Cambridge Fans United

CFU

"Uniting Our Community"

AMBER NEWS

Special
'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'
Edition

November 2021



Opening Analysis,

"Loyalty is still the same, whether it wins or loses the game; it is as real as a dial to the sun, although it is not shined upon."

A great deal has happened since the last edition, much of it very satisfying and full of hope for the future. Certainly, there have been some disappointments, such as defeats to Shrewsbury and Rotherham but perhaps the biggest disappointment was the abject first half performance away to Milton Keynes. Even then, our second half performance was so much better that we were able to match one of the division's best teams. That was certainly the case last Saturday as well where, despite losing, we might well have earned a draw and had another very good side on the back foot for half an hour. Their fans were very complimentary about us and the game showed yet again that there is no reason to doubt that we can flourish at this level.

It seems that whenever people start saying that we need a win, that two like those against Wimbledon and Morecambe come along, as well as sensational goalscoring. The doom merchants, and there are still plenty of those, will have to accept that we deserve our place in this league, whatever our budget and that no one will have an easy game against us. We played very well in the replay against Northampton to earn a home tie in the second round of the F.A. Cup. One day we will know whether we are playing Exeter or Bradford. Win that and we could earn a lucrative home tie against a glamour club. The fans deserve an attractive tie and our coffers could probably do with a top up.



Our away support has been phenomenal as usual this season, even in defeat. The combination of inspired management, a team in which everyone plays for the team and fanatical support all suggest that we are a club going somewhere, united in purpose. Like many, I was saddened to hear of incidents of racist abuse aimed at some of our fans at Rotherham. The police and Rotherham United are looking into it. If the allegations are proven, I hope that they will come down heavily on the perpetrators and send out a signal that such offences won't be tolerated. Rivalry is one thing but there is no place in our game, or in society for hatred of any kind. The message is gradually getting through but there are still far too many episodes of racist, sexist and homophobic abuse at matches. We are there to enjoy watching our teams. No one should be allowed to interfere with that enjoyment, threaten anyone's safety or insult whatever differences they see in other people. It is ignorant and plain wrong.

On the same tack, I am pleased to see that Simon Dobbin's case has been re opened. It is very clear that the mindless and cowardly thugs who attacked Simon in Southend ruined his life and the lives of his family. I hope that this time justice will be done. Simon

was a fine man, a gentle man and a family man. We can best honour his memory by campaigning relentlessly again hatred and violence.



I am delighted to include a combined CFU- CUSP statement in the Amber News. I haven't always seen eye to eye with them but I have great respect for their new leadership and sense of purpose. All fans' groups worth their salt should seek to work together and with the club on behalf of the fans. I am proud that CFU have concentrated our efforts on working for diversity, an area where co-operation with the club, the Community Trust and CUSP is bound to bear fruit. I am happy to repeat that CFU run the Away Travel scheme, have organised the provision of printed programmes to traditionalists like me, organised last season's player of the year poll and, very significantly, organised the sale of poppies at the Wimbledon game and the Act of Remembrance itself. We are hugely grateful to the ex-servicemen who gave so freely of their time to make this possible. We will never forget.

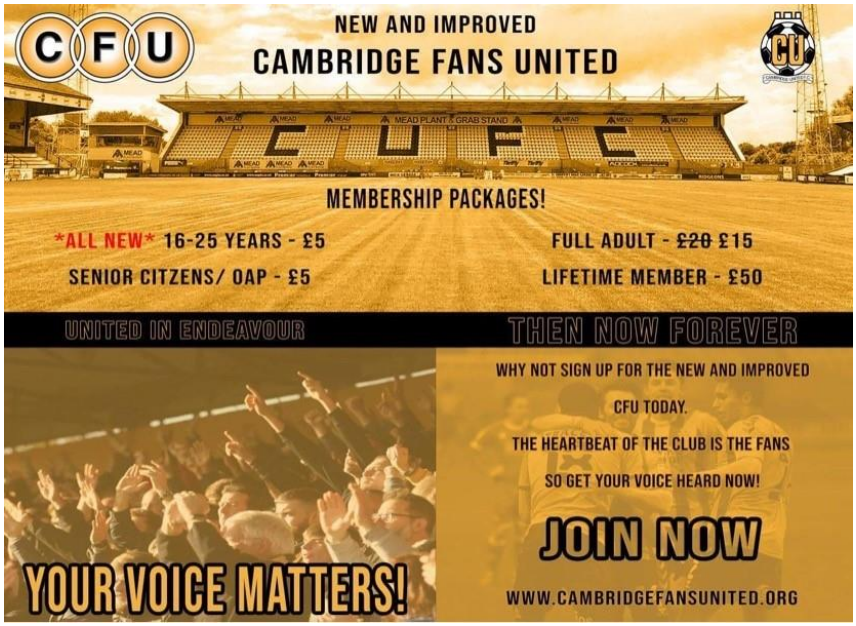
CFU are also responsible for running and organising the Lottery. As you will see, it has been relaunched. We haven't given our name to the scheme but we take great pride in its achievements. It is a fantastic way of supporting the club as well as having a good chance of winning great cash prizes. The more members we have, the more we can help the club. Over the years the Lottery has contributed a great deal to the club, in particular helping Ian Darler with the equipment he needs to make our pitch one of the best in England. We provided the scoreboards and operate them. Most recently we have paid for a wheelchair with thick tyres which will deal better with pitch side mud. We have also spent nearly £4,000 on providing replacement seats in blocks C, E and the Executive Box.



CFU are mainly involved with long term projects and services which the club don't have the resources or time to provide. Having significant assets and an Elected Director means that we are able to get involved in many things which benefit both club and fans. We are not always consulted about things, which is a shame. It would have been helpful to talk to us and CUSP about the decision to go cashless in the ground. It is my view that those fans who aren't fully confident with technology should be allowed to use cash. No doubt this conversation will begin at some point but the other side of our role is to protect the interests of fans who may not be able or willing to speak up for themselves. Both CFU and CUSP have a watching brief. The club should be pleased that we take it seriously. I am very proud of the work our volunteers do. They rarely get the credit they deserve. The hours of work they put in make a real difference. CUSP perform a vital role of picking up day to day issues raised by fans, usually about their matchday experiences. Their meetings with the club have been

very productive. We are glad to have the opportunity to work more closely with them now.

Finally, a word about Dave Matthew Jones who has been FED for many years. Few people know about the hours he has put in with other volunteers patching up our venerable stadium and making it attractive. Neither do they know just how huge his role as Supporters' Liaison Officer has become. It is up to him that all fans coming to our stadium are kept fully informed and well provided for when they get here. He is very much involved with fans' groups across the country and CFU have derived considerable benefits from his expertise. In the future I suspect that the roles of SLO and FED will have to be performed by two separate people. This is Dave's final year in post. Before our AGM we will have to start thinking about successors, rather than successor. Watch this space.



CFU and CUSP Joint working

This weekend has sadly seen an alleged incident of racial abuse of a Cambridge United supporter away at Rotherham. Whilst at this moment in time it's not right to cover this in any more detail until the official investigation has been carried out, it does draw into focus the need to work harder on the topic of inclusion for all in football.

The board of directors of Cambridge United recently released a statement on equality, diversity and inclusion at the club. It is key that the work of the club continues in this area, and both Cambridge Fans United (CFU) and Cambridge United Supporters Panel (CUSP) are coming together to support the board in their working and offer their advice and guidance where they can.

Over recent months CFU have been prioritising outreach work to parts of the

community that have traditionally been under represented amongst the fan base. For example, working with the Mosque on Mill Road, which has recently resulted in a visit to the ground. At the same time, CUSP are playing a key role in CUFC's efforts to be a mentally healthy club in all areas.

This is the first time that CFU and CUSP have come together on a topic. It's the belief of new chairman Andrew Stephen (CFU) and Ben Payne (CUSP) that a joint working approach will be of benefit to all supporters

Andrew Stephen comments: " I have never seen Fans' groups as rivals in any way. Our purpose is to look out for the interest of fans, whatever that might involve. CFU and CUSP have a fine track record of service to the club but we are not simply nodding dogs and part of our role is to ensure that whoever the temporary custodians of the club might be, they have to consider the interests of the fans. Naturally these include enshrining diversity, sustainability and the values this great club have always tried to represent. It is sometimes assumed that fans' groups are irrelevant except in times of crisis but this is clearly not so. There are always things to improve and develop. Football clubs have significant power when it comes to looking after the communities they are privileged to serve. CFU and CUSP are committed to working together to help them achieve this."

Ben Payne says: "CUSP was set up with the aim of being a voice for all fans for the everyday issues that affect the club, be it simple things such as arranging for a new display board at the front of the ground or advising the club on some of the matchday items since we've had the return of fans. However, it's key on matters like this that CFU and CUSP should work together to represent all U's Fans. It's something that sadly shouldn't still be going on in today's world, but whilst it does we need to continue to work with the club where we can. We will look to work with CFU more closely on a number of key topics where both CUSP and CFU feel that joined-up working will benefit all."

CFU and CUSP look forward to further discussions with the club in due course to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.



LOTTERY

Dear Lottery Member
Changes are being made to the CUFC Lottery.
We requested feedback and ideas from members several weeks ago and received positive feedback, and some grumbles, together with some excellent ideas on solutions, improvements and changes.
It has taken time to make those changes and test them to ensure they work.

There is also a new Lottery website. Check it out at Home | CUFC Lottery

In future there will be two draws a week - **Must Win Monday** and **The Abbey Accumulator.**

Draw 1
Must Win Monday
As the name suggests the prize, currently **£100 MUST and WILL** be won every Monday.

The first draw will be **Monday 1st November**.

Lottery members will receive a results email and the winner will be notified personally by email.

The prize currently offered **will** be increased as the lottery membership grows.



Draw 2
The Abbey Accumulator
Drawn every Friday as it is now.

The current prize fund is **£1700.00**

Lottery members will receive a results email and the winner will be notified personally by email.

Should the prize not be won £50.00 will be added to the prize total and the value rolled forward to the following Fridays draw.

Extra Draws Will take place as finances allow.
Most or all of you will be aware that the Prize Fund element of your lottery membership is ringfenced and will only be spent on the provision of prizes.

We thank you for your support, Good Luck in the forthcoming draws, encourage friends and family to join.

Regards,

The CUFC Lottery Team

You have to be in it to win it.

All Lottery members received this email recently. I hope that it will attract many new members. The more we make, the more we can help our club.

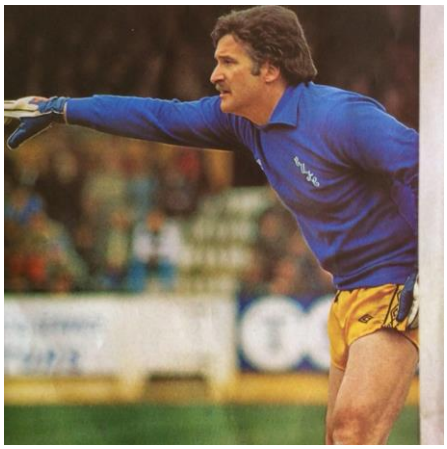
CATERING

Hi Andrew, If it's not too late could you add in a piece to your newsletter to help us recruit some match day catering/ bar staff? Currently we make up the numbers using agency staff but this is very costly. Details below:

In common with many hospitality businesses across the UK we have found difficulty in recruiting staff to work in bars and hospitality areas on match days. We are aiming to build on our bank of keen and reliable staff and limit our reliance on agency staff who add considerably to our costs. Please contact the club on catering.cufc@wilsonvale.co.uk if you are interested. Pay levels, at £10.00 per hour, are good. Shifts vary in length between 3 - 6 hours on match days depending on requirements. The rota and requirements are shared with the team in advance so staff can select their shift. Duties will include serving food, operating the till and pouring drinks along with a team of 25.

Thanks

Ian



Ian Mather

Chief Executive Officer

Abbey Stadium | Newmarket Road | Cambridge | CB5 8LN

E ian.mather@cambridge-united.co.uk T 07979 707892

Good Morning guys,

Following feedback from yourselves and other supporters regarding queues, we are going cashless at catering and hospitality outlets starting tomorrow.

We will use a flexible approach, as are very much aware that not everybody will get the message, but any help in projecting this message would be much appreciated.

FYI – the Club Shop and Ticket Office will continue to accept cash.

Many thanks,

Dan

Dan Branowsky

Head of Communications



CUP 26

Back in August, Cambridge United Community Trust's Education and Skills Manager Ash Dyer signed Cambridge United up for the Planet Super League's CUP26: a competition in association with COP26 that encourages members of our local community to score goals for Cambridge United by completing environmentally friendly activities. Our opponents: 48 other pro clubs, including 13 huge clubs from the Premier League!



The game plan was to just give it a good go this season to see if we could mix it with some of the giants and, when we qualified through the group stage into the semi-finals, we dared to dream. An epic duel with Lincoln City awaited - which would break the all-time Planet Super League record for most goals scored in a game and Cambridge United through as victors!

We then found ourselves in the final. 9 teams battling it out to be crowned champions. We had film crews in local schools, huge interest from fans and stakeholders, and even a Planet Super League presence at our last home game against Wimbledon in an attempt to finish as high up that 9 as possible. Ash was then asked to go to Glasgow to COP26 to give an acceptance speech and be presented the trophy (should we be declared winners) by Ledley and Allegra Stratton.

Well, you may already know the outcome based on the rather obvious clue in the image, but Cambridge United were declared WINNERS! We also won the Planet Super League Impact Award for having the greatest impact during CUP26. 1,000 football pitches in the Democratic Republic of Congo will now be protected on their behalf through a CUP26 donation to the Rainforest Trust UK.

We are so proud of our fans, our schools, our staff and our community! It was a huge effort from everyone involved and we would not have done it without the support from our team at the Trust. We had participants ranging from aged 3 (Ash's nephew who made a beautiful insect out of leaves and twigs to score a goal) to our senior participants, who we are working with to tackle loneliness, scoring goals on their wellbeing walks with our communities team! We had participants from our mental health support sessions taking part, and our disability and inclusion participants contributing goals too!

This victory marks another fantastic day in what is a golden period for Cambridge United both on and off the pitch, and we're not done yet! As a direct result of winning CUP26, we will be creating a legacy towards making Cambridge United a more sustainable club and a club which

puts the climate at the forefront of its thoughts in regards to education. We will continue to inspire and empower our community to make positive change to protect our planet!



Sport Matters

I have never been a great fan of the South African cricket team. I'm far from certain that Nelson Mandela would think much of the current set-up and its insistent and doubtful posturing. He had such high hopes of sport bringing different races together and repairing some of the profound damage done by apartheid. You can argue all day long about the quota system which they use to achieve and demonstrate diversity but the treatment of Quinton de Koch shows how gesture politics generally achieves the opposite effect to the one apparently desired. Trying to force a player to take the knee when that player, and many others have claimed that the gesture itself is used to mask a lack of real action by the authorities responsible is both hypocritical and unfair. Taking the knee should be respected as one possible response to racism. Forcing people to do it deprives it of power and legitimacy.



Top marks to Cambridge United who have moved heaven and earth to find the best place for my mother to attend home games. They have allocated a free ticket for a carer too. She is not disabled but she is nearly 90 and has been a regular fan since 1974. Her loyalty deserves recognition. I am so grateful that it has been. Good to see too that CFU found enough volunteers to sell poppies at the Wimbledon game. This was the nearest game to Remembrance Day. Some of the volunteers are ex servicemen. Together we must keep the memory of all those who gave their lives to keep us free alive and valued.

Cambridge United had a man sent off in a recent away game at Shrewsbury. Nothing wrong with that. It happens. However, it changed the course of the game and it was "achieved" by an opponent blatantly cheating and by his team mates putting undue pressure on the Referee to do what they wanted. This raises some important points. Are we really prepared to allow cheats to ruin our game? What can be done to prevent football clubs putting officials under undue and unfair pressure? It's no wonder that we can't find people willing to take on this unpopular and increasingly impossible job.

More positively, injury and suspension conspired to get young player Ben Worman selected for the team's away game at Morecambe. He proceeded to score one of the most thrilling and technically difficult goals I've ever seen. I love the unpredictability of football.

It's hard to know what to say about Yorkshire Cricket Club which seems to have treated claims of racism with casual indifference. I don't know the facts well enough to comment but it is fairly clear that the club have tried to sweep the whole thing under the carpet. Issues like this require complete transparency so that the public can be confident that justice has been done. Sadly, there are many groups of people with the power to run things who believe that they are not answerable to ordinary people. They must be. The ECB have come down very heavily on Yorkshire but I am sure they have done so in response to the media furore. Responsible governance might have prevented all of this.

Interestingly, the ECB have come under scrutiny for their previously inadequate response and Azeen Rafiq himself has had to apologise for anti-semitic tweets. Racism is a complex problem which needs a lot more work and much less unhelpful sensationalism.



CFU Corner- Gillingham

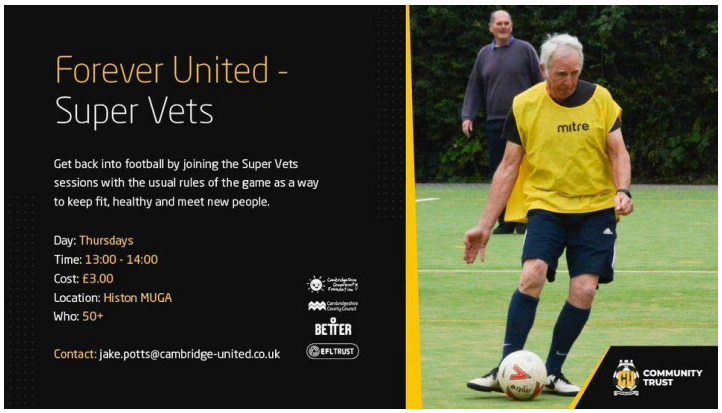
The CFU caravan (in the front car park, adjacent to the club shop) has recently undergone a makeover. Alongside the evergreen match programme sales, 50-50 (Golden Gamble) tickets, and the CFU backed 'Away Travel' ticket outlet, is the new PROGRAMME EXCHANGE. For the past few years '100 Years of Coconuts' have been assembling a comprehensive library dating back to the inception of Abbey Utd match-day programmes, in 1947. Thanks to kind donations from fans the post 1970 element of the CUFC Programme Library is virtually complete. There are, however, still a lot of gaps in the pre-70s section, particularly late 40s and early 50s.



'100 Years of Coconuts' are appealing to fans for help to complete the project. Obviously donations are preferable but, as the ones still needed are illusive, a fair price can be agreed. Gathering dust in the dark recesses of an attic is no use to anybody. Helping to complete the library would be a magnificent gesture for which every donator's name will be included for posterity. Likewise, the completed library will not be hidden away in some dark cupboard but will be available, as part of the Club museum/archive, for any fan or researcher to readily access.

Past donations have helped to fill gaps and duplicates have provided a way of raising money to enable the acquisition of other, rarer editions (which can cost anywhere between £50 and

£200 when they surface). Currently there are complete sets of Home programmes available, for most post 1970s seasons, which can be purchased for £5 per pack. There are hundreds of other Home and Away programmes, spanning the full 75 years, that can be picked up for as little as 50p each. Simply fill out a request form at the CFU caravan and we'll see if we have a copy of the one you need. All proceeds from the sale of historic programmes will be used to purchase the missing ones.



100 years of coconuts are the clubs official historian group and are also part of the CFU group. They will be holding their annual CUFC hall of Fame dinner on 25th November. It is always a great night for U's fans when former players and fans favorites get inducted into the clubs hall of fame on the evening. There are still some limited tickets available for this event which includes a two course meal. If you would like to find out more details email: 100yearsofcoconuts@gmail.com

CFU has also recently set up a food bank and unwanted football kit and boots collection at the caravan, if you could help by donating to either the food bank or bringing unwanted football kit and boots, (Child and Adult) Sizes, it would be greatly received on a match day.

Away travel is been run by CFU this year and has proven a popular way for fans to get behind Mark Bonner and the team in their campaign in League one on the road. There are still spaces left for Crewe away this Saturday priced at 30 pound a seat. The coach departs Ely at 7:45am and the abbey stadium at 8:30am. You can book your place on the official away travel by emailing: emailcfuawaytravel@yahoo.com or by calling 07591111251



Never quite a hero

Whenever I talk to people about who their favourite player was or who impressed them most, the most frequent answers are Alan Biley, Dion Dublin, Tom Finney or Steve Claridge. Occasionally the choices are more unusual and involve players who would never make a best ever xi. One such is John Filan, who was with us for quite a short time and wasn't always first choice keeper, such were our riches at the time. It didn't help that he was in a team going into a steep decline but it puzzled many that some thought that Jon Sheffield was better in goal. It was no surprise that Filan made his name higher up the league while we went the other way. I am sure that I have never seen a better keeper in our colours.

Very few people talk about Roger Gibbins now but, unglamorous as he was, he scored vital goals, was tactically astute and had an incredible work rate. He had a terrible haircut but what a difference he made to our team. He had just the right attitude too and feared no one.

Colin Baillie opted out of the Beck revolution because he felt that it was spoiling football. Many others joined the chorus later. Some said that it was because he was too bright for the General and we know how he treated Steve Claridge when he dared to think for himself. People forget what a skilful and cultured player Baillie was. I would have liked to see more of him.

Jermaine Easter was an excellent forward just at the time when we didn't really have any but it always seemed to me that the crowd never really took to him. Managers didn't seem too sure either. Like Joe Pigott he went to clubs higher up the pyramid and did really well. We have lost a few of those. Of course, the Habbin always thinks it knows best.



Fola Onabuje was a player who really could have been one of our best ever forwards. He terrorised defences in our early days in the conference before apparently losing interest. He didn't seem to know how good he was and would have been any coach's nightmare. Nonetheless, when morale at the Abbey was understandably low, he put a smile back on our faces.

George Harris, who came to us from Reding when we were on our way into the football league made scoring look easy. In fact, he made everything look easy. When he first arrived, he seemed to have come from another planet where football is played on another level.

When we signed a great chunk of Chelmsford City's players, people were excited about Butcher, Cassidy and the late, great Terry Eades. Most people have forgotten



Peter Leggett, certainly Ron Atkinson tried to, but if anyone could have got through to him, he could have been a huge star. He had everything but was far too eccentric to use most of his ability. Another truly terrible haircut too.

John Turner convinced me for a while that he could be a fine player but ended up at King's Lynn where Adam Marriott had a spell too. Adam really should have done better. He had a predator's instinct but like so many, seemed to lose his way just as it looked as if he had made the grade.

Malcolm Lindsay came to us from King's Lynn as we entered the league. I had seen a lot of him and Bill Leivers rated him really highly. Maybe he tried too hard or never developed enough confidence. Whatever the reason, he was never quite good enough for the football league. Psychology is so important

Finally, for now, giant Ivorian Latte-Yedo looked brilliant until he was unluckily red carded at Wycombe. He never got over it Herve Renard brought in a number of exotically named foreign players, many of whom performed well in flashes but couldn't do it week in and week out.

There are many others who I will no doubt remember over the next few days. Perhaps you know of a few nearly men too. We can never know why it is that some find their way to the top while other more gifted players plunge into obscurity. But then, "It's a funny old game."

CFU Corner- Ipswich

"We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond."

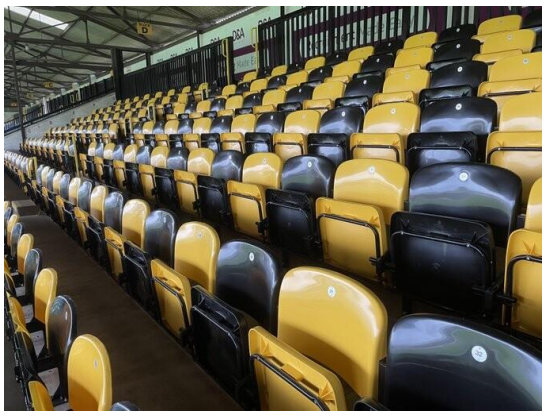
G. Brooks

The work of any fans' group is made immeasurably easier when the club they support shares the same value system. We were delighted when Cambridge United signed up to the FA Diversity Code last year and have followed it up by applying the standards advocated in their recruitment policy and to fans .Our club was one of the first to be involved, a fact which speaks volumes.



In addition, it is clear that the Community Trust have adopted a truly proactive approach to the issue, appointing staff accordingly, to build on some of the great work done during the pandemic and before. The Seniors' Lunches and afternoon teas, the Dementia Café and the vast number of varied disability sessions run are all testimony to that. We are lucky to have Phil Mullen and Vicky Neal striving to make things better for the disabled, the elderly and the vulnerable.

CFU have, in partnership with the club and the Trust, been seeking to make better provision for fans with dementia, mobility problems and autism, amongst other needs not traditionally catered for in football grounds. We plan to launch a questionnaire designed to identify and quantify the needs of our fans in order to understand them better and to meet them more fully. Only recently CFU, through its volunteers, installed grab handles to help supporters who find the steps in the Main Stand hard to climb. We have tried to identify trip hazards and make them as visible as possible. When told about a problem , we try to help as much as we possibly can. The design of our venerable stadium doesn't always make this easy but we do our best. We are always open to suggestions which may help to make the matchday experience easier and more comfortable for all fans.



We are working with different communities, such as the one based around the Cambridge Mosque to find ways of making them feel more welcome and better provided for at our ground. Anyone wanting to enjoy football should be able to without difficulty or opposition. It is very encouraging to see that CUFC have become official partners of Her Game Too' an organisation dedicated to improving the experience of women in football crowds. CFU Board member, Emma Smith said," It means a great deal that our club has taken a stance against sexist abuse…….It sends a powerful message of support for the club's female fans." CFU are also keen to promote the Amber Belles group on Facebook which advocates the right of all female football fans to feel safe and welcome at football matches. It is amazing frankly that this is still an issue but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Finally, and more personally, I was immeasurably saddened to hear of the recent death of Terry Eades. I started to watch the U's in the late sixties and he quickly became my hero. He was also one of the best footballers I ever saw in our shirt. RIP Terry-and thank you.



CFU Corner- Wigan

Fixtures are coming thick and fast for Mark Bonner and the boys at present, and your support in your numbers home and away has being incredible as always.

The U's last played a home fixture in the league almost a month ago, against AFC Wimbledon was the clubs fixture that marked the annual remembrance service for the poppy appeal. Members of CFU are proud to have worked with the Royal British Legion Fulbourn and Teversham branch to organize the club's tribute for remembrance.

It was great to see fans getting involved and volunteering to help with the Royal British Legion's poppy appeal bucket collections at the fixture around the stadium. We would like to say a massive thank you to the volunteers who helped with this. We are pleased to announce that the Royal British Legion have now informed us that the bucket collection at the fixture raised 911.00 pound, so a massive thank you to both sets of fans for giving so generously on the day.



CFU recently set up a scheme asking for fans to donate old unwanted football Kit's and boots so they could be given to local charities to utilize. If anyone has any unwanted football kit or boots you can bring them to the CFU Caravan on a match day. Thanks to fans kind generosity we have already being able to deliver football boots and kit to the YMCA hostel, allowing those less fortunate to be able to participate in playing football.

The eagle eyed amongst you may have spotted the recent seat colour changes in the main stand D Block, these new seats was paid for by the Cambridge United Lottery. The last home fixture against Wimbledon also saw the relaunch of the Cambridge United Lottery, which is attached & works closely with CFU. The lottery is a weekly lottery prize draw where fans can sign up and win cash prizes. In return for the money raised from Lottery members playing, it's reinvested into the football club to help fund improvements for fans around the stadium & to fund initivies within the local abbey ward area. The organization has contributed significant contributions to the football club and funded a host of different things now. The more fans that sign up to play, the more projects we can fund to help enhance the match day experience. If you fancy a flutter then find out more details on how to sign up and play here; Finally if you are after an ideal Christmas present or stocking filler for U's fans then look no further than the latest must have publication on all things Cambridge United, '' 100 Things I love about Cambridge United''. This book promises to be another cracker. It includes memories and experiences of Abbey heroes and diehard fans and one hundred things that make this football club we all love so special. The book is available to pre-order now for 14.99 on the club shop website and there will be a special launch of the book on the 18th December at the home fixture against Rotherham, when some of the U's legends who feature in the book will be helping the author Russ Greaves promote his book.



Ben Phillips Andrew Stephen

Who'd be a Manager?

In some ways I find it extraordinary that anyone would consent to be a manager these days. That is until you realise that Steve Bruce received over £8,000,000 pounds in compensation and that Ole Gunnar Solskjaer of Manchester United is in line for a similarly huge sum as consolation for being the club's latest failure. At least they won't have to work again. When a manager of proven quality is sacked first by Manchester United and then by Tottenham Hotspur you have to wonder just what went wrong. Of course, if you work for United, it doesn't help having Alex Ferguson prowling the club's corridors, reminding everyone of a golden era which is unlikely ever to be repeated. The stuttering giant sacked David Moyes (he's not too shabby) Louis Van Gaal in Mourinho in a very short space of time. Their fans, like those of all big clubs, feel an entitlement to success and a sense of personal betrayal when they don't get it. Patience is certainly not considered a virtue at Old Trafford.

More relevant perhaps, is the way that many of today's players often seem to have their heads turned by the ridiculously high salaries they "earn" and by the empty headed adulation heaped on them by our sensation seeking media, for the short time they remain in favour. Players with distorted egos are no use in a team and the likes of Pogba, Ronaldo and a number of others seem to have regarded themselves much more highly than their managers. That kind of player breeds a toxic influence in the dressing room and on the training ground and a strong club, supportive of their manager, would ship them out.

Arrogant and selfish behaviour is not exactly unknown in the Premier League. It got Nuno Espirito Santo the sack at Spurs and knowledgeable fans everywhere can tell when a team is not performing to its potential. The best managers are very good at man management but I think it's pretty abject that professional players can't produce their very best because they haven't been praised, inspired or mollycoddled enough. We criticise managers for losing the dressing room but players owe it to the fans and those who pay their salaries to produce their very best, week in, week out. It is significant that Harry Kane thought so highly of Mourinho while some of his team mates actively undermined him. Perhaps that's why he wanted to leave.



It's hard to imagine Brian Clough, Bill Nicholson or Bill Shankly getting away with their characteristic do what I say approach now and yet they all improved players, sometimes beyond belief. Our own Bill Leivers wouldn't tolerate dissent. It was his way or nothing. He effectively ended Rodney Slack's league career before it began because, allegedly, he was too strong a character in his own right. A shame because Rodney was a superb goalie. John Beck was another whose iron discipline improved players beyond their wildest dreams. Fortunately, we have begun to seriously question the effect of obscene amounts of money on the values of the peoples' game, particularly at the very top. For managers to be dismissed "for being too nice" is a sad indictment of the way we do things today. It must surely change.



Hot off the Habbin

[programme articles]

GILLINGHAM

"Sorts do not build character, they reveal it."
Heyward Brown

Any conversation about Gillingham will, inevitably, bring up the large spectre of manager Steve Evans. His visits to the Abbey Stadium have always been colourful and memorable, if not always for the right reasons. Sometimes the fans sitting near to the dug out in heated exchanges with a man known for his heated exchanges with officials. I remember, with considerable distaste, some clashes with Crawley Town, who were well skilled in time wasting, play acting, screeching at the referee and all those unsavoury practices associated with Gamesmanship. If I dare to get of the fence, one might almost have labelled them as very accomplished cheats.



He has long been a controversial and very divisive character, having, amongst other things, been prosecuted for tax evasion whilst manager of Boston United who he had taken into the Football League. Many felt that they should not have been allowed to be promoted, given the number of "financial irregularities" uncovered at the time.

He has, however, been a serial winner. He took Rotherham to two successive promotions and all is teams are notoriously difficult to beat. He is also feared by many match officials who find his abrasive style hard to cope with. Sometimes the police and the authorities have helped out.

His first two matches as Gillingham manager were accompanied by a yellow and then a red card but since that time, I am told, he has mellowed. Last year when we beat them, surprisingly easily in the Papa John's Cup, he was fulsome and generous in his praise for the home team. Redemption is possible for all of us.

If my notes seem a little negative, the theme was promoted by the performance of Fleetwood on Saturday which, at times, reminded me of the Crawley of old. They too were a skilful team in red and masters of most of the dark arts. If any of Ged Garner's antics had been spotted by the alarmingly inconsistent Paul Howard, he would surely not have finished the game. At times, our approach play was scintillating. We deserved three points but we will earn our just reward over the whole season. One thing we do know now. We are here on merit.

IPSWICH TOWN

"There will never be a crisis at Ipswich Town unless the white wine runs out in the board room."
John Cobbold

How refreshing it is to hark back to the days when a benevolent brewer would give his managers plenty of time to build a side and end a losing streak and back their club financially with no desire for profit or personal glory. Bobby Robson struggled in his early days and the fans agitated for his dismissal. Of course the board backed him and the rest, as they say, is history. Thyssen, Muhren and a reputation for flowing football is the heritage all Ipswich fans expect to be lived up to. It is astonishing to believe that under Alf Ramsey, following promotion from the second division, that Ipswich won the first division title in the 60-61 season. That manager certainly had potential.

Our first win against them was in the League Cup in 1987. We were fielding a patched up team of free transfers and triallists, including the Kimble twins. We didn't expect much but what we got was a performance of grit and great promise. I seem to remember a fairly fractious atmosphere over the road in the Globe after the game. Exuberance no doubt. Most notably, we won 2-1 at Portman Road in November 1991 to go top of the second division, our highest league placing ever. The following season was the first for the new Premier division. Had we been in it, as well we might, who knows where we would be now! The speculation continues to this day.

Whilst celebrating tradition and old fashioned values, how should we respond to the take over of Newcastle United? As a fan, I would no doubt be delighted at the prospect of being competitive after all these years but what about the cost? The football authorities talk about fit and proper persons checks and proper regulation of the game in the interest of fans but they have allowed the Big Six to become the Big Seven and another cuckoo in the nest to consume far more than their fair share of the game's wealth. The appalling human rights record of Saudi Arabia is well known to everyone but of course our government does more trade with them with anyone. Not that a small detail like this would sway anyone's judgement. And there's the dilemma, the promise of success bought at a very high price or the maintenance of decency and fairness in the peoples' game. I think I know what the Cobbolds would have said.



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

"Every castle was once started with a little block; despise no new beginnings. A little step every day builds up the hope of greater accomplishments. Do something every day."
I.Ayivor

As a young teenager attending my first games at the Abbey, I soon began to appreciate the winning habit. After we bought a third of the Chelmsford City team promotion to the Football League seemed assured. Even so, the thrill of signing people I had actually heard of like George Harris from Reading was enough to hold my attention. In those days I had no idea that one day we would be playing Ipswich Town and Sheffield Wednesday here within a matter of days because we were in the same league. In 1966 I had watched Sheffield Wednesday coasting to victory in the FACup Final, only to be overwhelmed by Everton. I had no thought then that we might match them or play at Wembley…but of course we have.

In 1976 we played Wednesday in the Shipp Cup. They were a division higher and beat us 5-2.The following season we were both in Division 3 and Cambridge won 3-2. This was the Ron Atkinson side built around Dave Stringer and Steve Fallon in defence. Spriggs and Finney were in midfield and Alan Biley rampaged up front. United feared no one and we battered Wednesday 3-0 at home in the league.

Most enjoyably of all was the victory of John Beck's side against a much fancied Sheffield Wednesday team managed by ….Ron Atkinson. He was as gracious as he could be, having seen his expensive team swept away 4-0. Another great United side was in development, including a certain Dion Dublin who starred in a very aggressive team which upset the purists but delighted us with some wonderful displays.

Since then we have had bad times too and, having nearly folded , we spent nine years in the Conference where we were the big team that everyone wanted to beat. It is easy to think that when you drop out of the league and two directors buy the ground for themselves that it is all over. That is to ignore the power of fans who stick with their team no matter what. Even if we'd been resurrected as a Sunday pub team, we would have come back and the real fans would have waited for better times. The same must be said of Wednesday who have had financial trouble and lean periods associated with that kind of struggle. Their fans are amazing and turn up in numbers everywhere. They wont be saying how pleased they are to be playing mighty Cambridge but they will be delighted that they still have a team to support. We know that, for good or bad, you support a team for life. Whether we play Eastbourne Borough, Farsley Celtic or Manchester United, we are proud to be here supporting a team which always gives its all.



WIMBLEDON

"Unity to be real, must stand the severest strain without breaking."
Mahatma Gandi

Most of us have been delighted to see the real Wimbledon re established as a league club, given their sickening take over by the Milton Keynes franchise. In some ways they are a similar club to us, having risen twice from obscurity to the higher reaches of the league. Unlike us, they reached Division One and won the FA Cup in 1988. We are still waiting to do that.



They have also returned to their roots at Plough Lane, having ground shared with Kingston for a number of years. This was a homely ground like many we visited in the Conference. It was good for the trains and had a good local chip shop but had little else to recommend it. On one occasion, United fans enjoying a beer in a local pub were invited by scantily dressed strippers to come and see the show next door. Naturally we declined since, for us, football must always come first.

Wimbledon's season has been very uneven so far, particularly of late and they , like us, will be looking for a good result, however it is achieved .Entertaining or not, we will all be grateful to see our teams playing each other in a traditional ground, unsullied by owners who don't care about the aspirations of their fans or investors hoping to make a quick buck or several before disappearing. Who knows? One day our ground might belong to us once again?!

Our game at Shrewsbury reminded us, if we needed it, that nothing can be taken for granted. There is little margin for error in this league. The game turned on a sending off which reflected little credit on the Referee and even less on the hysterical theatrics of some of the Shrewsbury players. Pressurising and conning officials is just another form of cheating, whoever does it. Frankly it threatens to ruin the game we love.

We should remain confident. This United team are resilient and determined. We will almost see youngsters playing their part as injury and suspension take their toll on our very small squad. They will be ready for the challenge. Unlike some of the so called big teams, our players are well managed, well prepared and they all play for the good of the team rather than for the team. In Bonner we trust. This will be another season to remember.



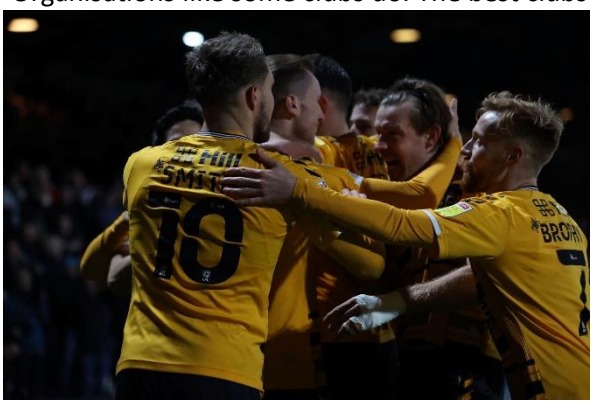
WIGAN

"No man can ever rise above that which he aims."
A.A.Hodge

Some clubs can quite easily be compared with ours. Wigan's rise through the leagues, having dominated non league football for a couple of years certainly parallels ours. Like us, a bumpy ride involves successes and relegations and achievements beyond the wildest dreams of the club's fans. Unlike us however, Wigan had Dave Whelan who has put £ 100 million into the club, built a 25,000 all seater stadium, spent time in the Premier League and won a Cup Final at Wembley. With a rich backer, we might well have reached the top league when we were more than a match for most teams but frightened of the investment which would have been needed to bring our stadium up to scratch. We will always wonder exactly why we never quite made it.



Of course the joy of football over the years is that fans can afford to dream big. Sometimes the dreams come true and that is the definition of real and fair competitions, something we can only dream about now that the big clubs help to maintain their stranglehold over the rest of us. Of course just about a year ago Wigan went perilously close to going out of business as the previous owner plunged the club into administration. Sometimes teetering on the edge of oblivion results in a greater sense of togetherness and a clearer sense of purpose A fans' fund has been very successful, particularly since fans decide how their money is spent. Wigan are an example of a successful club who recognise the prime importance of the fans' voice. They don't just play at it and pay lip service to Fans' Organisations like some clubs do. The best clubs achieve a unity of purpose between club, players and fans. Any break in that fusion can be fatal for the health of any club, however big or otherwise they are supposed to be. It will be a tough game but one thing our club can rely on is the backing of some of the best and most devoted fans to be found anywhere.



As a slightly younger fan I loved it when Cambridge United featured on The Big Match, courtesy of Anglia Television. Sometimes this programme showed lesser clubs like Colchester, Luton and Ipswich but it was always worth listening to the commentary of one Gerald Sinstadt who has just died at the age of 91. He had real insight, flair and a way of expressing things that was clear and uninfluenced by how famous a club might be. He was well thought of by others in his profession who realised that he went his own way. Famously he called out racism during a West Bromwich game because he found it repellent and not because he felt the need for virtue signalling. Some of the current crop feel the need to have a known ex professional beside them to make their commentary authentic and to give it some clout. Tokenism has introduced commentators who know very little about the game except the current crop of cliches. I remember an old comedy sketch in which a famous player kept saying, "I've fallen off my chair Brian" because

he had. Gerald Sinstadt was a professional who set high standards. He had a huge following. Media companies please take note.



Sunderland

"Courage is not something that you already have that makes you brave when the tough times start. Courage is what you earn when you've been through the tough times and you discover that they aren't so tough after all."
Malcolm Gladwell.

Well the big matches keep coming and despite having a small squad which is severely taxed by injury and exhaustion, Cambridge United keep proving that we can give anyone a game. This week highly fancied Wigan Athletic came to the Abbey Stadium and outplayed us until Joe Ironside proved yet again that we have player who can hurt anyone. Wigan's line up included the hugely impressive Power and Maclean and they will surely be near the top of our division by the end of the season. Somehow we took a two nil lead and for a spell in the second half we stretched them. The 400 odd Wigan fans were silent as we tore into them with all the passion and commitment we have come to expect. We looked a very tired outfit in the last ten minutes but we emerged with a hard earned point which was a metaphor for our season.



Now we face Sunderland, another side with huge support, and hopes of a long awaited return to the big time that many of their fans dream of. It's a long time since a full and raucous Roker Park and the days of Charlie Hurley. It's a long time since Ian Porterfield and Jim Montgomery beat Leeds on their own in an FA Cup semi final. And what a popular win that was. Not everyone loved Leeds. We have had some memorable tussles with them down the years, famously getting a draw away to guarantee our spot in the play offs for the first year of the Premier division. That didn't go so well. We beat them 2-1 at the Abbey in 1992 in one of Beck's last

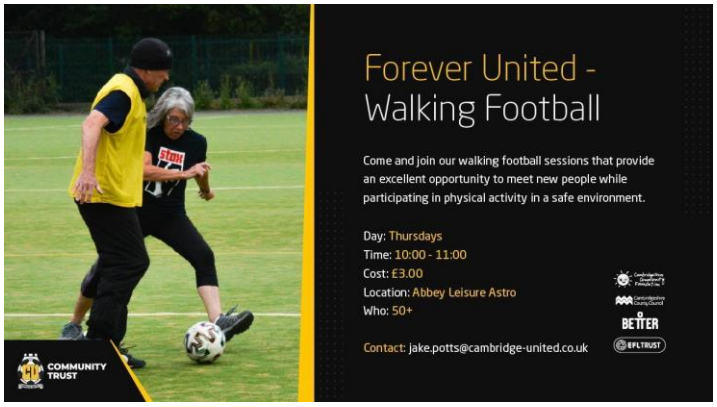
games. I travelled back on a train packed with Sunderland fans, some of whom had had a glass or two. They were great company and surprisingly flattering about the way we had played. Real football fans are like that. They know when their opponents have played well and are not above saying so. Sunderland fans know their football and they enjoy it, even if the experience hasn't been kind to them for a while. I

It was good to see the scoreboards recognising Mark Bonner's birthday. He deserved that and much more. The team desperately wanted to win for him. Their disappointment was obvious at the final whistle. I love to see that. They hadn't settled for a point. At the astonishingly young age of 35, Bonner has created a team that don't give up and who fight and scrap for each other, no matter what. They have surprised a lot of people this season and will continue to do so. Maybe we could do with one or two reinforcements in January if only to rest players who work extraordinarily hard. What we do know is that when the final whistle blows on Saturday, Sunderland will know that they've been in a game.

Walking Football Marathon 2nd May 2022 Bank Holiday Monday

Hi,

You may be aware, or you may have heard, that Nigel Hillyard and a few colleagues are organising a major fundraising event for Cambridge United's Community Trust. The aim is to raise £15,000 specifically for sessions run by the Trust for participants with disabilities and at the same time promote Walking Football.



The plan is to play a 5 a-side Walking Football match, over a 12 hour period, with roll on roll off subs from 10am until 10pm on Bank Holiday Monday, 2nd May 2022. The match will take place at the sand-based astro pitches at the Abbey Leisure Centre.

To do this he NEEDS approx. 80 – 100 players and a group of about 20 helpers.

Players will be split into two squads and allocated an approximate time slot during the 12 hour match, which means they do not have to sacrifice the whole of Bank Holiday Monday to take part, instead they can turn up around their allotted time, play in the match and then do as they please.

Players can opt to choose how long they wish to play for e.g. 30 minutes to 2 hours, express preferences when to play, i.e. morning, afternoon or evening and if groups of players wish to play at the same time we will try and accommodate that too.

Helpers (who can also be players) will be required to stay maybe two or three hours and ensure the roll on roll off substitutions run smoothly, keep track of the score and scorers, referee/officiate, and help with any other tasks to ensure the event runs smoothly.

At this stage Nigel would simply like to hear from you if you are interested in playing or helping, or both. It should be a good fun filled social event.

Before you express an interest here are few things you may like to know:

Player safety is paramount and to make it safer players must appreciate the game will be an endurance event and only lightly competitive. It will be strictly no tackling, no physical contact and of course only walking is permitted.

It is fully inclusive. At any one time the ten players on the pitch may be a mixture of abilities, ages from 10? to 90, sexes, able bodied and some with disabilities. The match has to be played in the right spirit.

Players will be required to aim to raise £100 each in sponsorship from friends and families in the now familiar ways and the Trust has an online platform to help with this.

One of the main sponsors is the Cambridge Independent Newspaper and it is expected there will be a fair bit of media coverage, including local radio and TV. Each squad will also have a sponsor.
The event is a trial for a Guinness Book of Records attempt which is planned for 2023.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PLAYING OR HELPING – Please drop Nigel an email at nigel.hillyard@btinternet.com with a quick note saying if you'd like to play, help, or both. He will then send you a form to fill in and get your interest registered. You are not committing to anything at this stage and he really wants to hear from you.

Thank you.

Vicky Neal
(she/her)
Wellbeing Manager
Cambridge United Community Trust
Abbey Stadium | Newmarket Road | Cambridge | CB5 8LN
T 07760183400
E vicky.neal@cambridge-united.co.uk
See our latest Community Trust video here



I would just add that Nigel really wants to hear from those of us who already benefit from the sessions run by Phil Mullen and the Community Trust as it gives us all the chance to contribute and to say thank you.



and finally….

"Every person is defined by the communities she belongs to."
Orson Card

As I write I am looking forward to attending another Hall of Fame Dinner at the Abbey Stadium. Not only does this offer the opportunity to talk to a few of our heroes, but it gives those heroes a chance to reminisce and to celebrate their time at our club, which was usually very special to them. 100 years of Coconuts have done a magnificent job of keeping former players in touch with the club and with each other. Anyone who has ever cared about Cambridge United becomes part of its community and enjoys a sense of pride in its traditions.



The Community Trust also plays a very important role in looking after the community based on our club. I have been delighted to see the numbers attending the Seniors Lunch gradually going back up to the level they reached before the pandemic put all such events on hold. I know that most of the participants look forward to these lunches as a highlight of the month. A surprising number never do anything else. It is hugely valuable socially. The lunch, afternoon teas and dementia cafes are all ways in which sport can make a contribution to the quality of life in the community where it is based.

I can personally testify to the value of the football sessions organised for the elderly, the disabled, the homeless and a huge variety of other groups which are not catered for elsewhere. When I began walking football in 2016, I hadn't played team sport for some years. Dave Doggett recommended it and Phil Mullen to me as a way of getting fit in a more organised and purposeful way. I found that the social side of it was important too. A number of people I got to know had problems with depression, loneliness, mental health and physical health too. All are welcome , irrespective of talent or fitness. This valuable resource depends on the support of the Community



Trust but the man who has made it what it is is Phil Mullen who, in my opinion, has done more for disability than anyone in the county. He has worked tirelessly to create sessions for disabilities of all kinds and he has a natural talent for raising the confidence of everyone who attends his sessions. Everyone I know at Walking Football thinks the world of him and realises full well what they owe him. That's why I know that many of us will get involved in the walking football marathon to produce urgently needed resources and to say thank you to a truly remarkable man. A big thank you is due to Ian Mather who is stepping down as CEO. We have not always seen eye to eye but he has steered the ship through choppy seas to the point where, at last, we can reasonably expect to avoid another financial crisis. We are also involved in major national schemes to encourage diversity and to make the way football is run much fairer and more equal. Real competition is in everybody's best interest. It is vital that the club get the right person to take over from Ian. As Paul Barry said, we may not be in the Champions League but we can be a club to be proud of. We must aim to look after our community better than any other club and then we will deserve success on the field.

Andrew

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

[Deadline for next newsletter- December27th]

United in Endeavour



