

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Martin Haworth  
Julie Wilkinson  
Gordon Ormerod  
John Billouin  
Neil Duckworth  
John Wareing  
Andy Neill  
Ben Sumner  
Ray Williamson  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Annette Birkbeck  
Rob Parker  
Tristan Stock  
Mark Hitchen  
Terry Crawford  
Glenn Pegden

## **Present from BRFC**

Paul Hunt  
Greg Coar  
Lynsey Talbot  
Phil Cannon (item 2)

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

Ben Pirraglia  
Steve Birtwell

### **2. Future of the Academy**

Phil Cannon attended to update the Forum on major changes to the operation of academies from next season. All academies were to be categorized as 1 to 4. Category 1 would be the highest level and the club's owners had decided to apply for Cat 1 status. They had made a significant investment in providing a new floodlit Astro turf pitch and extra classrooms for academy trainees. The club had formally applied for Cat 1 status and was to be independently audited on 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> May. If successful the club would be given time to do the necessary work. The owners had also confirmed that they would remain committed to the academy whatever the status next season.

The level of existing facilities at Brockhall meant that the club were confident that with Jack Walker's legacy and the extra investment from Venkys that the club would get Cat 1 status. The outcome would be known in due course.

The academy had had an excellent season with the team one game

away from winning their league and also with a number of former academy players making their first appearances in the first team, which was the main aim.

There would be no change to fixtures for the 2012/13 season but after that there would be national leagues for under 21s, under 18s and under 16s. There were also plans to commercialise and televise some of these games. A number would be played at Ewood.

AB asked whether consideration could be given to providing transport from Ewood to games which were now held at Brockhall. PH agreed to consider this, dependent on demand.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

- a) LT introduced herself and outlined her new role as Supporter Liaison Officer. This was now a Premier League requirement for the UEFA licence but it was very much the role she had been doing for 10 years, as she dealt with the customer charter, fans' complaints and provided an interface between the fans and the Board. Complaints can be escalated to the Premier league if a fan is not satisfied. In 10 years only three referrals had been made and in all the club's actions had been upheld.
- b) JL asked regarding progress in replacing the disabled fans minibus. PH replied that the club had received one quote which had been very expensive, but that the club was still committed to finding a satisfactory outcome. JL asked that the disabled supporters group could have input nearer the time for a decision and PH agreed.
- c) MH asked about a replacement for the club flag which had recently been damaged beyond repair. PH replied that John Newsham would review this over the summer.
- d) MH noted that the Forum's request to involve former players at half-times had been acted upon and that recently Matt Jansen, Tugay and Simon Garner had appeared.
- e) In response to a question about the lighting at the rear of the Riverside PH stated that he would check the outcome with John Newsham.
- f) GC stated that the night celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the winning of the Full Members Cup in Blues had been very successful, with most of the team being present.

### **4. Season Tickets**

GC reported that the response to the Early Bird season ticket offer had been pretty good given the current circumstances and the outcome followed a similar pattern to that when the Early Bird was last offered in 2008.

Season tickets would now be off sale until after the end of the season,

when they will be relaunched with new pricing.

Management of the direct debit scheme had been moved to Zebra Finance, who currently work with 86 other football clubs. The procedure had therefore changed and fans will be required to sign and return a credit agreement which will be sent to them shortly. The new arrangements with Zebra Finance would mean that it will be possible to make direct debit applications online from when tickets go back on sale.

LJ asked whether it would be possible to apply for renewal of disabled supporters' season tickets online in future. GC said that the situation with personal assistants made this complicated but he would make enquiries.

## **5. Blackburn Rovers investment Trust**

MH asked what the club's view of the recently launched Blackburn Rovers Investment Trust was. PH responded that, whilst he had not read the business plan in detail, he had recently met Wayne Wild. He found the plans credible as a disaster recovery plan but saw no prospect of one being needed in the near future.

## **6. Shirt Sponsorship**

PH stated that the club are planning to have a commercial sponsor next season. The club had two seven figure offers on the table dependent on retaining Premier league status. Should the club be in the Championship a regional sponsor was more likely.

MH asked whether a second sponsor would be added to shirts if the club was relegated, as this was allowed in the Football League. PH replied that it would not be a preferred option but the club may consider this.

GC reported that unlike recent seasons, the club would be putting a sponsor free home shirt on sale shortly, with the away shirt following in July. Anyone who bought the new shirt in May would be entitled to a 10% discount voucher on other club shop purchases.

JB asked whether it would be possible to incorporate a badge commemorating the Premier league win in 194/95 on to future shirts. PH agreed that this might be a good idea.

It was confirmed that the club had a contract with Umbro until 2016.

## **7. Pre-Season Plans**

PH confirmed that the first two pre-season games had been confirmed, with the club playing Fleetwood Town at 12pm and Accrington Stanley at 3pm on 21<sup>st</sup> July, both at Accrington's Crown Ground.

There would be a training camp in Austria and there may now also be a game there as well. Other plans would depend on the team's league status.

## **8. Fan Zone**

GC reported that the Fan Zone at the Blackburn End had been a great success, with both Thwaites 95 and Wainwright selling out just prior to kick-off. Unexpectedly, targets had also been broken at the concourse bars, in Blues and in the Roverstore.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- a) RW reported problems with exiting the car park behind the Blackburn End after games. This had been particularly bad after the Manchester United and Liverpool games. He asked whether it would be possible to reverse the one-way system to allow fans wanting to exit via Livesey Branch Road to leave earlier. At present they had to wait with everyone else until Bolton Road cleared. PH stated that he would ask John Newsham to review this.
- b) GO expressed his disappointment at the lack of team sheets for the FA Youth Cup semi-final with Burnley. LT replied that she ordered a quantity of team sheets for the whole season based on previous usage. It was of course not anticipated that there would be a game attracting 10,000 fans so there had not been enough available. For the final second leg there would be a programme as this was handled by the FA.
- c) MH reported that there were rumours circulating that Burnley fans had obtained tickets in the Wigan fans area. GC replied that this was unlikely as Wigan had sold out their allocation in three days to season ticket holders.

## **11. 2012 Meetings – Proposed Dates**

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June  
Monday 20<sup>th</sup> August  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October  
Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December

The next pre-meet will be at Ewood on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012. 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) to give their apologies on 07984 085474 if they cannot attend a meeting.

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