time because of a 'technical glitch'.

What did we learn then? Well Smith was effective in midfield, Lavery worked tirelessly up front and Barton looked sharp and pacy when he came on. As it's the first game of the season, good manners prevents me from listing the players who didn't perform but you already know them. It will get better, but please raid the loan market for a striker (or two) now.

CAMBRIDGE UNITED 1-2 QPR

You can always tell when it's a new season at Cambridge United as we seem to already have a number of injured players, plus Ditton Lane has even more queues than usual with the endless road works going on there. The queues before and after the game were quite dreadful. Onto football matters now - both sides made several changes from their line ups on Saturday. The men in amber making 7, QPR making 6. In for the U's came new signing Connor O'Riordan, young Dan Barton and Brandon Njoku to name 3. Tonight's crowd was 4529 including around 1000 from west London. The visitors now occupy the south Habbin with the south stand not in use tonight. The U's looked a new young side, the championship team seemed much bigger.

The early stages were end to end with both teams looking to gain the advantage on a warm evening. Really there was little to choose between the sides until the 12th minute when following a fine move of around half a dozen passes saw the unmarked Frey fire into the corner for 0-1. It was no good looking at any individual, the defence had been cut right

open. Anderson lost control when presented with a good chance. Moments later Anderson beat two defenders on the right and crossed for Dixon-Bonner to fire over an open goal from around 12 yards. Centrally placed he should have broken the net in two. United were playing shadows at times but got themselves back into the game when young Barton, looking lively cut in from the left and fired in a shot from around 25 yards, which saw his effort strike the foot of the post. That was unlucky.

Dixon-Bonner for the visitors stabbed another effort goalwards but Stevens got down to save at full length. The U's were very close to equalising on 30 minutes when Morrison



headed a corner goalwards. It was met by Njoku who flicked the ball goalwards but visiting keeper Walsh saved the forwards effort. Five minutes later and disaster struck. At first I thought referee Paul Howard missed a foul on Brophy, the United defence fell asleep. Smyth got goal side of the United defence but appeared to play it too far in front of himself. I am not sure what keeper Jack Stevens was thinking but he should have belted the ball down Newmarket Road, however Smyth got their first, slipped the ball between the keepers legs and tapped in for 0-2. Really poor defending although the obvious free kick would have helped. Half time came at 0-2, scant reward for the home team who had played their way back in the game.

Kai Kai and Lavery came onto strengthen the side with QPR shooting themselves in the foot by overplaying in defence, Paul Digby latched onto the ball and struck in a nice shot from the edge of the box beating Walsh. United were now playing their best football of the game and roared on by some great support and after some fine interplay saw the increasingly impressive Barton skate past defenders to try his kick but the alert Walsh saved his effort. United had rediscovered themselves and truly played some great football which had the championship side backpedalling. Referee Howard booked Kaikai on 66 as the attacker fell in the area. We all shouted penalty but the referee said no and I thought, what did the United striker have to gain as he was about to shoot from 10 yards out.

The referee appeared to penalise any minor infringement on United but waved away United claims for a number of fouls due to the desperate defending by the visitors. Barton, seemingly toying with defenders was played through after a 1-2 with Lavery but the excellent Walsh parried yet again. After being set up nicely Lavery fired in the next effort for the U's with the busy Walsh saving yet again. United had two great chances close to the end with Lavery robbing a defender, but on the angle fired against the post from 12 yards, that was close. As 90 minutes approached Sullay Kaikai lashed a shot inches wide with Walsh at full stretch.

Referee Howard could and should have given a number of free kicks as the men in Amber pressed for the equalizer, it is frustrating when several soft free kicks were given earlier in the game that more obvious ones were deemed unworthy of formal action. So the game finished 1-2 to the visitors who could count themselves lucky to have won. United though will be all the better for this performance and the addition of a striker or others returning from injury will make this a much more promising season.





Star Man - Dan Barton, young 18 year old lad, the size of a postage stamp. What skill, what speed, what class and what a player…….

All Match reports by Richard Stephen

and finally….

"A trophy carries dust. Memories last forever."
Mary Lou Retton

It was wonderful to get back to the Abbey yesterday and meet up with friends I haven't seen since last season. The gap between seasons always seems to be shorter but that may just be my age. Being a Cambridge fan has many a bonus but I have always enjoyed bumping into familiar faces in Carlisle or York or Newcastle or even Hartlepool. It brings home what we have in common and why we're there, however we are doing. It's a calling and a hugely valuable one. It was good to see Carl Badcock and Brian Thorby mending our immaculate pitch, the CFU volunteers, William Arnold who had come all the way from China to get me to sign my book-and watch the U's of course, voice of the Abbey, Mike Barnes, the stewards, familiar faces on the Habbin North Terrace and photographer extraordinaire, Simon Lankester. We are lucky as a club that so much good is done for the community by people associated with it. I think particularly of Phil Mullen, who has done far more for disability groups than anyone I've ever met, and Simon Wall, Jake and Ed who make Seniors' Lunch such a memorable and valuable experience for so many elderly fans. It's no wonder that crowds are on the up. They have become more diverse as the club



have made it clear that all are welcome and all are safe. We have moved a long way away from the mindless tribalism of the past. It makes it the more disappointing to hear about some of the unpleasant chanting heard at Stockport. That was nothing to do with banter or with football. A group of youths entertaining themselves at the expense of others can't be acceptable. It can lead to acute distress and violence. I remember years ago at Stafford Rangers, some fans making fun of a Stafford fan who had lost his hand ,which had been replaced by a hook. There were chants about Abu Hamza ,which some found very funny but of course it wasn't. He became furious and there may well have been violence had he been able to scale a security fence. The perpetrators knew this of course, which exposed their thoroughly abusive behaviour for the cowardice it was. I would say the same about abuse directed at a young woman. Cowardly, unwelcome and the kind of thing we must put an end to. Surely?



I would hope too that action is taken against Crawley for the flares thrown onto the pitch at various points. There will be those who dismiss it as harmless fun and exuberance but it is potentially dangerous and it's illegal. I hope that Crawley Town will condemn it themselves.

More positively, it's great to see that the Walk in memory of Robert Osbourn, organised between CFU and the British Heart Foundation to raise money and awareness, is likely to take place before the home game against Wigan on November 19th. Gary Aytes, whose concept it was, spent many years on the CFU Committee and knows that CFU value all such projects which benefit the community. Similarly, I am pleased to hear that the club have approached The Royal British Legion with a view to producing enamel badges with the club badge and the poppy symbol on them. The club and the fans always observe Remembrance Day immaculately and support the Poppy Appeal very generously. It's great to see so many ex-servicemen volunteering as collectors too.



I was reading the other day about the size of the Chelsea first team squad and about the money Chelsea have spent on players over the last few years- not that it has done them much good. That kind of spending power shows exactly why we need better, fairer and more effective Governance in football than we've had since SKY TV and a number of big clubs hijacked the game and its values of fair competition, and the rights of fans, in the nineties. It is vital that long overdue reforms in football are enacted as soon as possible.

The game against Crawley - or the result anyway - was a disappointment. However the second half against QPR and an hour against Crawley showed that we are a very strong team in the making. If you don't take your chances, you don't get what you deserve.

People have started moaning already but success is not an entitlement, it comes through hard work. We have talented players who are injured, we have some brilliant young players and a big number nine who will come in at the end of the window…

This is a time for optimism. Those who had us relegated before a ball was kicked will be disappointed. I think that this will be a season to remember.

Up the U's!

Andrew



Make a difference and join CFU.
Your opinions and contributions are always gratefully received:
acstephen@hotmail.com

[Deadline for next newsletter- **15th Sept 2024]**

United in Endeavour

