

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Andy Neill  
Ste Birtwell  
Gordon Ormerod  
Neil Duckworth  
John Wareing  
Jennifer Lewis  
Alan Birkbeck  
Ray Williamson  
Rob Parker  
Glenn Pegden  
John Billouin  
Terry Crawford  
Tris Stock  
Jim Holden

## **Present from BRFC**

Greg Coar  
Lynsey Talbot

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

Mark Hitchen  
Ben Sumner  
Annette Birkbeck  
Derek Shaw  
Simon Barnes

### **2. Matters arising from the Minutes 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

#### **a) Disabled Minibus**

In response to a request for an update from JL, LT stated that a decision was still under review.

### **3. Womens Super League 2 Application**

AN asked whether a decision had been made about an application for Rovers' womens team to join the new WSL Division 2, which had to be made by 4<sup>th</sup> March. LT replied that. Whilst meetings had taken place, no final decision had been made. The issue was about resources and timescales rather than the financial commitment. It was fully expected that investment would continue to the womens' team even if an application to join WL 2 was not made this time. The team management were concerned to ensure that growth of the womens' team was done in a sustainable way.

TS stated that he understood that there had been issues with the players gaining access to the club's medical staff and that they did not have defibrillators. After the Patrice Muamba incident defibrillators had been provided by the FA to all clubs up to semi-professional in the mens' game and to WSL teams but not to teams at Rovers level. LT agreed to check the current situation.

#### **4. Owners Attendance at Home Games**

RW expressed concern that the recent incidents at the arrival of the owners before the Charlton game could have been avoided. Whilst there was no excuse for the behavior of a few fans the incident could have been avoided by an earlier and more discrete arrival. He felt that it may have had a detrimental effect on the atmosphere at the game and probably on the team's performance.

LT understood fans' concerns. The club dealt directly with the owners on their visits but often circumstances meant that both arrival and departure times at games changed. Early departure from games was not meant to disrespect the club and fans but was for other practical travel reasons.

#### **5. £24m Share Capital Injection in Venkys London Ltd**

AN stated that there were rumours that the recent £24m share capital injection into Venkys London Ltd had been financed by the sale of future Premier League parachute payments. GC said that any injection of this nature was a decision taken at a much higher level in the organisation and was unable to comment further.

#### **6. Burnley Home Game**

Plans were now all in place for the upcoming home game with Burnley. The plans were similar to those for the reverse fixture at Turf Moor but the facilities at Ewood Park meant that organisation for the away fans was considerably easier. Burnley had been given 4,000 tickets in the Darwen End Lower and had an option for a further 1,000 in the upper tier if required. Several meetings had been held between the clubs and the police and some of these had also been attended by fan representatives of both clubs.

In response to a question about ticket promotions GC stated that the Football League allowed the club the opportunity to designate four games where they could run promotions for home fans. This had been done at three home games so far, against Birmingham, Cardiff and Leeds. One more game would be chosen before the end of the season. He also stated that it had been decided, in conjunction with Lancashire Police, that the Darwen End would not be closed to home fans for the home game with Blackpool, as had been initially planned.

## **7. Millwall Cup Game**

GC stated that the club had been given an initial allocation of around 1,400 in the top tier and there was the possibility of a further allocation if needed. Sales so far had been good, despite the difficult kick-off time and the live TV coverage. He also reminded fans that the most convenient railway line for The Den, South Bermondsey, would be closed for engineering works on the day.

## **8. Derian House Partnership**

The giant tea pot on the corner of Ewood Park had been erected as part of a promotion for a rebranding of Derian House for a fundraising and awareness campaign. The club had had a long and good relationship with Derian House and had been happy to help at the prompting of the Action Group. There had been both perimeter and big screen advertising at recent home games.

## **9. Heineken Contract**

There had been some concerns about the quality of the beer in one or two areas at the start of the new contract with Heineken. GC conceded that there had been some isolated teething troubles, mainly because the transition between games was very quick. Heineken, as the brand owners, were very focused on the quality of the product supplied and on growing their brands and sales.

There has been some adverse publicity locally about the change of contract from a local brewer but in fact sales at Ewood were 85% lager, which was not produced by Thwaites and had had to be bought in. Ale sales represented only about 10% of total sales across the stadium.

TS asked whether some premium brands such as Amstel and Strongbow could be offered to fans in kiosks and GC agreed to explore this.

GP asked whether kiosks could be left open during the second half. GC agreed to check whether licensing would allow this. There was also some discussion on whether Legends and selected concourse bars could be opened to casual fans after games.

## **10. Rovers Player**

AN asked whether there was a solution to the use of Rovers Player Apple mobile products, which did not support Flash. GC replied that this would be an issue for the web company through FLI, with which Rovers

and most other Football League clubs had a contract. GO asked whether there was any progress in making full Rovers games available. GC stated that this was possible in theory but that there were currently network issues, which made uploading even fifteen minute highlights an issue.

## **11. Indian TV Deal**

AN asked for an update on the contract with Indian TV. GC replied that Ten Action had been very impressed with the quality of the production. The three hour programme aired on Fridays before the evening game and was repeated on Mondays. The club were still awaiting audience viewing figures.

## **12. Pricing of Senior Season Tickets**

AB asked why it was not possible to reduce season ticket prices mid season when fans reached the age of 65. LT replied that the club had always operated a cut-off date for eligibility of 31<sup>st</sup> August for the application of concessionary prices. This policy is the norm for virtually all other clubs.

JB reported the concerns of some season ticket holders in the central area of the Jack Walker Lower Stand, who felt they were overcharged in comparison to other areas of the ground. GC replied that he was aware that many fans in this area were long-standing season ticket holders but these seats were a premium product and therefore commanded higher prices. Overall the club was very proud of its affordable ticket pricing policy.

## **12. Any Other Business**

### **a) Tannoy in Family Stand**

JH reported that tannoy announcements in the Family Stand were very difficult to hear. GC replied that the system was regularly tested before games but that it was now a dated system. He agreed to check the issue.

AB asked why the tannoy system was tested at unsocial hours of the day – it had been tested at 6.45am on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> February. GC was surprised to hear this and would check whether the testing system was malfunctioning.

### **b) Ground Tours**

AN wished to record his thanks for what had been an excellent ground tour he had recently taken, for the first time. He was particularly impressed with the tour guide.

### **c) FSF “Twenty’s Plenty” Campaign**

JW asked the club for their view on the recently launched “Twenty’s Plenty” campaign to restrict the cost of tickets for away fans to £20. GC stated that the club had a long standing commitment to excellent value ticket prices and to a fair approach to both home and away fans.

**d) Riverside Catering**

JL stated that there were problems with the lack of or badly fitting lids for hot drinks from catering outlets in the Riverside Stand. GC agreed to check.

**e) Riverside Betting Kiosk**

JL reported that a betting kiosk had collapsed next to the Riverside stand and that fans had been directed to an alternative kiosk at the back of the stand, which was inaccessible to disabled stands because of the steps. GC stated that he was not aware that the kiosk had collapsed and agreed to look into it.

**13. Date of Next Meeting**

Pre -meet	Main meeting
Tuesday 2/4/13	Monday 8/4/13

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](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.