

# **Minutes of the Blackburn Rovers Fans' Forum Ewood Park, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015 – 7.15pm**

## **Present – Fans' Forum**

Tris Stock  
Neil Duckworth  
Jim Holden  
Bharat Parmar  
John Wareing  
Jennifer Lewis  
Ray Williamson  
Alan Birkbeck  
Annette Birkbeck  
Gordon Ormerod  
Mark Hitchen  
Terry Crawford  
Simon Barnes  
Anthony Corry  
Savio Mathias

## **Present from BRFC**

Derek Shaw  
Lynsey Talbot  
Alan Myers

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

Ste Birtwell  
Ben Sumner  
Greg Coar

### **2. Matters Arising from the Minutes 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

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

LT stated that there had been an issue with fans with permits for the Albion Road car park sometimes not being able to get into the car park, despite paying £100 for the permits. Although the club had sold these permits the car park was in fact owned by Blackburn with Darwen Council and the sale of permits had been done as a convenience for fans.

In order to avoid further problems Blackburn with Darwen Council had agreed to reserve spaces on 'The Triangle' for seasonal permit holders until a time when this was not feasible due to ongoing roadworks.

JW stated that there was still an issue with cars parking on Livesey Branch Road between the Fox & Hounds and Albion St, which was causing fans to walk in the road after the game in competition with cars coming down the hill. This was again an issue for Blackburn with Darwen Council.

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

LT stated that Blackburn Youth Zone would be providing entertainment in the Fan Zone before the Bolton game and Sky Sports presenter Tom White would also be there.

AM said that there had been plans for entertainment at the Millwall game on Easter Monday but that had now had to be postponed because of the Liverpool cup replay game.

**c) Tannoy**

JH advised the meeting that the problem with hearing the tannoy at the back of the Family Stand had now been solved.

**3. Financial Fair Play**

Asked for an update on the current situation with financial fair play, DS stated that there had been little or no change in the situation, except for the departure of Bradley Orr. The club was still paying out a significant monthly cost for mistakes made over the last few years. In the last couple of years about 30 contracts had been terminated and although a number of these had been young players there had been some seniors, which would give the club a considerable National Insurance Contribution saving.

SM stated that he had written to the Football League asking why Rovers had been hit with a transfer embargo when Bolton had not. DS agreed that he did not understand why Bolton had not given their reported £58m loss, but he was not party to the detailed figures or the decision.

GO asked how embargo rules would be applied for the Summer transfer window, given that no annual financial figures would be available. DS replied that clubs would be presenting interim calculations.

**4. 2015/16 Season Tickets**

TS asked whether the club was considering an early bird offer as other clubs had already done. DS stated that he did not see any financial benefit in issuing the offer early before the season ends. He would expect that a small increase would be approved but the final decision rested with the owners and that they were very keen to keep prices affordable and had vetoed rises proposed by the management team before.

JW asked whether the club was considering any major changes, such as closing the Family Stand to save money and to concentrate fans in the rest of the stadium. AM stated that it was very difficult to move season ticket holders who often were very attached to their seats. JW suggested that it might be worth the club writing to season ticket holders in the Family Stand to gauge their views.

**5. Managerial Situation**

TS stated that, despite the result at Liverpool the previous day, that there was some significant concern from many fans about the performance of Gary Bowyer, given the recent decline in league form. DS responded that the club was aware of supporter concern, but the management both in Blackburn and India remained fully supportive of Gary. He had performed well in what had been and continued to be a difficult situation for a manager. The owners commitment can clearly be seen both in their support of Gary and their refusal to accept offers from other clubs for senior players.

## **6. Smoking Areas**

TS stated that the lack of progress to date on the creation of smoking areas was very frustrating. Many other Championship clubs now had managed to create smoking areas to the benefit of all fans, whether they smoked or not.

DS was pleased to report that the club were hoping to be able to trial some smoking areas before the end of the season  
[Post meeting update - there is meeting of the Safety Advisory Group on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March. If all is approved, the club is hoping to trial smoking sections in the Darwen End (home area only) and the Blackburn End Lower Tiers at the Brighton game on the 21<sup>st</sup> March.]

## **7. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plans**

AM confirmed that the Former Players Association was planning a celebratory dinner towards the end of the season. He was conscious that the cost of this event would be beyond the means of many fans. The club was therefore planning three nights in Blues in April. Hopefully a player would be available. After some discussion it was agreed that a film of the Premiership winning season would be most appropriate.

In addition the final league game of the season against Ipswich would be designated to celebrate the anniversary.

## **8. Disabled Supporters Association Relaunch**

JL reported that the Disabled Supporters Association had recently been successfully relaunched. They had two events planned for the near future. There would be an evening with Stuart Metcalfe and John Kenyon on 25<sup>th</sup> March and the Player of the Season night on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

## **9. Any Other Business**

a) ND asked what plans the club had to stop excessive infiltration by Liverpool fans at the upcoming cup replay. DS stated that fans would have to be on the club's database to buy tickets in the home areas,

although he recognised it was inevitable that some fans would obtain seats. JW asked whether the club had considered linking priority purchase of tickets to buying tickets for future league games, particularly the £29 special offer for the Brighton, Brentford and Millwall games.

- b) MH expressed concerns about the state of the pitch this season and wondered whether training sessions at Ewood had been the cause. DS agreed that the condition was disappointing. He felt that the primary cause had been an under 21 game with Derby that had been played in a downpour for the whole game, although having to train on the pitch was also a factor.
- c) TC asked about availability of shirts for 2015/16 season. AM replied that it was expected that kit launch would be around late June, in good time for the summer holidays and the start of the season.
- d) SM asked whether the club would consider stocking Rovers branded champagne flutes and tea pots in the club shop and MH asked for cereal bowls. AM agreed to check whether this would be possible.
- e) SB asked whether details of the 2015/16 pre-season could be released as soon as possible as a number of fans liked to follow the team to overseas training camps. DS replied that planning pre-season was getting more and more difficult, particularly if the club wanted a friendly with a Premier League team as most were now travelling the world at that time and often would not confirm until very late.
- f) JH asked whether, now that the club had transferred from a public to a private company, there would be a shareholders meeting. DS stated that he was not aware of any plans to hold such a meeting.

## 10. Date of Next Meetings

Pre -meet	Main meeting
5/5/15	11/5/15
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.