

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 9th July 2018 – 7.00pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock
Neil Duckworth

Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot
Mike Cheston

John Wareing
Bharat Parmar
Jim Holden
Savio Mathias
Mark Hitchen
Terry Crawford
Annette Birkbeck
Anthony Corry
Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Steve Birtwell

1. Apologies for absence

Ray Williamson
Gordon Ormerod
Steve Waggott

MC stated that Steve Waggott was not at the meeting as he was in London ready for the appeal at the FA the following day regarding the refusal to promote the ladies team this season. This had been pursued by the club despite FA reluctance.

JH advised that meeting that Ray had recently suffered a heart attack but had now had a successful operation and was recovering well at home.

TS stated that Rob Parker had decided to resign from the Forum due to difficulties in getting to meetings regularly. The Forum noted their thanks to Rob for his service on the Forum over a number of years.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting 22nd May 2018

• Plans for Discounted Game

TS asked whether the first home game with Millwall on 11th August

would be discounted like the Oxford United home game. LT replied that it was still planned to discount a game in August but there was as yet no confirmation as to which it should be.

b) 2018/19 Season Ticket Sales

MC stated that 2018/19 season ticket sales were currently running at 80% of the club's stretch target for the whole season, which was already above sales for last season. Now that the Early Bird promotion was finished it was unlikely there would be significant further sales until the beginning of August before the season start.

c) Displaced Darwen end Season Ticket Holders

LT stated that the club had designated an area in the Jack Walker Lower Darwen End as a singing section. Darwen End season ticket holders had dispersed across the ground with some in the new singing area and others in the Blackburn End.

d) iFollow

TS asked what the situation would be for fans watching Rovers' games on iFollow this season. LT replied that fans based in the UK would be able to watch games live on iFollow, providing they are not Saturday 3pm games or games being shown live on Sky or to an overseas broadcaster (which our game vs Ipswich has been selected for).

e) Ewood Park Maintenance

LT stated that the club had a full maintenance plan in place but that within that there was priority work. There had been a lot of work in the close season at the training ground and on new turnstiles at Ewood. The next priority was any work that needed doing in order to ensure health and safety regulations were complied with in order to stage games.

TS asked whether the work on the new turnstiles was complete. MC replied that there still snagging issues but he was confident that everything would be ready for the Liverpool friendly game.

BP stated that many of the bricks in the Walker Fame were looking scruffy and that a few were cracked. LT replied that the area would be power washed hopefully before the start of the season and she assumed that the cracked bricks would be replaced in due course. However, the priority at the moment was to be match ready. She would pass on the information.

f) Using Disabled Tickets as Credit towards Adult Match Tickets

JL had concerns that it was not possible to use a disabled season

ticket as part credit towards an adult single match ticket, as it was for ordinary season tickets. LT stated that this should be possible and undertook to check the situation.

g) Plastic Glasses

LT stated that the club were still looking at alternatives to single use plastic glasses at Ewood, but hoped to find a satisfactory solution.

h) Club Kit Release

JW asked for an update on the release of new club kits. MC replied that the home kit would be released on Wednesday 18th July and would be used at the Liverpool game.

3. Kick-off Time Changes

TS asked for the reasoning behind the moving of games away at Bristol City and home to Leeds United and Preston North End.

MC was unsure of the reason for the change to the Bristol City game. JW noted that the new Rugby Union Premiership fixtures had the opening game of the season at Ashton Gate between Bristol and Bath and assumed that the club did not want to stage two big games on consecutive days. [Note – LT has since spoken to Ian Silvester re this. The Bristol game was moved back by a day by agreement with both clubs (and the agreement of the manager), since they were both involved in the Carabao Cup in the week prior to the game].

Of more concern was the moving of two home games to 12.30 kick-off times. MC stated that these games had been moved on police advice

4. 1875 Club Benefits

TS asked what benefits would be available for 1875 club membership this season. Last year the benefit of priority for away game ticket allocation had been the draw for most fans but that was unlikely to be an issue this season.

AB also queried the pricing of membership. Last season it had cost £5 for season ticket holders and £15 for others. This season the price was £10 for season ticket holders but still £15 for others, which didn't seem fair.

[An update from Greg Coar: -
Firstly pricing; for consistency we have brought it in line with the Junior Rovers membership (which we have reduced from £15 to £10)
On joining a member receives £5 back in Club Cash making the whole scheme cost just £5. This is well below the cost of similar schemes at

comparable clubs. Across the board setting a fair price is a key element in us striving to enable TM to put out a competitive team. A net £5 (or actually £4 once you extract the VAT) is a fair price.

Member benefits are explained here;

<https://www.rovers.co.uk/tickets/1875-club/>

Ticket priority was a key driver last season & it may not be quite as much this season yet there will be occasions (at probably the most important games) when it will be. It enabled us to ensure all the most deserving fans got tickets last year and it will be the case going forward.

Last season was almost an introductory trial for the membership so this season we will look to boost the number of exclusive member events as they now have two perfect venues in the refurbished Blues & the 1875 Lounge.

There will be more competitions, more opportunity for member deals on hospitality and potentially discounts on cup matches].

MC stated that the club already had 1,000 1875 club members and a further 350 Junior Rovers members. The club were planning some members only events but recognised that they needed to work harder to make the benefits clearer. They would like to find benefits that had minimal cost to the club but would be appreciated and was open to any new suggestions by fans.

TS stated that he had been unable to take out 1875 membership online, which seemed an anomaly. LT undertook to check this.

5. Riverside Stand – Short & Long Term Plans

TS asked whether there were any plans to close the Riverside stand for games after the pre-season games. LT replied that there were no plans to do so but there may be games where it would make commercial sense. MC stated that the club accepted that the stand needed modernizing but there were no plans in the short term. In the long term the club would like to redevelop the stand but at this stage these were just conversations rather than definite plans. There was however absolutely no intention to close the Riverside stand other than for any future possible redevelopment.

6. Senior Leadership Team Announcement

TS asked what had happened to the promised announcement about senior leadership team changes at Ewood, which had been promised. MC replied that Steve Waggott was still keen to make the announcement as soon as possible. He of course wanted to make sure that he spoke to the staff affected first and in the last few weeks he had been very busy

with transfer business the update of the Senior Training Centre and new sponsorship contracts.

TS asked for an update on transfer business, wondering whether the club was behind in its plans. MC replied that a lot of work had been done, some of which had been on deals which proved dead ends, as is the case every year. The club were in advanced negotiations with both existing and new players but he was unable to make anything public at this point.

7. New Scouting Set Up

TS asked for an update on the new scouting team structure. MC stated that the restructure has taken the most time over the close season after work on the playing squad. The club were not quite ready to make a public announcement but in the meantime much good work had been done.

8. Brockhall – STC Academy Sites

TS asked for clarification about Steve Waggott's comments about wanting to merge the Senior Training Centre and the Academy. This had led to much wild speculation about the club considering the sale of the Brockhall site.

MC replied that it was true that the club would like to merge the two sites at Brockhall, as there would be savings from removing duplication of facilities and it would also be positive to have the first team squad and the Academy mixing more. But there would be costs involved and other factors to take into account and it has not been something that has been progressed during the close season. Whilst the club could never say never, there were absolutely no plans to vacate the Brockhall site.

9. Match Day Programme Plans

AB stated that he had met Steve Waggott in the previous week with nine other fans to discuss plans for the club programme. There had been a wide ranging discussion and some suggestions were that there should be less adverts, less on the Community Trust and more on profiles of away team players and more on the ladies and junior teams.

ND asked if the club were still considering a subscription model. LT replied that they still needed copies for hospitality and for away fans sales, but they would like to be able to more closely match print runs to demand. It was often the case that the club either sold out completely or had many copies left over.

10. Any Other Business

- LT was asked why fans had not been able to claim their own seats for the Liverpool and Everton games. This was due to tight timescales following the introduction of new ticketing systems.
- SM asked whether copies of some of the old club team photos from previous seasons could be made available for purchase in the club shop. LT replied that there was simply very little demand for this.
- LT asked for feedback from the recent supporter consultation meeting. The consensus was that the meeting was a lot calmer and therefore more informative and enjoyable than previous meetings.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
10/9/18 **	17/9/18 **
5/11/18	12/11/18

** Note change of dates

Pre-meets are held one week before the main meetings. The pre-meet is open to all interested fans to attend, providing they request to do so in advance by contacting John Wareing by email or phone as below.

Members should contact John Wareing at roversfansforum@hotmail.com or 07984 085474 to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

Fans can also contact John regarding the Forum using the contact details above.