

Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 24th June 2013 – 7.15pm

Present – Fans' Forum

Andy Neill
John Wareing
Ste Birtwell
Gordon Ormerod
Neil Duckworth
Jennifer Lewis
Alan Birkbeck
Ray Williamson
Rob Parker
Terry Crawford
Tris Stock
Jim Holden
Mark Hitchen
Ben Sumner
Annette Birkbeck
Simon Barnes

Present from BRFC

Greg Coar
Lynsey Talbot
Gary Bowyer (Item 2 only)
Terry McPhillips (Item 2 only)

1. Apologies for absence

Glenn Pegden

2. Gary Bowyer & Terry McPhillips

GB and TMcP joined the meeting for an open question and answer session. GB stated that he was starting his tenth season at the club and he understood how much the club meant to its fans.

In response to a question about new arrivals at the club GB confirmed that David Dunn had signed a new contract earlier in the day and there was another signing due to be announced on the following day. This had followed on from the appointment of Craig Short to the backroom team. GB felt it was very important to have people who were committed to the future of the club and both David and Craig fell into that category.

GB confirmed that with the arrival of Craig Short he had now completed appointments to his backroom team.

RW asked whether some players in the squad were surplus to requirements and whether having players not playing regularly in the first team would cause friction. GB made the point that a certain strength in

depth was necessary to cover for injuries during a 46 match season – at one game at the end of last season the club had 13 players injured. Nevertheless there were bound to be some comings and goings before the transfer window closed and he accepted the need to strengthen the playing squad. The limitations of the new Financial Fair Play Regulations also needed to be taken into account. If there were players in the squad who asked to leave he would not stand in their way as he did not want any players who were not committed to the club.

He stated that he would not be playing a long ball game but he also recognised that the business he was in was very results based.

ND said that there was a perception amongst fans that the team last season had not been fully fit given the number of late goals they conceded. GB replied that the pre-season training plan for this year was very tough to make sure the players were prepared in August.

MH asked whether there was any truth in rumours of the appointment of a Director of Football. GB recognised that rumours were always circulating around football clubs.

ND asked GB for his impressions of the owners following his visit to Pune. GB replied that he had no doubt that they were still fully committed to making Rovers a successful club, which included a return to the Premier League.

MH asked whether GB had full control over the club's transfer policy. GB said that he had and pointed out that he had dealt with all the recent appointments himself.

TC stated that he thought that fans in general were very supportive of GB's appointment and wished him luck for the new season. For his part GB stated that he thought that the support of fans for him and the team at the end of the season had been terrific and he looked forward to an improved atmosphere for home games in 2013/14.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes 25th February 2013

a) Disabled Minibus

AN asked whether the policy had been agreed for the new season. LT said that the club had met the Disabled Supporters Club and told them that the provision of a coach with disabled facilities that had run for the second half of 2012/13 would be made permanent. The club planned to dispose of the old bus but had not yet agreed a price. Not all disabled fans were fully happy with the outcome but they did accept the reasons for the change.

b) Rovers Player

AN asked whether any progress had been made into the request for the replay of full Rovers games via Rovers Player. GC stated that he fully expected that this facility would be available to fans for the new season.

c) Indian TV Deal

JW asked whether the programmes shown on Indian satellite station Ten Action could be made available in the UK. GC replied that he was not sure whether the contract would be renewed for the new season. In any event the 3 hour programme was produced in-house by Rovers TV so that the vast majority of the content should be available to Rovers Player subscribers in the new season.

d) Heineken Contract

TS asked whether consideration had been given by Heineken to the introduction of premium brands as requested at the last meeting. GC replied that Heineken and the club were very happy with sales figures on the new contract. Nothing would be in place on premium brands at the beginning of the new season but a trial on selected bars was planned for later in the season. Fans' willingness to pay a higher price would be one of the factors tested.

There was some discussion on the practicality of opening some concourse bars after games. Current licensing regulations did not allow it and in any event it was not clear there would be demand but it remained an option should Blues not be able to cope.

4. Season Tickets 2013-14

GC apologized for the late announcement of season ticket details for 2013/14, which had been for a variety of reasons. Sales had started promisingly. The retention of very competitive prices and in particular the Premier League pledge showed the commitment of the owners to the club and fans.

TS asked whether there was any truth in constant rumours that match attendances had been overstated during the 2012/13 season. GC stated categorically that the club adopted the policy used by the vast majority if not all professional clubs, to quote attendances based on tickets sold, so all season tickets were counted for league games whether or not the season ticket holders attended.

JL pointed out that the season ticket packs had not contained two forms for disabled fans to cover carers, as it usually did. She has contacted many disabled fans to explain the change in procedure but some fans had been confused.

SimonB asked for some overall statistics on the make up of the season

ticket holder fan base, which Greg agreed to do for the next meeting.

5. 2013-14 Kits

GC stated that the home kits for 2013/14 were planned to be launched on Tuesday 2nd July. This was later than planned primarily due to delays from Nike. The away kits were currently planned for later in July.

6. Commercial Sponsorship 2013-14

GC stated that he had a proposal in for approval for shirt sponsorship but there was no agreement as yet. Other companies had also expressed interest in recent days.

7. 2013 Pre-season Games

SimonB asked whether the club planned to issue any specific advice for fans attending the pre-season game at Portimao in Portugal, given the trouble there had been last year in Holland. LT did not expect there to be any similar issues this year but did agree to check and make absolutely sure.

AN had been asked to enquire whether the club would consider laying on coach travel to the UK away pre-season games. GC stated that this would be provided if enough demand could be demonstrated.

8. Academy Category 1 Status

LT stated that a meeting had been held in London on 21st June regarding the re-audit of the club's application for Category 1 status, but that no final decision had been announced.

9. Any Other Business

- a) SteveB asked when the membership forms for Blues Bar would be issued. GC replied that they would be sent out very shortly.
- b) There were no plans announced yet for the away game at Burnley in September but information was expected soon.
- c) ND stated that the residents' car parking between Bolton Road and the Jack Walker Stand was looking very unkempt. LT replied that did not know that the land was owned by the club but she would check.

13. Date of Next Meetings

Pre -meet
Monday 22/7/13
Monday 2/9/13
Monday 14/10/13
Monday 25/11/13

Main meeting
Monday 29/7/13
Monday 9/9/13
Monday 21/10/13
Monday 2/12/13

Pre-meets are held at Ewood 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 give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

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