

# Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 – 7.15pm

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Tris Stock  
Neil Duckworth  
Ste Birtwell  
Bharat Parmar  
John Wareing  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Annette Birkbeck  
Gordon Ormerod  
Savio Mathias  
Ben Sumner

## **Present from BRFC**

Derek Shaw  
Lynsey Talbot  
Alan Myers

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

Jim Holden  
Anthony Corry  
Terry Crawford  
Mark Hitchen  
Ray Williamson  
Rob Parker

### **2. Matters Arising from the Minutes 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

#### **a) Ewood Roadworks**

Asked for an update on the roadworks around Ewood LT stated that although the works were behind the original schedule of dates the delays had caused few problems on match days. The re-scheduled finish was going to be around October 2015.

#### **b) Fan Zone**

AM stated that the Fan Zone had been a success but that the club were still learning and they would look to improve for next season. LT added that the Fan Zone had been a big factor in the club retaining its Family Excellence Award.

#### **c) 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plans**

TS thanked the club for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event on 11<sup>th</sup> May, which had been a great success. GO expressed disappointment that the Former Players Association event on 14<sup>th</sup> May had been a closed event. LT replied that the event had been so popular that it had been close to selling out from the initial waiting list and although there had been many corporate clients in attendance, many fans were also there.

**d) Disabled Supporters Association Relaunch**

The Disabled Supporters Association relaunch had gone well. JL emphasised that the organisation was open to any fans and not just the disabled. SB suggested marketing their events as general events organised by the BRDSA, which might encourage others to attend.

**e) Ewood Pitch**

DS reported that the sloped edges around the pitch were being resurfaced in astroturf during the close season – they had not been touched in 20 years.

**3. Financial Fair Play**

DS stated that there had been no change in the situation since the last meeting and he did not expect any significant change before the Championship conference in June.

Asked about the situation with QPR and their potential court case he stated that he was not party to that situation. What was clear was that a court case could take years to resolve and that QPR's situation regarding the league they would play in next season would have to be resolved within the next month.

The club were unable to comment on the situation with their transfer embargo but they were working hard to look after the club's interest.

**4. 2015/16 Season Tickets**

The club had recently announced season ticket prices for the 2015/16 with prices frozen and the continuation of the pledge to heavily discount season tickets for 2016/17 should the club be promoted. Advice from the management at Ewood had been for a modest increase in prices but the owners had insisted on a freeze.

The club had decided to keep home fans in the Darwen End as more than 10% of season tickets were held there. The club had not specified at which matches the whole Darwen End would be given to away fans and season ticket holders asked to move, as it was not yet clear who would be in the Championship and what effect other team performances would have on demand.

The late decision to move fans for the home game with Bolton was purely made on safety grounds

**5. 2015/16 Shirts & Sponsors**

An announcement had been made the previous week about the new

sponsorship deal with Dafabet, which would be for three years and was worth significantly more than the average for Championship clubs. This would provide much needed income and also some stability. Images for the home shirts had also been released and the shirts would be on sale in early July, with away strips later in the same month. Prices for replica kits would be frozen.

JW asked about the owners' previous concerns about having gambling companies as sponsors. DS responded that they were still reluctant but had accepted the commercial reality.

## **6. Smoking Areas**

DS stated that the recent trials with smoking areas had gone well and it was intended that they would be continued in the new season for the Blackburn End, Darwen End and Riverside stands. There had been an issue with the area in the Riverside clashing with queues for the toilets but it was hoped to find a solution to this. There were currently no plans to provide access to smoking areas for the Jack Walker or Family stands. JW suggested that any new season ticket holders in those areas be told that information in case they wished to change to another stand.

TS stated that the Forum were pleased to see that this issue had been finally resolved after some time.

## **7. Team Targets for 2015/16**

TS recalled that when Gary Bowyer had last been to the Forum that he had indicated that there had been no specific targets for the 2014/15 season. Both AM and DS responded that there should only ever be one target for any manager in the Championship – to get promotion.

SM asked what would happen if the club did not achieve promotion next season as this would be the last one with parachute payments from the Premier League. DS stated that the parachute payment would be worth £10m as opposed to between £4m and £5m as a Championship club. The club had made significant progress in reducing the cost of player contracts so that this gap would be reducing.

## **8. Huddersfield Town Away Ticket Prices**

The Forum has asked for this to be on the agenda but before the meeting the issue had been resolved. The Chairman of Huddersfield Town had apologised to Rovers fans for the fact that those who had bought tickets in advance had been charged £24 but many fans who had paid on the day were only charged £20. The latter had been a mistake and the correct price had been £24.

## **9. Lack of Live Sky Games**

TS expressed disappointment that the club had only featured twice in live Sky games and the second game had only been selected because of Ipswich's potential to reach the play-offs. He could not remember a season which little live TV coverage. AM explained that Sky took a hard line commercial approach to game selection and was interested in clubs at the top and bottom of the league and also those that brought larger TV audiences.

It was noted that Channel 5 would be taking over the coverage of Football League highlights from next season. It was expected that a new fresh approach would produce a more interesting product and the new time of 9pm would be better for most fans.

DS noted that live TV beam back to Ewood for away games would be available if there was enough demand from fans. Technological improvements meant that this would be available for all games should the opposing club approve it.

#### **10. 2015/16 Pre-Season Plans**

Pre-season plans for both the first team and the under 21s had now been issued – the full programme is attached to these minutes. The club would be going to Portugal for pre-season training from 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> July but that no games would be played.

DS stated that it was very difficult to set up pre-season games with Premier League clubs. Most clubs travelled to overseas tournaments now and in any event these games did not attract significant crowds. Most international teams wanted a fee plus significant expenses to come and play, which were impossible to justify given likely attendances.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

- a) JL expressed concern that the St Johns Ambulance teams were keeping their stretcher equipment in front of the disabled toilets. DS stated that Stuart Caley was aware of this and is making arrangements for it not to happen again.
- b) BP asked what the situation was with the big flag which used to be passed across the Blackburn End before games. The understanding was that it was damaged but AM agreed to check.
- c) SB raised the issue that some season ticket holders had been moved from their seats in the Riverside for the Liverpool game, only to find that other fans were sitting in the seats at the game. LT explained that this had been a communication error at the club. The seats were originally blocked as part of the segregation for the game but were later released. Season ticket holders in one block had been offered their seats back but not in another block which had been an error.
- d) AB asked whether the picture outside the ground of the Premier

- League winning team could be amended as it showed Newcastle fans in the background. AM agreed to investigate and correct if true.
- e) LT asked for any fans who had ideas for future events at the Fan Zone to get in touch with her.
  - f) TS asked whether the choice of drinks in concourse bars could be extended to include Amstel and Strongbow, both of which were Heineken brands. AM agreed to check.
  - g) SB asked whether any refurbishments were planned for Blues Bar. AM thought that there were some plans but agreed to check.
  - h) TS asked the Forum whether the standard meeting time should be moved to 7pm in the future – this was agreed/

## 10. Date of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
6/7/15	13/7/15
7/9/15	14/9/15
2/11/15	9/11/15

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 give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

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

## **2015 Pre-Season Programme**

### **First Team**

Saturday 11/7/15 3pm  
Accrington Stanley v Rovers

Tuesday 21/7/15 7.45pm  
Rochdale v Rovers

Friday 24/7/15 7.45pm  
Tranmere Rovers v Rovers

Saturday 25/7/15 3pm  
Oldham Athletic v Rovers

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 7.30pm  
Bury v Rovers

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 3pm  
Rovers v Wigan Athletic

### **Representative XI (Reserves / under 21s)**

Saturday 11/7/15 3pm  
Burscough v Rovers

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2pm  
Knaresborough Town v Rovers

Tuesday 28/7/15 7pm  
Bamber Bridge v Rovers

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 7.30pm  
Chorley v Rovers

Tuesday 4/8/15 7.30pm  
AFC Fylde v Rovers