

AFC Wimbledon US Dons Newsletter

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US Dons – News

Well we had some representation at the closing matches of the season. Steve Smith of California travelled back home in April and managed to get to the final league game of the season, the home game against Harrow and he witnessed a 2 – 1 victory and advancement to the playoffs. Steve got some good photos of the celebration and I think SoCal will be adding them to the US Dons website.

Dave Hambly (SoCal) another California resident made a quick weekend trip over for the Surrey Senior Cup Final against Kingstonian in the middle of May. Unfortunately he did not take his magic with him this time as the Don's lost 1 – 0. It will be a tough reminder for the Don's to see the cup encased in the Kingstonian Trophy case for the upcoming season!

My trip was delayed, I will be over there later this month and for the first part of July, and will get to see a couple of the pre-season friendlies. One game just announced on the web-site is a July 15th game against Leyton Orient. It will be the first time AFCW has played a football league member club at Kingsmeadow. I plan to be at that game.

I haven't had too many responses to my questions from the last newsletter, so will try again.

Send in your thoughts and comments for the next newsletter.

It would be nice to get some of your comments on how you thought this last season played out. Are you happy with the results? Do you feel another season in the Ryman Premier League will provide us a stronger footing for the next campaign and better prepare the team for Conference football? It has been a meteoric rise over the last three seasons we can't expect to gain promotion every year without a season of consolidation. Do you feel Dave Anderson did a good job? Or do you feel the ever-revolving door played into the inconsistency of the team? What are your expectations for next year? Share your thoughts with the rest of the US Dons. Send your thoughts to me and we will print them during the off-season.

I have received several positive responses to again sponsoring a players kit for the next season. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, based on this past years pricing, with approximately 50 members, it would cost us about \$10 each to sponsor a kit for next year. For those of you who have not yet responded drop us an e-mail on your thoughts. Being several thousand

miles away from the action, we are unable to help in other ways with the fundraising efforts the club performs. This is an easy and relatively cheap way to show our continued support of OUR club.

Unfortunately, I have not had too much time to put together the poll mentioned in the last newsletter. I will try and get it together for the July edition.

Some of the questions would be:

Are you an AFCW stockholder? Are you a member of the Don's Trust?
Are you a member of WISA? How long have you been a Don's Supporter?

I have other questions, but would like to ask you to offer some other ideas for your questions.

I am sure most of you will be watching the World Cup in the very near future, only a couple of weeks to go. Let's GO ENGLAND!
Shortly after that the friendly pre-season will begin, it doesn't seem like there is much of a break anymore, still if you are like me... you can never get too much football.

We have a contacts page attached, and anyone who doesn't mind sharing his or her info, let Dave Hambly (SoCal) or myself know. I try and send the newsletter to your e-mail as well as have SoCal post it on the website.

Stay in touch.....

“Come on you DON'S”

You can reach me:

via e-mail: davgarlinge@aol.com,

phone: (281) 482-6034

mail: 206 Winding Road, Friendswood, TX 77546

David Garlinge
(Limeydg).

AFCW News

After a strong finish to the regular season, which gained us a place in the playoffs, the Don's fought a valiant game against Fisher. Unfortunately, they could keep the regular season magic over Fisher and lost the game 2 – 1. Fisher would go on to beat Hampton in the game that decided the second club to gain promotion to the conference.

All in all, the goal at the start of the season, to reach the playoffs was achieved. The step up to the Ryman Premier division was a success. However, there are probably some misgivings for the inconsistency of the teams' performance. For the most part they won the bigger, tougher games, then had some real disappointments against some of the lower placed teams. Let's hope for the next season we can build on the progress that was made. The club suffered from injuries last season and there seemed to be a revolving door policy with player personnel, which certainly contributed to some of the inconsistent performances. Let us pray for a more settled team and fewer injuries and a major push to win the division outright this coming season.

The season ending game in the Surrey Senior Cup final was a downer. Despite having several opportunities to win the game, it was not to be. And to be honest, Kingstonian deserved to edge the game overall. The loss meant AFCW did not win any silverware this year!

To date there does not appear to be much happening in the way of playing personnel changing, although I am sure Dave Anderson has some areas where he would like to make some improvements. Watch the Official web-site for any news.

What are the goals for the upcoming season?

A stronger showing in the FA Cup! A run into the first round would certainly help swell the coffer's and could provide us with a football league club as a possible scalp and further rewards.

The goal for the League this year? To be crowned automatic champions.

Something I haven't covered too much in the newsletters has been the women's team and the reserve and youth teams. These can be followed in more detail on the official web-site, but they certainly deserve some mention. Last season we saw several reserve team players run out in the league team, and they proved themselves capable of playing in the higher level. The youth teams, as a whole, again had some good results with many making cup finals. It is these players who will one day carry AFCW to

higher levels. The Ladies team has added a second team and is again proving a positive side of our club.

I think I speak for the entire US Don's when I send our congratulations to all of the AFCW teams for another successful season. We may be a few thousand miles away, but we are behind you all the way.

COME ON YOU DON'S

Guest Column:

WE NEED TO TRUST OUR DECISION-MAKERS ON BANK LOAN

TREVOR PEARCE argues there is more in favour of switching AFC Wimbledon's loan from Khosla to the Barclays Bank and why we must trust our people to make the right financial decision for all of us.

While supporters over at poor old, much misunderstood, Chelsea have to debate which game they will win the title at, and Arsenal are debating whether it was the right move to sell Patrick Vieira and replace him with a group of 16-year-old Spaniards, we at Wimbledon have much more of a key issue to discuss -- whether a 10-year loan at 2.5 percentage points above the base rate from Barclays Bank is better than a similar loan at base rate plus 5 points from Raj Khosla. I'm not done yet, no, you may not go and read Armfield's article now.

As a kid, my football dreams extended to playing centre forward for Manchester United (sorry, I didn't always follow the One True Path, not seeing the light until an early teenager). And maybe going on to manage England, before a combination of bad luck, a poor national scouting system and my own complete lack of ability put paid to these delusions. At no point did the vision encompass playing even a small part in the financial decision-making of a club. For me, the fact that we even have to consider these decisions brings back the great betrayal. We're supposed to be fans, we're supposed to be thinking about who should be the manager or the left-back, roaring on our encouragement on a Saturday afternoon, defending our heroes in the workplace on Monday morning, not debating depreciation, amortisation and who is offering the best loan. While messrs Hammam, Rokke, Gjelsten, Koppel and Winkelman can surely expect a hot welcome come the day of judgment, if I have any input into the process then the suits at the FA and the Football League can at least expect to spend several million generations trying to make head and tail of complex excel spreadsheets for their neglect.

But we are where we are, and if we don't make a decision then it will surely be left to businessmen with more interest in the real estate potential of South West London than in our journey through the Ryman and Conference Leagues. So the deal, as I see it, is this. We currently owe £400K to Raj Khosla — which is testament to our fundraising power, given that our original debt was £2.4 million. Our relationship with Khosla appears to have been relatively civilised, although Kingstonian fans I believe have a rather different opinion of the man who bought their ground for £500K and sold it to us for rather more. But the future likelihood is that, once the ground is bought and paid for, we will still need to borrow and invest to get it up to standard, and also to build a team capable of moving us on. And to do that we need to establish a link with more orthodox lending institutions, many of whom have had their fingers burnt in dealing with the football chairmen that we are exhorted to leave alone to run football clubs as businesses. As a result, of 17 financial institutions approached for lending, Barclays are the only one who have signalled interest, and to encourage them more, it will help if we can become a customer for this loan now.

The immediate financial impact is negligible -- Barclay's loan is at a lesser interest rate, but the impact of this is not likely to be felt for the first three years. The difference in risk is also insignificant. While Khosla might be more likely to try and reclaim the ground in the unlikely event that we default on payments, our agreement with Khosla is that we only need to pay the interest on the loan, while Barclays require capital repayments as well.

On the whole, having read through the club document on the issue, I would favour supporting the Barclays loan as a method of helping attract future lending if and when necessary. But more than that there are many at AFC Wimbledon who will disagree violently with this, but in my view we need to have more trust for our decision-makers on issues such as this. I am simply not qualified to give a sensible decision on which loan to go with. We have professional financial people in Kris Stewart and Erik Samuelson on the board of our club. If they are not to be trusted then we should get rid of them and employ people who are. If, as I believe, they are competent individuals who are committed to building up a club for the people of Wimbledon, rather than to furthering their

own bank balances, then these are the decisions that they should be making, and these are the people who should carry the can if they go wrong.

Dave Anderson did not consult me when he signed Tony Battersby and Paul Barnes. And judging by my previous history of managing Subbuteo teams I am probably more likely to have given wise counsel on that issue than on the loan one.

Now then, which two of Barnes, Battersby, Butler and Smeltz should it be?

This article is a little behind the times. The decision to go with the Barclay's loan was approved almost unanimously. It does, however, give us a little insight to some of the arguments (differences of opinions) that were debated before the vote was made.

Fundraising Activities

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, it is time to begin thinking about if we want to again “Sponsor a Player’s Kit” for next year. Based on last year’s cost, and with almost 50 US Dons members, a small donation of approximately \$10 per member would cover the cost. It is a small price to pay for our long distance support. It let’s the club and players know they have our support, despite the distance between us. It is encouraging to see so many of you on the “Old Centrals” chat-room every weekend and hear the US dons mentioned over the Dons network. Let’s keep our support going for our club!

We need some:

New Ideas

Send us your ideas for other fundraising activities we could embark upon. One thought is to have some US Dons team shirts made up, which we could proudly wear on our trips back to the homeland. Any takers on this?

AFCW and Cancer Research:

OK ... I'm still plugging the cancer research – It does not impact you while you are on the computer and it does not cause you or your computer harm. Give it a try! If it doesn't work for you, then remove the driver.

AFC Wimbledon has always had an affiliation with supporting Cancer research (it has been one of the recipients of the Walk(s) for Wimbledon sponsorships). There is a program that has been in operation for some time, whereby, you can link your home computers to a Grid supporting cures for cancer. The program runs in the background of your PC and will not inhibit your use of the computer, but will run programs when your computer is idle and utilise any free CPU time. A couple of us have set up an AFC Wimbledon team on the grid and are donating our free CPU time to the cause. If you would like to join, I have attached a link to the team below. Click to this site, download the driver and join the team. Each participant and team gain points. It is a good way to advertise and promote the club. Later on we may be able to gain some sponsorships, based on points earned, that could be shared amongst the club and cancer research.

'<http://www.grid.org/services/teams/team.htm?id=C89CDDA3-BE3D-4D7B-8601-87BB77C8329A>'

There are at least 16 football clubs with 'teams' associated with this research, the largest being Liverpool. We are working on a table that will rank the football club teams, by points, by members, etc. Obviously the more team members you have the more points you can accumulate. We can make this a fun thing that can derive great benefits for everyone. So come on all of you, go out to the above link and join the fight against cancer.

Contacts

Here we will list contact information for those of you who want to share. Who knows, in our travels we may be in a fellow supporters area and get together for a beer and chat. Sign up is optional.

David Garlinge (Limeydg)
206 Winding Road
Friendswood, Texas 77546
e-mail: davgarlinge@aol.com
phone: (281) 482-6034

Dave Hambly (SoCalDon)
Burbank, CA.
e-mail: dave@usdons.com

Nic McJannett (Carolina Don)
Charlotte, NC
e-mail: nicmcj@aol.com

Robert Smith (WDSA)
Australia
e-mail: wdsa@optusnet.com.au

Websites of interest

Official Website - contains schedule, results and game reports:

www.afcwimbldeon.co.uk

WISA: www.wisa.org.uk

Tony Kempster's site: www.tonykempster.btinternet.co.uk

Paul Raymond - ItmustbeDons: www.itmustbedons.com

Ryman League: www.isthmian.co.uk

DonsOnline: www.donsonline.co.uk

Radio WDON: www.wdon.com

NEW chat-room: <http://www.afcwgb.co.uk/gb.php>