

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Martin Haworth  
Julie Wilkinson  
Gordon Ormerod  
Tristan Stock  
John Billouin  
Tom Marsland  
Ben Pirraglia  
Neil Duckworth  
John Wareing  
Steve Birtwell  
Andy Robinson  
Glen Pegden  
Pauline Perkins  
Andy Neill  
Ben Sumner  
Ray Williamson  
Duncan Gardiner

## **Present from BRFC**

Simon Williams  
Paul Hunt  
Greg Coar

## **Apologies**

Mark Hitchen

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Mark Hitchen.

### **2. Matters arising From The Minutes 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

None.

### **3. Update – Simon Williams**

SW reported to the meeting on his recent short visit to Pune to meet the club's owners. Before the takeover the club had been effectively run from Ewood, with the Walker Trust having little or no involvement in day-to-day affairs. This has changed to a position where the club has new owners based 5,000 miles away from a completely different culture, who are new to football and who want to be involved in the business. It was therefore not surprising that there had been some initial difficulties. What was clear was that the owners were committed to football ownership in the long term.. It had been Balaji Rao's idea to name a stand at Ewood

for Ronnie Clayton.

The owners had also engaged Shebby Singh to promote the club in India and across Asia. Shebby was an ex-international Malaysian footballer who was now the face of football coverage on Indian TV.

GO asked whether there would be any more local presence by the owners in Blackburn. SW replied that there was now a regular by Venkys employees at Ewood. Gradually relationships were building and improving across the management team.

JulieW asked whether Kentaro/SEM still had any involvement with the club. SW replied that there had been some reliance on them in January immediately after the takeover but there was no real involvement now. There had been no relationship with them in the last transfer window.

JB asked whether the adverse criticism of the owners by fans had affected the owners. SW responded that they had been affected by the criticism and were very keen to improve their relationship with fans. He accepted that the club needed to get better at a coordinated PR message. The forthcoming trip by some members of the Forum to India should also help as a first step to building a lasting positive relationship.

SW outlined some of the plans for the trip in early October. The team would play an exhibition match against a local team on the Friday. He planned to take Alan Yardley and a film crew to make a short film of the trip, to include some of the work being done out there with the RoverStar programme for example.

GP asked whether the owners appreciated that the overall impression of them by fans is gradually improving despite poor results on the pitch. SW agreed that poor results by the team were masking the overall impression of the owners in fans' eyes.

#### **4. 2011-12 Season Tickets**

GC reported that season ticket sales had been down about 10% in mid July but there had been disappointing sales in the following period. As a result sales were 15-16% down on the previous year at just under 15,000. In particular there had been very few sales after the start of the season unlike previous years. Also sales were particularly down in the Darwen End where sales were only at 74% of last season, whereas sales in the Blackburn End Lower were only 10% down. Given the general state of the economy and initial results for the team this was not altogether surprising. There was evidence of reduced crowds from a number of other Premier League clubs.

Given the time overrun ND then closed the meeting and it was agreed that the rest of the agenda would be picked up at the next meeting in November.

#### **5. 2011-12 Shirt Sponsorship**

SW stated that it was always the club's intention to find a commercial sponsor to replace Crown. The Crown deal had been excellent for the club, being well above average for clubs of Rovers' size. The club had not been willing to devalue the worth of shirt sponsorship by taking a significantly lower price and had instead decided to opt for a deal with the Prince's Trust. This had proved to be excellent in terms of consolidating the brand and had received widespread national and local press coverage.

#### **6. Radio Lancashire**

The Forum were pleased that match commentaries were now once again appearing on Radio Lancashire after a year out. SW stated that the club were also pleased to have reached a satisfactory commercial relationship with the BBC.

#### **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th November 2011, with the pre-meet in the Fernhurst pub on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011. Note that the date of the Forum has been put back a day to avoid a clash with a home reserve game.

Members should contact John Wareing at [roversfansforum@hotmail.com](mailto:roversfansforum@hotmail.com) or on 07984 085474 with any queries about the Forum or to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

#### **2011 Meeting Calendar**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November