

# Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

## Ewood Park, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019 – 7.00pm

### Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock  
Neil Duckworth

### Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot  
Steve Waggott

Peter Ridehalgh  
Jim Holden  
Savio Mathias  
Annette Birkbeck  
Alan Birkbeck  
Ray Williamson  
Jen Bellamy  
Anthony Corry  
Mark Hitchen  
Jennifer Lewis

### 1. Apologies for absence

John Wareing  
Bharat Parmar  
Steve Birtwell

#### • Matters Arising

#### • Shelving in Jack Walker Upper Stand Concourse

JH said the shelving hadn't been installed by the PNE match. LT was told it would be done and would follow up.

#### • Emergency Cords in Accessible Toilets.

JL reported much improvement in cords not being tied up, but still are on occasion. She provided a card that can be attached to the cords provided by Euans Guide that states the importance to both staff and fans.

#### • Contactless Payments

TS asked how the introduction of contactless payment was going. SW reported that its going reasonably well but would need to look at the data to assess sales figures. May need time for people to change their buying preferences and speed up the process. Previous idea of contactless only tills may be trialled before the end of the season.

MH commented that the Bottle Bars that only use contactless payments, was working well with very little queuing, although it could do with a little more signage to encourage its use.

### 3. Season Tickets and Attendances

Rovers are looking at all available demographic information to help drive ST sales. Average attendance of 14400 boosted by Leeds and PNE

fans. Rovers currently generate 25% of income from ticket sales (approx £4m), compared to an average of 8% in Premier League. Facing challenges of Ifollow and Sky Red Button that give fans an option not to go to the match and stay home instead.

Half Season tickets had finished at 456 and 111 super six tickets sold to date.

Biggest Drop off in ticket sales appears to be with the 18-25 age group, perhaps down to a number of factors including, starting new jobs, moving away from home, university, lower income. Rovers are looking at keeping the pricing of these season tickets competitive to retain the support.

Possibility of a discounted game before the end of the season, but options limited given the "Super Six" ticket was already in operation. Looking to launch season ticket information mid to late April.

1875 membership stands at 2050, 2/3's being season ticket holders. Proved valuable to fans when it was used as a criteria for buying away tickets where numbers were more limited in league one than they currently are in the championship. Despite this numbers are holding up this season.

Rovers are looking at a couple of themed matchdays before the end of the season. Looking at Bolton game on Easter Monday as a Former Players / Legends Day. Stoke will be Next Generation Day with the Blackburn End Upper Tier becoming the Next Generation Stand. This will be organised with the Community Trust local Junior Schools and Clubs will be invited to Rovers to experience a real live matchday.

Issue raised about how expensive tickets were for the Sheff Wed game, same as for Leeds Utd, and what can be done by the Club, would it be likely that Rovers would charge those clubs the same we are charged. SW said it was something they were looking at but added he would be keen to offer clubs reciprocal deals if they offer reduced ticket prices to Rovers.

#### **4. Preston Game Kick Off Time.**

Despite the early kick off it is not possible to eliminate all incidents of trouble at games, with a couple being reported for the PNE game. Going forward the club is looking to have as many games as possible at the 3pm kick off time, with only games on TV being moved. SW stated that the club will be reviewing the moving of future games to limit the amount of disruption to supporters whenever possible. The club will also be looking at limiting / reducing the streaming of home games and have refused this service for the PNE and Bolton games.

- **Hospitality Plans**

Northcote have been a valued partner with Rovers for 18 years and provide the executive catering for the corporate lounges. Their contract comes to an end at the end of the season and they will not be re-tendering for the future contract.

This will allow the club the opportunity to refresh the catering operation and look in a new direction. It should hopefully give Rovers a wider licence to operate throughout the lounges especially on non-matchdays

as There is demand for hospitality packages at reasonable prices as well as using the Boxes for Junior Birthday parties.

## **6. Stewarding**

### **Vaping and Drinking.**

Smoking zones seems to have reduced cigarette smoking in concourses / toilets. Vaping is being seen in seats and concourses but club stresses it is not allowed and stewards are instructed to tell fans vaping is not allowed. Club to look at possible PA announcements or Big Screen Notices to reinforce this information.

JH reported some fans bringing pints of beer into JW Upper, walking past stewards without being challenged. When mentioned by fans they did return to concourse without issue. Drinking during games does not seem to be an issue in Europe. SW mentioned that EFL have been considering a review of the licensing laws at football grounds that some supporters see as antiquated around lawful drinking during matches.

### **Reporting of Racist and Homophobic Behaviour.**

Following on from recent chanting at Rotherham game of Ryan Nyambe by our own fans. JenB asked what the procedure was regarding the reporting of such behaviour.

The Club was keen to reiterate the long held **zero tolerance** policy to any such behaviour. An incident in January was reported after the game, CCTV was used to identify the person involved and was dealt with by the club.

LT said that if a fan felt safe to do so they should report any incident straight away to the nearest steward who will deal with the appropriate manner.

Another alternative is the Kick it Out App, any report will go straight to LT who can contact the control room and send stewards to the incident. The person who reports the incident will also receive a follow up by Kick it Out

Usually the Kick it Out Campaign is incorporated into Rovers One Rovers campaign. 2019 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Kick it Out and it will be publicised at the Stoke City Game including information about the App and Reporting Procedures.

## **7. Away Travel Bookings**

Reported that some fans had been unable to get a place on Official Travel for the Brentford Game. LT said that travel was very much down

to supply and demand. When coaches are full then a waiting list will be started and details taken. Another coach will be ordered when there are enough names taken to make it financial viable to do so. Lists will be kept open as long as Thursday for a Saturday game, in some instances other travel groups may be contacted to see if they have spaces available.

It was suggested that perhaps travel availability could be given before tickets are purchased where a waiting list has been started.

- **Museum / Heritage Project**

Still in the early stages the Club have met with John Murray of the Supporters Trust discussing suitable areas within the stadium: funding opportunities: memorabilia and former player / fan involvement. The Club are looking at perhaps a smaller exhibition to begin with to generate fan interest and kick start future funding. One challenge will be the naming of the project to make it current and exciting.

Given the rich and successful history of Rovers cataloguing the memorabilia that is held by Rovers alone will take some time and will be completed before inviting donations from fans themselves. The club is looking at setting up a fans consultation group when time is appropriate.

- **Football Quarter**

PR reported on a discussion from a recent Supporters Trust meeting that they are concerned that the profile of Rovers is decreasing in and around the town, especially in the Town Centre where the presence is limited.

Suggestions raised were ideas of installing signs in Blackburn with visual reminders of Rovers rich history, key achievements, hall of fame inductees, even taking advantage of the M65 bridge which is visible as fans approach the Ewood area.

Continuing the discussion LT said how good the working relationship currently is with BwD Council and how it was contributing to plans to regenerate the Ewood Area with ideas being formed regarding the use of Darwen End and ultimately the Riverside Stand. Other ideas of using advanced digital platforms to improve the experience at Ewood were discussed.

- **John Lewis Grave**

The Club Chaplain Ken Howells has tasked a group of scouts to tidy up the area around the grave and it is looking very good, though there is still some work to do on the grave stone itself. A service of thanksgiving had been planned to coincide with John Lewis' Birthday on the 30<sup>th</sup> March, but given the Aston Villa Game this will take place on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 6.30pm at Roe Lee Cemetery.

- **Team Matters**

JH asked whether loan deals had a recall clause, highlighted given the clubs defensive injuries of late. SW said that clubs generally like to have a loan player for an agreed period of time and you can only recall the

player through the contractual terms or by mutual agreement. Emergency loans only applies to goalkeepers outside the transfer windows and this will only be approved on providing medical reports to prove injuries to club's goalkeepers.

MH asked for comment on rumours that perhaps certain players were not signed by Tony Mowbray. SW was happy to state that "every signing is decided by Manager".

RW asked whether the form since Christmas would influence the recruitment over the summer. SW said that defensive statistics would have an influence and be part of future assessments. He went on to say how football clubs live and die by their recruitment and heavy investment has been made over the last eighteen months at the club including developing scouts to work throughout the European leagues and employing analysts who process the information they receive back on identified talented players.

Future Academy players are looking bright highlighted by recent debuts of Magloire and Buckley but SW stressed the need for a balance with experienced professionals.

AB asked if there was any information available yet regarding the final of the Senior Cup against Burnley. He expressed concern that people who regularly attended these games may miss out if tickets are limited to the rumoured 1000 per club. SW stated that they were awaiting further information from the Lancashire FA.

- **Any Other Business**
- Date has been set for the Disabled Supporters End of Season Party of the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Tickets are now on sale for this popular and well attended event.
- JL asked if there had been any progress on the ability of disabled fans to purchase tickets online. SW reported that he had met with Ticketmaster who were working on this facility and Ticketmaster hope to have it available for next season.
- JL asked if Rovers had considered making an audio version of the Rovers Matchday Programme to make it more accessible for people with visual disabilities. LT said it was something that had been considered but there was a cost to producing an audio version. JL asked whether it might be worth contacting some of the podcast communities to get involved.
- JB asked if Rovers were aware of the rumours that the Rovers Ladies would be axed at the end of the season. SW replied that the Ladies receive the full support of the club.
- SM was pleased with the new player postcards that are available in Roverstore and asked if there would be one for Harry Chapman soon. SW stated not at this moment of time.
- AB asked about pre-season plans for the club. SW confirmed that this was now all arranged for a week in Austria.
- MH asked if Rovers had considered starting a club podcast, especially

- since the end of Radio Rovers. LT stated not at present.
- SW said the club are still looking at upgrading the clubs struggling wi-fi, but admitted the costs involved could be prohibitive.
- The Club said there had been extra ticket checks in NO1 due to comments received that kids had been entering this area with incorrect tickets. Bans have been imposed and the check have been received well by other fans with no problems reported.

### 13. Dates of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
13/5/19	20/5/19
1/7/19	8/7/19
2/9/19	9/9/19
4/11/19	11/11/19

All dates are Mondays unless otherwise indicated

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](mailto: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.