

# Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum

## Ewood Park, Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019 – 6.00pm

### Present – Fans' Forum

Tris Stock  
Bharat Parmar

John Wareing  
Peter Ridehalgh  
Savio Mathias  
Terry Crawford  
Mark Hitchen

### Present from BRFC

Lynsey Talbot  
Steve Waggott

Greg Coar

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Neil Duckworth  
Jim Holden  
Steve Birtwell  
Annette Birkbeck  
Alan Birkbeck  
Ray Williamson  
Jen Bellamy  
Jennifer Lewis

#### 2. Visit to India / Summer Recruitment Plans

SW reported that 5 senior members of the club had a successful visit to the owners in India in May. Another trip is planned to take the technical staff to make a case for an increase in the club's recruitment budget.

The owners continue to plan a gradual build of the club and are committed to building through the acquisition and development of young players. Financial Fair Play continued to be a challenge for the club. SW noted that the recent sale of David Raya to Brentford was the first since he had joined the club. The club continued to plan an extension of the scouting network across Europe but this would take time.

David Raya's sale had come about after him losing his place in the first team and his agent actively looking for another club. SW confirmed that there had been some interest in acquiring Karl Darlow from Newcastle but his current high wages were a significant stumbling block.

SW noted that matchday ticket prices had just been released and that prices for the games with Leeds United and Sheffield Wednesday would be increased to £40 to reflect the prices charged at these away games. He stated that anyone who took out 1875 Club membership

would be able to get a significant discount for tickets for these home games.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

None

### **4. Season Ticket Sales 2019/20**

GC noted that there had been some recent confusion about season ticket sales numbers and he wanted to clarify the situation. Sales as at early that morning were 7,550. 7,322 of these were paid for tickets and there were also 128 free under 8 tickets and 102 other complimentary tickets, mostly for carers. He expected that the number of complimentary tickets would end up at around 700, plus 300 seasonal corporate tickets.

The club's target for the end of August was 11,000, of which 1,000 would be comp tickets, including free tickets for staff. The equivalent figure for 2018/19 was 9,400 paid for full season tickets. He noted that last year only 300 season tickets were sold after the end of the Early Bird promotion. This season, with no price increase, there was less incentive for fans to buy their season tickets early and he expected steady sales through to the end of August. He remained confident that the target would be achieved.

GC stated that the club's previous finance partner Zebra Finance had ceased lending in March, at a particularly difficult time. At that time the only other option in the market was V12 on the same terms as many other clubs. He was able to announce that the club had just done a deal with Premium Credit which would be announced very shortly. On this deal the club would be taking the risk of default. There had been about 300 rejections for credit under V12, which might amount to 600-700 tickets and these people would now be able to apply again with Premium Credit.

PR asked about the wider spread of advertising this year with some advertising in Preston. GC replied that around 15,000 people in the Preston area had bought tickets for games at Ewood in the last few years, which was more than Preston's average home crowd, so he saw advertising there as perfectly legitimate.

### **5. Matchday Experience**

There was a wide ranging discussion about how to improve the matchday atmosphere inside Ewood Park. There was some comment about plans for bars and entertainment both before and after games. In particular there was consideration of running buses to the games from the surrounding areas and a trial may be held. JW suggested arranging

bus travel from UCLAN and Lancaster universities around the start of the new academic year and GC agreed to consider this.

There had been some discussion about where to seat away fans in the Darwen End. GC stated that the consensus was that having them in the lower tier improved the atmosphere and a plan was being considered to try seating them in the rear of the lower tier with seat coverings over the lower seats.

## **6. Hospitality Plans**

GC stated that the new contract with Sodexo had started on 1<sup>st</sup> July and that all the staff previously employed by Northcote at The Rovers and Rovers' own catering staff had been transferred to Sodexo under TUPE legislation.

A plan was in place for the refurbishment of the corporate areas. The Premier Suite would be first to be done between the Charlton and Middlesbrough games, with Jack's Kitchen following in the September international break and the Red Rose Suite in the November one.

A lot of work was already underway in the concourse areas and this work should be ready for the start of the season, with a new menu and the installation of digital screens.

## **7. 2019/20 Kits**

SM asked about the launch of the 2019/20 away kit. GC stated that it would be launched at an event on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July in Blues in conjunction with Sodexo, the kits would be available for sale online from 5pm on 19<sup>th</sup> and in store on 20<sup>th</sup> and the team would be playing in the kit at the game with Rangers on 21<sup>st</sup>.

GC stated that the retail store had had their best season for sales since 2008 and the home shirt had sold very well, despite some controversy about the shade of blue used. This was in comparison to a season when the club were in the Premier League and had a retail store in the town centre.

## **8. Midweek Home Game Dates**

MH asked whether it was possible to fix the day of the week that the club played their home midweek games. LT replied that the club's preference was to play on Tuesdays but that the Sky contract meant that some may have to be moved to Wednesdays.

## **9. Schoolchildren Promotion in Blackburn End Upper**

JW asked how the offer of free match tickets to schoolchildren had been received. LT stated that it had been a great success with 2,500 tickets having been offered and about 1,800/1,900 had been taken up on the day. Some tickets had been allocated in the Jack Walker Upper as capacity in the Blackburn End Upper had to be restricted because of unreserved seating.

LT stated that the club intended to repeat this event more than once in the 2019/20 season, with the possibility of offering tickets to other local organisations as well.

## **10. 1875 Club Visits to Training Ground**

JW asked what the procedure was for selecting 1875 Club members for the trips to the training ground. GC stated that all 1875 Club members were emailed and a random draw was made from all those who responded each time.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- SM asked whether it was possible to get some Harry Chapman merchandise in the Roverstore. GC agreed to discuss this with the Retail Manager.
- LT stated that the club would have Rovers branded poppies available for Remembrance this November.

## **10. Dates of Next Meetings**

Pre -meet	Main meeting
2/9/19	9/9/19
4/11/19	11/11/19

All dates are Mondays unless otherwise indicated

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 to give their apologies if they cannot attend a meeting.

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

